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The Popular Magazine

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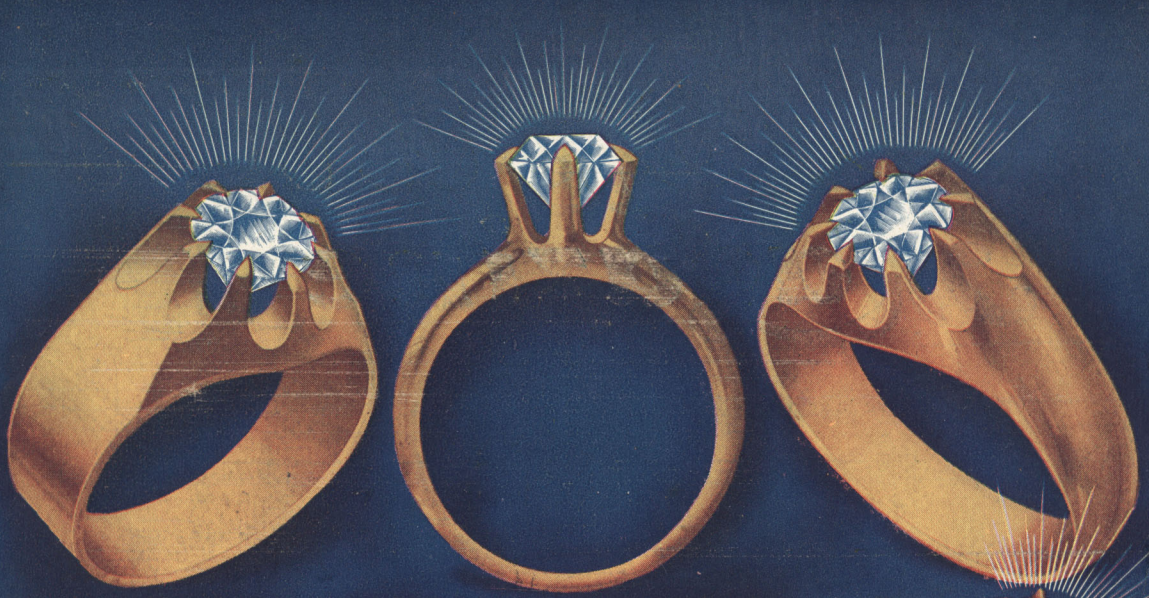

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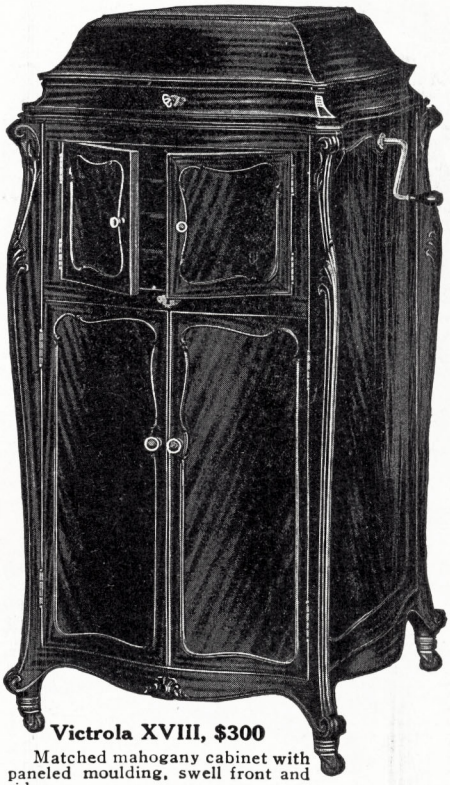

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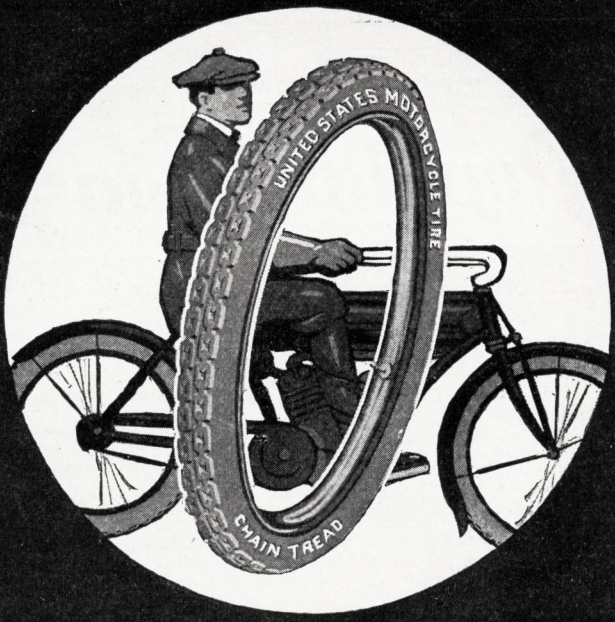

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TWICE-A-MONTH

The Popular Magazine

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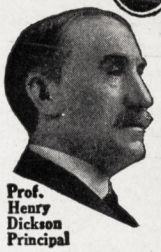

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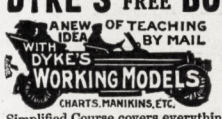

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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XXXVII. SEPTEMBER 7, 1915. No. 6.

The Salmon Run

By William Slavens McNutt

Author of "At the Moon Trail's End," "The Master," Etc.

Gold is not the only wealth of Alaska, though its spell has held captive the imaginations of men. In this swift and virile novel the author takes one to the Aleutian Islands to witness streams of living silver flowing in the depths of the ocean; and the hazardous endeavor of man to net the shining tons of salmon as they seek shallow water to spawn. One of the impressive sights in nature is that of the salmon millions swimming from one to twenty feet below the surface, leaving in their wake countless javelins of phosphorescence. Of the great canning industry of the North, McNutt gives us a vivid, indelible glimpse. And interwoven with it all is the fabric of human passions—love and hate, greed and generosity, and sinning and charity. A memorable story.

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CHAPTER I.

MR. JACKWELL shook his massive gray head sadly, and, wheeling in his desk chair, gazed from the window with an air of deep gloom. The other occupant of the office, a stocky, overdressed man with "shoddy" clearly written in his coarsely handsome face, tilted his half-consumed cigar upward from the corner of his large, loose mouth to an angle indicative of supreme self-satisfaction, to which he gave voice:

"I guess that's complete enough, ain't it, Mr. Jackwell? Believe me, when the Harmon Agency starts on a man's trail it's blazed for him right through to the doors of the pen. Of course, if you wanted to prosecute I'd lay off this bird for a little longer and get some dope on him that would stick in a court of law, but——"

Jackwell shook his head decisively. "No. There will be no prosecution. I just wanted to be sure."

"Well, you're sure, ain't you? We deliver the goods, and if you'll give me a little more time on this matter I'll rope this guy so tight——"

Jackwell pressed a button on his desk. "I'm sure enough, thank you. I only wish there was more room for doubt."

The door opened, and Mr. Jackwell's secretary stepped in.

"Send Leonard in."

"Believe me, you're making a mistake," the detective assured Jackwell when the secretary had gone. "Once

a crook always a crook, and a crook belongs in the pen. He belongs there, and he'll get there in time. Letting him off like this only means giving him a chance to sting some other sucker, and—— Excuse me, Mr. Jackwell. Didn't mean, of course, to say that you were a sucker, but——"

Jackwell made a dry grimace of disgust. "I understand. I can rely on your silence, of course?"

"Silence? Why, say, if I told all I knew about some of the best men in this town that made little mistakes that were hushed up for——"

"Exactly. Your logic is indisputable. Some of the best men in the city have made mistakes that would have spelled ruin had they become known, but—— Ah, come in!"

Bob Leonard was good to look upon. He was tall, straight, athletic looking, and bore himself with an air of proud recklessness that was not swagger, but suggestive of a thoroughbred colt that has never known bit nor halter.

"Mr. Jennings," Jackwell introduced the man from Harmon's briefly.

Leonard nodded, and his deep brown eyes twinkled with merriment as he looked again at Jackwell.

"I know; I'm fired," he hazarded, with a chuckle. "Oh, I know the symptoms. Being fired has become an art with me. Constant practice since——"

"I'm not in the mood for nonsense, Robert," Jackwell interrupted him sharply.

"Pardon. I don't know what my fault has been, Mr. Jackwell, but on general principles I know I deserve to be fired, and I do wish you wouldn't feel bad about being obliged to let me go. Why, I'm no business man and don't want to be. Dad——"

"I know everything, Robert."

"Everything?" the boy repeated blankly. An irrepressible grin spread over his face. "Omniscience must be fine, but it isn't like you to boast of your qualities. I really beg your pardon; I'll be serious. Now what's the row?"

"You've got nerve!" Jackwell muttered half to himself.

"Lay off it, son," Jennings advised wearily. "I've got you dead to rights and you might as well come clean."

Leonard surveyed the man coldly. "I suppose you have some good reason for having this caricature here, Mr. Jackwell. Otherwise——"

"Robert, you're a thief!" interrupted Jackwell.

Leonard's jaw dropped in amazement and then snapped shut with a click.

He settled himself squarely in his chair, and assumed an expression that men who had faced him on the football field would have known meant trouble.

"Your age and your friendship for my father prevent my saying that you lie," he said crisply. "But I do say that you are mistaken."

"I wish the opportunity of thinking so was left me, Robert. Fifteen thousand dollars were taken from the safe Saturday morning two weeks ago. It was the pay roll for Camp Seven on the D. L. G. I had——"

"And you think that I——"

"One moment, Robert. Only you, Arnold, and myself know the combination. I immediately engaged detectives—yes, Mr. Jennings is from the Harmon Agency—and what they have discovered leaves me no option but to believe you guilty of theft. One moment more; I have no absolute proof that you took the money, no proof that would stand in a court of law—and if I had I need scarcely tell you that I would not prosecute—but I have absolute proof that you betrayed me; that you sold the Stillwell people the full details of our bid on the Short Line tunnel. The matter of the theft of the money lies between you and Arnold, who has always been the soul of

faith, and I must believe that theft is not beneath a traitor."

Leonard gripped the arms of his chair till his knuckles showed white. "Whoever says that I'm a traitor or a thief lies. I didn't take the money and I didn't sell out to the Stillwell people. I suppose this man——"

"Yes, this man's got the dope on you," Jennings cut him off importantly. "We turned a dictagraph loose on you, my son, and I've got the record of your entire conversation in your apartment with the fellow that called himself Brown; I got witnesses to it, and witnesses that saw you take the money from him. And what have you got to say to that?"

A flood of shame crimsoned Leonard's face, and his lips trembled slightly as he leaned toward Mr. Jackwell.

"I want to explain about that," he said earnestly. "I'll admit that it does look bad in the light of what you've told me. This fellow Brown came to my apartment late one night after I had returned from the club and offered me five thousand dollars for a tip on your bid. The thing struck me funny, and I kidded along with him, making him think that he had not gone high enough. Then it occurred to me that the only way to punish a man low enough to stoop to such tactics was to take his money away from him, and I told him that if he would make me an unconditional loan of a thousand on the spot I might be able to think the matter over more advantageously and would see him the next day. He gave me the money——"

"And you took it?" Jackwell interrupted.

"I did. I've been thoroughly ashamed of myself ever since. To be frank with you, I—well, I'd just got in from the club, and I was about half seas over at the time, and in that condition it seemed to me a great joke to trim this chap, but when I woke up sober and realized what I'd done——"

"You hunted him up and returned it to him?"

"I tried to, but I couldn't find him. He said that he was staying at the Washington Hotel, but when I inquired there they said there was no such person registered. I haven't seen him since that night."

"Likely yarn," Jennings sneered.

"I'll see to you presently," Leonard replied to him, with a cold smile. "Is it necessary, Mr. Jackwell, to have this man——"

"Wait outside, Jennings," Jackwell said, with a nod.

"I thank you," said Leonard earnestly when the detective had left. "Now, sir, you can't seriously think that I would betray or rob you. It's absurd! Why should I do such a thing even if I were capable of it?—which I'm not. The only possible motive for such an action is money, and you know perfectly well that my father——"

"When your father sent you to me as a last resort to see if I might not be able to make something of you, he put you on a limited allowance; an allowance that I know you've far outlived."

"That's true. But great Scott, man, if I were in any serious need of money dad would——"

"I know that your father wouldn't let you have an extra cent; you should know it and probably do. I know that he would not spend one cent to save you from the penitentiary nor blame me if I sent you there. Your chance here was your last; your father is through with you forever.

"But I don't altogether blame you, Robert. You are a natural result of the life you have been permitted—even taught—to lead. I blame your father to a great extent, though I understand his reasons for having been so lenient with you. When I knew your father

first in this great West he was alternating between day labor and prospecting. I never knew any man who suffered as much from poverty or who was so—almost insanely—determined to rise. Nothing could block that determination, and he has risen close to the top, but I know that the scar of those early years of poverty and humiliation and fruitless struggle is on his soul to this day. We were partners in the first railroad job either of us ever took, and for some years after that in general contracting until he went East and to the top of the heap.

"I know that when you were born his greatest joy was the knowledge that you would never have to withstand the rough shocks that he took in his early days. He had borne the brunt, and you were to have everything that he missed in his youth. You have. You've had everything he missed and missed everything he had. He never fully realized that his character was tempered to unbreakable steel in the fire of his early hardships, nor does he realize now that yours has been drained of all vitality by the murderous luxury with which you have always been surrounded. I mean just that, sir. You have never been burdened with a responsibility in your life, and the result is that whatever germ of character you may have inherited is at least dormant from want of nutrition—use—if not extinct. Your last despicable act is the direct and natural result of——"

"But I haven't done anything terrible," Leonard protested in a dazed tone. "Upon my honor I haven't, Mr. Jackwell. I can't fully realize that you are seriously accusing me of theft and treachery. I know I've been a bit wild, sir, kicked out of Harvard in my sophomore year, never caught on with dad's affairs in any way, and all that, but I've never done anything—well—dirty. Bit riotous maybe, but I always paid for any damage I did, and I never seriously injured any one but—myself perhaps. I'd have gone to work fast enough if there had been any reason for it, but dad's got more money than ten sons would know what to do with, and plenty of good men that know how to run his business better than I ever could learn to. What's the use? But to think that——"

"You lie with persuasive sincerity, Robert, but facts tell me that you do lie, and fact and truth are synonomous." Jackwell seated himself, and, gazing out the window, continued thoughtfully: "At this moment, Robert, you stand at the critical division of your life's paths. One road leads to the inevitable destruction of whatever shreds you may have left of honor and decency, a short, broad, easy road and soon traveled, for only a short distance ahead lies the pit of your mortal and eternal damnation; the other is narrow and rough and long; it leads up a hill that will be mighty tough climbing for your flabby moral legs, but at the summit you will at least find the right to die without regret for having lived or horror of the Unknown—and that right's worth struggling a long way to gain—and you may find there success and happiness.

"It's no unkindness for me to tell you that your father is done with you for good and all, for you'll find that out for yourself shortly. You say that hitherto you've never been able to discern any reason for going to work; you'll find one soon. From now on you will be compelled to work to get food and shelter for your body, or continue as a crook, in which case you'll soon be nabbed. If there's any character left in you it will show now."

Leonard put his hands over his eyes for a moment, and rose. "It's just beginning to sift into my consciousness that this is—serious," he said shakily. "I can't fully grasp it yet. I'm not

guilty of these things you accuse me of. I'm not, I tell you!"

"It lies between you and your cousin, Arnold; do you accuse him?"

"No! Why, sir, he's as incapable of committing such a crime as I am."

"It's to your credit that you don't try to cast a shadow on a man you must know to be blameless. Robert, do you know that under the circumstances Arnold will probably be your father's chief beneficiary? That he will probably step into the shoes you have never even tried to fill? It's true. Your uncle was an impractical old cuss who could never even take care of himself, and your father has never done anything for Arnold. And yet the boy has made his way. He's been with me for eight years now; I took him in the first place because I thought I saw in him something of the ruthless determination that made your father what he is; the fairly maniacal, unbreakable will to succeed; the something that you so utterly lack. I was not deceived. He's got it. Your father and I are jointly interested in a new venture of which you were to have been the eventual head had you taken advantage of your opportunity here; the chances are that Arnold will get that position, and will, in time, succeed your father in his business. All that you might have done. I'm deliberately showing you the extent of your loss to try and shock you into some realization of your position."

Leonard took a deep breath. "I see you're determined to regard me as guilty. All right, sir. You may be sure that no one would be happier than I to see Arnold succeed; he's a fine fellow and deserves to; but you can't make me believe all this melodramatic rot about dad casting me off and all that. Why, dad knows I wouldn't steal! Why, this whole thing's absurd! I—— Oh, Miss Allison!"

"Well?"

"Have I your permission to tell her of this myself?"

"If you will tell her at once; this afternoon."

"Can I call at your house to see her? Or am I suddenly such a moral leper——"

"You may call this afternoon to tell Elaine of your shame; if you are found on the grounds after that I'll have you jailed for trespass."

Leonard made a convulsive forward movement, but checked himself. "If you were a younger man——" he grated.

"That's all!"

Jackwell seated himself abruptly and became at once absorbed in the papers on his desk. Leonard hesitated, made as if to speak, shrugged, and passed out, slamming the door smartly. At first he had been stunned beyond the ability to feel. Now resentment was swelling in him, and because he was young and hot-headed, strong and surcharged with the destructive instinct of lusty youth, he wanted to crush something, hurt somebody, vent his rapidly growing anger in a way that his fingers could feel—and there by the window of the outer office stood Jennings, the detective from the Harmon Agency.

Leonard stopped short at sight of him, and then laughed happily, a low, soft, silky laugh, as laden with menace as the hiss of a venomous snake. He strode across the room to him, walking with a loose, swinging stride, his shoulders lifted slightly and his chin thrust forward, and tapped Jennings on the shoulder.

"You did a remarkable piece of work, Mr. Jennings," he said pleasantly. "I congratulate you on the remarkable cunning you displayed."

Jennings, startled at first, smiled complacently, and, tucking his thumbs in the armholes of his vest, tilted his barometric cigar to the indication "fair weather and same to follow."

"We deliver the goods," he declared. "You take it cool, my son. I don't mind saying that you're some Foxy Quiller yourself, and that if there'd been some cheap, ordinary 'dick' spotting you—instead of me—you might of got away with it. No hard feelings, eh?"

"Certainly not!" Leonard assured him. "The very idea! I must do something to you to show my opinion of the remarkable sagacity you displayed in trailing me to earth. I really must! You know I'm something of a student of phrenology, Mr. Jennings, and—you know what phrenology is?"

"I've read of it, yes; but I didn't pay much attention and——"

"I see. Phrenology is the science of bumps, and my knowledge of it enables me to read your skill in raised letters, so to speak, on your skull. Now these bumps here"—placing his fingers on the detective's receding forehead so that the palm of his hand was over the sleuth's eyes—"indicate marvelous foresight; that you can instinctively tell what's going to happen. And this bump"—he smashed the blinded detective fair on the chin with his right fist as he spoke, and then caught the suddenly limp body in the crook of his right arm—"indicates that this is an exception to the rule. You didn't know that was going to happen, did you, you lying sneak?"

He dragged the unconscious disciple of Sherlock Holmes to a near-by desk and carefully anointed his large features with a large bottle of India ink. Thereafter he poured a pot of fresh mucilage over Mr. Jennings' sleek hair, and after carefully rubbing the same well into his scalp he grabbed up a half-filled wastebasket and jammed it down over his victim's head. By this time Mr. Jennings had recovered consciousness and was emitting strange and wonderful noises. The clerks and other employees were rushing into the outer office, and the day watchman made a pugnacious rush at Leonard, who smashed him with savage glee. He snatched up a heavy desk chair, and, swinging it before him, backed toward the main doorway, aflame now with unreasoning rage.

"That's right; stare at me, you fawning fools!" he snarled at the ring of employees. "The man who cracks his whip over your cringing back says I'm a thief and a traitor. A thief and a traitor, do you hear? You bootlicking sycophants! Well, take the news straight from me that he's a liar and the rest of you are sniveling, puny, puling, cowardly curs afraid to own your own souls!"

As he reached the outer door, flanked on one side by a large plate-glass window, he became aware, through the reddish mist that hazed everything, of Jackwell standing in his office doorway.

"I just told your whining curs here that you were a liar!" he shouted at him. "And you are! You're a liar, do you hear me? A liar, and I'll prove it! Let me off from going to the penitentiary! Why"—he turned suddenly and cast the heavy chair through the big plate-glass window that crashed in tinkling fragments on the tile floor of the office and hallway. "That's what I think of you and your whole crowd. Now call the police and I'll show you a one-man riot that can't be beat. No? Well, so long!"

He flung open the door, kicked the glass from it, and strode blindly from the wrecked office of Jackwell & Co., contractors.

CHAPTER II.

For an hour Bob Leonard walked the hilly streets of Seattle without thought of whither he went, enveloped in an aura of anger that blinded him to all extraneous things. He bumped

into other pedestrians, and hurried on unconscious of their amazement or complaints, crossed downtown streets, and left behind him a trail of mixed profanity from the lips of chauffeurs and motormen with the possibility of a manslaughter trial in their minds, and was finally brought to a consciousness of realities by the persistent discomfort of being thoroughly chilled. A cold, steady spring rain was falling from the low-scudding clouds, and he was wet through.

He was downtown and only a few blocks from Jackwell's office when he made this discovery. He entered a quick-lunch room, and, after gulping two cups of scalding hot coffee, hurried to the telegraph office and dispatched the following message to his father in New York:

> Your friend Jackwell accuses me of theft and some other things that are worse. Unnecessary to tell you he is making big mistake. Want to see you on important matter. Wire me five thousand to clean up here and come home.

"Rush that," he requested the clerk, and went out in a calmer frame of mind.

There was something important he wanted to see his father about. That "something" was an insistent desire, born out of the morning's chaos of emotions; an earnest desire to go in with his father and prove that he was capable of success and anxious for it. He had a sincere affection for his short-spoken, undemonstrative parent, and Jackwell's sketch of his father's early struggles and joy in being able to save his son from like experiences had given Bob insight into some things he had theretofore been blind to. His father had always taken his escapades with small comment, and it had never come home to Bob that his lack of interest in the business had ever really meant anything to him. Jackwell's assurance that this was his last chance worried him not at all. He knew that that was absurd. Six months before, his father had said to him: "Try it on the coast with Jackwell for a while, and see how you catch on."

That was all. True, he had not "caught on" any better than he ever had previous to this last attempt to fit the peg of his inclinations into the socket of business, but then he had never wanted to before. And now suddenly he wanted to "make good" more than he had ever wanted anything. That he could not if he tried never occurred to him, any more than it ever occurred to him that any man living could whip him, or that any one was his all-around superior. He was not conceited; he had simply never known the gad and never met his master. His belief in himself was like to that of the thoroughbred colt, as yet a stranger to bit or burden.

He heard his name called from behind him, and turned to see his cousin, Arnold Leonard, hurrying toward him.

"Been hunting for you everywhere," Arnold panted anxiously, as he caught step. "Bob, old man, what in God's name does it all mean?"

Bob laughed ruefully. "World blew up, and a flying fragment landed on me with a solar-plexus knock-out, as near as I can remember. Good of you to recognize a branded thief; appreciate it."

"Bob!" Arnold reproached him. "You know that I realize the absurdity of that charge."

Bob pressed his arm gratefully. "You're a good sort," he said. "Let's go into a box here in Sutherland's and consult John Barleycorn."

Bob was honestly fond of his cousin in a remote way, and now he felt for him a sudden surge of warm friendship.

"You're a trump, Arnold," he said impulsively, as they entered the box. "You're everything that I'm not, and a just Providence would have given you the opportunities that I've never even

tried to take advantage of. I'm going back and break in with the old man in earnest, and when I get a say in things I won't forget you, old boy."

Arnold looked at him queerly. "Oh! You're going back to your father, then?"

"And prove to him that I'm something other than an idle ass. I gathered from Jackwell's kind remarks this morning that the old man has his heart set on my enlisting in the army of industry. I didn't know he cared much."

"I'm glad you're going back. I understood that your father had broken with you and——"

"Oh, that's just some of Jackwell's fiction."

"You've heard from your father since ——"

"Haven't had time; just sent him a wire. Arnold, have you any theory about the theft of that money and the tipping off of the Short Line bid?"

"Not a hint of one."

"I'd like to clear that up just for the satisfaction of making Jackwell eat his words. He called me a thief and a traitor! Of course it's silly, and all my friends will know that it is, but——"

"What did Miss Allison——"

Bob banged the table with his fist. "By jing! I've been so raving mad I completely forgot about her. Haven't told her. I'll go up to my rooms and change, and then hurry right out. I'm to be shot at sunrise if Jackwell catches me on the premises after this afternoon."

He started to leave the box, hesitated, and went slowly back.

"We've never been chums, but you're white and I won't forget it," he said earnestly. "It seems like I've got everything you deserve to have, and lots of fellows in your place would be mean and jealous. You're a brick!"

Within the hour Bob presented himself at the Jackwell home, where Elaine Allison, his fiancée, was visiting with her school friend, the second Mrs. Jackwell. When Elaine entered the room, he knew that some one had told her of his trouble.

"Would you kiss a thief?" he greeted her laughingly.

"If the thief was you," she smiled, and offered her lips casually. "What's it all about, Bob?"

"Somebody stole some money, and Jackwell insists that the somebody is me. Kind of him not to send me to the penitentiary."

"Don't be a ninny! You didn't take it, of course."

"Naturally not; why should I?"

"Then your father hasn't——"

"So you've picked up that rumor, too! Why, of course he hasn't! I know dad, and I know he'd never believe me a thief."

Elaine wrinkled her nose in disgust. "Don't use that word."

Leonard laughed. "Has got a nasty twang to it, hasn't it? It was Jackwell's chief conversational asset this morning."

"He's furious. Minnie and he had a frightful quarrel about you over the phone. He told her you were coming out to see me, and that if she spoke to you——"

"The least he would do is divorce me," a merry voice interrupted, and Mrs. Jackwell entered. "Hello, Bob! I have spoken, so let the chips—— My! Poor, dear husband is in a towering rage with you. I understand your departure was a calamity."

"I did break a few—er—home ties," Bob admitted. "Mr. Jackwell takes this thing seriously, Minnie, and if he warned you not to talk to me——"

"And I won't," she declared, laughing. "Not because hubby says so, but because you and Elaine want to spoon. So I'll leave you. Don't let father Jackwell's tantrum bother you, Bob; I never do."

Leonard looked after her with a little frown. "Marriage doesn't bother her much, does it?" he muttered.

Elaine, perched on a couch with one foot drawn under her, giggled. "Why should it?"

"Elaine," he said suddenly, "let's get married right away and—behave."

"Behave?"

"Like a man and woman instead of a couple of irresponsible children. We've neither of us ever done a worthwhile thing; a thing that was done for anything but our own sweet pleasure. I'm suddenly sick of it all. I'm going in with dad in earnest and make good. Come back with me, and we'll chuck the nonsense and make good together."

"I—I don't quite understand you, Bob. Am I a failure in some way, that I——"

"You're only a failure in the same way I am—at something you've never tried. We've puddled around in the nursery with our toys long enough; marry me now—to-day—and let's play—life."

"To-day? Why—why, Bob, I want a wedding. I want——"

"You want to play with your toys! A church wedding, with all the fuss and frumpery and notoriety that goes with it. Is it that you want, after all? Or—me?"

"Why, of course I want you, Bob. Don't be silly. But——"

"Then marry me now. I mean it. I'm going to work just as hard as I've played. If you want to take your place as the wife of a man with as little time for nonsense from now on as my father, marry me now. Elaine, no one can give us happiness; we have to earn that ourselves. I'm starting out to earn it; will you come with me?"

"But your father, Bob?"

"What of him?"

"What would he say?"

"Probably say: 'Good for you; glad you got that over without any fuss!'"

"Are you sure of that?"

"Certainly. Why, dad's all right, Elaine." He took her in his arms suddenly. "Girl, it's all been froth with me so far, and I'm thirsty to the core of my soul for strong, real life, whether it be sweet or bitter. You and I haven't loved; we've always liked each other and taken our engagement as a matter of course. I want love. I want to love you above and beyond anything in the world or out of it——"

"Elaine!"

It was Mrs. Jackwell calling from the hall. Elaine, flushed, tremulous, and frightened, freed herself from Leonard's embrace and stepped back.

"Yes?"

Mrs. Jackwell parted the portières and winked knowingly. "Spooning!" she chided. "Elaine, dear, you look as though you had just come through a passionate encounter with a cave man. Bob, just look at her; pink as a peony. That color's a great compliment to your love-making. If I had known you were doing that well with her, I wouldn't have interrupted, but—telegram for you, Elaine."

"For me?"

"Oh, no! Been for you, I wouldn't bring it to you, of course. Fine work, Bob. Don Juan's own blood flows in the veins of any man able to fuss Elaine to the point of asking a question as inane as that. I leave the field to the victor."

She left them with a laugh and a nod, and Elaine opened the telegram. As she read it, the color faded from her cheeks and she clutched nervously at her throat.

"Bad news?" Bob asked solicitously.

She stared at him for a moment, with a look almost of horror, and then silently handed him the message.

Wonderingly he read:

Think it fair to warn you Robert no longer my son. Will have no help from me now or ever. Final. ADRIAN C. LEONARD.

Bob read the message without realization of its meaning. The words produced a flutter of inner panic, like a veiled threat of some fearful horror. His eyes saw the words, but he knew that the message they gave him was a lie. It must be! The thing was impossible. Slowly, carefully he read the telegram a second time, studying each letter of each word minutely as though a peculiarity of type might give him an answer to the riddle. The panic in his breast increased, but he stilled it with a shudder. Of course the thing the words told him was a lie. Some one's idea of a good practical joke, perhaps. Well——

He looked up from the yellow sheet with a set smile to find Elaine gone. Dazed, the telegram in his hand, the panic spreading to his brain and beyond his control, he stepped into the hall and called to her. There was no answer. Mechanically he returned to the music room, and, seating himself, studied the message again, frowning stupidly.

"'No longer my son,'" he muttered, closed his eyes for a moment, reread and repeated the words. They made no impression on him other than to increase the vague fear that had now set all his body atremble.

And the fear was vague. The words said his father had cast him off, but he knew the words lied. They must lie. He knew that was impossible. He looked up with a quick start as a maid entered.

"Miss Elaine has been taken ill, sir," the maid said. "She won't be able to see any one this afternoon."

Leonard gazed at her, his face set in a mechanical, idiotic smile. "Yes, I see," he chattered. "But just tell her please that I must see her for a moment; just a moment. Very important, tell her. Just a moment."

The maid withdrew, and Leonard seated himself in an armchair, fighting desperately for composure. After what seemed hours to him, the portières parted and Mrs. Jackwell entered, white-faced and sober.

"Elaine told me, Bob," she said, coming close to him and laying her hands on his shoulders impulsively. "We were both a little afraid of it. I'm sorry."

"But it's not true," Leonard protested feebly. "I'm sure of that."

Mrs. Jackwell shook her head. "I'm afraid it is, Bob. Harvey told me your father would do this if you failed out here with him."

"Oh, I know dad better than that. Where's Elaine? I want to——"

"She's lying down," Mrs. Jackwell said, a hard note creeping into her voice. "You can't see her this afternoon, Bob."

"But I—I must. I'm not to come back here, you know, and I may not have another chance to see her before I leave."

Mrs. Jackwell patted his sleeve. "Be a good boy now, Bob," she wheedled. "It will be so much easier for both of you if you don't see each other now. It would only be embarrassing and add to the pain you both feel."

"I don't—— Why, what——" Bob stammered.

"Don't be utterly silly, Bob. Elaine has practically no money, you know."

"You mean that she—because she thinks dad has thrown me over——"

Mrs. Jackwell shrugged her small shoulders expressively.

"Can you blame her? Elaine hasn't been trained to live in a cottage furnished only with love. And you know, Bob, your ability to earn even a cottage to love in is open to question."

"I see. Finis, eh?" He threw up his head and laughed bitterly. "I'm glad I do see in time. I was urging her to marry me at once when this—interruption occurred. I'm inclined, now, to regard it as a blessing. Good-by and thank you."

CHAPTER III.

At his apartment, Leonard found, waiting for him, Arnold and a telegram. He greeted his cousin briefly and tore the yellow envelope open with trembling fingers. The message was from his father's personal secretary. It read:

Your father instructs me inform you he will forward no further funds and wishes never to see you again. Refuses to receive any communications from you. Instructs me to state that this is final.

Leonard slumped into an easy-chair and tossed the telegram to his cousin.

"Useless to say I'm sorry," Arnold said gravely, when he had read it. "But I am, old man."

Bob nodded. "Thanks. Dad is thorough in this, as in all things. He wired Elaine, and she immediately put reverse English on our noble love. Even spared herself the trouble of telling me the show was over; got a maid to do it for her."

He looked at Arnold, and an evil light glowed in his eyes. "Want me to tell you just what I think of her?" he asked. "Do you?"

Arnold averted his eyes. "I—I'd rather you didn't," he said sympathetically. "I can understand. Instead, tell me of your plans. Have you decided what to do?"

"Go East and straighten this thing out with dad first of all. It isn't having my allowance choked off that hurts, but the idea of him thinking me bad enough to disown. Somebody's been stuffing him."

"You think you can patch it up with him?"

"I know I can. Dad's no fool, and he can't look me in the eye and believe that I'm a thief. Oh, I'll straighten that out, all right."

Arnold rose. "When do you expect to leave?"

"To-morrow some time, I think. I've got to get out and borrow a little money somewhere; only got a few dollars cash."

"I think I could get a little together for you to-morrow," Arnold offered.

"I'd appreciate it. Going?"

"Unless you'd rather have me stay."

Bob shook his head. "No discourtesy, but I'd rather be alone for a time, I think. Thanks, just the same. You're a brick, old man."

When Arnold had gone, Bob walked the floor, trying desperately to think clearly. He could not. He was unable to make himself fully realize that the things that had happened to him were real. He was possessed of a vague agony, misty and mighty; an agony so great that it stunned and made full immediate experience of it impossible. An explosion great enough is inaudible because it numbs the oral faculties, and in like manner an agony beyond endurance is largely unfelt.

That his own father should think him a thief! With a grunt of disgust, he gave up the attempt to reason and tried to absorb his mind in a book.

He answered a knock on the door, and found the elevator boy with a note.

"Man brought it, suh," the elevator boy informed him. "Wouldn't wait foh no ansuh. Thanky, suh."

Bob took the note from the small, plain envelope and read:

If you want to know who stole the money, go at once to the alley on Washington Street between First and Second Avenues; stand at the entrance of the alley, and wipe your forehead three times with a handkerchief. A friend unknown to you will speak to you. Ask no questions, but follow him, and you will find out who took the money and how to prove it. If you tell the police of this note or show it to any friend, you will not be aided. Do just as I tell you, and I will help you clear the mystery. A FRIEND.

Bob dashed into the hall and called frantically for the elevator boy.

"The fellow who left this note," he said excitedly. "Which way did he go?"

"Went toward Union Street, and went in a hurry, suh. That man, he jes' left here in a rush an' gathered speed as he went. He's gone."

"You ever see him before?"

"Naw, suh; not me."

"Messenger? In uniform?"

"Naw, suh; jes' a man."

"What kind of a man?"

The black boy scratched his woolly pate to stimulate his descriptive faculty. "Jes' a man, Ah reckon. Had on dahk clo'es an' some kind or nuther of a hat, or cap, mebbe."

Leonard flung back into his room with an exclamation of disgust, and feverishly read and reread the strange note. The neighborhood where he was requested to come was the most evil in the city, and this added to his suspicion.

"A frame-up?" he questioned himself. "Can't be. I haven't anything anybody wants. I'm not asked to bring money."

He looked at his watch. Ten o'clock.

"I'll see this through," he decided. "I'll just follow this stranger's instructions to the letter and see what happens."

He dressed hurriedly and slipped a short-barreled revolver into the pocket of his overcoat.

"You may be a friend, as you sign yourself," he muttered, "and you may not. If you're not, I'm in the mood right now to fiddle you six bars of music worth dancing to."

A taxi carried him to Yesler Way, the street that divides the playground of the underworld from the rest of the city. At Yesler Way, he left the machine and walked rapidly down a hill that led to an inferno horrible enough in a sordid way to tax the pen of a Dante. The narrow, uneven sidewalks were jammed with a shuffling, sinblasted mixture of sodden humanity, each composite atom intent in a horrible search for his own pet evil. This was the poison pasture that the sailor, the miner, lumberjack, construction-camp followers, the roving, homeless men of the world paid the price of all their bitter labor to feed in.

Leonard pressed his way through the rough, wild crowd with a shudder of repugnance. Cheap saloons lined the way, and the sordid street rang with the hideous mouthings of drunken men, the metallic tinklings of mechanical pianos, and the coarse bawling of barroom singers. He turned into Washington Street and reached the mouth of the alley designated in the note. He stepped back into the alley a pace out of the filthy, pitiful stream of turgid humanity that flowed by so sluggishly, and, with a hand that trembled in spite of his effort for composure, drew out his handkerchief and passed it three times across his forehead. After a moment, a slouching, hard-faced young fellow with a limp and greasy cap pulled over one eye stepped from the entrance to the nearest saloon and paused beside him to light the stump of a cigarette pendulous from one corner of his twisted mouth.

Suddenly Leonard became aware that this hard-looking customer, while apparently intent only on getting his cigarette to draw, was whispering to him.

"Don't look around at me, kid," the young fellow muttered. "I'm the guy you're lookin' for, but we're bein' watched, so don't tip it. You stand there a couple o' minutes longer, an' then come on back in the alley, here, an' I'll be waitin' for you. Now don't turn around to talk to me an' spoil this; do what I tell you."

"What's the meaning of all this?" Leonard whispered back, without turning his head. "What do you know about the——"

"Can it!" the young man admonished him. "I don't know nothin' about nothin'. I steer you to the main squeeze, see? Now walk back up the alley after a minute or two, an' I'll meet you."

A patrolman sauntered by, and Leonard was minded to enlist his help, but smothered the impulse, and, with his hand on the revolver in his overcoat pocket, faced about resolutely and walked firmly through the dark, odorous alley. He had traversed half the length of the block when the young man who had accosted him reached out from the deeper blackness of a doorway, and, with a warning whisper, took him by the arm. To the accompaniment of a succession of admonitory shivers that chased up his spine, Leonard allowed his strange guide to draw him into a small areaway. Here the young fellow produced a small electric flash lamp that showed a narrow, bare stairway leading upward alongside a freight-elevator shaft. The young man beckoned and started to ascend the stairs.

"Just a minute, my friend," Leonard delayed. "What's the meaning of all this melodramatic hocus-pocus? And where is it you're taking me to?"

"If you want to bolt, there ain't nothin' stoppin' you," the young fellow reminded him disgustedly. "If you're goin' to be game, come on an' quit beefin'. I tell you I don't know what this game is; I'm only takin' you to the main squeeze."

Leonard hesitated for a moment longer, and then gave a reckless exclamation. "Go on," he said shortly. "I'm with you."

The guide led him on up the narrow stairs that twisted about the square of the elevator shaft to the third floor. He went a few steps down a narrow hallway and opened a small door. A dim square of light from the room marked the darkness of the passage. The guide stood to one side and nodded for Leonard to enter. Bob put his foot on the threshold, caught one photographic glimpse of a bare room with a small window in one wall, and then instinct or perhaps a slight noise behind him bade him dodge, and he felt the thud of a weapon on his shoulder. He sprang into the lighted room and faced about with drawn gun. Jennings, the detective from the Harmon Agency, was charging on him with an uplifted blackjack, and behind him came other figures. Leonard fired, and the big detective stumbled and crashed to the floor at his feet. Before he could pull the trigger again the other charging figures were upon him. His wrist was caught in a savage grip, twisted, and the revolver dropped from his fingers.

But the physical touch of the enemy's hand had suddenly galvanized his strength. He wrenched loose from the man who had grasped him, sprang backward out of reach of the sweep of a blackjack, snapped forward again under a man's striking fist, and grunted happily as his own knuckles smacked on the fellow's jaw, and the jar that he felt clear through his frame told him the blow had been powerful enough to remove one contestant from the battle, for a time at least.

But others were upon him on the instant, and from then on he fought instinctively, scarcely conscious of the beating that he received nor the punishment he meted out. He was on the floor with men piled on top of him, smothered, writhing, fighting for his legs; and then he was on his feet, dealing out blows that landed hard and true and scattered his assailants before him. Then he was downed again, and as he rolled and fought he felt his strength ebbing. One man had secured a clutch on his throat that he was unable to shake off, and his lungs seemed bursting from lack of air. Brilliant lights flashed before his eyes like bursting bombs, and each light seemed to transmit a spasm of frightful agony to his brain. Then one thrashing hand touched something cold and hard on the floor. It was the revolver that had been wrenched from his grasp. He clutched it desperately and pulled the trigger.

There was a roar, the hands at his throat loosened, and then came darkness.

Gasping desperately for air, Bob struggled to a sitting posture. He heard the thud of retreating feet on the stairway. Then his name was called.

"Yes," he gasped. "I'm here, all right, and ready for more. Who are you?"

"Thank God!" the voice whispered back. "I was afraid they'd done for you. It's Arnold, Bob. Where are you?"

"That's what I'd like to know. What are you doing here?"

"I was afraid you'd do something desperate; I followed you, Bob. What's it all about?"

"Ask somebody that knows," Leonard mumbled. "Anybody with you?"

"No." The tiny flame from a lighted match flared and revealed Arnold's pale face. He looked about the room for a moment, and then knelt with an exclamation of horror.

The match sputtered and went out.

"It's that detective," Arnold's voice came through the darkness. "He's dead! Bob, you've murdered him!"

Leonard laughed shakily. "Murder? Is it murder to protect your life? He lured me here by a fake note and then had his gang of thugs ready to jump me. I defended my life, that's all."

"But can you prove that?"

"Prove it?"

"Yes. Bob, you don't seem to realize your position. You are suspected of being a thief, and here you have killed a man who fastened that suspicion on you. Bob, you're not the privileged son of the great Adrian Leonard any longer, but a suspected thief and the slayer of the man who brought you to book. I believe—I know—that you're innocent, but a court of law won't believe it. You've got to run for it, Bob."

"Run?"

"I mean it. If you want to save your neck, you've got to run, and run quick. It's the only way, Bob. I'll intercede with your father, and I'll do everything that mortal man can do to clear this thing up and prove that you're innocent. But you must give me time to do that, and you mustn't risk imprisonment and execution in the meantime. You've got to get out."

"Oh, come!" Leonard protested. "Nobody will believe that I murdered this chap in cold blood. It was self-defense, I tell you."

"I know it, and you know it," Arnold answered. "But you've been able all your life to square anything by telling people who you were. You can't square this that way. You wouldn't believe that Jackwell thought you a thief, nor that Miss Allison would go back on you, nor that your father would disown you. But all those things happened, whether you believed they would or not. And unless you get out and give me a chance to look into this thing thoroughly and clear it up, you'll be hung for the murder of this man. You will, I tell you! Bob, old boy, you're up against it hard!"

"Arnold, are you sure he's——"

"Dead? He's cold. You shot him square through the heart."

Leonard strangled a sob. "I'm not scared, but—but it's terrible to kill a man. He came for me, and I——"

"You did the right thing. But you've got to run for it, Bob."

"But where? I haven't any money with me, and——"

"I've got a couple of hundred you can have. The *Altrock's* sailing for Alaska at midnight. I know the purser on her, and he'll fix you up. I can get him to leave your name off the passenger list. Go on her and settle up North there somewhere. Let me hear from you, and I'll do all I can to square things."

Leonard struggled dizzily to his feet.

"By George, but you are a man!" he said huskily, finding Arnold's hand in the dark and wringing it hard. "It's all up to you. I'll do whatever you say."

"I'll take you to the boat. We'll have to leave this fellow for his friends to look after. Come on!"

CHAPTER IV.

The steamer *Altrock* was three days out from Seattle, plunging down Icy Strait against a small gale that swept in from the open Pacific but forty miles distant, and through a smother of snow that made objects the length of the vessel distant quite invisible. But Leonard, known to his fellow passengers as Thomas Thurman, sat alone in the smoking room aft, staring out into the stormy night with miserable, unseeing eyes.

A young woman wrapped to her chin in a heavy fur cloak, and with a fox fur cap settled firmly over her golden curls, came down one of the deserted passageways, nodded to Leonard, and stepped out on deck. She was a Miss Marvin, going North to join her father, a salmon-cannery operator. Leonard replied to her salutation with the slightest inclination of his head.

He hated all women, he told himself bitterly, and then got his cap and coat from his stateroom and followed her. He found her aft, crouched in the lee of the deck house. Her lips were parted, and her blue eyes shining.

"Don't you love it?" she called to him. "The feeling of power from the storm and sea? The unrestrained ruthlessness of it all?"

"It's like a woman to love the ruthlessness of it," he said bitterly.

"You don't approve of women?"

"I do not!"

The girl laughed. "I enjoy the savagery of the elements in their wild moments, but not the ungentlemanly cynicism of a peevish man. Good night, Mr. Thurman."

She stepped from the lee of the house to the starboard promenade. Leonard moved over to the port rail and bared his hot head to the sting of the shrieking wind. He tried to convince himself that he felt better for having been rude. But he did not; and, after roaming restlessly about the decks, he made his way down into the steerage.

It was jammed with men of a score of nationalities, Japanese and Chinese predominant, and they interested him. They were the floating riffraff of the world on their way North for the salmon fishing. The storm had not stopped the gambling games that the Japanese and Chinese had kept in continuous operation since leaving Seattle. They played on blankets stretched on the floor and ringed with candles.

The players made no attempt to conceal their excitement. Giant, bearded Russians; slim, hot-eyed Kanakas; swaggering Mexicans; heavy-faced Swedes, and nondescript young hooligans noisily invoked the aid of fortune, each in his own manner and language, and yet more noisily cursed the cards or the dice when they lost. They knelt about the blankets, tense, hands trembling, faces gleaming with perspiration. Here and there a first-cabin passenger stood back of the kneeling players and placed an occasional bet.

The second officer picked his way disgustedly aft through the polyglot litter and stopped beside Leonard.

"Bad lot this voyage," he said, with an inclusive wave of his hand. "Another cutting scrape a few minutes ago. Third this trip. Liable to be a general shindig down here before they're through."

"They look like they might make a sweet fight of it."

"Bad. Born mutineers, these dogs. Quit fighting each other in a minute and go for us if we try to interfere. Ought

never to let them start gambling. Best go above, sir. They don't love a man in a white collar."

Leonard laughed off the warning, and after a little time returned to the smoking room, where he found Captain Horner reclining wearily in an easy-chair. The bushy-browed, stocky old captain nodded to Bob.

"Stopped snowing, thank God!" he said. "I've been on that bridge for twenty-six hours, young man."

"Been in danger?" Bob asked.

"Ship's in danger from the minute she leaves the ways," the captain retorted shortly.

"I suppose you've been in some bad wrecks in your time?"

"Before I got my master's ticket."

"Not since?"

"I'm alive, ain't I?"

"Oh!"

"My first bad wreck as a skipper will be my last. Life's all right, but it ain't worth living with the death of helpless women and kids on your mind. I wish women and kids would stay ashore. Good night, sir."

Leonard peered out to find the clouds breaking and the high-tossed wave crests silvered here and there with moonlight. He settled himself deep in an easy-chair and gave up his mind to gloom while the ship plunged on, groaning in all her fabric with the pitch and roll and goad of her throbbing engines, like a living thing in pain.

Bob was dimly aware, as time went on, that the wind had died down and the sea was moderating. After two hours of gloomy retrospection, he rose to go to his stateroom. There came a dull, mighty, metal-rending crash from far down in the bowels of the vessel, and its motion ceased with stunning suddenness. Leonard was hurled to the floor and shunted, helpless and dazed, against the wall by a sharp list to starboard that piled all the loose furniture in the smoking room on top of him.

Working frantically, he extricated himself from the encumbering mass of shattered chairs and tables and got to his feet. He listened and could hear no sound throughout the ship. For the instant the quiet of the tomb—a prophetic quiet it was—prevailed. The great engines were still, and this was the most terrifying thing of all. The steel heart of the ship had stopped its rhythmic beat, and she lay powerless, quiet, dead; a corpse of wood and metal.

Quiet she lay for the long, long moment while the deathlike silence endured; then she moved, ever so slightly, and the movement was more terrifying than the stillness had been. She was listed far over to starboard, and the slight movement was a farther list and a little downward settling—a slow, lifeless slumping, like the impotent loll of an unlodged corpse on an incline.

The first sound that Leonard was conscious of was the rapid patter of boots on the deck above. Then a hoarse order was bawled from the wheelhouse and echoed aft.

Came a confused buzz of voices from the staterooms, and then a woman's shrill scream seemed to startle the entire ship to terror-crazed life. From room after room came screams and curses, and over all sounded the animal-like, concerted growling from the scourings in the steerage below. The boat deck resounded to the clump of running feet. The passageways were filling with half-clad men and women. Stewards and officers hurried through the ship, pounding on stateroom doors and ordering every one on deck. And with a swiftly increasing, lifeless momentum, the doomed vessel lurched and settled.

A steward rushed past Leonard, his face transfigured with horror, and snatched an emergency ax from its socket on the wall.

"She's buckled!" he screeched. "She's buckled, and some of the stateroom

doors are stuck. They'll drown like rats! Like rats!"

He dashed back into the passageway and attacked the jammed doors with maniacal fury.

Leonard caught a hurrying officer by the arm. "What is it?" he shot at him. "How long will she float?"

"Reef!" the officer snapped back. "Going fast! Get on deck!"

Less than a minute had elapsed since the ship struck. Leonard stepped on deck, and realized for the first time the full horror of the situation when he saw how far she had sunk in that space of time. The starboard rail of the main deck was already awash in the short swells.

Only a scanty film of broken scud dimmed the moonlight, and the scene on deck was weirdly visible. From somewhere a hoarse voice bawled monotonously: "Women and children! Stand back, there! Get back! Women and children, women and children!"

From the main deck forward came a steady volley of threatening profanity rising above the angry growl that rose from the steerage. Leonard stepped forward and looked down. The first mate stood before the steerage companionway with a revolver in each hand, earnestly promising death to the first man who showed his head on deck. On the bridge, old Captain Horner stood, gripping the rail and watching the mate.

"Hold 'em, Mr. Carter!" he called. "Another minute or two now. Hold 'em! Hell to pay if they get up before the women are gone. Hold 'em!"

The mate's revolver roared, and his hard voice followed on the heels of the report: "Back in there, you dogs! You'll get your chance if you wait; but I'll kill you as fast as you come if you show now. And you want some, huh?"

Both guns spoke, not once but many times. There was a moment's hush, and then the steerage belched forth its danger. A dark figure shot up out of the companionway and grappled with the mate. On his heels came others, a tangled stream of insane brutes fighting for life, without sense of gallantry; obedient to no law but their own instinct to live. And as they boiled up out of the steerage, the ship lurched ominously and the main deck on which they fought was awash.

With a concerted howl of terror, they broke for the ladder to the upper deck and the boats, about which yet clustered many half-clad women and little children. Leonard had seen one young mother with a baby in arms go up on the boat deck but a moment before, and a swift vision of horror of those brutes unchecked among the helpless women still left aboard photographed itself on his brain. He rushed to the ladder just in time to greet the first man up—a wild-eyed, heavy-bearded fisherman—and him he sent sprawling backward to splash into the deepening wash on the main deck below. In his fall he cleared the ladder of those who were swarming up behind him, and this gave Leonard a moment's respite.

He felt a hand on his shoulder, and turned to see Captain Horner standing beside him. The captain handed him a revolver and bowed slightly.

"Thank you," he said crisply. "Another minute, and the women will all be gone. Will you hold them?"

"You bet I will."

"Good!"

The captain turned and vanished toward the bridge. A head showed on the ladder and Leonard turned to his task. He clubbed the gun and battered the man who was scrambling up. The man relaxed and fell, but those behind held on, and three appeared where the one had been. Still loath to shoot, Leonard fought them back with the butt of his revolver. But others clambered over their backs and squirmed onto the deck. They clawed desperately at his feet and legs for a

hold, and a sharp, warm pain in his left thigh warned him that a knife was in use. He freed himself with a desperate wrench and leaped back a step. As he did so, heads appeared over the rail to the left of the ladder. A blade of fire stabbed the dark near one of these heads, and he felt the swish of a bullet past his ear. He reversed his gun and fired. One of the heads by the rail disappeared, but figures were clambering over now, and others were on the deck by the ladder.

"Hold 'em!" the captain's voice from the bridge behind implored. "For God's sake hold 'em!"

Leonard emptied his gun into the onrushing mob as fast as he could pull the trigger; and then, with a bellow of rage, flung it from him and sprang to meet the charge unarmed. The first two men fell before his flailing fists, but others were on him instantly. Some slipped by him and gained the ladder to the boat deck; and they met Captain Horner himself, a whirlwind of flying fists and heavy-booted feet.

"Hold 'em!" the old sailor roared, with the ring of active battle in his voice. "Hold 'em, boy!"

Leonard was fought to his knees, regained his feet, gave ground slowly, was crushed to his knees again, and, with a despairing groan, felt his strength give under the ever-increasing press, and went prone on the deck while the mob streamed over him. But as his resistance gave, he heard the call from the boat deck, "Women and children all away, sir!" and he smothered his head in his arms to escape the stamping feet of the maddened men with a glad sob of relief. When the first crush had passed over him, he got to his feet and hurried up to the bridge. What he saw aft on the boat deck, weird and terrible in the dim moonlight, forced an exclamation of thanks from him for the fight he had put up.

There remained four boats to care for the male passengers and those of the crew still left aboard. In addition, there were life rafts to support any who could not go into the boats. Low in the water as the ship was, the crew, unimpeded, could have safely launched the boats and rafts in time. But they were not unimpeded. The frantic horde from the steerage was committing suicide in a savage effort to live. By every boat and raft men fought like hunger-crazed wolves over a fresh kill, and while they fought, each to maintain his own life, their chance for life vanished.

For a little, the crew fought to stem the tide and maintain discipline; then caught the spirit of panic and added themselves to the mad jam of brutal life so certainly working its own destruction.

Not one of the four boats reached the water in safety. Leonard saw one being lowered away, packed with layer on layer of wildly fighting men, and when it was halfway to the water, the bow tackle was let run and the boat upended and spilled its mad freight into the sea. It hung so for a moment, was let go, and smashed to bits against the iron side of the vessel. Another was swamped the moment it touched the water. One was overturned by the men who clutched its side when it was lowered already too full to live; and yet another, lowered away with no one in command and no one at the oars, rode a swell safely, then slammed against the ship, for there was no one to fend off, and sank. Dark forms sprang one by one from the boat deck to join the struggling, suicidal throng that ringed the ship with despairing cries.

A steward rushed up from the promenade deck, adjusting a life belt as he ran.

"Stateroom doors jammed!" he yelled to Captain Horner, standing on the bridge near Leonard. "Broke in

all I could." He waved his hand and leaped far out from the side.

There was a sudden, ominous hush. The voices from around about in the water came faintly to the ears of the two men on the bridge. The gurgle and swash of the water in the hold of the sinking vessel was audible.

Captain Horner gripped Leonard's arm hard. "Jump!" he ordered. "You've got sand, lad. Thank you. Good-by."

He seized a lantern and an ax and started to descend to the promenade deck, now awash. He went without ado, without bluster or show of any emotion; went like a man going peacefully to the execution of any commonplace, habitual task. Leonard was swept with admiration, and then envy. And then, swiftly following, came exaltation.

This was the big, honorable way out of it all. Better to die gloriously than live meanly. The stateroom doors were jammed. There might yet be work for a man in that swirling inferno of icy water and wreckage below. The old captain was going to it as calmly as a man going to his dinner. Bob laughed, grabbed up a lantern, and followed him down the ladder to the flooded deck.

The captain, up to his waist in water, saw him and shouted a warning. "Go back!" he called. "Jump while you've the chance. It may be a matter of seconds now."

Leonard dropped beside him, holding the lantern aloft as he splashed into the icy water to his waist.

"People penned in there?" he shouted.

"Maybe; not likely. Swim for it, boy!"

"Not on your life. I'm with you, sir."

The old captain raised his lantern and held it for an instant before Leonard's face.

"You're young to choose this," he said. "Come!"

He plunged into the dark smoking room, and Leonard followed, half swimming, half walking. The water was up to his armpits.

He forged his way thus through floating wreckage that cut and bruised him, and reached the first passageway lined with staterooms. Ahead of him, the captain stopped before a closed door and began battering at it with his ax. It gave, and the captain disappeared for a moment. When he emerged from the dark compartment, he bore a woman on his shoulder, a woman wrapped in a heavy fur cloak and with a heavy mass of golden hair cascading over her shoulders and floating on the dark water as the old man carried her out. In the glow of the lantern he held up, Leonard saw that it was Miss Marvin. She was conscious and composed.

"Take her!" the captain shouted. "She can't make it alone. You've both got a chance yet. Go!"

Leonard took the girl in his arms and turned to fight his way out. The water was up to his neck, and the surges as the ship lurched washed over his head. He lost his feet and began to swim. He lost the lantern when his feet were swept from under him, and battled in the dark, uncertain of his direction.

"You can't do it," the girl spoke in his ear, in a strangled voice, as they regained the surface. "Not both. I'm —killing you. Let me—go!"

Bob's head struck hard against a floating bit of wreckage, and he went under again, stunned for the instant, but able to keep his grasp on the girl. Then he felt a strong hand on his shoulder, and when he came to the surface the captain was beside him, holding his lantern free from the flood and aiding them both on.

"Can't—do any more—here," the captain gasped. "This way. Ah!"

Leonard, still clutching the girl in his arms, felt himself pulled through a narrow aperture that was the wreck of a

door and emerged into the moonlight. Swimming as best he might, and aided on by the captain, he reached the ladder to the bridge and clambered up. The captain ahead of him was ready with two life belts. When Leonard stepped on the bridge, he was conscious of a mighty shivering of the sinking vessel, accompanied by a succession of splintering crashes from below. Landsman though he was, he recognized the final convulsion of disintegration.

"Swim for it!" the captain shouted, as he draped the life belts over them. "If she sucks you down, hang onto the girl. Go!"

Half dragging Miss Marvin, Leonard sprang to the edge of the bridge. The dark swells, splattered with silver patches of moonlight, ran very near.

"Hang tight!" Leonard shouted. "Jump when I do. Now!"

Together, with his arm about her waist, they leaped, and together they splashed into the crest of a swell. Drenched as he was, the chill of the icy water bit into Leonard's heart with murderous teeth as he went under. Involuntarily he gasped before coming to the surface, and came up half strangled with the salt water he had swallowed. The girl had tightened her arms about his neck as they sank, but when they came to the surface together she voluntarily released her clutch and clasped his life belt at the back with one hand.

"All right," she gasped faintly. "I—w-won't choke you. I know."

Leonard dashed the water from his eyes, glanced around at the vessel to get his direction, and then, burying his face, swam with fierce, lunging strokes that gained distance swiftly in spite of the impediment of the cumbersome belt and the girl who clung to it. He swam so till the clamor of his lungs for air became undeniable and his weary limbs fought ineffectually, then stopped and straightened up in his belt to gulp breath. He looked back. Only the boat deck and bridge of the vessel were visible above the waves. Suddenly the moon shone clear through a large and jagged tear in the thin film of flying scud overhead, and its brilliant rays fell upon the lone man on the bridge like a benediction.

Miss Marvin gave a cry: "Oh! Isn't —isn't he coming?"

Leonard could not answer. In spite of the deadening chill, the danger, the strangeness of it all, a sob rose in his throat and his eyes filled. The old man's laconic boast that his first wreck would be his last had been no idle one. He stood now on the sinking bridge, bathed in the prophetic radiance of the kindly moon, his white head bared to its rays, very straight, very still, waiting.

All forgetful of his own danger, of his duty to the girl, of the dreaded suction that would follow the engulfment of the ship, Leonard rested in his life belt, crying like a child, and watched. Suddenly the old sailor lifted his head and stared upward. It seemed to Leonard that he could see the man smiling into the face of the moon that had shed the spotlight of heaven full on his last heroic performance on the theater of earth.

The stern of the vessel lifted slightly, and she slid forward and down, slowly at first, but with gathering momentum like a ship leaving the ways. It was the end! The bridge on which the captain stood slid smoothly into the waves, and as they rushed to his knees the old sailor touched his raised forehead as if in salute to whatever it may have been that his fixed eyes saw in the heavens toward which they were turned. The top of a swell swirled about his waist. The top of the next one reached his neck. Straining his tear-dimmed eyes, Leonard saw on the moon-silvered crest an uplifted face; a hand touching the forehead in salute. The stern heaved higher suddenly, shot straight down, and was gone from sight.

CHAPTER V.

With the disappearance of the ship, Leonard came to a sudden realization of his own danger. With a cry to the girl to hold tight, he laid himself out in the water and started to swim again, but he was too late. He felt himself drawn back and downward by an irresistible force, and had just time to turn and clasp Miss Marvin tight in his arms before the suction snapped him under the waves.

It was as though the ship, on sinking, had become a powerful magnet to draw all within a certain radius to its last resting place. Down, down, down they went, whirled over and over, shot first one way and then the other by the conflicting currents of the suction, locked tight in each other's arms, stunned by the terrible power of the force that sported with them, mercifully half unconscious from the moment of their immersion. Leonard dimly sensed the loosening of Miss Marvin's arms when she fainted away, and instinctively tightened his own grasp of her.

Sense of time ceased. It seemed to Leonard that he had been the victim of this hell of clutching water always. The wreck, all his life previous to that, seemed but a vague, far-away dream. The agony of tortured lungs possessed him for he knew not how long, and then an ointment of indolent peace eased the pain. Confused and stunned and near to death as he was, he heeded the silent voice of the subconscious mind warning him that this respite of pleasant lassitude was the herald of oblivion, and he crushed the girl to him and fought to make himself feel, to continue his experience of agony.

In that chaotic tangle of mighty, conflicting currents, there was no sense of direction, of up nor down. Leonard still vaguely knew that he was being tossed hither and thither, drawn first this way and then shot that. But whether he was a foot or a mile from the surface he could not tell, nor whether the currents were casting him up or dragging him down. And so he tossed on the surface for a brief space of time without realizing that he was free from the infernal welter of the depths, free to breathe life back into his body and take up anew the agonizing battle for its continuance.

As full consciousness came back to him with the great drafts of air that he sucked into his lungs, he turned his attention to the girl. She was unconscious, and lolled in the circle of her life belt as though dead. Leonard made sure that she was breathing, however, and started aimlessly to swim with her. After a few strokes, he stopped. His brain was clearing, and the full horror of their position coming home to him.

Apparently they were alone in this tumbling waste of water, and beyond the knowledge that they were somewhere along the Alaska coast, he had no idea of their whereabouts, the direction of land, or the distance to it. To be sure, some boats had been safely launched and could be at no great distance.

To Leonard, being tossed about like an inanimate fragment of wreckage, it seemed that they might as well be on the other side of the world. He could make no intelligent search for any of them, and the chance that one would accidentally discover him was slight. He reflected that each boat had probably been lowered with its full complement of passengers and crew and that even were he found he might not be cared for. There must be many such as he floating near, and the boats, already loaded to capacity, could offer no hope to the unfortunate ones in the water.

But there was Miss Marvin. If he could locate a boat, the crew would not surely refuse to take a woman. How brave she had been! He took her cold, white face in his hands, pressed her

cheek to his, and crooned his sympathy. He could see her features dimly, and she appeared strangely, weirdly beautiful to him, so white and still and helpless with her flame of golden hair undulating in the swash about them.

The masculine instinct for protection woke in him and goaded him to new life and effort. Resentment against the elements, the fortune that had tortured her so cruelly and threatened her life, set his sluggish blood flowing. She should not be permitted to die! He vowed that in a frenzy of determination.

Some of the boats were surely in calling distance. He lifted his head and shouted at the top of his lungs, shouted again and again, screaming out over the waves into the mystery of the night that a woman was dying. Then he listened intently. It seemed to him that he could hear the murmur of many faint cries, but he could not be sure. Perhaps other unfortunates begging help for themselves of the sea and the night. He shouted again and yet again, shrieked out the plight of the still, white woman in his arms.

And when his brain had been driven to the gates of madness by the smothering sense of impotence, he saw a tiny light on the top of a swell near by. For an instant he ceased his shouting and listened. He was not mistaken. He heard the mumble of many voices and the clack of oars, and then the light appeared to him again as the boat rose from the trough of the sea.

And now hope gave wings to the voice that bore the message of a woman's peril. The boat came slowly nearer, it was not fifty yards away, and Leonard swam frantically toward it, towing the girl. He could see that it was one of the lifeboats and low in the water with its excess of human freight. He heard loud voices, and, thinking they were calling to him, shouted back as he swam. The boat was less than thirty yards distant now. His breath was gone from his shouting and the convulsive effort of that short swim, and he rested, waiting to be picked up.

But the light in the bow swung from him.

"There's another one over there," he heard a man in the boat yell. "Pull! He'll upset us if we get near him. Pull!"

"There's a woman here!" Leonard shouted, as calmly as he could, realizing that any evidence of excitement might scare them away. "I won't upset you. I don't want aboard. But there's a woman here, I tell you. For God's sake come and get her!"

The creak of oars ceased and the boat stopped.

"We're full up," a surly voice came back.

"One woman won't sink you," Leonard sobbed. "I don't ask you to take me, but I do ask you not to leave a woman here to freeze when you can save her."

"I reckon we can kind o' manufacture room for another woman, gentlemen," a slow, heavy voice rumbled.

"But he'll upset us if we get near," the man who had spoken first insisted.

"I'll swim away as you come near," Leonard assured him. "She's in a life belt. Come and get her and I'll swim away while you're picking her up."

"Sounds like a man talkin'," the heavy voice boomed approvingly. "We'll just play his tip. Swing her round, boys, and we'll pick the lady up."

"He'll sink us," the first man screamed. "We haven't got room. No! I'll kill you first! I'll——"

The spang of a revolver cut the tirade short, and the report of the gun was followed by an ominous splash. The heavy voice of the man who had advocated picking the girl up terminated the instant of silence; drawling, pleasant, and yet laden with deadly threat.

"I had to do it, ladies and gentle-

men. He stood up and tried to jump for me with some manner o' weapon. A struggle in this boat now would go hard on the innocent bystanders. Unfortunately for him, the part o' my wardrobe that I always put on first is my guns. Too bad! Well, he wanted the boat lighter, an' he got his wish. Now, you sailor boys, just siwash this craft around an' head for the young gent bellerin' for help for his lady friend. I said it! I stand self-elected as temporary chief commander and big cheese of this bunch for the present. I ain't no sailor, but tight pinches are a hobby o' mine; almost a profession. I reckon this is a tight pinch, an' from now on the man among you that don't do what I say an' do it quick will lighten this boat some more! Get busy, now!"

The oars dipped again, the prow of the boat swung around and headed toward Leonard. He guided the men by shouts, and when they were within a few yards of him and coming on slowly, he reverently kissed the girl he had fought for, and, in obedience to his promise, started to swim away. He had taken but a few strokes when the man who had championed him called a halt.

Leonard turned and looked back. They were just hauling Miss Marvin into the boat over the stern. He noted that the boat was literally packed with men and women and dangerously low in the water. In the stern sat a man holding a lantern up close to his face and superintending the rescue of the girl. He was a huge fellow with crisp, curly, iron-gray hair cut close, and a big-featured, weather-beaten face marked by a habitual, tolerant, partly contemptuous grin. A long-barreled forty-four dangled loosely from one great paw.

He held the lantern higher after Miss Marvin was safe aboard, and peered out over the water at Leonard.

"Come here, son!" he ordered, and wonderingly Bob swam to the side of the boat.

The big fellow nodded to the men who had drawn Miss Marvin aboard. "Hoist him in!" he instructed them.

"No," Leonard refused firmly. "You're overloaded now. I'd only make it more dangerous."

The big man shook his head. "This boat's lighter by a couple o' hundred pounds than it was a minute ago. Your wife won't thank you for savin' her if you go an' throw yourself away."

"She's not my wife. Just met her on the boat."

"So?" the big man drawled. "Now you plumb got to come. You assay too darn high in manhood to be chucked on the Big Dump without bein' milled, youngster. Haul him in, boys!"

Too weak to protest further, Leonard was hauled in, and slumped into the bottom of the boat at the feet of his rescuer and alongside Miss Marvin.

"Now hike for somewhere, you boys that know sailorizin' an' about where you're at," the self-elected commander ordered pleasantly, and, after a murmured consultation, the crew dipped their oars and headed the boat south.

"Bad mess, ain't it?" the big fellow drawled pleasantly, arranging Leonard's head against one knee and propping Miss Marvin on the other. "Hell on the women," he went on, lowering his voice. "I'm Dave Burke, minin' man mostly, but temporary sea captain. Here!" He surreptitiously slipped Bob a half-pint flask of whisky. "Take a good swig an' then give your girl a mite to put life in her."

Leonard did as he was bid. Miss Marvin coughed weakly and opened her eyes as the strong liquor shocked her back to life.

'It's all right, little girl," Leonard soothed her gently. "We're safe."

She nodded dazedly, staring up into his eyes and then for the first time be-

gan to cry. "I'm so c-c-cold," she wept, and crept into his arms like a sick child.

"I done give away all my clothes but my shirt an' pants," Burke said regretfully. "Hug her tight, kid, an' it'll help some. We ain't so awful far from shore here, so them that ought to know tell me. Get there in a few hours, anyhow. Bad mess!"

"Good many drowned, I guess," Bob said dully.

Burke shrugged. "Death ain't bad. Seen a lot of it come quick like this. Man does plumb hate to see it come tough like this for women, though, don't he? But death ain't nothin' if you look at it right. Now that fat pup I had to shoot back there—I never did see a man want to live as bad as he did. What for, you reckon? Man that scared to die couldn't had much fun livin'. Funny thing, them that's so scared o' dyin' most generally does in a tight pinch like this. Noticed it often. Cheer up, there, everybody. Don't be so glum. Bring your womenfolks out for a fine boat ride in the moonlight an' you don't show no appreciation!"

He nudged Leonard and went on, in a whisper: "Jolly 'em along. Can't help by bein' sour-mouthed about it. Hell on 'em, ain't it? No officer come in this boat, an' we had a bad time till I plugged that fat coward. We'll keep 'em jollied. I can't sing, but I'm goin' to."

He raised his heavy voice in an old boating song. It was true that he couldn't sing, and the effect was so irresistibly ludicrous that some of the half-frozen women in the boat laughed in spite of themselves.

And so the crowded boat labored on over the tumbling swells while Burke tirelessly bawled old songs and cracked rough jokes at which he laughed heartily. His manufactured buoyancy fought off despair and at least gave hope to the sufferers. With the first glint of morning came a dense, white fog that bit to the marrow, and big Dave Burke, clad only in drenched undershirt and trousers, shivered and joked the more.

The rest of the people in the boat had ceased even their moaning. Strong as he was, Leonard had sunk into a stupor of misery from the effects of the exposure. Now and then he roused himself to force a little whisky on the girl in his arms. Her cheeks were flushed with fever, and she muttered softly, unintelligibly as she slept on his breast.

For an hour they forged monotonously on through the thick, penetrating fog —so thick that when they sighted land it was scarce three boat lengths ahead. Some cheered feebly as the sailors sent the boat up on the bowlder-strewn beach with willing strokes, but few were able to stand.

Burke hopped out and did the major portion of carrying the chilled, helpless women and men ashore. Leonard tried to rise, but found that his cramped limbs would not support him. With a booming laugh, Burke took him on one shoulder and Miss Marvin on the other and deposited them together on the beach. Under his direction, the sailors gathered a great heap of dead wood from the forest, and when the question of dry matches came up Burke produced from his trousers pocket a little, cylindrical case wrapped carefully in oiled silk.

"Never catch an old jungle rat like me napping," he boasted loudly. "Keep my guns handy an' my matches dry, no matter how I travel."

In the warmth of the roaring fire he soon had going, most of the wretched refugees recovered their spirits. Three of the women were seriously ill from the effects of the exposure, however, and these Burke tended as best he could, giving them hot broth made from the tinned beef stored in the lifeboat and brewed in a baling can.

The coaxing warmth of the flames

drew Miss Marvin from her feverish stupor. Sitting by her on a steaming overcoat that Burke had allotted them, Leonard told her of the events of the night that she could not remember. When he had done, she impulsively took his hand.

"You were brave," she said, with a catch in her voice. "So brave! I do thank you."

Leonard laughed ruefully. "Last expression of opinion I heard from you was a—ah—peevish cynic, wasn't it?"

The girl blushed. "And the last I heard from you was a condemnation of all women," she retorted. "Why risk yourself to prolong the life of one of the detestable creatures?"

The bitterness of remembrance suddenly distorted Bob's face. "Risk myself!" he exclaimed. "Don't feel indebted to me for that. Wah! I couldn't even succeed in committing decent suicide. My intentions were good as usual and with the usual result. I meant to go down with Captain Horner and get out from under it all in a heroic blaze of glory, and here I am alive and little the worse for wear. Ah, pardon! Melodramatic bosh, I know. I seem to be irresistibly impelled to vent my grouch on you."

The girl nodded. "You're in trouble," she said gently. "I knew it the first time I saw you, when you came down to the table the first day out. Perhaps you feel impelled to vent your grouch on me because I tried to give you the opportunity to do so."

"You tried——"

"Admitted shamelessly. You seemed so—so hurt that I felt 'irresistibly impelled' to try and help you some way."

"Oh!" Leonard grunted ungraciously. "Guess I have had my heart on my sleeve lately."

"You're too fine a man to sneak out from under it 'in a heroic blaze of glory,'" she said earnestly. "If you weren't, I wouldn't be alive. Now fight for yourself as you fought for me."

Leonard stared at her queerly. "You know I'd like to be good friends with you," he said suddenly. "If I was sure you wouldn't try to get me to make love to you."

The girl flushed and bit her lip. "You make it rather difficult," she said, in a strained voice. "I can't very well snub the man who saved my life, no matter what he may say."

"Oh, I know," Bob grumbled. "I beg your pardon, as usual. I've been bitten, and it hurts. And I'm just beast enough to want to pass it along—use my own teeth on anybody that gets in reach of them."

Miss Marvin's eyes narrowed as she looked at him, and a cold note crept into her voice. "I see. I forgive you, of course, and I think we may safely be good friends."

Bob laughed. "Shake on that."

She gave him her hand and made no attempt to withdraw it when he held it overlong. But her eyes were a barrier to his glance, and Bob arose and wandered away to offer his services to the ever-busy Burke, depressed by the vague feeling of having carelessly lost something very precious.

CHAPTER VI.

About nine o'clock, the fog lifted, rolling up the mountain slopes like a gigantic scroll of fleece, disclosing first a panorama of dark-green steeps, and then the glory of varitinted rock, sinuous, gleaming glaciers, and last the outline of snow-draped peaks melting softly into the pale, turquoise sky.

In the fog they had entered the narrow mouth of a small, circular bay and made their camp a half mile from the point. They were somewhere on Chicagof Island, near the mouth of Cross Sound, the sailors thought. Burke requisitioned several shirts, and, piecing

them together for a signal flag, had them nailed to a tall hemlock near the point and told off a man to keep a fire burning on the sandspit near by. The fog still mantled the waters five or six miles offshore, and there were no boats to be seen in the clear space.

"Be found soon," Burke assured them all cheerfully. "Most likely some time to-day, and by to-morrow sure."

Miss Marvin was desperately anxious about her father. He was at Yakutat, where the *Altrock* was due that morning, with his gasoline schooner to meet her and take her with him on the seven hundred miles across the Pacific to his cannery at Chagnak, on the Aleutian chain, one hundred and fifty miles west of the western end of Kodiak Island.

"He'll know you're too pretty to drown," Burke assured her. "Why, if I was your daddy, I wouldn't worry a mite. I'd know that some nice-lookin' young fellow would save you, same as I'd know that if I left a fish in the room with a hungry cat I'd have to get somethin' else for my dinner."

The day advanced, clear and warm, and the last of the fog faded from the waters, but disclosed no rescue ship. The brilliant sun largely dissipated the terrors of the night, and the picnic spirit manifested itself as many of the party explored the beach, the adjacent forest, and some of the shallow mountain streams that wrangled down steep, rocky courses from the far-off glaciers to the bay.

A little after noon, Burke led Bob aside and expressed misgiving.

"Don't like the look o' this thing," he confided. "Them women roamin' loose around through the woods, mighty liable to make trouble if we ain't picked up soon."

"Trouble?"

"Some o' them sailors. Don't like to say nothin' for fear o' startin' just what I'm afraid of."

Bob stared. "Why, you don't think that they——"

"You bet I don't; I know. My boy, you throw men like them out into the woods this way with no authority over 'em, an' civilization peels off of 'em at the rate of about a thousand years a day. One or two o' them sailors never did get more'n two hops an' a hoot ahead of a ring-tailed ape, nohow—for instance, that rangy guy with the knife scar on his cheek, and that little, sawed-off Mexican rat. I've got the big fellow tending fire out on the point and keepin' a lookout there, an' I've got the little greaser busy on the beach puttin' together a lean-to for to-night. They're the two I'm scared of. Like as not, I'm a fool to worry about them, but it's as well to be on the safe side. So just keep your eye peeled."

Late in the afternoon, while reclining near the big beach fire, Bob unintentionally dozed, and woke with a terrifying premonition of evil. He had been asleep for more than an hour, and the brooding chill of twilight had settled in the valley. The deepening shadows had driven the explorers back to the protection of the fire, and brought a vivid remembrance of the terrors of the previous night. The men and women sat close to the fire and close to one another, silent, awed by the touch of mystery in the approach of night.

Bob searched the group for Miss Marvin, and when he failed to locate her, the instinctive terror that had wakened him increased.

"Up the beach toward the point the last I saw of her," one of the men answered his inquiry. "Burke went up that way a little bit ago."

Bob noted that the rat-faced Mexican Burke had mentioned was still busy near the fire, completing the lean-to; on the far point flamed the fire that the tall man with the knife scar on his cheek was tending. Bob forced himself to sit down again, and tried to rea-

son away his nameless fear; but in a short time he was strolling down the beach away from the fire. He fought back a blind impulse to run, but his pace quickened in spite of himself, and when he was halfway to the fire on the point he broke into a trot.

A single, sharp cry in a woman's voice from the dark forest to his right halted him. There was a crash of branches, a smothered curse, and again the shrill cry of a woman.

Bob turned and dashed heedlessly into the tangled underbrush of the dim forest, fighting his way through the impeding bushes and stinging devil club in the direction from which he judged the sounds to have come.

Stumbling over windfalls, scratched and torn by sharp branches and nettles, he emerged after a fifty-yard dash into a small, circular clearing free of underbrush and thickly carpeted with pine needles. The soft twilight that yet filtered through the interlocking branches overhead made objects in the clearing fairly visible. Miss Marvin was crouched against a tree staring into the brush on the far side of the clearing with eyes of fear. She screamed at sight of Bob, and then, recognizing him, rushed to him and clung to his arm.

"Who's that?" Burke's heavy voice came from the brush.

"Me," Bob cried. "Burke, where are you? What's the matter?"

"Plenty. Give us a hand here, will you?"

Wonderingly Bob loosed himself from the girl's grasp, penetrated the screen of alders and devil club, and peered down at Burke. The big fellow lay limp across the body of the lanky sailor—the sailor with the brand of a knife on his cheek. Bob knelt and raised Burke's massive head to his knee.

"Easy," Burke groaned. "Haul me out where it's lighter, will you? Find my gun. I clubbed him with the butt. I dropped it—right here."

Bob recovered the gun that lay near by, and noted that the sailor was quite dead.

"Haul me out—in the light," Burke requested jerkily. "Easy as you can."

"You're hurt?"

"Some might call it that," the big man retorted dryly. "Now take me. Easy, boy! Now! Ah, that's better! Like to be—where I can see."

He relaxed with a gasp on the soft pine-needle carpet in the clearing, and Bob knelt beside him.

"He got me," Burke said calmly. "Knife. I couldn't shoot 'cause he was wrastlin' with the girl an' I was scared o' hittin' her. I finished him, but he slit me before I got the job done. Ah!"

"Where is it, man? Can't we do something? Can't——"

"In my back. No use. I know when I'm got." He turned his head and grinned at Miss Marvin. "We showed him what was what, didn't we, little girl? There, don't bawl about it. No damage done. I'll be 'out' in a few minutes, an' I don't mind goin', not a mite. That's right, sis; hang onto my paw while I take the jump."

Miss Marvin knelt by him, sobbing, and stroked his big, rough hand.

"Take command, youngster," Burke said calmly. "The rest o' them custard-hearted males—no good. Watch that greaser."

"Let me see if I can't do something," Bob begged. "It may not be as bad as it——"

"I know. No use. Gone in—couple minutes. Ah!"

Bob choked back a sob. "Who shall I—notify?"

"Nobody. Been a lone duck. Got about—five hundred—my pocket. That's all. Use it—if you need it. If not—give it—some good guy—out o' luck."

He was silent for a half minute, lying with closed eyes and breathing heavily.

"Leave me here," he resumed suddenly. "In the woods. Always liked it. Well, I think I've played the game through square. I—— Ah! Here—I go. Good-by. Good——"

He sighed heavily and was silent. After a little, Bob rose and gently helped the girl to her feet.

"Nobody to care," she sobbed. "He just played the game square for the sake of the game and dropped out like this!"

She stepped back and faced Bob scornfully. "Does it make you ashamed?" she burst out. "Make his death worth something by learning from it how little you've been! He was alone and getting old, but he played the game with a smile for us all because he knew that for a man's way. And you, a young man, with your life ahead of you, sulk and nurse your trouble and talk of trying to get out from under it. Are you ashamed? Are you? Life hadn't even given him a friend to care when he died, but he lived to save us from death last night, and me from worse than death now. He didn't mind dying because he'd played the game, and he knew that playing the game was enough. Honor him by imitating his manhood! Play the game that he's been taken from!"

Bob gripped her hand and nodded. Together they turned and picked their way through the dark forest from the glade of death.

The dawn that ended a night of anxiety and sorrow revealed a small steamer nosing slowly into the bay, and in the wake of the steamer came a low-lying gasoline schooner that surged at full speed past the slower-going vessel and sped swiftly across the quiet waters of the bay toward the camp. In the bow of the flying schooner swayed a tall, gaunt, white-haired man of giant frame, with a marine glass trained on the party on the beach.

"It's daddy," Miss Marvin shrieked. "It's daddy in the *Aleut*. Oh, dad, dad!"

She rushed to the water's edge and waved her arms to the old man. He lowered the glass and waved back casually. The schooner rounded to fifty yards from the beach, the crew slid the gig from the stern, and the old man rowed ashore. He wore wrinkled corduroy trousers and a faded blue shirt. A nondescript felt hat was perched on the back of his white head.

"How, kitten?" he greeted his daughter whimsically as she leaped into his arms. "Now, now, don't go an' scratch me all up! That's right, bawl; bawl your head off. Um! Had a pretty tough time of it, hey, chicken?"

When she had had her cry out she called Bob and presented him to her father as Mr. Thurman, the name she knew him by. Old Marvin sized him up slowly with his keen, piercing gray eyes, and then crushed his hand in a mighty grip.

"My little girl tells me you saved her life, young man," he said. "Only a damn fool tries to express his thanks in words for a service that big. I ain't goin' to try. 'Scuse my cussin', honey. When the kitten's away the old tomcat will get to cussin', Mr. Thurman. When she leaves me it takes me about two months to get so's I can properly express myself, an' when she comes back it takes two months more to get my vocabulary tamed down so's I can speak without shockin' her. Now then, that steamer'll take care o' all the rest o' these people, Mr. Thurman, but you've got to come with me on the *Aleut* as my guest. I'll take you to any port you want to go to."

"I intended to stop at Cordova," Bob said. "But if that's out of your way just drop me any place. It makes no difference."

Marvin raised his brows questioningly.

"I don't know anything about this

country," Bob confessed. "Don't know one town from another. I want to go some place where I can get something to do."

Marvin eyed him appraisingly. "Just exactly what do you mean by 'something to do'?" he asked.

Bob shrugged. "Just that. I've got to get a job of some sort."

"You mean 'position,' don't you? You don't size up like a man lookin' for a job."

"I mean 'job.'"

"Oh! What can you do?"

Bob flushed. "A good many things that don't need to be done up in this country, I imagine. I'll do anything I can to—to earn my living."

"Know anything about a gasoline engine?"

"Indeed I do. I took second in the motor-boat race at—I—— Yes, sir. I know something about a gasoline engine."

"I need another engineer for one of my trap tenders. Hundred and fifty a month an' found. Want the job?"

Bob evaded the older man's keen gaze for a moment, and then met it squarly. "I do if the offer's still open after—after I've told you some things about myself that you don't know."

"Tell 'em," Marvin said briefly.

"My name's not Thurman," Bob said defiantly. "And I'm a fugitive from justice."

"So! Want to tell what you done?"

"I'm accused of—of murder."

"Guilty?"

"I am not. It was self-defense."

Marvin stroked his chin reflectively with his long, bony fingers. "I see. Assumin' that you tell the truth you're not a fugitive from justice, but from the injustice of the law. Got no use for a man that won't or can't defend himself. Anything else?"

"I'm accused of being a—thief."

"Guilty?"

"No!"

"That all?"

"My father has disowned me."

Marvin scratched his head thoughtfully. "This Bible fellow, Job, that they tell about, you seem to kindo have his time beat when it comes to troubles. I will admit that you don't recommend yourself real high."

Bob shrugged. "You needn't trouble to withdraw your offer. I'll just refuse it."

"Whoa now, hold on!" Marvin objected. "I ain't withdrawn nothin' yet. You look like a man, an' you talk like one, but you sure do daub yourself with an awful black brush. What about it, kitten? Is this young man O. K.?"

The girl frowned. "Don't tease," she said irritably. "You know he is, father."

"Reckon I do," Marvin admitted. "My boy, you can consider yourself hired as chief nurse to one of the ailin'-est, dog-gone engines in the North."

Bob hesitated. "If you're doing this just because you feel indebted to me for being able to help your daughter I don't want it," he said doggedly.

"You're hired!" Marvin snapped. "Hired! And I don't want any talk about it."

After the other survivors had departed aboard the rescue steamer, Bob saw to it that poor Dave Burke's last wish was carried out. A coffin of scrap lumber from the *Aleut* was nailed together, and they laid the mortal remains of the genial, brave soul to rest under the soft carpet of pine needles in the glade where he had laid down his life. They left no monument to mark the grave, but his memory was ineradicably stamped on three human hearts by gratitude.

The long swells of the great Pacific were a gorgeous welter of gold and copper from the rays of the low-hung sun when the *Aleut* emerged from Cross Sound and stood out to sea for her seven-hundred-mile run to the west-

ward. Bob sat alone on a rope coil in the stern of the little schooner, his mind struggling to readjust itself to harmonize with his suddenly altered station in life. He sat thus, pondering, while the sun sank from sight and the rising moon astern painted their wake with silver. Later Miss Marvin came to him and laid her hand on his shoulder.

"That was playing the game," she said softly. "To tell. Good night."

When she had gone worry vanished from Bob's mind. The future was mystery and the past a snarl of events that baffled his understanding. To play the game as each successive hour arranged it was enough. He would do that. He rose and went to his berth at peace.

CHAPTER VII.

The beginning of the salmon run in Northern waters was yet some three weeks away when they arrived at the Marvin cannery on the Aleutian coast, and the plant was practically deserted. Only the trap-driving gang was at work. They lived on the floating pile driver that was towed from one location to another as the long traps of piling and web were finished, and were seldom seen at the cannery. Bob was assigned to a fifty-foot gas schooner then used to gather and tow logs to the trap locations and shift the driver. Besides him on the boat there were a Swede skipper and a deck hand. These, with the crew of the *Aleut,* two watchmen, and a small force of carpenters, comprised the entire community quartered at the cannery. With the exception of Bob, these men were all quartered in one long, narrow bunk house near the cannery.

Bob had been assigned to a one-room shack several hundred yards distant. He took his meals with the rest, however, in the big cook shack. The Marvins lived in a five-room cottage in a clearing on the hillside well back from the plant. In two weeks he saw Miss Marvin only at a distance. To be sure he was at the cannery but little. When darkness overtook the little schooner at work some distance from home they dodged into the most convenient bay and slept aboard.

But he had been made to feel that his acceptance of a job as engineer for her father had altered their relationship, and, argue with himself as he might, he could not escape resentment. He was good enough to accept aid from when she was in danger, he told himself sulkily. Then he immediately hated himself for the thought, but the thought persisted.

After an absence of three days at the trap they returned to the cannery in the evening and tied up at the dock. They had eaten aboard, so Bob went straight to his shack. He had just finished cleaning up and stretched himself on his bunk to smoke when Marvin poked his head in at the door. The old man swung a chair beneath his legs, and crossed his arms on the back of it.

"How's the Rocky Point trap comin'?" he asked. "Got the lead drove yet?"

"Got that finished this morning. Worked on the heart this afternoon."

"Good! Can't work too fast now. Fish ought start runnin' in another ten days, anyhow. Well, how do you like it far's you've gone?"

"All right."

"Kindo lonesome right now. I look for the ship to be here in a week, though, with the cannery crew and the fishermen. Then you'll see some excitement. The Indians'll be trailin' in in a few days, too. No time to be lonesome then. So you're pretty well satisfied, huh?"

Bob nodded. "No complaint."

"Good! From what you told me I judge that life's handed you a pretty husky wallop recently, a bad knock-

out. It ain't real easy to get on your feet after you've been counted out once, an' jump back into the scrap as willin' as you were before you were floored. Nope. Most men that get a sure-'nough knock-out wallop once just sort of dangle around the edge of things after they get up, scared to death o' mixin' in again an' spendin' their time tellin' people how good they was before they got hurt. Does my heart good to see you buckle down to business without a whine. Yes, sir! Every whine when you're down is a slap at your own face." He took off his hat and ran his long fingers through his gray hair. "Reckon you been wonderin' why I ain't had you up to the house?" he said abruptly.

Bob flushed. "Not at all," he denied, with evident overemphasis. "I'm just——"

"Yes, you have," Marvin disputed him. "Been thinkin' that now you're one o' my hired men I don't consider you good enough to come to my house. Don't blame you for thinkin' that, but you think wrong. You're in love with Helen, ain't you?"

"Why—why, n-no," Bob stammered. "I—I'd never thought——"

"Well—you ought to be. She's a great girl."

Bob laughed confusedly. "I agree with you that she is; but really, Mr. Marvin, I've never——"

"I know. You would, though. Son, I've had a pile of trouble, one way and another, an' I don't want no more. Particularly I don't want no more for my little girl. I got a terrible wallopin' once, when I was about your age, I imagine. I'd made a hard, long fight of it, an' I was on the road to success with apparently nothin' to stop me. Helen's mother an' me we'd had a hard pull of it—the kitten had just come to us then to make us fight the harder—an' the reward was in sight for us. An' then a thievin' hound that I'd worked with an' helped an' trusted as I'd trust my own wife—he stabbed me in the back an' walked over me to take what was mine. He took it an' he kept it. I'd trusted him, an' the law didn't take account o' the promises that had passed between him an' me without witnesses.

"I went down an' out. I come up again, an' I come fightin', same as you're doin' now, my boy, but before I could fair get into the scrap again Helen's mother she—she got her call. Son, have you any idea what it is to love a woman; to have her share your hardships with you; to sweat blood at seein' her go without the fine things you know she's hankerin' for all the time; to slave like a dog for them things, an' almost get 'em, an' then look down at a white face some day an' know that she's gone forever an' that you'll never be able to do another thing for her? To look down at her an' know that no matter what you win from life you'll never be able to make her eyes shine by givin' it to her? To look at her an' know that never, so long as you live, will you be able to buy her a pretty dress or a gewgaw, or take her through a fine house an' tell her that it's her home? To look at her an' know that you can't never, never, never give her no more?

"I reckon not. You ain't got the mark of it on you. But I know what it is. I had Helen left, an' I started in again to get an' give to her. I've done about everything since but steal. Minin', contractin', timber, ordinary hard labor sometimes, an' at last this fishin'. I've kept her away at school most of the time, but I never had a chance to clean up an' give her the big things till I struck this salmon proposition. It's been a hard fight with the little capital I had to start with, but I've fought it through, until now I've got another crack at the big thing, an'

I've got somebody to give it to. Helen's mother she threw in with me an' took all the bitter, an' I never had a chance to give her any of the sweet. Never had the chance, boy! An' sometimes it seems like—like she was still livin' in the girl, an' that I've still got the chance to give to her by givin' to Helen; that I can still make her eyes shine by makin'—makin'—— Aw, hell!"

The old man's lips worked uncontrollably. He stepped to the door, blew his nose loudly, and stood for some time staring out into the gathering dark.

"I do get all worked up," he said apologetically as he resumed his seat. "I do for a fact. But you see now, son, why I just can't ever see my little girl have any trouble. You see, you saved her from drownin', an' that makes you more dangerous, so to speak, than you might be otherwise. And I don't want any love business between you an 'my girl, youngster. I like your style, but you say yourself that you're under a bad cloud, an' I want my baby to live in the sunshine always."

"I'm not a cad," Bob said simply.

"I know you're not. If you was you wouldn't be anywhere near here, not for long. An' all this talk may be a plumb lot of poppycock. I got no reason to think that Helen has any feelin' for you but natural gratitude, an' as long as you're in a mess I want to take good care that she don't acquire any! I'm mightily indebted to you, son. I owe you for my girl's life, an' I'm tellin' you all this so's you'll understand why I seem to treat you kindo shabby the way I been doin'."

"If you'd rather I left——" Bob began.

"Not a bit of it. You're doin' fine right where you are. You'll see a lot to interest you this summer after the run starts. That Rocky Point trap that they're drivin' now, for instance, be a wonderful sight when the fish get millin' in there. That location's what put me in the runnin', boy. Best trap site in Northern waters, bar none. I ain't had the capital before to use what fish I could get, but I scrimped and borrowed enough to fit the plant out this year so's I can take advantage of the catch of that trap. Boy, in three months from now I'm goin' to be rich, sure 'nough rich, an' it'll be largely owin' to that trap site. I been offered fifty thousan' for the rights to that trap, but she's worth a half a million to me in the next few years now that I'm prepared to take care o' the catch. The other three canners on the bay here sold out to the new trust this year, but not me! No, siree! I know what I got, an' them that's backin' this new company know, too, but they ain't willin' yet to pay my price for it."

"What is this new trust?" Bob asked. "I hear the men discussing it, but they don't seem to have any definite information."

"No more have I. Call it the Northern Fisheries Company, an' their agents, one way an' another, have bought up every cannery on this coast in the past year except mine an' one other away to the eastward. I don't know who the big wigs are back of it. Most o' the boys got kindo scared an' were glad to sell, but pshaw! I don't reckon a big company like that would sacrifice its profits just to squash one or two canners. Yuh reckon?"

"I shouldn't think so."

Marvin's trembling hands belied the assurance of his tone as he went on: "Naw! Why, they'd have to cut the whole market to hurt me, an' if they did that they'd lose fifty dollars to my one. They wouldn't do that. An' they can't get at me no other way, can they? Huh?"

"I don't see how."

Marvin rose suddenly and flung his clenched hands over his head. "They hadn't better try," he declared, trembling with suppressed fury. "I won't

have this took from me. If they try any funny business I'll find out who's back of it all, and——"

He spread the fingers of one outstretched hand, and flexed them slowly, suggestively.

"I'm ravin' again," he said, with a shamed laugh. "The strain gets on my nerves sometimes. Some o' them men that were around to buy us fellows out dropped a lot o' nasty hints about what would happen to us if we didn't sell. I know it was bluff, of course, but I've so near to got the big thing cinched that I'm a mite nervous. You—you don't reckon they could do anything, do you?"

Bob shook his head helplessly. "A whole library full of books could be written on what I don't know about such a situation," he admitted.

Marvin drew a deep breath and rose. "I do get nervous sometimes," he muttered. "Good night, youngster."

The next few days were busy ones for all. The Rocky Point trap was rushed to completion in expectation of the early arrival of the ship from Seattle with the crew, extra machinery, and supplies, and the beginning of the run. The trap consisted of a long "lead" of piling, driven at intervals of about six feet and running from the beach out into the sea for nearly a quarter of a mile. This was covered with wire netting. At the outer end were driven the hearts, pot, and spiller, a trap of web, and pile so contrived that salmon, striking the obstruction offered by the "lead," and turning seaward to find a way around the barrier, found their way easily into it and seldom out. The trap proper was about one hundred and fifty feet square, and on top of the piling that comprised it a walk not more than two feet wide was built. At one corner a tiny shanty was constructed to house the watchman. At low tide the outer end of the trap stood up from the water forty to fifty feet.

The Indian contingent arrived and pitched camp on the beach near the cannery. They came in sailboats, small gasoline craft, and canoes, some hundred and fifty strong. Their camp added a splash of picturesque color to the scene and a remarkable variety of odors to the atmosphere—all unpleasant.

Then one morning a full-rigged sailing ship slid into the bay, was picked up by a tug from the next cannery to Marvin's, three miles down the beach, towed thither, and brought to anchor.

Her deckload and rigging were jammed with cheering sailors and fishermen and shrilly chattering Orientals. In the afternoon the supply ships for the other two canneries in the bay arrived, and the hills echoed to the shouts of men released from the tedium of a long voyage, the insolent tooting of tugs, and the rattle of anchor chains.

And early the following morning the supply ship for the Marvin cannery, the three-masted bark *Minerva,* jammed with men and food and machinery, crept into the bay and came to anchor off the plant. All day long Marvin's boats plied back and forth between ship and dock, towing the lighter scows that bore the *Minerva's* cargo ashore. The cannery building rang with the sounds of the mechanics setting up the new machinery that had arrived in her; the beach and dock were alive with fishermen overhauling nets and boats, and above all sounded the shrill cries of the Orientals settling themselves in their separate quarters and preparing for their season's work.

The busy scene was vague in the soft light of late evening when the workers were startled by the boom of an explosion that seemed to come from out at sea. The first shock was followed by three others in quick succession. Bob's schooner, the *Sockeye,* had just towed in the last lighter and was being tied up for the night. He came up

from the engine room and stood on deck, listening curiously.

Then he heard his name called, and saw Marvin sprinting down the dock toward him, hatless and coatless.

"Cast off!" the old man shouted as he leaped from the dock to the deck. "Start her up, son! Hustle!"

Marvin himself took the wheel, while the deck hand cast off the lines and Bob started the engine. The boat described a short arc and shot away over the darkening waters of the bay. They rounded the point, and stood away along the shore to the westward. Old Marvin held the wheel, grim and silent, and Bob forbore to question him. The outline of the Rocky Point trap, looking like a monster centipede lying on its back on the surface, showed just ahead of them in the dim light. Bob noted it casually, rubbed his eyes suddenly, and stared intently. The intricate part of the trap—the hearts, pot, and spiller—were gone. Only the long lead remained. Marvin rushed into the bow and stared ahead as they drew nearer. At the end of the lead the surface of the water was littered with splintered piling and tangled web.

"Shut her off!" Marvin muttered in a stunned tone.

Bob stopped the engine, and returned to the deck. The boat was nosing in among the mass of wreckage at the end of the lead. Marvin stood looking at the floating ruin of his trap with an utterly bewildered air.

"They're goin' to do it," he said to Bob monotonously. "They good as told me they would if I didn't sell. I didn't believe 'em—but they're goin' to!"

He dropped to the deck, and buried his gray head in his arms. When he rose his face was transformed with a calmly terrible ferocity.

"I never killed, but I'm ready to now," he said flatly. "I'm going to fight like a wolf to save myself, but if I can't I'm goin' to kill. An' when I kill I'll get them that's back o' this. I don't want their poor hirelings that do the work. If they beat me let 'em look out! If they ruin me now, I'll kill, kill, kill—— Oh, I'm goin' crazy!"

"The watchmen on the trap!" Bob gasped, suddenly remembering them. "You suppose they—were killed?"

"They probably done it themselves. Oh, their pockets are lined with the price of one grand drunk! All right! Fight it is! I'll beat 'em yet. Where's the trap driver?"

"Miner's Bay."

"That's ten miles from here. Start her up, boy. We'll get the driver and tow her back to-night."

When the boat was under way, Bob came on deck again and found Marvin squatted on a rope coil in the stern.

"They ain't clever," the old man said hopefully. "If they had been they wouldn't o' blown that trap up till the fish struck in. The run's late this year, an' by forcin' the work I can get that trap repaired before they come. If they'd been clever they'd waited. It's war, boy, an' you can imagine how bitter it's goin' to be by the way they've started it."

Both were silent for a little. Then: "There's just one thing I know of that I do better than run a gasoline engine," Bob said hesitantly. "That one thing is fight. If this is war, as you say, I want you to know that I claim the honor of being the first enlisted man in the Marvin army. I'm with you!"

Marvin didn't answer for a time, and when he spoke his voice was shaky with feeling. "You're promoted. You're a captain or general or whatever you want to call yourself. I can trust you, an' men I can trust is what I need. Boy, we'll lick 'em yet!"

"I'll shake with you on that," Bob laughed, and the two men gripped hands.

CHAPTER VIII.

Bob was taken off the schooner and given charge of the work of repairing the trap. In turn with a stupid, faithful Swede, who had been with Marvin for years, and whose loyalty was beyond all question, he kept guard with a rifle for two days and nights until the work was completed.

And still the fish had not come.

Everything was in readiness at the cannery. The boats and nets had been overhauled, and the new machinery installed. A picked guard of twelve armed men, recruited from among the fight-loving fishermen, patrolled the plant night and day, and extra guards had been placed on all three of Marvin's traps.

"They seem to be layin' low," Marvin told Bob. "We'll give 'em a warm reception if they start anything again. I've had a look at one of the higher ups an' give him warnin'. He's head superintendent of all three of the trust plants here on the bay, an' he's his headquarters at the old Kraus cannery, the next one below here. I went over there this morning and had a look at him. I didn't learn the name he goes by, but I christened him with a string of new ones that he didn't seem to care for. He told me that if I ever set foot around the place again he'd have me shot, an' I returned the compliment."

"Oh, well, maybe they'll quit their funny work now they know we're prepared for them," Bob said consolingly.

Marvin shook his head. He spoke quietly, but his eyes were inflamed, and the glint of madness was in them. "If we beat 'em we'll beat 'em by fightin'," he declared. "I've been thinkin' since they blew up that trap, an' I understand some things that have been puzzlin' me. I know now why it was so almighty easy last winter for me to borrow the money to enlarge the plant. The N. F. people just gave me rope to hang myself with. I put up everything I had as security—cannery, trap sites, everything, an' them notes come due in January. If I don't get up a fair pack an' market it I'll be cleaned. What you get in this business you've got to grab in the six weeks that the run is on, an' if they can cripple me for that long so's I don't get my full pack up they've got me. No use tryin' to dodge facts."

"They haven't crippled us yet."

"No, an' if they do succeed in doin' it it'll be the sorriest winnin' they ever made. They'll pay blood for dollars if they bust me, son."

Marvin's reiteration of threats made Bob uneasy. It was patent that the old man was on the verge of madness and must be watched to prevent him doing something that would work him irreparable harm.

In the afternoon a Japanese boy brought Bob a note from Helen asking him to call. He found her pale and distraught.

"Dad's told me a little something, but not all," she said. "I want to know the whole truth."

"About what?"

"You know perfectly well. The Rocky Point trap was blown up, and I've seen men with rifles marching around the cannery for the last two days. Dad tries to laugh it off when I ask him about it, but I know that he's nearly insane with worry. It's something terrible, isn't it? I feel as though invisible hands were choking me! Tell me the truth."

Bob hesitated. "I—I don't know that I have the right to tell you anything about your father's business that he doesn't see fit to tell you himself. I think——"

"I don't care anything about the business!" Helen cried desperately. "It's dad that I'm worried about. He's changed so in the last few days, and

it frightens me. He's my father, Mr. Thurman—all I've got in the world—and don't you think it's my right to know just what troubles him, so that I can help? So that I can work intelligently to save my father for myself? I feel, some way, that it amounts to just that! It seems as though he were slipping away from me; almost as though he were—were dying hour by hour as I watch. And I can't help him because I don't know surely what the trouble is. Haven't I the right to know? Haven't you the right to tell me?"

"I believe I have," Bob said thoughtfully, and told her straightforwardly all he knew of the matter and of his conversation with Marvin.

"Just now I'm more afraid of what your father may do than I am of his enemies," he concluded. "He's so deadly bitter that—well, I'm worried."

Helen nodded miserably. "It isn't fair to me, is it? Oh, if I could only make him see that!"

A flicker of contempt passed over Bob's face.

"Not fair!" he echoed bitterly. "You don't know that whatever he does—however desperate it may be—will be done for you, do you? You don't even know that he's being consumed in the fire of his desire to acquire a fortune just for you!"

"Of course I know it!"

"Well?"

"Is it fair, then, for him to court his own destruction in my name?" she asked.

"He's simply fighting to get you what you want, isn't he?" retorted Bob. "Is it fair for you to blame him for trying desperately, with all his heart and soul, to gratify you? Fair!"

"Mr. Thurman, I love my father," Helen said, with clear rebuke. "Are you able to understand that? I love my father."

"You ought to. And if you do, it seems——"

"I didn't think you'd understand," she interrupted him. "I said that I loved my father. I do. If I could I'd destroy this whole business and all that may ever come of it rather than run the slightest risk of losing him. If I could only make him see that! Do you understand now, Mr. Thurman? You must have known a very bad or a very silly woman to feel and see things as you do."

Bob's face grew crimson from the sudden flame of shame that flared in him.

"Maybe that's it," he muttered.

He looked up after a moment with a pleading expression on his face. "I—I guess that's it," he said. "I—hope it is."

She met his questioning look with calm, sure eyes. "It is!"

Bob dropped his head, and fumbled with a paper weight on the table. "I'm glad," he said huskily. "I believe you. I've always thought of a woman as—as a bit—a bit—holy, I guess. When I think otherwise the world seems topsy-turvy, and—useless."

"And now about dad," Helen broke the silence, with an effort at lightness. "You watch him, won't you, Mr. Thurman? And I'll try to talk some sense into his blessed, old, silly head."

"I'll do what I can," Bob said dully, and rose to go. He met Helen's eyes, and suddenly trembled from head to foot. It seemed to him that he was possessed of an alien personality.

He forced himself away from her, and hurried blindly from the house. In the privacy of a little strip of bushes far down the hillside, he turned and looked back.

That evening the advance guard of the great run came in in scattered schools, and the camp hummed with activity. Power boats chugged in from

the westward, and reported the main body of fish, returning to their natal streams at nature's call after four years of life in the depths, to be but a few miles distant. The purse seiners and gill netters made their final preparations for participation in the great sea harvest. Late in the evening, Marvin and Bob, aboard the *Sockeye,* voyaged a few miles up the coast to see the run strike in. The sky was overcast, and the phosphorus very bright.

The salmon, swimming from one to twenty feet below the surface, left behind them long javelins of blue light with each successive dart. They came in schools of hundreds at first, then in thousands, and then in countless hundreds of thousands. As far as Bob could see from the deck of the schooner, the water was a shimmering plain of phosphorescence, and directly about the boat he gazed down bewildered into a dazzling tangle of shafts of light. The run had "struck in," and when the *Sockeye* stopped by the Rocky Point trap on the way home, the pot was aglow with the phosphorus stirred up by the salmon already imprisoned.

"I had a kind of a confidential chat with Helen this afternoon," Marvin said as they chugged up the dark bay. "She put the brakes on me pretty hard. Good thing, I reckon. I was slippin' fast toward the point of doin' somethin' mighty foolish, an' we need clear heads right now."

"I'm glad you see it that way," Bob said. "I think I ought to tell you; I'm in love with your daughter."

"Pshaw! Just find it out? I knew that all the time. Tell her?"

"No."

"Good! It may be all right; hope it is, 'cause I like you. We'll take that all up later, you an' me. If there's a way to get you clear of that murder mess I'll help you, an' then you can find out what the kitten thinks of you. But if you can't do her no good, son, an' have to leave, I don't want no unnecessary mournin' done when you go. So mum's the word for the present."

CHAPTER IX.

In the first light of early morning two great barges piled high with gleaming salmon from the Rocky Point trap were towed to the cannery dock, and the feverish fight to salvage a fortune from the run began in earnest.

On the cannery floor men with one-tined forks stood, hip deep in the slithering mess, pitching the fish one by one into the maw of the Iron Chinks, an intricate mechanism that automatically cleans and beheads and issues the salmon forth on a moving belt, for it's a quick trip to the cooking pots and the can. The interior of the long building was aglow with the flare from the furnaces and soldering pots, in the light of which the yellow faces of the Oriental workmen were weirdly visible. The fishermen, in their Columbia River boats, were towed away to the grounds, a long string of the small craft tied one behind the other, vociferously cheering the event of their first departure.

And through all the activity ran an undercurrent of suppressed excitement. The armed guard ceaselessly patrolled the plant, and none of the workmen, least of all the Orientals, were ignorant of the cause. The tension of expected violence imposed a nervous strain on all.

Bob was in charge of the entire guard, both at the cannery and on the traps. He had a small launch at his disposal, and cruised constantly back and forth from the traps to the plant.

He was, at one and the same time, happier than he had ever been in his life, and more keenly miserable. He was athrill with a spiritual ecstasy that was half awe of the mighty power and exquisite beauty of the love that possessed him. To thrill thus was living,

keener, stronger, finer than he had ever known save in the pale taste of vague yearnings.

And his soul was sick with a poignant misery more keen than he had ever been able to feel before. A thousand wild schemes for recovering his place in the world raced through his brain, and all came to smash on a dead body in a dark, bare room in Seattle, the body of Jennings, the detective. Should he go back and stand trial? He realized with a shudder how bad his flight would seem. He would stand half convicted by that before the trial began. Find witnesses perhaps to corroborate his story? He knew only of the man who had brought the fatal note to his apartments and the young thug who had guided him to the room of tragedy. Hunting them would be like searching the shores of the world for a certain grain of sand with no assurance that they could or would aid him if found.

His only hope was his Cousin Arnold. And this hope he nursed with fierce tenderness. Arnold would turn up something, he told himself; perhaps had already done so. He resolved to write to his cousin and mail the letter on the next boat that went to the eastward. He must, somehow, some way, clear his name!

He was seated on the face of the dock shortly after dinner when one of the N. F. gasoline schooners, inbound, plowed past only a little distance out in the bay. As it came opposite the dock a man emerged from the wheelhouse and lounged forward on deck. At sight of him Bob experienced in rapid succession all the emotions that have ever been supposed to invest one at sight of a ghost.

It was Jennings! It couldn't be, of course, because Jennings was dead; but it was. Bob tried to shout, and could not. He danced up and down on the dock, waving his arms wildly, and at last his voice came, shrill and trembling:

"Jennings! Jennings! Oh, Jennings!"

The very solid and overdressed ghost turned quickly and looked back. He seemed as startled as Bob, and for a moment gaped stupidly at the dancing figure on the dock. Then he turned and swiftly ducked from sight in the lee of the wheelhouse.

It was Jennings! He was alive! Forgetful of the ready launches in which he could have pursued the schooner, Bob leaped from the dock and raced after it down the bowlder-strewn beach, calling to Jennings.

The latter showed no disposition to respond, remaining hidden behind the wheelhouse, and after a quarter of a mile Bob stopped, breathless, and watched the vessel swerve in toward the next cannery, three miles distant.

Jennings was alive! The terrible, insurmountable barrier was a chimera —and had vanished. Bob turned and raced back up the rough beach, panting and murmuring over and over to himself the magic fact of Jennings' existence in the flesh. He darted up the path that led to the Marvin cottage, and without waiting to knock burst into the living room, breathless and disheveled. Helen rose with an exclamation of fright at sight of him.

"What is it?" she demanded fearfully. "What's the matter? Has dad——"

"No," Bob gasped. "Good—news. I didn't kill him! Do you hear? I—didn't kill him! I didn't! He's—alive!"

He dropped weakly into a chair, and buried his face in his arms on the table, shaken with dry sobs from the effect of the reaction.

"Didn't kill him?" Helen echoed. "Who? What? Tell me!"

"The man—I thought I—had killed," Bob sobbed. "The one I—told you of.

I'm not a murderer; I'm not a fugitive from justice. There's no charge hanging over me! He's alive! I saw him just now. He turned when I called. He's alive!"

Marvin entered the room, panting from a quick run up the hill from the cannery.

"What's wrong?" he asked. "I saw Thurman scootin' up here. What is it, boy?"

Bob turned and gripped his hand.

"He's alive!" he reiterated shakily.

Marvin took him firmly by the shoulder. "Easy now!" he soothed. "Just don't talk till you get settled down a mite, an' then tell it straight. Get the boy a drink, Helen."

Bob gulped the whisky, and told them of seeing Jennings.

"That's great!" Marvin boomed. "Easy to see how it happened. That fellow that told you he was dead was no doctor. Maybe the rest o' your troubles'll slither off your back the same way. Take a launch an' go to see this fellow, son; he may have news for you."

Helen followed him to the door and gave him her hand. "I'm glad!" she said, her eyes shining. "So very glad!"

Bob looked at her hungrily. "I'm in a hurry now," he said, with a wry smile. "But I'm not a fugitive from justice any more, and—I'll be back."

A surly watchman confronted him when he clambered from the launch to the dock of the N. F. cannery and shortly denied knowledge of any one yclept Jennings. Bob asked for the superintendent, and the watchman motioned him to a small, detached building at the end of the dock. A pale youth, with a pen behind his ear, retreated to the inner sanctum to learn whether the superintendent was busy, and, returning, motioned Bob in.

Bob opened the door, and stared amazedly at his Cousin Arnold, who stood by the desk regarding him calmly.

"I've been expecting you," Arnold said in a matter-of-fact tone. "Jennings told me he saw you. Sit down, won't you?"

"I—why, Arnold!" Bob stammered. "I didn't know——"

Arnold frowned slightly. "Sit down. How have you been?"

"All right. I—why, what are you doing here, Arnold?"

"I'm local superintendent for these three canneries on the bay."

"But Jennings, Arnold; he's up here and——"

"I know it. He's in my employ. That night after you left I returned to the room where we left him and found that he was still alive. I cared for him, and when he recovered gave him this job up here—chief detective for the company—to keep his mouth stopped."

"Then—my running away was useless."

"Seems so. What are you doing?"

"Working at the Marvin cannery," Bob said vaguely. Arnold's manner had given birth to many suspicions long pregnant in his mind. "What do you hear from my father?"

"Nothing new."

'Oh! And you've left Jackwell?"

"I got a pretty good chance with this new company," Arnold answered evasively.

Bob rose and advanced a step toward him. "A chance to destroy another man's property, eh?" he burst out. "So you're in charge of these canneries! You're the man responsible for blowing up Marvin's trap! I've been a blind ass for a long time, but, Arnold, I've got your number now. You were very certain Jennings was dead, weren't you? Yes! You knew he wasn't. You wanted me out of the way. And I know now who the thief and traitor in Jackwell's office was. It lay between

you and me. You did it! You did it, and then deliberately laid it on me. You planned the whole thing to throw me out with dad in the hope that you could take my place! Well, that didn't work out for you, did it? You wouldn't be here if it had. Why, you dog, I'll——"

"Stop!" Arnold snatched an automatic from his desk drawer and trained it on Bob. "None of your athletic exhibitions, old boy. Cut out all this nonsense and get down to business. Suppose I admit everything you've charged, what then?"

"What?"

"What can you do about it?"

"Why, you thief, I'll——"

"You'll call me names," Arnold sneered. "Exactly. That's all you can do. Absolutely all you can do! Now look here, Bob, as your father's son you're everlastingly through. Maybe I do expect to profit some time by your elimination. You can't do one thing to hurt me, but in consideration of our relationship I'll do what I can to help you. If you'll promise me to dig out and not show up again ever, I'll try to get you together ten thousand dollars for your traveling expenses. What about it?"

"I can't be so everlastingly through if you're still willing to spend money to get rid of me," Bob snarled. "I'll get you, and get you right! And in the meantime you take my tip and let Marvin's property alone. We're ready to fight, and if you give us cause to do any shooting there are a few good shots among us, myself included, that'll come looking for you first of all. And we'll get you, you——"

"Get out of here!" Arnold sprang to his feet, shaking with rage, and pointed to the door. He advanced slowly on Bob, his face distorted with hatred, and jammed the muzzle of the automatic against his chest.

"If I could just pull this trigger without having to answer for it you wouldn't live ten seconds longer," he said. "You poor blind fool, I've hated you from the minute I was old enough to know that I was poor and you were rich! You were born with everything, weren't you? Yes, everything but brains! And I was born with nothing else. You had every pleasure and advantage for nothing, and I had to scrabble like a dog for a bare living. I worked and schemed and waited while you lapped up the cream of everything, but I got you—I got you where I wanted you.

"You're the poor devil on the outside now. I'm in, and some of these days I'm going to have everything that was ever intended for you. Wrap that around your heart and squeeze! And all I'll ever get won't pay me for the way I've hated you. I can't remember a waking minute of my life that I haven't burned with it, and I've murdered you a thousand times in a thousand different ways in my dreams. I'd kill you now if I could do it without risk to myself, but I don't take risks like that. No! I leave that to windy hotheads like you. I scheme and wait and work and win, and do my talking when I'm safe. Now you know something, don't you? Get out of here, and don't come back!"

He prodded Bob through the door with the point of his gun, and called his assistant.

"Take your gun and see this fellow off the place!" he ordered. "Point him out to the watchmen, and tell them that if they ever see him on N. F. property again to shoot, and shoot to kill."

Bob stumbled down to the launch, his mind stunned by the violence of Arnold's suddenly revealed hatred. As he clambered into his boat he noted a small steam yacht coming to anchor a few hundred yards out in the bay. He was too dazed to give it more than casual attention. The thought upper-

most in his mind was that he must get in personal touch with his father at once and straighten out the tangle. He doubted now the sincerity of Jackwell; that the telegrams supposed to have been sent by his father were genuine. He had trusted Arnold, and he knew now that Arnold was the direct cause of his plight. Realities were lost to his sight in the bewildering fog of distrust that enshrouded him.

As he neared the dock he became aware that the machinery was not in operation. Marvin came hurrying down to meet him as he left the launch. The old man's face was white and grim.

"Hell's broke loose," he greeted Bob tersely. "Boy, our own force is packed with men in the pay of the N. F. Somebody tampered with the machinery while we were shut down at dinner, and when we started up again everything went smash. Have it fixed in an hour or so, but as soon as we start they'll cripple us some other way. Boy, what are we goin' to do?"

"Fight!" Bob snarled savagely. "Keep them off our backs if we can, and if not we'll start some fireworks of our own!"

CHAPTER X.

With the resumption of work in the cannery, Marvin's prophecy of further trouble came true. One of the guards from the Rocky Point trap came panting into camp with the news of the disaster. One of the N. F. schooners had crashed into the lead halfway between the shore line and the pot, and torn a great gap in it. She had drifted into it with the swift tide, her engine shut off, and when the guards reached the scene of the smash-up in their dories the captain declared that his engines broke down and that he had been helpless to prevent the accident. While the guards were wrangling with him, a small, unidentified launch gained the end of the trap, and when the guards returned they found the webbing of the pot cut and all the day's catch gone. Worse, the web was ruined beyond repair, and a new one must be hung, in addition to mending the broken lead, before the trap could fish again.

Came also word that the N. F. fishermen had clashed with those in the Marvin boats on the banks, slashed many nets, and sunk two boats.

Marvin received word of these disasters with unnatural and ominous calm.

"Nothin' short of a miracle can save us, son," he admitted to Bob. "I reckon miracles ain't happenin' around Chagnak Bay these days. Do what you can here at the cannery, an' I'll go out an' get the driver started repairin' the trap."

No further "accident" occurred at the cannery during the afternoon. The workmen, however, both Oriental and white, were plainly frightened. In his patrol of the plant, Bob was aware of group after group of men whispering together, furtive-acting men with the mark of fear on them, who always scattered at his approach.

At seven o'clock in the evening the night crew of Chinese had not appeared for work, and Bob went to their quarters in search of them. He found the long, low buildings which housed the Chinese and Japanese half deserted. None of the night men were there, and the day crew, sullen and suspicious, unanimously "no savvied" what had become of their slant-eyed brethren.

As he was returning, mystified, to the cannery a little Japanese foreman confronted him in the privacy of a narrow lane between the tool house and a high pile of lumber.

"You please I tell you mebbe where China boy he went," he said, with a smile and a bow.

"Go to it."

"Yes. China boy, I think, he very

much scare'. All China boy he work daytime, he run quick away some place. Yes. All China boy gone now, he not to come back. No. He very much scare', I think."

"Run away? Not coming back?"

"Yes, please. No time, I think, he come back. Soon time China boy all he work daytime he run quick some place; I think he not come back also."

"But why? What are they running away for? What are they afraid of?"

The little Japanese smiled brilliantly. "He very much scare', I think. Some bad China boy he got gun; he belong bad tong; mebbe so he tell some other China boy 'you work long time Marvin cannery some very bad thing happen by you; you work long time some other cannery mebbe no bad thing happen, you get plenty money other cannery.' You please no say China boy I tell you these thing?"

"You mean that the N. F. people are hiring bad Chinamen to threaten our boys and get them away from us?"

The Japanese shook his head. "I don't say those thing. I talk all time mebbe some bad thing happen by me."

Bob nodded. "Thanks for the hint. I won't give you away."

"You please not to do," the Japanese said, with a low bow, and Bob hurried away to find Marvin and apprise him of this new attack. The boat on which he had gone for the trap driver was tied up at the dock, but Marvin was not to be found about the plant. Bob hurried up the hill to the cottage, and found Helen alone.

"Things are going badly, aren't they?" she asked anxiously, reading his face.

"They are. I'm afraid they're going to beat us. Every hour counts so largely while the fish are running, and if they can keep up this persecution and prevent your father getting his pack up——"

"I know. I was afraid of something like this when dad went so deep in debt to enlarge the plant. If it only doesn't crush him, drive him to do something desperate, irreparable! Oh, if these people will just leave me my dad out of the wreck I won't care."

The longing to take this girl he so loved in his arms and comfort her gripped Bob and shook him. He stepped close to her.

"I know how you feel," he said huskily. "I—— Helen, Helen, I'm not a fugitive now—and I've come back. I think all my troubles can be straightened out, and, if so, I can help. I learned some things to-day that make me think that the whole thing, my banishment and all, may be just a put-up job on me. If I could—could——" His voice died away in his throat, and they stared at each other in startled silence, awed by the mighty power that irresistibly drew them together.

Then she was in his arms, and he was murmuring incoherent endearments, with his lips in the fragrant cloud of her golden hair.

Came a heavy step on the porch, and the lovers drew apart in confusion as Marvin entered the room.

Helen cried out at sight of him. His face was ghastly white, and his eyes were bloodshot and staring. His features worked uncontrollably, twitching his face into horrible distortions. He reeled like a drunken man, and his every exhalation of breath was audible in a sort of monotonous, low moan.

He stood with his feet braced wide apart, swaying, and eyed his daughter and Bob dully. Then he dropped into a chair, hunched over, wringing his great, bony hands.

"It's him!" he said hoarsely. "It's him! It's him again! He ruined me once, an' now it's him again! He's back of it. He's the trust. It's him, an' I got to kill him. I got to! Don't talk to me! I got to! If it was any

one else! But it's him! It's him again!"

Helen slipped to her knees by her father's side. "Daddy, you're ill," she cried. "What's it all about? I don't understand you."

"I seen Kraus, that used to own the next cannery down the beach," the old man went on monotonously. "He got a job with the trust when he sold out. He's travelin' with him on a steam yacht, makin' a tour of inspection of all the canneries. They come to-day. It's him, I tell you! Kraus told me. It's him! He's the big one back of it all. I got to kill him. Don't you try to stop me, 'cause I got to. It's him!"

"But who, daddy? Who? You're not yourself! Who do you mean, daddy?"

Marvin rose and flung his great arms wide. "The man that broke me," he said in a terrible voice. "The lyin', thievin' friend I trusted, that broke me when he broke his word to me an' made me wifeless an' a grubbin' slave; the man that sent your mother to her grave with her heart crushed when she see all we'd worked for took from us by his treachery. Adrian C. Leonard! He's back o' this. He's the trust! Adrian C. Leonard!"

Bob shrank as though from the lash of a whip. "My father!" he cried. "He's my father!"

So steeped was Marvin's mind in the brew of his rage that he did not comprehend. Helen was the first to grasp the significance of Bob's anguished cry. She signaled frantically for him to be silent, but Bob did not see or hear her. He grasped Marvin by the arm and shook him.

"He's my father," he reiterated. "Don't you understand? I'll make everything all right now. Dad isn't the kind of a man to permit such persecution. You don't know him. It's that superintendent that's been doing all this. Dad's all right. I'll see him and make it all right for you. Don't you hear? He's my father. He's—he's——"

His voice trailed away into silence, and he slowly backed away from the growing glare of insanity in Marvin's eyes. The old man followed him, his great hands opening and closing convulsively.

"Your father!" he croaked. "You a Leonard! You spy! I've trusted you just as I trusted him when I had success in my grip before, and you've done me now just as he did then. You spy! You'll be the first of the breed to go. You're one Leonard that'll never dog me again."

He sprang forward suddenly with a roared curse, and Bob went down beneath him, feeling the furious man's huge fingers lock about his throat in a death grip. He was as powerless as a baby against the maniacal strength of the big man, and his brain darkened as the choking fingers tightened their grip. They relaxed their hold suddenly, and Marvin's body slumped across Bob's chest, limp and unresisting.

Bob struggled from beneath him, and got to his knees. Helen knelt beside her father, stroking his gray head and calling to him wildly.

"Oh, I haven't killed him, have I?" she asked piteously. "Tell me I haven't. I struck him—with that."

She pointed, shuddering, at a heavy agate paper weight on the floor.

"He was killing you, and I had to do something," she went on. "Oh, daddy! Daddy! I didn't mean to hurt you so."

Bob knelt and examined the unconscious man. He found only a slight scalp wound on the back of his head, and he could tell from Marvin's breathing that he was rapidly recovering.

"He's all right," he assured Helen. "God bless you, my sweetheart! He's utterly insane! He's coming to all right now. I'll——"

"Oh, go quick!" Helen implored, rising and urging him toward the door. "He'll kill you if you're here when he recovers. Go, and keep out of his way."

"It's nonsense!" Bob protested. "Me a spy! I had no more idea that my father——"

"Oh, I know, but go! You don't know how he hates a Leonard. It's an insanity with him. I trust you, I love you; I love you, love you, love you, my own boy. For my sake, go!"

"If dad's here I'll go see him and put an end to all this," Bob said firmly. "I can fix things. And then I'll be back. You want me to come back, don't you?"

"Yes," Helen moaned. "But you mustn't. Oh, I don't know. I don't know. I love you so! It's all terrible! He's calling me. Go!"

Bob pressed her to him for an instant, and hurried away. The bay was dim in the long, lingering twilight of the Northern summer night, and the steam yacht he had noted when he was leaving the N. F. cannery that afternoon was only vaguely visible. Bob's heart gave a great leap at the thought that his father was probably aboard her. The time had come when he could straighten out the tangle of his life by a personal talk, and he hurried down to the dock, buoyant with the knowledge that within the hour all would be right, not only for him, but for the girl he loved and her father.

CHAPTER XI.

Bob handed the painter of his launch to a sailor on the landing stage of the yacht and bounded eagerly up the ladder. He had recognized his father while yet some distance off, seated under an awning in the stern with several other men. The elder Leonard was awaiting him near the ladder when he stepped on deck. Bob reached for him with a whoop of joy only to have his eager arms struck aside by an angry hand.

"No scene," the father warned in a low, tense voice. "I've some friends aboard that I don't care to have know my shame. Come!"

Hurt to the core, Bob followed his father below to the latter's private cabin. The old man switched on the light, and, seating himself in the revolving chair before the desk, surveyed his son coldly. The elder Leonard was a tall, spare man, with lean, viselike jaws, thin lips that curved habitually downward, and a large, bony nose, slightly Roman in outline. His eyes formed the most striking features in a face that exhibited nothing of the commonplace. They were small, set wide apart, and deep under bulging brows; they were the vague gray of a stormy winter sky; they were as utterly void of expression as the glazed orb of a dead fish, and yet whoso looked into them experienced the shock of an uttered threat. Utterly expressionless, they completely expressed the man. A man of one idea, acquisition. A man who instinctively classified the people he encountered in his path in only two groups; those who could aid him and those who must be brushed aside to make way for him.

A slight sneer warped his cold lips as he looked at his son.

"I dared to hope that you at least had sufficient of the virtue of pride left from the wreck of your moral nature to have spared us both the humiliation of this useless interview," he said in a flat voice.

"Dad, you don't understand," Bob said desperately. "I don't know what all you've been told, but anybody that says I'm a thief or a traitor lies. You can't believe those things of me! I tell you, dad, you're being made a fool of. Arnold is using you and pulling the wool over your eyes as he did with me. Dad, he framed the whole thing, with the idea of getting me out of the

way so that some day he might take my place as your heir. He did, I tell you. He admitted the whole thing to me this afternoon. Be sensible, dad; look at this thing right. Why, I——"

"You're only wasting your breath and my time, Bob," his father interrupted crisply. "I suppose it's no good my asking you to spare me the last pang of knowing that you are a lying, begging sycophant, devoid of pride as——"

"I'm not!" Bob declared hotly. "I'm asking mere justice. I——"

"If you got the justice you ask for you wouldn't be at liberty to seek me out and bother me like this. Bob, I might have ultimately relented if you hadn't made the final mistake of selling me out. That was the last straw. Nothing you can ever say will wring forgiveness from me for your treachery to your own father."

"Selling you out?" Bob gasped. "Treachery to you?"

"You deny it?"

"I don't know what you're talking about!"

Leonard smiled contemptuously, and leaned back in his chair, joining the tips of his fingers before his breast judicially.

"I'm inclined to see how adroitly you can lie, Bob," he said coolly. "Why did you run away from Seattle so hurriedly?"

"Because I thought I'd killed a man. I——"

"Killed a man!"

"Arnold put up a job on me. He made me think I'd killed a detective, and I——"

"Bad!" Leonard shook his head reprovingly. "Not at all plausible. You ought to be able to do better than that. Why did you come here to Marvin's cannery?"

Bob began an explanation about the shipwreck and what had followed, but his father cut him short:

"Much too involved. Here's my case against you: You were working in Jackwell's office at the time that he and I and—you know who else, of course—were completing the organization of this company; I may add, what you probably don't know, that I intended you for the position Arnold is now filling very satisfactorily. Your position in the office enabled you to have access to our correspondence in regard to the formation of the Northern Fisheries Company, confidential correspondence that I admit may be of some slight use to Marvin at some time if offered as evidence in court. You are fired from Jackwell's office for theft and treachery, and discover that you are in difficulty with me. You have no money and no means of getting any. The correspondence I refer to, or important portions of it, disappears—mysteriously, shall we assume?—coincident with your own sudden departure from Seattle. Now I find you here working for or with our bitterest enemy, the man to whom that correspondence might be of the greatest value. We suspected you when Jackwell discovered the letters were missing; your presence here transforms suspicion into certainty. I trust you made a good bargain with him, Bob. Get an interest in the business or a cash payment? You're lucky if you got cash. A variety of things is going to happen to Mr. Marvin and his cannery business, none of them pleasant or profitable—for him."

"The things you think of me aren't true," Bob said doggedly. His mind was busy with his father's implied threat against Marvin. "Turn about seems fair play," he went on. "I've been hearing a few things about you, and——"

"Doubtless. Marvin was always a fluent talker."

"He says you broke your promise to him years ago and ruined him by doing it."

"I got the best of him in a business deal, largely through his own criminal carelessness and stupidity. Marvin never did have any business sense."

"Is it careless to trust a friend?" Bob asked slowly.

Leonard smiled dryly. "Very," he said briefly.

Bob's eyes narrowed. "I see. I begin to see a good many things I've never seen before. I'm afraid I begin to see you for the first time, dad—and I don't like the look of you."

The father rose abruptly. "You may go," he said shortly.

"Not yet. Dad, do you know what Arnold has been doing to destroy Marvin?"

A shadow of hatred flicked over Leonard's masklike face. "Whatever he's done hasn't been enough. The man is still canning salmon. Go back to him and tell him that his attempted use of the man who was once unfortunately my son is as stupid and barren of result as his average business move."

"I'll go back and tell him that I'm ashamed of my father," Bob retorted. "I'll go back and beg him to forgive me for being your son! I see now why you are able to believe all these lies about me; it's because you're capable of doing everything I've been accused of—and have done them all. I'm ashamed of you! I'm ashamed to be your son! I'm proud of being enough unlike you for you to disown me. You are the traitor and crook, and if it came under the head of business, and others did the work, I wouldn't put murder past you. You're the crook, and with all your cunning you're being used and fooled by another thief of our own blood slyer than you are."

"You were the only human being I ever—loved," his father said in a scarcely audible voice, wincing at the word "love." "Go before I forget and kill you!"

"Dad, forget it!" Bob cried, touched by the other's confession of affection. "I can prove my——"

"Go!"

Grim, unapproachable, the old man pointed toward the door with a hand that shook not a whit, and Bob turned with a gesture of despair and left him so.

Helen met him when he clambered up on the cannery dock. Her hair was tumbled about her shoulders, and her dress torn and awry.

"Dad's gone—to do it," she panted. "Oh, I'm so glad you've come. I fought with him as long as I could, but he's quite mad. We must stop him some way. He took his rifle and——"

"Where?"

"He went off down the beach toward the old Kraus cannery. I think he doesn't know himself where he's going. He's mad; blood mad. Perhaps he's going to the Kraus plant, hunting for your father. We must stop him!"

"How long has he been gone?"

"Only a few minutes. I held him as long as I could."

"Why didn't he take a boat if he was going there?"

"He's mad, I tell you; utterly insane."

Bob took a lantern from the stringpiece. "I'll look for him; you go home."

"I'm coming with you."

"No. There may be trouble. There may——"

"That's why I must be there. If my two men are in trouble I'll not sit safe at home."

Bob slipped his arm about her waist as they descended to the dark beach. "You blessed little wonder girl!" he murmured.

"You d-don't love—somebody else—do you?" she panted plaintively as she hurried over the rocks at his side.

"Indeed I don't. Why, I never had any idea what love was until I realized all of a sudden that I loved you."

"I knew I loved you—when I first saw you," she confessed. "Then you were mean, and I thought there was some one else, and——"

Bob halted, and stopped her with a kiss. As they hurried on he told her briefly of his interview with his father.

"God help me, but I believe all your father says of him is true," he admitted. "But that isn't my fault, and your father's got to forgive me and let me work for you."

"That's—playing the game," she said.

Bob kissed her again. "And that's winning it," he declared. "Hush! Listen! What was that?"

The low murmur of a voice came to them from a little distance down the dark beach. They went on cautiously for a little, and stopped again to listen.

"It's daddy," Helen whispered. "I'm going to call to him."

She raised her voice and called through the dark: "Daddy! Oh, daddy!"

"Here I am, kitten," Marvin's voice came back gentle and kindly. "Right here."

Bob and Helen hurried on, and came upon the old man kneeling on the beach, with his clasped hands resting on a bowlder in an attitude of prayer. His face was haggard, but strangely gentle, and his eyes were peaceful and kindly.

"All right, kitten," he said, rising as Bob and Helen approached. "I ain't goin' to do nothin' wild. Helen, your maw came to me a little bit ago. Oh, don't think I'm crazy; I was, but I ain't now. I don't mean that I seen a ghost or nothin' like that, but she came to me an' I felt her; I felt her bein' with me plain as you'd feel mist on your face in the dark. She told me a heap o' things I needed to know, little girl; not in words, you understand, but I could sense what she meant. You bet I could! I come rampagin' down here with murder in my heart, an' she came to me just like she used to when I'd get het up an' mad, an' made me feel where I was wrong. I reckon I been worryin' you a right lot, little girl, but you needn't go an' worry no more. They may do a lot o' things to my cannery, but they can't make no murderer out o' your dad now, Helen."

Helen crept into his arms, sobbing with relief, and the old man caressed her gently.

"I ain't lost your maw, Helen," he went on in a glad voice. "I been thinkin' all these years that she was lost to me, but she ain't. I can make her happy an' do things for her now just the same as though she was settin' up there in the house waitin' for me in the flesh. Here I been all these years, bitter an' mournin', an' all the time she's been safe an' just waitin' for me to get through here an' come on along to her. I reckon if I had got my hands dirty with blood to-night, maybe I couldn't go where she is; an' maybe that's why she could come an' make me feel what she wanted me to know."

He was silent for a little, and then spoke to Bob:

"I'm right sorry for the things I said to you, boy. I was crazy then, but I'm sane now, an' while I don't understand how you, a Leonard, come to be here with me, I'm willin' to listen an' be reasonable."

Hurriedly Bob told him of the events that led to his flight from Seattle and of his interview with his father on the yacht.

"I believe you, boy," Marvin said heartily when he had finished his recital. "I could have told you it was no use askin' him to let up on me. A man always hates any one he's cheated, an' he does hate me, son. He does! I can't ask you to fight your own father, so——"

"You don't need to," Bob interrupted him. "I'll do it without being asked.

He's wrong, and I'll fight all the harder to keep him from injuring you just because he is my father."

"I never reckoned on knowingly takin' the hand of a Leonard," Marvin said slowly. "But—shake! They've got us licked, but we'll fight an' fight clean."

"That's playing the game!" Helen exclaimed, her eyes shining. "Why, I've got my two dear men, and my two men have got me. And we've all got life! What do we care about the old cannery?"

Marvin pressed the girl to him, and laid one hand on Bob's shoulder.

"I reckon your maw's mighty happy right now, Helen," he said softly. "Mighty happy! Well, let's go back."

They had gone but a few steps up the beach when Marvin stopped, holding his head in a listening attitude.

"Thought I heard some one callin'," he explained. "Listen! Hear it?"

The call came from the darkness in the direction from which they were going, faint, but unmistakable: "Help! Help! Help!"

Marvin and Bob exchanged startled glances. The same thought was in the mind of each. Some one of their own men hurt in the fight with the N. F. thugs!

"You wait right here, kitten," Marvin said. "We'll see what it is."

As they hurried down the beach with the lantern the calls grew more clearly audible. They were almost on the man before they saw him, a dark form prone among the slippery bowlders. Bob knelt and held the light to the man's face. It was Jennings!

A glance told that the former detective was badly hurt. Bob slid his arm under the man's shoulders to raise him up, and shuddered at the feel of flowing blood on the coat. Jennings recognized Bob, and struggled to rise.

"Easy!" Bob cautioned. "What is it? Where are you hurt?"

"In the back," Jennings groaned. "And my side. You're the man I want now. I was tryin' to get to you when —when I give out. That cousin of yours double-crossed me, and I'm goin' to—to come right back—at him."

"Arnold?" Bob questioned eagerly. "Did he——"

"It was him cut me," Jennings said bitterly. "I seen him through with his game, an' then—he thought he could—could stall me with—a thousan' bucks an'—an' a bum job snoopin' around these fish joints. He got scared I'd crack while—your father was here, an' to-night—to-night he done me."

"You mean you helped him get me out of the way?" Bob prompted.

"Sure. I was the fall guy all the way. He copped the kale from the box, an'—an' tipped the Short Line job —through me. I got the case, an'—an' framed you, with that guy that offered you the bribe. When you were out your cousin was scared you'd square yourself with the old man. He talked me into trying to bump you off. Oh, I'm crackin' right. I'm comin' clean. I'm goin' to rap the works! I may get 'stir' for it, but I'll take him with me! I been the fall guy. He didn't even have the nerve to—to croak you himself. He had you—there in Seattle —but he wouldn't risk a shot. It had to be me do all the operatin' an' I never got my bit! To-night I tell him to come through or I rap to your old man, an' he slid me the steel. It was dark, an' he thinks he did for me. He leaves me on the beach like a dog to be blamed on you people when I'm found. I started to—to get to you, but I—I give out. He near got me. I'm bad hurt, but—I'm goin' to live to —rap on him. Get me out to—the yacht. He's out there—now. Get me there, an'—an' I'll squeal to—to your dad like—like a trainload of pigs—right in front of—him. The cheap mutt! He stood to make a million on—on this,

an'—an' he tries to stall me with—with——"

"Get a launch!" Bob said tensely, interrupting the wounded man. "Quick, Marvin. Run it down here and pick me up. Hurry! Bring some bandaging and whisky. We'll pay some debts to-night—with interest!"

CHAPTER XII.

Arnold and the elder Leonard sat alone under the canopy of canvas in the stern of the yacht. The other members of the party had retired some time since, and, since their leaving, Leonard had been altogether gloomy and silent. Silence is the keenest irritant of a guilty conscience, and Arnold grew uneasy. His nerves were jumpy. Things done at his behest bothered him not at all, but the commission of a deed of violence by his own hand had stained him with a sense of horror that kept him shuddering inwardly. He could not keep from wondering just how that still form on the beach would look when daylight revealed it, and who might be the first to discover it. This speculation helped him to composure not at all, and coupled with the effect of Leonard's taciturnity, led him on to make a mistake.

"Did—ah—did he make any attempt to—see you?" he inquired tentatively.

The moment the words were out of his mouth he knew that he had blundered. Leonard did not answer, and Arnold's heart fluttered with panic. The putter of a launch attracted his attention. He strained his eyes to make out the boat through the darkness, but could not. It was approaching the yacht; that he could tell from the sound.

He had no wish to be present at an interview between Bob and his father with his nerves so ill controlled, and the possibility of it had been in his mind since he boarded the yacht. Might Bob be in the approaching launch? As the noise of the motor's exhaust came nearer this prospect imbued him with a growing fear. The boat stopped by the landing stage, and perspiration burst out on his forehead.

He made out a low murmur of voices, then heard a sailor on watch say loudly: "Orders to let nobody aboard, sir. Sorry."

"Dad, I've got to see you for a minute," Bob shouted. "Tell this fellow to let me aboard. I've got absolute proof that I'm innocent, and you've got to listen to it. I've got proof!"

The father, leaning back in his wicker chair, gave no indication that he had heard. Arnold watched him fearfully, and, unbalanced by his fear, made his second and greatest mistake.

"D-don't do it, sir," he chattered. "It w-would d-do no g-good, and only m-make you—you——" His voice stuttered away into silence. Leonard had snapped himself erect, and stood over Arnold, piercing him with the unblinking stare of his menacing eyes.

He turned his head, and called shortly: "Let the gentleman aboard, Johnson!"

Arnold rose. "I'll leave you," he said, with a great effort. "It would only embarrass——"

Leonard shifted the battery of his stern eyes on him again, and Arnold sank back in his chair as though forced by a mighty hand.

In the light of the electrics under the awning, Bob and Marvin appeared, supporting a reeling man between them. At sight of this man, Arnold made his third mistake. He shrieked, and, leaping to his feet, backed toward the rail, fending with his outstretched hands like a man warding off blows.

To the newcomers the elder Leonard gave but a glance. His attention was concentrated on Arnold. He followed the shaking man slowly to the rail, gripped him suddenly by the shoulders,

and roughly forced him back into his seat. He turned, then, and looked at the three.

"Well?" he said shortly

"D-don't believe them," Arnold begged. "They're going to lie to hurt me. They——"

"Johnson!" Leonard called sharply.

The sailor appeared and saluted.

Leonard indicated Arnold. "If this man attempts to speak or get away—you understand?"

The sailor touched his cap and took up his position back of Arnold. Leonard turned to Bob and nodded.

"All right."

Vengefully Jennings gasped out the details of the plot against Bob, sparing neither himself nor Arnold. Leonard heard him out, standing rigid and with no shade of expression showing in his face.

"I'll do—my bit if—I have to," Jennings wound up. "But I'll take that cheap double-crosser with me!"

When he had finished, Leonard turned to the sailor guarding Arnold.

"Take this man below and lock him up," he ordered crisply. "Tell Ole to take Mr. Jennings to a room and call Doctor Merton to tend him."

Arnold got to his feet, a helpless, shuddering wreck.

"You've go—got no right——" he began a whimpered protest.

"To be fooled by you!" Leonard cut him short with a flash of bitterness. "I'm losing my grip. Take him away!"

When he was left alone with his old enemy and his son, Leonard seated himself and stared long into the blackness astern, silent, expressionless.

"Well?" he said at length, without turning his head.

"I don't know," Bob muttered miserably.

Marvin silently slipped away to the launch. Bob waited for a little time, choking back an aching lump in his throat as he looked at his father. The old man made no move, spoke no word.

"I don't know," Bob repeated dully, and followed Marvin to the launch.

The father sat as he left him with no apparent heed of his son's going. Throughout the short night and the wonder of the dawn he sat thus, grim, immovable, staring at nothing with blank, unblinking eyes.

Bob was at breakfast with the Marvins when his father appeared at the cottage. The man had aged years in the night, yet of all he was the least visibly embarrassed. He made no comment when Bob introduced Helen as his fiancée, but came direct to the point of his visit.

"Take charge in Arnold's place, Bob," he said abruptly. "Come aboard at two, and I'll go over matters with you. Kelso, your assistant, is capable. You can rely on him for details of the routine. We sail at high tide to-night. Jennings will get well. I'm taking him and Arnold with me. I'll have to let them go free. They are dirty linen that it won't aid us to air in court."

He turned to Marvin and spoke with evident effort: "I won't ask you to forgive me; I will admit that I wronged you. What I can do to right the wrong I'll do. My boy called me some hard names last night, and he was right. I haven't played the game square. You've got what I haven't—my boy's respect."

"None the less, you're playin' the man now," said Marvin; "and shake!"

Leonard stared at the outstretched hand, gripped it, and held it for a long moment.

"Dad——" Bob began, with an impulsive movement.

His father restrained him with a gesture. "Wait! I don't want any emotional reconciliation that means nothing. Perhaps we've both made mistakes. Think it over calmly, and when the pack is up come and see me."

"You bet I will."

Leonard rose and picked up his hat. He looked from Bob to Helen, standing by her father with her arm about his neck.

"I'd give everything I have in the world to stand in your shoes, Dan Marvin," he said steadily, and passed out.

They stood together on the dock in the gloaming, watching the stern lights of the yacht grow dim in the distance. Bob's eyes were misty as he stooped and kissed his sweetheart.

"Poor dad!" he said brokenly. "He's been wrong, but—— I seem to think more of him right now than I ever did before."

"I'm glad," Helen said softly. "I'm going to forget the past and love your father, too, Bob. He's played the game wrong, but there's nobility in him. He couldn't have had you for a son if there hadn't been."

Bob laughed and took her in his arms. "You silly darling! Isn't it all wonderful? This time last night we were all in desperation, and to-night we are——"

"Didn't I tell you? My boy played square and won his game."

REAL BUSINESS ACUMEN

A MUSIC-PUBLISHING house mailed broadcast over the country a short time ago a letter addressed to "Dear Music Lover," setting forth that the firm had been able to secure at a special price "a number of copies of three beautiful popular compositions," and containing this offer:

The special price of twenty-five cents for all three pieces is made only on condition that you keep all three, as these numbers are generally sold at fifteen cents per copy straight. You will be getting one piece of music for nothing if you remit for the three.

In the due course of time the house received this reply from a small town in North Dakota:

GENTLEMEN: You stated in your letter that if I remitted for all three pieces of music I would be getting one for nothing, so I will keep the one I get for nothing, and am sending the other two back that are worth fifteen cents apiece.

HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS

Author of "OVERLAND RED"

CONTRIBUTES the opening novel for the September month-end POPULAR, on sale September 20. A Western novel, dealing with the adventures of an honor man from Harvard in the cow country. We have never published a more exhilarating story. Mr. Knibbs' earlier novel, "Overland Red," made an instant hit; and his other book "Sundown Slim," recently published, has been hailed as a winner by reviewers. This latest novel of his, which you will get complete in the POPULAR, two weeks from to-day, is the best thing Mr. Knibbs has done.

Pigeon Pie for Breakfast

By A. A. Chapin

Author of "The Under Trail," Etc.

Latin subtlety, the German colonel thought, was a myth; and the French savant entertained serious doubts about German science. In this instance both were put to the test over a pair of lifeless pigeons which had been scheduled for pie. An episode of the present war recounting a duel of wits

"AH, well," said M. le Docteur Morelle, with his usual cool shrug, "it is but the fortune of war. In these dark times I should be grateful that I have escaped so long!"

His enemy, the commanding officer of the recently arrived detachment, smiled pleasantly.

"You are philosophical, Herr Doktor," he said, with frank civility. "But believe me, my men will do as little damage as possible. We shall be obliged to ask for shelter and food, but——" He hesitated.

The doctor smiled. "Pray consider the château at your disposal," he broke in. "Your excellency was, I think, about to offer to pay for what your soldiers might—er—requisition, but you courteously refrained. I appreciate your delicacy of feeling. I am a noncombatant—a Frenchman, it is true, but not thought by the government strong enough to fight for my country. I dabble in science, and, I confess, have been trying to invent a new explosive which will prove more troublesome to your troops than any you have yet encountered. However, consider me your host while you occupy this house."

He had a suave, monotonous voice, and talked with a slow fluency which contrasted oddly with the rougher accents of the German officer. No two men, indeed, could have been more signally unlike. The scientist was very pallid, and slenderly, though compactly, built. His was the high, unwrinkled forehead of the student, perhaps the dreamer, though the tight, cold set of his lips promised more practical qualities. There was something ruthless about the man, in spite of his slight frame, colorless skin, and quietness of manner; he seemed immovable, not to be touched by the blustering things of human life.

The Teuton was typical of his race, class, and calling; big, healthy, highly intelligent, and albeit patently a gentleman too direct to concern himself with unimportant superficialities. Though he was a soldier he was no butcher, and though he had a streak of brutality it was of a wholesome sort, free from the obscure twists which spell that infinitely worse thing—cruelty. Neither man was young in years, but each after his own fashion looked younger than he was. Superb bodily condition, and a nature as big as his stature, had seemingly done as much for the soldier as had self-control and a finely balanced and adjusted brain for the man of science.

"Very well," said the colonel, with bluff cheerfulness. "I will leave you a moment to go to see after my fellows."

With smiling confidence, he flung his saber on the large Flemish oak table, saluted with a flourish, and swung his khaki-clad bulk out of the room. The clank of his spurs grew fainter on the bare, hardwood staircase, for the doctor had received him and his staff in his own study on the second floor of the château. As the last metallic echo died away a mask seemed to fall from the Frenchman's face.

"Pig! Fool! Fat brute!" he muttered in a harsh undertone. "Fool, did I say? He is worse than that! He is demented to trust his life in a French house. His host, eh? Yes; I will be his host—as the devil is host in hell!"

He wiped his wet forehead, and pulled himself together. "Talking to myself, Jules!" he said in a more natural and controlled voice.

A misshapen figure stole out from a dark corner of the study. Jules was not old, but a bursting shell six months before had twisted his body and torn away one eye. He hated the Germans as much as his master, though to less purpose. The fact that the doctor also hated them made his instinctive devotion and fidelity a passion; whatever Doctor Morelle told him to do was done with an almost fanatical obedience. He now carried a large covered basket, and, because the master had said so, he held it as tenderly as if it were a baby.

"Talking to myself!" repeated the scientist. "I shall be mad, doubtless, before long. These are days that breed fevers in the brain. There is no insanity as terrible as that which comes from the smell of raw blood, and who can help but smell it here in France and Belgium, where the earth is soaked in it? There will be only red flowers next year, my Jules; red flowers fed by that blood; the soil will have forgotten all other colors! You have the birds?"

Jules shook the basket he held, and from within sounded a sequence of soft, cooing notes and an eager beating of imprisoned wings.

"How will M. le Docteur manage?" the man asked in a low voice. "There will not be time for all arrangements now——"

"Bring them into the laboratory," said his master curtly, and they both passed through a doorway at the far end of the study.

A few minutes later the German colonel reëntered the room. It was, as might have been expected, the sanctum of a recluse and a scholar. Large and well-worn books filled the shelves; there were loose papers, pens, and ink upon the table, a few deep chairs scattered about, one or two dusky engravings, and long windows flung wide open to the night air. The light was mellow and subdued, but through a half-open door streamed a white glare, plainly that of a high candle-power electric light.

The commander, softening his heavy tread, walked to the door and looked into a brilliantly illuminated and perfectly fitted-out laboratory. The low pur of a small dynamo broke the stillness, and then another sound, the light tinkle of falling glass. The doctor and his servant were bending over the long laboratory table. In the white downpour of light from the fixture of incandescents above lay the lifeless bodies of three pigeons.

"What is this?" demanded the officer sharply. There was more of challenge than of question in his tone.

He thought that the doctor gave a start, whether a guilty one or not it would be hard to say. The German was slow in jumping to conclusions. He did not invariably assume that every man was doing what he would do under similar circumstances. It is by this painstaking recognition of his enemies' differences from himself that the Teuton avoids some of the mistakes of

this our complicated life—not all, but many.

The doctor's momentary show of confusion was covered so quickly and gracefully that the soldier was moved to respect. With the inevitable smile and shrug the man of science indicated the elaborate electric installation and the limp birds on the table.

"Your excellency has heard of electrical anæsthesia?" he said easily. "The partial paralysis of the nerve centers by means of graduated voltage?"

"I have seen one or two experiments in Berlin."

"Ah! You are interested in science?"

"I was not interested in this. The subjects all died—like yours."

"It was first experimented in," proceeded the doctor, without commenting on this, "to reform the present rather barbarous method of electrocuting criminals, but some of us believe that it has other and more general uses. Personally, I am endeavoring to achieve the degree of anæsthesia which will produce unconsciousness without stopping the heart. It may in time supplant ether and gas, and I am convinced that it is less harmful than chloroform."

"Indeed?" remarked the colonel dryly. "I should hardly have said so from the look of your subjects."

The doctor sighed gently. "'There are losses in every trade,'" he quoted. "Your own also."

"Oh, yes," said the soldier, with rather a grim smile. "There are without doubt losses in mine."

His tired eyes seemed to contract as if to focus upon an inner vision. Perhaps he was looking once more upon that awful river of flesh which had broken in wave after wave of reeking blood on the vast and jagged banks of steel. "Oh, yes, there are losses!" he repeated, and flung off the gruesome phantoms that still seemed screaming about him.

Doctor Morelle touched one lifeless little body. His hands were finely molded, strong and sensitive, handsome hands, but singularly cruel. They were not the hands of a soldier, but they were hands capable of killing without hesitation or compunction. They would not shrink from blood, the colonel was sure. Again the delicate, steady fingers stroked a soft breast. No, they would not withdraw from the blood of men any more than they did from the dead flesh of birds and beasts.

"These pigeons," went on the doctor, without emotion, "are unusually sensitive to scientific experiments. The organism is nervous, and peculiarly responsive. I have been increasing the electric voltage for some time——"

The German advanced and laid his own muscular brown hand upon the plumage of the nearest bird. The small heart was still; the eyes closed, save for the merest dull slit. "Gradually," he commented, shrugging in his turn. "But, it would seem, not gradually enough, Herr Doktor!"

The scientist nodded gravely.

"As your excellency says, not gradually enough, it would seem," he agreed. "Jules! Take these things away!"

Jules, leering sardonically with his one eye, took up the basket and dropped the dead birds into it as carelessly as though they had been potatoes. As he was about to leave the laboratory, the doctor stopped him, adding: "Since they are dead, anyway, you may tell Antoine to make a pigeon pie for his excellency's and my breakfast."

The commander laughed outright, a hearty, man-sized laugh.

"My dear Herr Doktor!" he exclaimed. "I should have credited you with more diplomacy! We thick-witted Teutons have had Latin subtlety dinned into our imaginations like the proverbial ogre of the fairy tales. Is it possible that, like the ogre, it is only a myth, after all?"

The doctor showed slight, very slight,

embarrassment, but he appeared to have great self-control.

"What do you suspect, monsieur?" he asked, smiling. "That I have perhaps poisoned the flesh of these birds?"

The colonel laughed again, more ironically this time. He pointed to where, under the laboratory table, lay a tiny bottle, uncorked.

"You did not kick it far enough out of sight!" he explained. "Let us see what traces remain in it. As you guessed, I am interested in science, and know something of chemistry myself."

He picked up the vial, smelled it, and examined it closely.

"Not prussic acid," he said, 'nor yet —it may have been arsenic. But that is a small matter. Herr Doktor, was it really worth while to poison yourself as well?"

"For that—one takes one's chances," the Frenchman replied. "But, monsieur, I ran no risk. The birds, I assure you, are not poisoned."

"I had a similar experience once before," said the German colonel thoughtfully. "Some one being willing to swallow poisoned food as a guarantee of good faith, in order to make the enemy eat it. But in that case it was a woman, and women do mad things. Besides, she had provided herself with an antidote, and, though she was ill, she did not die—not then, at least."

"Ah! But her enemy did?"

"Yes."

"She was not, by any chance, a Frenchwoman?" asked the doctor, with interest.

"She was," rejoined the colonel grimly. "She had the honor to be shot as soon as she recovered from the poison."

"Ah!" murmured the doctor, shaking his head. "As I said before, one takes one's chances. But, your excellency, can I give you no convincing proof of my—er—my *own* good faith? The pigeon pie—that is, as you said of that bottle, a small matter. But I am truly hurt that you still will not accept my word, as your host, that your meals here will not be tampered with. See! I have thought of a proof! I have a good friend, Jean de Soulis—Vicomte de Soulis—who lives less than a mile from here. He often rides over for *déjeuner*. I will telephone him to breakfast with us in the morning. He, too, shall eat of the pigeon pie, the pie made of these selfsame pigeons, monsieur! One of your aids shall keep watch of Antoine while he cooks them. And your excellency surely does not think that I would poison my friend De Soulis?"

"There will be no telephone messages!" said the German crisply. "We, too, can telephone in open code. The world has learned that a hasty dispatch to the effect that little Mary has diphtheria has sunk a ship or two before now! No, Herr Doktor, I think we will not invite the vicomte to breakfast. But, since the pigeons are not poisoned, and you give me your word that it is entirely safe to eat them, we will send them to your friend with your compliments. It is possible that he, too, has a taste for pigeon pie for breakfast!"

He laughed as he saw the two Frenchmen start—unmistakably this time. A low, guttural exclamation escaped from the mouth of the servant, but the doctor, after a breathless moment, composed himself. He was even whiter than he had been before, but there remained no trace of confusion in his dark and unswerving gaze.

"I will send them," he said quietly. "Jules——"

The German checked him.

"Pardon!" he said quickly. "The night is dark, and your man might—lose them on the way. I will send an orderly."

The Frenchman stood for a moment looking down. Then he lifted his head

with a deep breath. The shrug came more slowly than usual.

"One takes one's chances; we are at war," he said. "Do as you will, monsieur. And then—may I persuade you to drink a glass of wine with me? You may see the cork drawn yourself!" he added, with a faint smile.

Fifteen minutes later they sat smoking and sipping at the great oak table. The lights in the laboratory were out; only the shaded glow from the student lamp shone between them. The night outside was very still. The low talk of the soldiers downstairs had ceased; the château, save for the two men in the study, was wrapped in quiet.

"And now," said the German colonel, "let us talk. I may tell you now, Herr Doktor, that I am waiting here for another detachment of troops——"

The first light of dawn found them still seated there, exchanging the fragmentary, endlessly suggestive narratives and impressions of men who have lived long, and through many strange happenings. Enemies though they were, there sprang up between them that odd freemasonry which is predestined between exceptional men, whether they are friends or adversaries. As the night wore away, the scientist had seemed to expand in a curious way, to grow more alert, more fully alive and tense. A keener light was in his eyes; his speech came not less fluently, but more swiftly. So does a stream gather speed and volume as it nears the rocks.

"Your excellency," he said at last as he played with the stem of his wine-glass, "you have, believe me, done me an injustice; but, paradoxical as it sounds, you have, in doing so, paid me a high compliment!"

The growing dawn red crossed the sallower light of the room, and, in the blending of rays, the man's face showed clear and sharp. For the first time the commander could see the lines of strain about the thin, coldly compressed mouth. A fine head the fellow had; his methods had been surprisingly primitive, not to say crude, for a person who promised so much intellectuality.

"So, Herr Doktor?"

The Frenchman smiled. Perhaps it was the crossed lights and shadows that even as he smiled gave to his face a sinister, if momentary, grimness.

"You spoke last night—not many hours ago—of the Latins' reputation for subtlety," he said, speaking slowly and gazing not at his companion, but at the glass of wine glowing ruby crimson in the waxing sunrise. "I think that it is a not undeserved reputation. But subtlety is a very difficult quality to—let us say, apprehend. If it were readily recognizable it would not be subtle. The art which conceals art is the most artistic—*nicht wahr?*"

They both smiled; he pronounced German very badly.

"I think I see your point," the soldier said doubtfully. "You mean that there is a deep below deep, a diplomacy below diplomacy, a policy behind the most politic intrigue, a subtlety which conceals itself beneath the obvious and the commonplace as a deep pool conceals itself beneath ice. Is that it?"

"You understand admirably!" said the Frenchman almost warmly. "Indeed, it is because yours is a remarkably quick and comprehending mind——"

"For a German's?" suggested the other, with a somewhat boyish grin.

The doctor made a deprecating motion with his hand, and continued: "It is because I find you an unusual man that I pay *you* the compliment of explaining my"—he hesitated—"apparatus."

"Apparatus?" repeated the colonel, puzzled. "Now you have beaten me! I do not understand."

"This laboratory," said Le Docteur Morelle, "with its paraphernalia of wires, dynamos, insulators, conductors;

its shelves of chemicals; its crucibles, its test tubes, its microscopes—all are part of a vast apparatus, but only a part. The rest of it is installed in the brains of France, in the multiple, infinite, and well-nigh invisible organization which radiates from castle and cottage, hangar and fortification, trench and factory; connecting as delicately as wireless, as surely as the cable, as relentlessly as a sunken mine."

The colonel considered this, and as he did so he let his cigar go out. He was watching the doctor closely.

"You may have heard it mentioned," he remarked, "that we also have a—spy system."

"Precisely!" smiled the doctor. "Your organization of espionage is the most complete in the world, but not always—you will pardon me?—not invariably the most intangible, the most—*enfin!*—subtle!"

"No?" said the German. He laid the dead cigar on the table, and stiffened slightly in his chair.

"No. Another glass of wine, monsieur?"

The officer shook his head. "Go on!" he said briefly, after one restless glance toward the brightening window. The doctor seemed to read his brain with uncanny exactness.

"They should be here by now—your reënforcements?" he said sympathetically. "How unfortunate if they have been cut off! However, let us finish what we were discussing. Your excellency, did you seriously imagine that if I had wanted to poison you I should have let you see the birds and the drug bottle?"

"Get to the point!" the soldier said sharply and with straining eyes. "It was a—trick?"

"But naturally! I had the best of reasons for wanting to send the pigeons to my friend the vicomte; my thanks to your orderly, by the bye, for carrying them: You see, I was watched, and De Soulis was not. You fell into the trap so nonchalantly, with so much pride in your acumen, so much malicious naïveté in turning the tables on me, that I was greatly amused, your excellency. Jules also. I feared for Jules' gravity at one moment; his sense of humor is not—subtle!"

The colonel was on his feet.

"You were watched!" he repeated. "You wished to send the pigeons! Then they were not dead! Something that you were not able to do with them could be done by your friend because he was not watched!"

"He could set them free, monsieur!" The doctor did not rise, but there was white-hot triumph blazing in his face. "The anæsthesia would not last more than half an hour, you see!"

"Gott!" gasped the German. "I understand! The detachment *has* been cut off——"

"Listen!" Morelle raised a finger. "You hear nothing? Some little time ago I thought I heard distant shots, but it may have only been imagination."

A horseman, shouting excitedly, galloped into the courtyard.

"One of my scouts!" burst hoarsely from the officer's lips.

There was a rush of spurred boots on the floor downstairs. An aid appeared, white-faced, in the doorway.

"Your excellency!" he cried.

The commander waited to fling a fierce question to the still man at the table. "Carrier pigeons?" he rasped.

"Carriers, of course, monsieur, with messages for the French general staff, fifteen miles away."

The white-faced doctor lifted his wineglass to his lips.

"I drink to them!" he said. "They were too good to waste on a pigeon pie, your excellency!"

On the wild, sweet morning wind came the bugle call, thin and thrilling, of the French cavalry.

Call It Luck!

By Howard Fielding

Author of "The Murder of Jack Robinson," "The Brown Flare," Etc.

After a closely contested game between two ball teams you will hear the wise victor say, "The game broke our way." But why did it break that way? Is it possible to figure the causes responsible for the break of the game, or must we call it luck! The question will occur to you while you read this excellent and decidedly uncommon tale of two Harvard-Yale ball games.

FREDERICK LYNDE inherited a moderate fortune which multiplied in his hands, though he was not an ardent money-maker. The chief source of his wealth was half a dozen parcels of real estate in the Harlem section of New York City, bequeathed to him by a frugal maiden aunt whose investments had been prophetically guided. The nephew managed this property well enough after it passed to him, and in the course of years acquired other interests. His name appeared in the "Directory of Directors," in the "Blue Book," in "Who's Who," and had once been found by the police in a list of wealthy men compiled for professional purposes by a burglar.

Mr. Lynde was mildly prominent in politics, and his good looks and pleasant style of oratory made him a figure in campaigns; but he attained only appointive offices, chiefly in the diplomatic service, and none of them very exalted except the post of ambassador to Italy, which he held for a short time. At the age of fifty-one he was living in New York without other occupation than the care of his estate. He was youthful for his years, enjoyed life, played a good game of golf, and when well warmed up could make his athletic son extend himself at tennis.

The son, Frederick, junior, was in his last year at Harvard, where his record had been in all things satisfactory, and in the sports distinguished. He had been a football star, visible even while Brickley shone with his incomparable effulgence, and for two years he had covered third base for the varsity nine. Here he was treading in the footsteps of his father, for the elder Lynde, some thirty years ago, had been a great performer in the hot corner of the Harvard diamond, wherefore he took the more pleasure in his son's success at that arduous station.

The ex-ambassador would not have missed the series with Yale upon any consideration. He went to Cambridge for the first game, and had the satisfaction of beholding a hard-won victory, in which, however, his son had no very conspicuous part. It is not possible to make star plays on easy chances, and the sensational value of a couple of hits depends largely upon when they come.

The next game would have been played at Yale on the following day,

and the third—in case of a tie—at Ebbett's Field, in Brooklyn, on Saturday of that week; but New Haven was visited by an almost unprecedented thunderstorm and cloudburst in the middle of Monday night, and the Yale bowl seemed to have been the central point of attack. The diamond, especially in the region of the home plate, suffered something that might be called a washout, and several days would be required for repairs. Attempts to secure another field in New Haven were not successful, and the result was that the second game was postponed one day and played on the Brooklyn grounds.

Fred Lynde spent the night before the game in his father's house, but he was absent for about two hours in the early part of the evening, somewhat mysteriously, Mr. Lynde thought. It was nearly ten o'clock when he appeared, and by training rules he should have gone to bed, but he expressed a wish to have a talk. His mien was serious, and the elder Lynde wondered what was coming. Debts, perhaps; but that didn't worry him; they would be neither heavy, nor tainted with dishonor. He had confidence in Fred.

"I've just seen a classmate of yours, father," he began. "It's Mr. Weld; I've been over there where he lives; a little flat on the West Side, about the size of five suit cases in a row, but very prettily fixed up."

"Is he down again, poor fellow?" said the ex-ambassador. "Seems to me I heard something about it."

"His company failed last February," said the young man. "It was a business depending on something made in Germany, and the war knocked it out. He lost everything."

"Too bad; I'm sorry," said Mr. Lynde. "But I'm afraid that if it hadn't been the war it would have been something else. Weld has never made a success, though he was one of the brightest men in our class. I always liked him."

"You helped him once, didn't you, father?"

"Yes; I pulled him out of a hole some years ago. In fact, I'd done it on a previous occasion."

"Did he pay you back?" the young man asked eagerly.

"The first time, yes; that was a small matter; and as to the other I have no complaint to make. I lent him a considerable sum, and took a series of notes. He paid all but one, with difficulty and after several renewals. His scheme didn't come out the way he thought it would, and eventually it floored him."

"And he didn't pay the last note?"

"He didn't have to, my boy," Mr. Lynde responded, with an amiable smile. "It happened to be so drawn that it was nominally due on Christmas Day. I looked the matter up early in December of that year, found that Weld was on the brink of another disaster, and sent him the note as a Christmas present—with very good will, too. I was sorry for him."

"You'd be sorry if you saw him now," Fred responded. "He looks ten years older than you do, dad. But he's putting up a fine fight; not a bit discouraged, though it must be hard to live the way they do."

"They? Oh, yes; he has a daughter. That's all, I believe."

"Just Celia," said the youth, with a peculiar sweetness. He took a deep breath. "She was in Radcliffe, but she had to give it up. Didn't come back after the Easter vacation. Wasn't that a shame?"

The ex-ambassador looked a bit uncomfortable as he made a sign of assent.

"I wrote you, father, that I'd met her. That was in January."

"Yes," said Mr. Lynde. "I remember your writing."

His tone did not encourage to more intimate confidences, and Fred took up another part of the subject.

"Mr. Weld has a great chance, if he can only take it," he said. "He has two business opportunities, in fact, but one of them needs capital. The other"—his voice changed, and he ended the sentence differently from his original intention—"the other is no good."

It was an opportunity for Mr. Weld to go to Buenos Aires as the representative of an American company. He would have to take Celia with him, virtually off the earth. Decidedly this did not look good to Fred Lynde.

"It's an unfavorable time to get capital," said Mr. Lynde; "and Weld's record doesn't invite investment. I'm afraid he'll have to take the other chance. What is it?"

Fred was unskilled in diplomatic evasion.

"Something in South America," he said.

Mr. Lynde heard this with satisfaction, which he carefully concealed. He could not regard Celia Weld as a brilliant match for his son.

"You know I'm not going to study law," said the young man. "I'm going into business. We agreed on that in March."

"Not by a jugful," said his father. "I still advise the law. As a preparation for public life——"

"I don't want to go into politics. No, sir; business for me, and as soon as possible. I want to be doing things. I asked Mr. Weld this evening if there was room for me in his game, but he didn't bite very hard; in fact, that seemed to shut him off from talking any more about it. He'd already said that he was under obligations to you, and I thought perhaps he might owe you money and feel a delicacy on account of it."

"He needn't. But he knows what I think of his business ability."

"Will you talk to him about his plans?" Fred asked very earnestly. "Will you advise him if he comes to you?"

The ex-ambassador reflected briefly.

"It would be useless, I'm afraid," he said. "I don't feel disposed to capitalize his scheme, whatever it is, and I certainly couldn't let you go into it."

"Aren't you unjust to him, father? Hasn't he really been unlucky?"

"Bad luck," said the elder Lynde sententiously, "is the name that incompetence goes by when it's at home. We are the masters of our fate."

The young man knew that his admired and respected sire was talking nonsense. To say that we are masters of our fate is not to express an opinion, whether right or wrong, but merely to deprive a solemn word of all significance. If any man ever controlled his luck, he didn't have any, and he wasn't a man. He was omniscient and omnipotent, and had nothing to do with luck, which, by definition, is what we don't know and can't control. But it seemed impolitic to introduce these arguments, and besides he remembered having once tried to convince this same gentleman that a penny is as likely to fall heads as tails, though it has fallen heads ten times in succession—if it's an honest penny tossed by a man of equally good character. Apparently his father was a little weak on the theory of probabilities, both mathematically and philosophically, but it would be better to obscure their difference by a momentary assent.

"Yes, father; that's true enough; but you can't always do it the first time. Mr. Weld may have made a lot of errors, but I'd like to see him get another chance. From what I know, it looks as if he'd got the worst of the break in every game. You've been a ball player, dad; you know what that means."

"Which reminds me that you ought

to be in bed," said his father, rising. "As for Mr. Weld, I'll make some inquiries. I'll go as far as that, my boy, to please you."

"That's good of you, dad; thank you very much," said the young man heartily. "They're going to be at the game to-morrow, Mr. Weld and Celia. I've got seats for them."

But Mr. Lynde had gone as far as he cared to, and he didn't suggest that there would be room for the Welds in the box which he had reserved on the third-base side of the field. The discussion was closed for the night, and it was not resumed on the following morning.

A fine day for baseball, warm, with a sky not too bright, and no wind to speak of. College honors of the year were between Harvard and Yale; both nines were unusually strong when the stars were on the field, but both had suffered loss of second-string men, especially pitchers, a condition which lends value to the short end of a bet. The game at Cambridge had been red-hot, and another of the same kind was anticipated. More than fifteen thousand enthusiasts turned out to see it, and the display of blue and crimson was unusually profuse.

Mr. Lynde, as an old ball player, watched the preliminary practice with a critical eye, and observed that Frederick, junior, was in rare form, fast as lightning. That was what made Frederick, senior, shake his head, remembering the old days. In some respects he had been as good a player as his son, but in speed, no; a carthorse to a racer.

Possibly the boy was speeded up a little by the knowledge that he was performing in the presence of a certain young lady. Mr. Lynde had already looked about for her, thinking that she might be seated not very far away. Fred would probably have wished him to see her. He wondered whether he should recognize her from the single view he had had when she was a child, very pretty and well behaved; but of course he wouldn't have to depend on this memory because Johnny Weld was to be with his daughter—rather a waste of time for a man in his position. They must be in another part of the stands, and Lynde turned back to see Harvard taking the field for the first inning.

It proved not to be a very thrilling contest in the early frames, but certainly there was nothing to distress a backer of the Crimson. The batting was rather light on both sides, but Harvard's long hits came when there were men on bases and Yale's didn't. The score at the end of the fifth inning was Harvard five, Yale nothing.

The ex-ambassador beheld his own judgment in the course of being justified by the event. He had picked the winner at Cambridge, and again this afternoon. Harvard was "the class"; anybody could see that who understood the game. It was a pity that Fred didn't get more to do, but at any rate he had scored the last tally of the five, on a walk, a sacrifice, and a long single.

Lynde saw the boy look up into the stands as he walked out toward his station after that inning, and, following the direction of that glance, the diplomat's eye lighted on a man. Good Lord! Can that be Johnny Weld? A dozen times Lynde must have looked him full in the face, but now he had a view in profile, and the fine, straight lines were unmistakable. Johnny Weld, beyond a doubt, but grown so old. Lynde turned away hastily, and put up a hand to his bare head as if he could assure himself by the sense of touch that his own hair had not turned white.

He had caught only a glimpse of Celia this time, but he had already noticed her without suspecting who she was; in fact, he was a little afraid that he might have stared at her. She was a very beautiful girl, strikingly fair

amidst the general color of the throng, always a little darker every year, and now that he had seen her face with her father's in precisely similar presentment, like two portraits on a cameo, he was amazed that he should have failed to identify her by the close resemblance.

It would be regrettable if he should seem to slight a man for whom he had done a favor, a man who was now in trouble, needing help again, and doubtless aware that this was known. Weld might properly have thought him very much a cad. He turned now with deliberation, but the two faces were still in profile and he failed to catch Weld's eye.

An uproar suddenly arose on the other side of the field. He wheeled about and saw that the first Yale batter in the sixth had made what proved to be a two-base hit, but he was caught presently trying to get home on a short single, and the next batter hit into a double play.

There was nothing more of a startling nature till the eighth, when Yale scored twice on solid slugging. Harvard came back with one, and the count stood Harvard six, Yale two.

While the crimson team was taking the field for the ninth, Mr. Lynde looked over his shoulder again, and this time straight into his classmate's eyes. To obliterate any unpleasant impression, the diplomat waved his hand with plenteous cordiality, and even shouted out a greeting which was drowned in cheers. This happened just as Fred Lynde was pulling on his glove, glancing toward his father's place as he did so. He saw that wave of the hand, and mistook it for an item in a wireless correspondence full of good will which had been going on between his sire and the Welds.

"They'll meet after the game sure. It's all right. Father'll ask them to ride home in the car. Great!" And the current of vital force in Fred's body was too suddenly turned into new channels. He lost that fine balance and coordination of nervous power which is essential to the athlete.

Yale went to the bat with all the encouragement that noise can give. The situation might have seemed hopeless, but the noble rally in the preceding turn at bat had waked the backers of the Bulldog, and they howled to Heaven. The one real chance was to rattle the Harvard pitcher, whose worse fault was a tendency to lose his nerve when the break of the game went against him. What the wise ones on the Yale side of the field prayed for was that something would drop at the very start of the inning. It dropped.

Stuart, Yale's second baseman and captain, who headed the batting list, was the first man up in this frame. He hit a fairly warm bounder straight at Fred Lynde, who handled it like a nervous woman trying to pick up a dollar bill which she has dropped at Broadway and Forty-second Street on a windy afternoon. When he got it the blue-legged runner was capering off first base, hoping to draw a wild throw across the diamond.

Lynde resisted temptation, and returned the ball to Leslie, the Harvard pitcher, who muffed it, thereby showing what had been done to him by Lynde's error. The Yale crowd laughed and yelled.

Bannard, left fielder, was the next at bat. He beat out a bunt to Leslie, and the first two stations were occupied. O'Neil, guardian of the middle pasture for the blue, then came up, and tried to put Leslie further to the bad by getting a walk, but he advertised it too openly, and Leslie fanned him. It was Harvard's turn to cheer.

Stuart scored on a solid single by Caswell, and Bannard took third. Erwin beat out an infield hit, scoring Bannard and putting Caswell on second.

But it was Harvard six, Yale four, with one man gone, and the weak part of the Blue's batting order had been reached. A nice double play would settle the business, and the infield was coaching Leslie to "put 'em over; let him hit it."

The man up was Foster, and he hadn't made anything that resembled a hit in the series thus far. He looked like a mark, but Leslie couldn't find the plate, and handed out a pass, to his own infinite disgust. It was Harvard six, Yale four, and the bases full, with one man gone.

Kent, the Yale catcher, came to the bat, and the blue stands besought him to clean up. He had been known to do it, but not often; his record in the series did not justify any great alarm in the Harvard camp. True to his reputation among those who couldn't see him as a batter, Kent hit a pop foul, and Fred Lynde went after it. The catch looked impossible, but Fred was a sprinter, and he picked the ball off his shoetops so close to the box in which his father sat that it looked for an instant as if he would knock his brains out on the wall. He escaped, however, and received a cheer somewhat reduced in volume by the memory of his recent transgression and by the stifling anxiety which permeated the Harvard crowd. The bases were still full, and a good hit would tie the score.

"Stocky" Lannigan, third base for Yale, then strode to the plate. He looked formidable, but the fact was that he rarely hit anything except fouls of preposterous length, and that his specialty was striking out in the pinches. Leslie had expected to see a substitute batter, and he experienced a spasm of relief. All he had to do was to use a curve and keep it away from the pan. Stocky was never known to wait.

The first one didn't break quite right, and Stocky reached it with a ferocious swing, but it went foul by a yard, and Leslie breathed again, though with difficulty. The next ball he sent in had nothing on it but a touch of nervous prostration, and Stocky swung again, apparently with his eyes shut. There was a crack like a rifle shot, and the ball sailed into the right-field stands for a home run and a total of four tallies.

In the midst of pandemonium, Prentice, the Yale pitcher, went out on a fly to left, but less than half the crowd saw him do it.

The score was Harvard six, Yale eight. Six runs had been harvested in that awful inning, and Fred Lynde's error loomed as the provoking cause. The ex-ambassador saw his son walk in with bowed head, but it was the elder member of the family who felt the worse. He glanced backward toward the Welds on an impulse of sympathy. Celia was standing up, waving a little red banner and trying to attract Fred's attention. Through all the noise her clear voice came to Mr. Lynde's ears. She was exhorting her father.

"He's going to bat next," she said. "Cheer him."

Celia evidently knew the game, and kept track of it. Mr. Lynde himself had forgotten that his son was due at the bat, and now he watched Fred walk to the plate without a sign of nervousness, sustained by loyalty, experience, and natural grit. He smote the ball on the trade-mark, and it sailed far to left field, exactly into Bannard's hands.

The next man popped to Captain Stuart, the next obliged "Paws" Caswell, the first baseman, with the easiest of flies, and the game was Yale's. It was a sad one to lose, and the ex-ambassador left the field with such a brow of gloom as might have been the subject of international correspondence if he had been seen to wear it in Rome five years ago. He was so cast down that he avoided the irritation of speaking to the Welds; he didn't feel like

being amiable, and any other sort of demeanor might be misinterpreted. He went out alone to his car, where he waited for his son.

It was unpleasant to think that the boy was being roasted and guyed in the dressing room at that moment, but probably it was true. Something consolatory would be in order, and the ex-diplomat was sorry to feel himself forbidden by prudence to adopt the one sure means. The promise he had already made, to inquire into Weld's affairs, was perfectly hollow, and he was not prepared to give it any solidity. He decidedly preferred that Weld should go to South America. The alternative would probably be to carry the man, more or less, for the remainder of his life, and be saddled with a sentimental responsibility for the daughter afterward, even though Fred's entanglement should be prevented.

It is hard to stop helping a friend when you've once begun. His subsequent requests may be devoid of merit, but his need will be real and will appeal to sympathy. Lynde regarded himself as too sympathetic, the fact being that he mistook a supersensitiveness to pain for a much nobler quality. He didn't like to be hurt by a story of misfortune, and he unwisely supposed that this mere weakness was a virtue or at least the accurate measure of one. It is a common error. The truth was that he had been very fortunate and much too comfortable, and had come to regard his luck as an appropriate reward for the exercise of sound judgment, his comfort as a personal right.

There had been little that was comfortable in Johnny Weld's life, and perhaps that was the deep, unrecognized reason why Lynde so strongly favored a South American exile for his classmate and the pretty daughter. His mental habit made him feel his son to be in danger of marrying from the sphere where things go right into the outer darkness where they always go wrong.

He was so deeply engaged in meditation that he did not see his son approaching till roused by the close sound of footsteps. He turned quickly, and for an instant Fred looked strange to him, larger and more powerful in the beauty of his youth. He seemed to have taken the loss of the game rather seriously, a little sternly perhaps, his father thought.

In fact, Fred had forgotten that the national game existed. His disappointment because the Welds were not in his father's car was equal to the loss of forty ball games, but the elder Lynde did not suspect this.

"Hard luck, my boy," said he, "but it only ties up the series. You have another chance."

It seemed a good time to say something about the advisability of giving everybody another chance, but the young man had given his father a good one that afternoon, and he hadn't accepted it, so what was the use of bringing up the subject?

"Rank error, dad, wasn't it?" he said. "I cut the guy rope all right, and the balloon went up. There's no alibi."

"You made a fine catch of that foul," his father said, pumping up enthusiasm. "I didn't think you'd get within fifty feet of it."

"I'd forgotten that play," said Frederick, junior. "You're the first to remind me."

And they talked baseball all the way home. After dinner, however, Frederick, junior, made one further play in the more serious game. He owned that he was very seriously impressed by Celia Weld and that he earnestly and reasonably desired to continue the acquaintance, which he couldn't do if she were carried off to Buenos Aires. And then his feelings got the better of him, and he gave a brief description of Celia as she appeared to him. It lasted only

about two hours, and was necessarily inadequate, but he had to cut it short and take a train for Cambridge. The best that he got in return for this effort was an admission that Celia was beautiful and of good descent—this and a renewal of his father's promise to make inquiries.

The promise proved not to be quite so empty as the elder Lynde had thought it was when he made it. On the following day he stumbled upon a source of information as to Weld's affairs, and was able to learn all the essentials. He discovered that the failure in which Weld had just been involved had no dishonorable features, and that it had burdened him with only a small indebtedness which could not embarrass him in any subsequent venture. Moreover, the scheme which he desired to capitalize looked decidedly good; to such a degree, in fact, that Lynde was amazed at Weld's inability to find a backer. Weld couldn't know how to go about it; he must be presenting the case badly. At any rate, he had been reckless to invest every dollar of the little he had saved out of the previous wreck in an option which would be totally valueless after the expiration of the time limit. And it had only a few more days to run.

Convinced that Weld had a good thing, and distressed by the thought that the fellow was about to lose his last dollar, Lynde was really tempted to assist him with the necessary money, which was not a very large sum. The position in Buenos Aires offered little but a living at the best. Weld might hold it for a few years, and then die down there or be displaced in favor of a younger man. To compare the two opportunities was absurd.

The matter weighed upon Lynde like a personal responsibility in spite of repeated denials to himself that it was anything of the sort. Moreover, he knew that he was risking some part of his son's regard and affection. The money hazard was a small matter compared to that. He appreciated Fred's attitude in the affair; it had been admirably restrained. The boy had done no more than state the case with a fine display of sentiment so far as Celia was concerned, but with no pleading, no begging. He might have said: "Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me," but he had steadily refrained from any such suggestion or any hint of a rebellious spirit. Lynde was very much better pleased with his son's behavior than with his own, which had lacked sincerity, for he had concealed his design to let Weld go to South America and even to speed his departure with a little money if that would help.

Naturally, Weld was a thorn in Lynde's conscience, a haunting and uncomfortable thought, and with a man of Lynde's type this did not tend toward justice. On the contrary, he felt more strongly that Weld was a condemned, inveterate failure whom it would be folly to back in any undertaking, a man with whom he could not afford to have any further relations, business or social. It never occurred to him to reconsider his own judgment of the man. He took the accuracy of that for granted.

Fred came home on Friday evening. He was just as steady and cool as he had been before, and the conversation on the inevitable topic was difficult only on the father's side. He had to do something unpleasantly near to lying in his reference to the inquiry into Weld's affairs.

"The business proposition seems not so bad as far as I can find out," he said with irritation which he tried to conceal, "but no business is fool-proof. Weld would manage it, and that would constitute a fatal weakness. I care nothing for the loss of my own money,

but others will be interested, and I can't shoulder the responsibility for them."

"Can't they shoulder it for themselves, father?" said Frederick, junior, mildly. "There's nothing tricky or dishonest about it, is there?"

"No, no; not at all," Lynde admitted. "It's a mere question of incompetency, proved incompetency." And that was about as far as they advanced in the matter.

The next day dawned clear, and the afternoon was altogether like the one on which the previous game of the Harvard-Yale series had been held. It seemed to Lynde, sitting in the same box, that the same persons were in attendance, with about five thousand others who had been attracted by the story of the hot finish which had made the former contest memorable.

Lynde was among the early arrivals, and he came alone as before. It was a ball game to him, not a social function. He wanted to enjoy the play, unhampered by any duties, undisturbed by foolish questions. He supposed that the Welds would have their former places, and he had hardened his heart to avoid them. He would exchange greetings and that would be all, but as often as he took his eye off the preliminary practice and looked behind him, the two seats were still vacant.

Possibly Weld had not been able to spare the time from his affairs, though nobody could do anything on a Saturday afternoon at that season. He might even be ill, and this thought marred Lynde's agreeable excitement. He had been on edge for this game, "rooting" with a vigor unsurpassed by any youthful enthusiast. It was disagreeable to have this confounded thing on his mind, and when at last he saw the gray-haired man and the pretty girl coming toward their seats, he felt somewhat as if they had tardily discharged a duty to himself.

He bowed and lifted his hat, and felt relieved. A little later he turned again, as the crowd behind him raised an unusually inspiring cheer, and he saw Celia standing, as nearly all the others were, and lending her voice to swell the chorus. Her heightened color was becoming, the blue of her eyes was very clear even at that distance; it seemed to flash out toward the field, and Lynde knew the direction of its aim. She was so pretty that he felt a thrill of pride for his son's sake. He noticed that she wore the same dress and hat as before; probably the poor girl had no other costume that would answer.

The additional five thousand spectators seemed to be partisans of Yale, and the previous majority for Harvard had been overcome. Lynde could not remember to have heard so much cheering at a ball game; it broke loose with reason or without. Nothing could discourage the Yale contingent. They had seen Harvard go to pieces once, and they were bent on doing their part to make it happen again. It *had* to happen if Yale was to escape disaster, for Harvard took the lead at the start, and continued clearly to outplay the Blue.

The nines had taken the field without change from the previous game. Neither of them had a second-string pitcher in condition. Lynde had been rather sorry to see Leslie go in again, but he knew that it was unavoidable. Fred had told him that Allerton was ill and that Hemenway was so lame he couldn't lift a hand to brush his hair; Leslie would not only have to go in, but he'd have to stay there if it was humanly possible to keep him steady.

The crimson's star pitcher began well, certainly, and as the game went on he seemed to be working at top form. Seven consecutive eggs were hung up on the scoreboard for Yale, and meanwhile Harvard had tallied three in the second frame and two in the fifth. It would have looked like a walk-over,

except for Wednesday's horrible warning.

In the eighth Harvard scored once, and Yale—last at the bat on this occasion—suddenly waked up and hammered in two runs. A great and growing murmur ran through the Yale stands, and presently spread across the field: "Six to two; the same as Wednesday." The backers of Eli had drawn to the only card in their hand, superstition. It was rather weak, but something desperate had to be done. The game and the series were in a fair way to be lost in the next few minutes. It was time to call on the gods.

A crowd is always waiting to be deceived by a prophet, and at this juncture one arose, or possibly several in collaboration, uttering an oracle in verse. A cheering squad took it up, and presently the whole Yale contingent seemed to be pouring it forth:

> The same as before,
> The same old score.
> We'll down Johnny Harvard
> One time more.

The same old welkin which has rung so often rang one time more to this infantile stanza, and the ex-ambassador, having at last succeeded in catching the words in the midst of babel, was so much affected that he wiped his sweating palms on his trousers and glared fiercely, following the ball with catlike watchfulness. In imagination he was playing third base again. Half a minute later, in the person of his son, he was at the bat, for it happened that Fred came up first in the ninth, as in the former game. The coincidence was noted by a few, and communicated to the others, and when Fred went out on a long fly it looked like fate. His successors were easily disposed of, and the blue camp roared for victory.

Lannigan was the first man up for Yale, and the Harvard pitcher seemed to be afraid of him. He tossed up a curve so wide that the catcher fell on his stomach to reach it. Where the second offering was intended to go has never been revealed, but in fact it met the end of Lannigan's bat, and subsequently went through a blue parasol in a box on the right wing of the field, fortunately without damage to the parasol's owner. Stocky trotted all the way around the bases to an accompaniment of frenzied cheers.

Prentice hit one over the shortstop's head, and it looked good, but the left fielder was playing in, and he got it. Harvard expressed a due appreciation, but it was drowned in Yale's outcry, which did not for a moment subside.

Stuart hit to third, and the ball took a high bound. Lynde knocked it down and then couldn't find it till too late. A wild roar arose from the Yale stands, and it increased when Bannard bunted safely, sending Stuart to second. O'Neil fanned, but there was no let-up in the noise on the blue side of the field, though the score was Harvard six, Yale three, with two men gone and a possible play at three corners of the diamond.

Ex-Ambassador Lynde tried to tell himself that the game was as good as won, but he failed to reach his inwards with conviction, and everybody else on the crimson side seemed to be equally unreasonable. To Mr. Lynde's experienced ears the Harvard cheering sounded like the voice of duty fainting on an empty stomach.

Caswell singled, scoring Stuart, while Bannard took third on the throw to the plate. Harvard six, Yale four. Erwin beat out a queer fluke toward first, of the nature of a bunt, and Bannard came home. Harvard six, Yale five. Foster walked, and the bases were full. The Harvard pitcher's face was the color of ashes as Kent came to the plate. Anything that put this batter on first would give the game to Yale, for a tie was no use. Leslie was all in, and there was nobody to replace him.

Two men were warming up, but it was a mere formality. Neither of them was fit to pitch, and Leslie knew it.

He had no monopoly of this information; he shared it with twenty thousand of his fellow citizens. The wise ones had told the others. It was get Kent or lose the game. Leslie's control was gone, and he didn't dare to put anything on the ball. A pass would be as bad as a hit. He laid the responsibility on the men behind him, and sent one over in the groove. Kent had been coached to walk if he could, but this little floater was too young and tender, and he swung his club to kill it.

The ball shot up into the air. It was a foul into the left wing of the stand, by the instantaneous judgment of the ex-ambassador, who had been sitting about three inches above his chair, with hands on knees, in the attitude of an infielder. He judged the ball at the crack of the bat, and his eyes were glued to it as it rose. He thought it would fall into his box or a little behind it, and instinctively he straightened up to make a catch over his head. Then he saw that the fly was falling short, and the next instant a figure flashed across his field of vision, dived for the ball at the last possible instant before it touched the ground, and held it.

A howl to which all antecedent clamor had been silence shattered the air. "Lynde, Lynde, Lynde!" The articulate word shot through the uproar like lightning leaping out of thunder. And the ambassador, whose misjudgment of the ball had prevented him from thinking of a possible play, stood dazed, staring at his son.

Frederick, junior, was in somewhat the same condition as a result of having bumped the wall after the catch. He was incapable of conforming to the etiquette for heroes in such circumstances, which provides that they shall run away from what they know is coming. It came with a rush and caught young Lynde in his tracks. Instantly he was hoisted on the shoulders of howling giants and borne away, while his father looked out upon this scene, deafened by the sound of his own name. Memories of his fortunate youth, of triumphs swift and sweet, surged up and thrilled him with that peculiar pang, that sense of having grown old suddenly and of having waked from a malign enchantment to confront the irreparable loss.

It came to his mind that Fred's day, too, had passed. This was the boy's last college game, for even though he should eventually yield to persuasion and enter the law school, he would be ineligible under the rules to play again. Twenty-odd years hence there might be another Lynde wearing a red H on his bosom, and Fred might stand beside a field like this—perhaps so fortunate as not to be alone, not to have been bereaved. It was even possible that he himself might live to be present on that occasion. A shiver went over him, and he glanced around for a man of seventy-five or thereabouts, as it were his own image in the mirror of the future.

He discerned no such veteran lagging superfluous in the departing throng, but he did see Johnny Weld and his daughter, the girl unrestrainedly exultant, a beautiful and glorious presence. Possibly it was her look of triumph, even more than her beauty, which affected Lynde and made him understand with sudden clearness that here was an adversary who might conquer him and take his son away. It would be well to know a little more about her.

He had now moved into a human tide confluent with that which was sweeping the Welds along. A meeting was virtually inevitable, and any touch of coolness in this atmosphere of enthusiasm would be disagreeably marked.

"Hello, Johnny!" he cried as they

drifted together. "What do you think of my boy?"

"He plays third base just like his father," Weld responded, "when he's standing still. You were speedy for those days, Fred, but the pace quickens."

This bit of chaff came crisply out. Nothing in Weld's voice or manner indicated that the modern pace had been too fast for him. Somehow he didn't look so old as on Wednesday; there was a difference in his bearing. The thought flashed through Lynde's brain that Weld might have found a backer in the meantime. If this was true, the South American exile would have been averted, and the case of Fred and Celia would have become a serious problem with no apparent answer. He doubted the wisdom of trying to separate these two young persons by an edict, but he was as far as ever from desiring a match between his son and Johnny Weld's daughter.

While these thoughts were in his mind, he had begun to speak with Calia, who seemed to attach no more importance to the incident than would have been natural in the most ordinary circumstances. Her references to the younger Lynde were as open as the day. She evidently saw nothing in this acquaintance except what was pleasant to all concerned.

This was not quite what Lynde had anticipated. He knew that Fred had not declared himself as yet, but the boy could hardly have disguised his sentiments so well that Celia had entirely failed to perceive them; and, though she might be the least mercenary of her sex, she couldn't help preferring a rich marriage to a poor one. Still she might possess her father's constitutional inability to do well in life.

He decided suddenly to see Fred and Celia together. This would assist his own judgment, and would please the boy, who certainly deserved something in the way of a reward.

"Won't you let me take you home in my car?" said he. "Plenty of room. Nobody else going but Fred."

Celia was delighted and took no pains to conceal it. She turned a bright face to her father, waiting for him to accept the invitation, which he did readily enough.

As they sat in the car, Lynde continued his study of the girl. She gave the impression of a stronger personality than he had expected of a daughter so conspicuously like her inefficient father. She had the externals of distinction; it remained to see whether she had any forceful qualities of mind or power of control over events. More probably she had inherited serious weaknesses of character, the sort of thing which made her father a perennial failure. This, in a woman, hampers and drags down the man she marries. He finds himself obliged to lead her life as well as his own, his energy dispersed and wasted upon petty domestic difficulties, illnesses, and so-called accidents which her incompetence creates.

Celia had given up her college course at the first assault of trouble. It was a suspicious circumstance. It would be interesting to learn whether she had really tried to face the situation or had stayed at home because she couldn't have any new spring clothes.

Meanwhile, Lynde was keeping a sharp lookout for his son, anxious not to miss the spectacle of his surprise and pleasure. It was worth seeing, and the subsequent grip of the hand was worth getting, if the recipient's fingers could endure the strain. The boy seemed to be keyed up pretty high, and even to have something else on his mind besides his own glory and the joy of seeing Celia. He received the shower of congratulations amiably enough, but he was evidently waiting with ill-restrained excitement for his own chance to speak.

"Did you notice anything freaky

about these two games," he said at last, addressing his father especially; "this one and Wednesday's?"

"They ran very much alike," Lynde replied, "up to the finish. Yale's finish, I mean. That was different."

"That's the queerest part of it," said the young man, taking a card out of his pocket. "I got hold of the two scores in the dressing room, and I copied off Yale's ninth from both of them. You never keep score, father; perhaps you didn't notice that they were exactly alike."

"Impossible!" the elder Lynde rejoined. "Yale scored six runs on Wednesday, and only three to-day."

"The game broke our way to-day, that's all, dad. Look at the scores." And he gave the card to his father, who read as follows:

YALE	June 23	June 26
Stuart 2b.	e5 ·	e5 ·
Barnard l.f.	B ·	B ·
O'Neil c.f.	KK	KK
Caswell 1b.	+ ·	+
Erwin s.s.	+ ·	+
Foster r.f.	BB ·	BB
Kent c.	ff5	ff5
Lannigan 3b.	HR ·	HR ·
Prentice p.	f9	f9
Runs	6/8	3/5

Stuart first at bat, ninth inning, June 23.
Lannigan first at bat, ninth inning. June 26.

For the benefit of those who do not keep score or who use different symbols, this explanation is provided: e5, error by third baseman; x, single base hit; KK, struck out; B, a safe bunt; BB, a base on balls; ff5, foul fly caught by third baseman; HR, home run; f9, fly caught by left fielder, and the dot means a run. The figures at the foot of the columns show the runs made in the inning, and also the totals.

The ex-ambassador viewed this exhibit with astonishment. He remembered the main features, his son's plays in a general way, though he had forgotten just how they had come in—Lannigan's home run and a few other high spots—but he could not have filled in the details. Of course, as an ex-ball player, he now understood what the luck had done, and he also understood the point of the argument as applied to certain judgments of his with which his son was not entirely satisfied. As the elder Lynde had no intention of reversing his judgments aforesaid, he naturally tried to minimize the force of the argument.

"The score doesn't show the base running," he objected.

"It isn't worth showing," Fred rejoined. "There wasn't anything in it. The men simply had to move. Nine cripples could have got away with all the base running. Stuart came home from second, but he could have done it on one leg."

Mr. Weld was now studying the card.

"It seems to have depended on the fact that Lannigan batted first in the ninth inning to-day," he said. "Who was responsible for that?"

"The man who retired Kent in the eighth," Fred replied. "I've forgotten who he was, and so has everybody else. And, anyhow, the causes of that event run back to creation, and include eighteen ball players and all their ancestors. It was the break of the game."

"Are you trying to prove that you're not a hero?" Celia said. "No, sir; you beat Yale, and I saw you do it."

"I beat Harvard the other day, and you saw me do it," he responded earnestly but gently. "I had two chances just like those in the day's game, and I played them the same way. I was a dog on Wednesday, and a hero to-day for precisely identical merit and performance. Guess I've learned something. I'll never be able to say after

this that Harvard has failed to give me an education."

"Well," said his father, "there's meat in this certainly. It's a lesson, as you say; it's taught you a point about life. The accident of conspicuous position will often command more honors and rewards in this world than ten years of good work. You're a fine ball player, my boy, but not because you've been carried on the shoulders of the crowd. I'm glad you know it."

This was in the way of an admission, and it was gravely and kindly spoken. It smote Fred under the fifth rib, because he knew that he had made a very yellow error in courtesy, of the kind that his father never failed to notice. The fact was that Fred had not expected to find the Welds in the car, and had copied off the two scores as material for a private session with his father; but the matter had lain so near the surface of his excited mind that he had not been able to suppress it. He shouldn't have provoked this veiled discussion under the circumstances, and he knew it, and was very grateful to his father for taking it so well.

He got aboard the car and sat with Celia in the forward part. The car was large enough for two conversations with a reasonable degree of privacy for each. On the rear seat, Weld carried the burden of the talk at first, with lively comment on current topics. Lynde listened sufficiently and replied when necessary, but the chief part of his attention was given to his own thoughts.

He had been impressed by Fred's queer demonstration of what can be done by the break of the game, but not to the extent of believing that Weld's career had been a matter of luck. He was studying Weld's cheerful demeanor. It was not assumed; it was not merely temperamental; it seemed not to be based on either hope or courage. It looked like a well-restrained pleasure in a very great relief; and the more Lynde considered it, the more thoroughly he became convinced that Weld had found the capital he required.

Lynde despised trickery, but as an ex-diplomat he could not help perceiving the opportunity to square himself with his son. Anything that savored of an offer to assist Weld would more than restore the entente cordiale with Fred, and if no help was now needed no damage would be done.

Certainly this looked somewhat ignoble, yet it couldn't harm any one unless his own present inference was mistaken, in which case he alone would be the victim. He reasoned with himself that this made the performance clean; we are constrained to use some stratagems with the young for their own good.

His line of sophistry was broken by a question asked by Weld. Was Fred going back to Cambridge to study law? The matter was still in doubt, Lynde replied.

"I hope he will," said Weld. "Celia will be there next year, and Fred is just the sort of young man that I like her to have as a friend. She's arranged matters so that she won't lose her place in her class. I didn't want her to stay out this term, but she insisted. I was pretty hard up, but she had saved some money and could have paid her own way, anyhow, by tutoring, if that were necessary. But she knew where she was needed, and she stayed. She's been a tremendous help to me with advice and encouragement, to say nothing of the work she's done at home, taking all care off my hands. I had a mighty good but difficult business chance, requiring capital, and if it hadn't been for Celia I——"

"Why didn't you say something about it, Johnny?" Lynde interposed, not daring to wait longer. "Why didn't you come to me?"

"That's very kind of you," said Weld

"It seemed to me, in view of what you did some years ago, that it was somebody else's turn to help me get a new grip. As a mere matter of investment, there wouldn't be enough in the game to interest you; but for a man who would come in with me as a working partner and bring a little business with him, it's a good thing. You remember Hetherington?"

"Paul Hetherington? In '87? Certainly. By George, he's the very man!"

"That's what he is," said Weld. "I landed him this morning. He's been in England; and I waited and waited, sweating blood, and trying to land somebody else, of course, in the meantime; but Paul showed up in New York on Thursday, and I've got him."

"On the right terms?"

"Right to both of us. There's nothing on paper yet, but I'm going out to his home to-morrow and violate my rule against Sunday work by drawing up the papers. We covered all the points to-day, in conversation. I was with him till half past one. He brought Celia and me to the game in his car, and then went on to his home. He lives at Babylon, as you probably know."

"Yes," said Lynde. "I've been down there. He has a nice place. Well, old man, I sincerely congratulate you. Hetherington is absolutely honest, and a live wire besides. You couldn't have done better."

Weld proceeded to give details of the scheme, already known to Lynde, though he didn't disclose that fact. He merely commented and approved, and expressed his confidence cordially.

Meanwhile, in the other conversation, Celia had communicated the glad tidings, and had erased South America from the map. Fred's only regret was that his father had not backed the game, but he had caught a few words over his shoulder which had made him feel better about that; and he was saying to himself: "He never would have let Mr. Weld fall through with this. Dad is the right sort."

The car halted in Longacre Square, at Forty-sixth Street, while the east-and-west traffic had its chance. Fred bought a newspaper and looked for an account of the game.

"Stung!" he said. "This is an early edition." He crumpled it up and threw it under the seat.

Three minutes later, they stopped at the door of an apartment house, decent in its poverty and not quite so dreary as the average; and the whole party alighted for farewells. Lynde congratulated his classmate again, and then waited by the car while Fred went with Celia to the door.

The young man returned, with a countenance so strangely altered that his father was alarmed.

"What's wrong, Fred?" he asked.

Fred pulled the crumpled newspaper from under the seat, and pointed to a leaded story on the first page, brief but put in double column to give more display to the headlines:

PAUL HETHERINGTON DIES UNDER OVERTURNED AUTO.

Rich Business Man is Victim of Fatal Accident Near His Babylon Home.

The rude and hasty words brought the tragedy naked to one's mind. Fate's own unhesitating and ruthless brutality was well portrayed.

"Father, you know what this means to Mr. Weld. His option expires next week."

Lynde looked at his son, and nodded in token of full understanding. He put up a hand to his lips, and stood staring, his breath expelled at intervals in audible, quick emptying of the lungs.

"I suppose this sort of thing is unequally distributed," he said slowly. "Some men get more of it than others —a lot of blind men, we are, I guess, walking amid obstacles set at random. Call it luck if you will."

"Mr. Weld doesn't know," said Fred, "but Celia does. She saw it when I opened the paper. Didn't she take it like a thoroughbred? She merely whispered to me—and took hold of my arm just for a moment. I asked her, there on the steps, not to tell him till I came; so I can't go home with you——"

"Go up and tell Mr. Weld that I'll assume Hetherington's verbal agreement. Ask him to come to my house to-morrow. And don't let this make you superstitious, my boy; it's just an accident of life."

Fred took his father's hand with a strong grip.

"I knew you'd do it, dad," he said.

He walked toward the house, but Lynde called him back, in a somewhat hesitating voice.

"I guess I won't give Johnny Weld's luck so good a chance against me," he said, with a very sickly smile. "Bring him down here, and Celia, too. We'll have them dine with us to-night, and I'll put this matter on paper in the course of the evening."

Fred took the newspaper and went into the house. For perhaps ten minutes his father paced back and forth before the door; then the boy appeared with the two dinner guests, Weld a little pale but steady.

"We'll telephone to Babylon from my house," Lynde said, "though I suppose there's nothing we can do except offer our sympathy."

He turned to the chauffeur.

"Home, Julius," he said, "and—er—drive carefully."

MILKING A RAILROAD

ONE of the most pleasing and profitable occupations in finance is milking a railroad—to the one who gets the milk.

Some years ago, the Kansas City Southern was practically owned by stockholders in Holland, who have always been heavy investors in American railways. The road was bankrupt, so they asked a very prominent railroad financier to assume its management for five years and give it the benefit of his genius.

At the end of the five years, the road was in worse shape than before, and the dissatisfied stockholders began an investigation. They found that the financial genius had placed the road's name in black letters on the door of his Broadway offices, charging it six thousand dollars a year for the honor. He had voted himself a salary of twenty-five thousand dollars a year, as chairman, during the five years of the road's poverty. Furthermore, he had used the road as a feeder for his own lines, diverting its traffic, even to the extent of having all the trees cut down in its territory, to produce more freight, so that most of the sawmills along the line were compelled to close. In fact, it had been milked about dry.

The angry stockholders appointed Herman Sielcken, the coffee king, as their representative, and the latter managed to get the road away from the railroad genius. He selected L. F. Loree to rehabilitate the property, who, by the development of the oil industry in the Texas territory, so quickly effected the prosperity of the road that his success attracted the attention of E. H. Harriman, who placed Mr. Loree in charge of the Delaware & Hudson Railroad.

The Lazy A

By B. M. Bower

Author of "The Last Stand," "Fortune's Football," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF FIRST PART

Nothing but content and harmony had possessed the Lazy A Ranch until one fair day in June a murdered man, Johnny Croft, was found on the kitchen floor. Suspicion falls upon the owner of Lazy A, big Aleck Douglas; and his faithful helper, Lite Avery, increases that suspicion by lying loyally. Though his reputation was unblemished hitherto, Aleck Douglas receives a sentence of eight years in the penitentiary. Little Jean, his daughter, is given into the guardianship of Lite Avery, who promises to make her the best rider and shot in the region. But Jean is bitter against mankind because of the injustice done her father. And her feeling even extends to her father's brother, Carl, and his wife, with whom she goes to live at Bar Nothing Ranch. For comfort, she frequently rides over to her old home, the Lazy A, and dreams of rehabilitating it. Once, while staying there, she discovers that mysterious visitors have been prowling about the place, and the next day runs into a moving-picture outfit at work on outdoor scenes: also they had calmly taken some Lazy A cattle for picture purposes. Jean holds them up and demands explanation. The director, Robert Grant Burns, endeavors to explain, but Jean does not like their cheek. Later, she and Lite rescue the movie folk when their auto gets stuck in sand. Carl Douglas, the uncle Jean dislikes, rents the Lazy A Ranch to the picture outfit for temporary purposes. This Jean resents, though she finds herself interested in their work. Burns sees in Jean possible material for the screen, and angers his leading lady, Muriel Gay, by telling her to study the Western girl.

(*A Four-Part Novel—Part Two*)

CHAPTER IX.

A MAN-SIZED JOB FOR JEAN.

JEAN was just returning, wet-lashed, from burying the little brown bird under a wild rosebush near the creek. She had known all along that it would die; everything that she took any interest in turned out badly, it seemed to her. The wonder was that the bird had lived so long after she had taken it under her protection.

All that day her Aunt Ella had worn a wet towel turbanwise upon her head, and the look of a martyr about to enter a den of lions. Add that to the habitual atmosphere of injury which she wore, and Aunt Ella was not what one might call a cheerful companion. Besides, the appearance of the wet towel was a danger signal to Jean's conscience and forbade any thought of saddling Pard and riding away from the Bar Nothing into her own dream world and the great outdoors. Jean's conscience commanded her instead to hang her riding clothes in the closet and wear striped percale and a gingham apron, which she hated; and to sweep and dust and remember not to whistle, and to look sympathetic—which she was not particularly—and to ask her Aunt Ella frequently if she felt any better and if there was anything Jean could do for her. There never was anything she could do, but conscience and custom required her to observe the ceremony of asking. Aunt Ella found some languid satisfaction in replying dolorously that there was nothing that anybody could do and that her part in life seemed to be to suffer.

You may judge what Jean's mood was that day, when you are told that she came to the point, not an hour be-

fore the bird died, of looking at her aunt with that little smile at the corners of her eyes and just easing her lips. "Well, you certainly play your part in life with a heap of enthusiasm," she had replied, and had gone out into the kitchen and whistled when she did not feel in the least like whistling. Her conscience knew Jean pretty well, and did not attempt to reprove her for what she had done.

Then she found the bird dead in the little nest she had made for it, and things went all wrong.

She was returning from the burial of the bird, and was trying to force herself back to her normal attitude of philosophic calm when she saw her Uncle Carl sitting on the edge of the front porch with his elbows resting loosely upon his knees, his head bowed, and his boot heel digging a rude trench in the hard-packed earth.

The sight of him incensed her suddenly. Once more she wished that she might get at his brain and squeeze out his thoughts—and it never occurred to her that she would probably have found them extremely commonplace thoughts that strayed no farther than his own little personal business of life, and that they would easily be translated to the dollar sign. His attitude was one of gloomy meditation, and her own mood supplied the subject. She watched him for a minute or two, and his abstraction was so deep that he did not feel her presence.

"Uncle Carl, just how much did the Lazy A cost you?" she asked so abruptly that she herself was surprised at the question. "Or, putting it another way, just how many dollars and cents did you spend in defending dad?"

Carl started, which was perfectly natural, and glared at her, which was natural also when one considers that Jean had without warning opened a subject tacitly forbidden upon that ranch. His eyes hardened a little while he looked at her, for between these two there was scant affection.

"What do you want to know for?" he countered, when she persisted in looking at him as though she was waiting for an answer.

"Because I've a right to know. Some time—within four years—I mean to buy back the Lazy A. I want to know how much it will take." Until that moment Jean had merely dreamed of some day buying it back. Until she spoke she would have named the idea a beautiful, impossible desire.

"Where you going to get the money?" Carl looked at her curiously, as if he almost doubted her sanity.

"Rob a bank, perhaps. How much will it take to square things with you? Of course, being a relative, I expect to be cheated a little. So I am going to adopt sly, sleuthlike methods and find out just how much dad owed you before—it happened, and just how much the lawyers charged and what was the real market value of the outfit and all that. Dad told me—dad told me that there was something left over for me, and that he had turned things over to you. He didn't explain what he meant—there wasn't time, and I—couldn't listen to dollar talk then. I've gone along all this time, just drifting and getting used to facts and taking it for granted that everything is all right——"

"Well, what's wrong? Everything is all right far as I know. I can see what you're driving at——"

"And I'm a pretty fair driver, too," Jean cut in calmly. "I'll reach my destination, I think—give me time enough."

"Whatever fool notion you've got in your head, you'd better drop it," Carl told her harshly. "There ain't anything you can do to better matters. I came out with the worst of it, when you come right down to facts, and all the nagging——"

Jean went toward him as if she would strike him with her uplifted hand.

"Don't dare say that! How can you say that—and think of dad? He got the worst of it. He's the one that suffers most—and—he's as innocent as you or I. You know it."

Carl rose from the porch and faced her like an enemy. "What do you mean by that? I know it? If I knew anything like that do you think I'd leave a stone unturned to prove it? Do you think——"

"I think we both know dad. And some things were not proved—to my satisfaction, at least. And you know how long the jury was out and what a time they had agreeing. Some points were weak. It was simply that they couldn't point to any one else. You *know* that was it. If I could find Art Osgood——"

"What's he got to do with it?" Her Uncle Carl leaned a little and peered into her face, which the dusk was veiling.

"That is what I want to find out." Jean's voice was quiet, but it had a quality which he had never before noticed.

"You'd better," he advised her tritely, "let sleeping dogs lie."

"That's the trouble with sleeping dogs—they do lie more often than not. These particular dogs have lied for nearly three years. I'm going to stir them up and see if I can't get a yelp of the truth out of them."

"Oh, you are!" Carl laughed ironically. "You'll stir up a lot of unpleasantness for yourself and the rest of us is what you'll do. The thing's over and done with. Folks are beginning to forget it. You've got a home——"

Jean laughed, and her laugh was extremely unpleasant.

"You get as good as the rest of us get," her uncle reminded her sharply. "I came near going broke myself over the affair, if you want to know, and you stand there and accuse me of cheating you out of something! I don't know what in Heaven's name you expect. The Lazy A didn't make me rich, I can tell you that. It just barely helped to tide things over. You've got a home here, and you can come and go as you please. What you ain't got," he added bitterly, "is common gratitude."

He turned away from her and went into the house, and Jean sat down upon the edge of the porch and stared away at the dimming outline of the hills, and wondered what had come over her.

Three years on this ranch, seeing her Uncle Carl every day almost, living under the same roof with him, talking with him upon the everyday business of life, and to-night, for the first time, the forbidden subject had been opened. She had said things that she had not until lately realized were in her mind. She had never liked her Uncle Carl, who was so different from her father, but she had never accused him in her mind of unfairness until she had written something of the sort in her ledger. She had never thought of quarreling, and yet one could scarcely call this encounter less than a quarrel. And the strange part of it was that she still believed what she had said; she still intended to do the things she declared she would do. Just how she would do them she did not know, but her purpose was hardening and coming clean-cut out of the vague background of her mind.

After a while the dim outline of the high-shouldered hills glowed under a yellowing patch of light. Jean sat with her chin in her palms and watched the glow brighten swiftly. Then some unseen force seemed to be pushing a bright, yellow disk up through a gap in the hills—and the gap was almost too narrow, so that the disk touched either side as it slid slowly upward. At last it was up, launched fairly upon its leisurely, drifting journey across the farther hills behind her. It was not quite round. That was because one

edge had scraped too hard against the side of the hill perhaps. But warped though it was, its light fell softly upon Jean's face and showed it set and still and stern-eyed and somber.

She sat there a while longer, until the slopes lay softly revealed to her, their hollows filled with inky shadows. She drew a long breath then, and looked around her at the familiar details of the Bar Nothing dwelling place, softened a little by the moonlight, but harsh with her memories of unhappy days spent there. She rose and went into the house and to her room, and changed the hated striped percale for her riding clothes.

A tall, lank form detached itself from the black shade of the bunk house as she went by, hesitated perceptibly, and then followed her down to the corral. When she had gone in with a rope and later led out Pard, the form stood forth in the white light of the moon.

"Where are you going, Jean?" he asked her in a tone that was soothing in its friendliness.

"That you, Lite? I'm going—well, just going. I've got to ride." She pulled Pard's bridle off the peg where she always hung it, and laid an arm over his neck while she held the bit against his clenched teeth. Pard never did take kindly to the feel of the cold steel in his mouth, and she spoke to him sharply before his jaws slackened.

"Want me to go along with you?" Lite asked, and reached for her saddle and blanket.

"No, I want you to go to bed." Jean's tone was softer than it had been that whole day. "You've had all the riding you need. I've been shut up with Aunt Ella and her favorite form of torture."

"Got your gun?" Lite gave the latigo a final pull which made Pard grunt.

"Of course. Why?"

"Nothing—only it's a good night for coyotes, and you might get a shot at one. Another thing, a gun's no good on earth when you haven't got it with you."

"Yes, and you've told me so about once a week ever since I was big enough to pull a trigger," Jean retorted, with something approaching her natural tone. "Maybe I won't come back, Lite. Maybe I'll camp over home till morning."

Lite did not say anything in reply to that. He leaned his long person against a corral post and watched her out of sight on the trail up the hill. Then he caught his own horse, saddled it leisurely, and rode away.

Jean rode slowly, leaving the trail and striking out across the open country straight for the Lazy A. She had no direct purpose in riding this way; she had not intended to ride to the Lazy A until she named the place to Lite as her destination, but since she had told him so she knew that was where she was going. The picture people would not be there at night, and she felt the need of coming as close as possible to her father; at the Lazy A, where his thoughts would cling, she felt near to him—much nearer than when she was at the Bar Nothing. And that the gruesome memory of what had happened there did not make the place seem utterly horrible merely proves how unshakable was her faith in him.

A coyote trotted up out of a hollow facing her, stiffened with astonishment, dropped nose and tail, and slid away in the shadow of the hill. A couple of minutes later Jean saw him sitting alert upon his haunches on a moon-bathed slope, watching to see what she would do. She did nothing, and the coyote pointed his nose to the moon and yap-yap-yapped a quavering defiance and slunk out of sight over the hill crest.

Her mind now was more at ease than it had been since the day of horror when she had first stared black tragedy

in the face. She was passing through that phase of calm elation which follows close upon the heels of a great resolve. She had not yet come to the actual surmounting of the obstacles that would squeeze hope from the heart of her; she had not yet looked upon the possibility of absolute failure.

She was going to buy back the Lazy A from her Uncle Carl, and she was going to tear away that atmosphere of emptiness and desolation which it had worn so long. She was going to prove to all men that her father never had killed Johnny Croft—"Crofty," as men had called him in the easy-mannered Western fashion. She was going to do it. The life would begin where it had left off three years ago. And when this deadening load of trouble was lifted, then perhaps she could do some of the glorious, great things she had all of her life dreamed of doing. Or, if she never did the glorious, great things, she would at least have done something to justify her existence. She would be content in her cage if she could go round and round doing things for dad.

She reached a level stretch of country that lay at the foot of the long bluff which farther along held the Lazy A Coulee close against its rocky side. The high ridges stood out boldly in the moonlight, so that she could see every rock and the shadow that it cast upon the ground. Little, soothing night noises fitted themselves into her thoughts and changed them to waking dreams: Crickets that hushed while she passed them by; the faint hissing of a half-wakened breeze that straightway slept upon the grasses it had stirred; the sleepy protest of some bird which Pard's footsteps had startled.

She came into Lazy A Coulee half fancying that it was a real home-coming. But when she reached the gate and found it lying flat upon the ground away from the broad tread of the picture people's machine, her mind jarred from dreams back to reality. From sheer habit she dismounted, picked up the spineless thing of stakes and barbed wire, and dragged it into place across the trail and fastened it secure to the post. She remounted and went on, and a little of the hopefulness was gone from her face.

"I'll just about have to rob a bank, I guess," she told herself, with a grim humor for the tremendous undertaking to which she had so calmly committed herself. "This is what dad would call a man-sized job, I reckon." She pulled up in the white-lighted trail and stared long at the empty, sagging-roofed sheds and stables and at the corral with its open gate and warped rails and leaning posts. "I'll just about have to rob a bank—or write a book that will make me famous."

She touched Pard with a rein end, and went on slowly. "Robbing a bank would be the quickest and easiest," she decided whimsically as she neared the place where she always sheltered Pard. "But not so ladylike. I guess I'll write a book. It should be something real thrilly, so the people will rush madly to all the bookstores to buy it. It should have a beautiful girl—and at least two handsome men, one with all the human virtues and the other with all the arts of the devil and the cruel strength of the savage. And—I think some Indians and outlaws would add several dollars' worth of thrills; or else a ghost and a haunted house. I wonder which would sell the best? Indians could steal the girl and give the two handsome men a chance to do chapters of stunts, and the wicked one could find her first and carry her away in front of him on a horse—they do those things in books!—and the hero could follow in a mad chase for miles and miles——

"But, then, ghosts can be made very creepy, with tantalizing glimpses of

them now and then in about every other chapter, and mysterious hints here and there, and characters coming down to breakfast with white, drawn faces and haggard eyes. And the wicked one would look over his shoulder and then utter a sardonic laugh. Sardonic is such an effective word; I don't believe Indians would give him any excuse for sardonic laughter."

She swung down from the saddle and led Pard into his stall, that was very black next the manger and very light where the moon shone in at the door. "I must have lots of moonlight and several stormy sunsets, and the wind soughing in the branches. I shall have to buy a new dictionary—a big, fat, heavy one with the flags of all nations and how to measure the contents of an empty hogshead, and the deaf and dumb alphabet, and everything but the word you want to know the meaning of and whether it begins with 'ph' or an 'f.'"

She took the saddle off Pard and hung it up by a stirrup on the rusty spike where she kept it, and the bridle hung over the stirrup, and the saddle blanket folded over the horn. She groped in the manger, and decided that there was hay enough to last him till morning, and went out and closed the door. Her shadow fell clean upon the rough planks, and she stood for a minute looking at it as if it were a person. Her Stetson hat tilted a little to one side, her hair fluffed loosely at the sides leaving her neck daintily slender where it showed above the turned-back collar of her gray sweater; her shoulders, square and capable and yet not too heavy, and the slim contour of her figure reaching down to the ground. She studied it abstractedly, as she would study herself in her mirror, conscious of its individuality—its likeness to herself.

"I don't know what kind of a mess you'll make of it," she said to her shadow, "but you're going to tackle it just the same. You can't do a thing till you get some money."

She turned then, and went thoughtfully up to the house and into her room, which had as yet been left undisturbed behind the bars she had placed against idle invasion.

The moon shone full into the window that faced the coulee, and she sat down in the old, black wooden rocker and gazed out upon the familiar, open stretch of sand and scant grass growth that lay between the house and the corrals. She turned her eyes to the familiar, bold outline of the bluff that swung round in a crude oval to the point where the trail turned into the coulee from the southwest.

Halfway between the base and the ragged sky line, the bowlder that looked like an elephant's head stood out, white of profile, hooded with black shade. Beyond was the flat shelf of ledge that had a small cave beneath, where she had once found a nest full of little, hungry birds and upon the slope beneath the telltale, scattered wing feathers to show what fate had fallen upon the mother. Those birds had died also, and she had wept and given them Christian burial, and had afterward spent hours every day with her little rifle hunting the destroyer of that small home. She remembered the incident now as a small thread in the memory pattern she was weaving.

While the shadows shortened as the moon swung high, she sat and looked out upon the coulee and the bluff that sheltered it, and she saw the things that were, blended cunningly with the things that were not. After a long while her hands unclasped themselves from behind her head and dropped numbly to her lap. She sighed and moved stiffly, and knew that she was tired and that she must get some sleep, because she could not sit down in one spot and

think her way through the problems she had taken it upon herself to solve. So she got up and crept under the Navaho blanket upon the couch, tucked it close about her shoulders, and shut her eyes deliberately. Presently she fell asleep.

CHAPTER X.

JEAN LEARNS WHAT FEAR IS LIKE.

Some time in the still part of the night which comes after midnight, Jean woke slowly from dreaming of the old days that had been so vivid in her mind when she went to sleep. Just at first she did not know what it was that awakened her, though her eyes were open and fixed upon the lighted square of the window. She knew that she was in her room at the Lazy A, but it seemed to her that she was there because she had always been sleeping there in that room. She sighed and turned her face away from the moonlight and closed her eyes again contentedly.

Half dreaming, she opened them again and stared up at the low ceiling. Somewhere in the house she heard footsteps. Very slowly she wakened enough to listen. They were footsteps—the heavy, measured tread of some man. They were in the room that had been her father's bedroom, and at first they seemed perfectly natural and right; they seemed to be her dad's footsteps, and she wondered mildly what he was doing up at that time of night.

The footsteps passed from there into the kitchen, and stopped in the corner where stood the old-fashioned cupboard with perforated tin panels in the doors and at the sides, and the little drawers at the top—the kind that old people call a "safe." She heard a drawer pulled out. Without giving any conscious thought to it she knew which drawer it was; it was the one next the wall—the one that did not pull out straight, and so had to be jerked out. What was her dad——

Jean thrilled then with a tremor of fear. She had wakened fully enough to remember. That was not her dad out there in the kitchen. She did not know who it was; it was some strange man prowling through the house, hunting for something. She felt again the tremor of fear that is the heritage of womanhood alone in the dark. She pulled the Navaho blanket up to her ears with the instinct of the woman to hide because she is not strong enough to face and fight the danger that comes in the dark. She listened to the sound of that drawer being pushed back, and the other drawer being pulled out, and she shivered under the blanket.

Then she reached out her hand and got hold of her six-shooter, which she had laid down unthinkingly upon a chair near the couch. She wondered if she had locked the outside door when she came in. She could not remember having done so—probably she had not, since it is not the habit of honest ranch dwellers to lock their doors at night. She wanted to get up and see and fasten it somehow, but she was afraid the man out there might hear her. As it was, she reasoned nervously with herself, he probably did not suspect that there was any one in the house. It was an empty house, and unless he had seen Pard in the closed stall——

She wondered if he had heard Pard there, and had investigated and found him. She wondered if he would come into this room. She remembered how securely she had nailed up the door from the kitchen, and she breathed freer. She remembered also that she had her gun there under her hand. She closed her trembling fingers on the familiar grip, and the feel of it comforted her and steadied her.

Yet she had no desire, no slightest impulse, to get up and see who was there. She was careful not to move.

except to cover the doorway to the kitchen with her gun.

After a few minutes the man came and tried the door, and Jean lifted herself cautiously upon her elbow and waited in grim desperation. If he forced that door open, if he came in, she certainly would shoot, and if she shot—well, you remember the fate of that hawk on the wing.

The man did not force the door open, which was perhaps the luckiest thing that ever happened to him. He fussed there until he must have made sure that it was fastened firmly upon the inside, and then he left it and went into what had been the living room. Jean did not move from her half-sitting position, nor did she change the aim of her gun. He might come back and try again.

She heard him moving about in the living room. Surely he did not expect to find money in an empty house, or anything else of any commercial value. What was he after? Finally he came back to the kitchen, crossed it, and stood before the barred door. He pushed against it tentatively, and stood still for a minute and then went out. Jean heard him step upon the porch and pull the kitchen door shut behind him. She knew that squeal of the bottom hinge, and she knew the final gasp and click that proved the latch was fastened. She heard him step off the porch to the path, she heard the soft crunch of his feet in the sandy gravel as he went away toward the stable.

Very cautiously she got off the couch and crept to the window, and, with her gun gripped tight in her hand, she looked out. But he had moved into the deep shadow of the bluff, and she could see nothing of him save the deeper shadow of his swift-moving body as he went down to the corral. Jean gave a long sigh of nervous relaxation and went back and crept shivering under the Navaho blanket. The gun she slid under the pillow, and her fingers rested still upon the cool comfort of the butt.

Soon she heard a horse galloping, and she went to the window again and looked out. The moon hung low over the bluff, so that the trail lay mostly in the shadow. But down by the gate it swung out in a wide curve to the rocky knoll, and there it lay moonlighted and empty. She fixed her eyes upon that curve, and waited. In a moment the horseman galloped out upon the curve, rounded it, and disappeared in the shadows beyond. At that distance and in that deceptive light she could not tell who it was; but it was a horseman, a man riding at night in haste, and with some purpose in mind.

Jean had thought that the prowler might be some tramp who had wandered far off the beaten path of migratory humans and who had stumbled upon the coulee and its empty dwellings and was searching at random for whatever might be worth carrying off. A horseman did not fit that theory anywhere. But that particular horseman had come there deliberately, had given the house a deliberate search, and had left in haste when he had finished. Whether he had failed or succeeded in finding what he wanted, he had left. He had not searched the stables, unless he had done that before coming into the house. He had not forced his way into her room—probably because he did not want to leave behind him the evidence of his visit which the door would have given, or because he feared to disturb the contents of Jean's room.

Jean stared up in the dark, and puzzled long over the identity of that man and his errand. And the longer she thought about it, the more completely she was at sea. All the men she knew were aware that she kept this room habitable and visited the ranch often. That was no secret; it never had been a secret. No one save Lite Avery had ever been in it, so far as she knew—

unless she counted those chance trespassers who had prowled boldly through her most sacred belongings. So that almost any one in the country, had he any object in searching the house, would know that this room was hers and would act in that knowledge.

As to his errand—there could be no errand so far as she knew. There were no missing papers such as plays and novels are accustomed to have cunningly hidden in empty houses. There was no stolen will, no hidden treasure, no money, no rajah's ruby, no ransom of a king—these things Jean named over mentally and chuckled at the idea of treasure hunting at the Lazy A. It was very romantic, very mysterious, she told herself. And she analyzed the sensation of little wet alligators creeping up her spine—that was her own simile—and decided that her book should certainly have a ghost in it; she was sure that she could describe with extreme vividness the effect of a ghost upon her various characters.

In this wise she recovered her composure and laughed at her fear, and planned new and thrilly incidents for her novel.

She would not tell Lite anything about it, she decided. He would try to keep her from coming over here by herself, and that would precipitate one of those arguments between them that never seemed to get them anywhere, because Lite never would yield gracefully, and Jean never would yield at all, which does not make for peace.

She wished, just the same, that Lite was there. It would be much more comfortable if he were near instead of away over to the Bar Nothing, sound asleep in the bunk house. As a self-appointed guardian, Jean considered Lite something of a nuisance—when he wasn't funny. But as a big, steady-nerved friend and comrade he certainly was a comfort.

CHAPTER XI.

LITE'S PUPIL DEMONSTRATES.

Jean awoke to hear the businesslike buzzing of an automobile coming up from the gate. Evidently they were going to make pictures there at the house, which did not suit her plans at all. She intended to spend the early morning writing the first few chapters of that book, which to her inexperience seemed simple, and to leave before these people arrived. As it was, she was fairly caught. There was no chance of escaping unnoticed, unless she slipped out and up the bluff afoot, and that would not have helped her in the least, since Pard was in the stable.

From behind the curtains she watched them for a few minutes. Robert Grant Burns wore a light overcoat which made him look pudgier than ever, and he scowled a good deal over some untidy-looking papers in his hands and conferred with Pete Lowry in a dissatisfied tone, though his words were indistinguishable. Muriel Gay watched the two covertly, it seemed to Jean, and she also looked dissatisfied over something.

Burns and the camera man walked down toward the stables, studying the bluff and the immediate surroundings and still talking together. Lee Milligan, with his paint-shaded eyes and his rouged lips and heavily penciled eyebrows, came up and stood close to Muriel, who was sitting now upon the bench near Jean's window.

"Burns ought to cut out those scenes, Gay," he began sympathetically. "You can't do any more than you did yesterday. And, believe me, you put it over in good style. I don't see what he wants, more than you have done."

"What he wants," said Muriel Gay dispiritedly ,"is for me to pull off stunts like that girl. I never saddled a horse in my life till he ordered me to do it in the scene yesterday. Why didn't he

tell me far enough ahead so I could rehearse the business? *Latigo!* It sounds like some Spanish dish with grated cheese on top. I don't believe he knows himself what it means."

"He's getting nutty on Western dope," sympathized Lee Milligan. "I don't see where this country's got anything on Griffith Park for atmosphere, anyway. What did he want to come away up here in this God-forsaken country for? What is there *to* it more than he could get within an hour's ride of Los Angeles?"

"I should worry about the country," said Muriel despondently, "if somebody would kindly tell me what looping up your latigo means. Burns says that he's got to retake that saddling scene just as soon as the horses get here. It looks just as simple," she added spitefully, "as climbing to the top of the Ferry Building tower and doing a leap to a passing airship. In fact, I'd choose the leap."

A warm impulse of helpfulness stirred Jean. She caught up her hat, buckled her gun belt around her from pure habit, tucked a few loose strands of hair into place, and went out where they were.

"If you'll come down to the stable with me," she drawled while they were staring their astonishment at her unexpected appearance before them, "I'll show you how to saddle up. Pard's awfully patient about being fussed with —you can practice on him. He's mean about taking the bit, though, unless you know just how to take hold of him. Come on!"

The three of them—Muriel Gay and her mother and Lee Milligan—stared at Jean without speaking. To her it seemed perfectly natural that she should walk up and offer to help the girl; to them it seemed not so natural. For a minute the product of the cities and the product of the open country studied each other curiously.

"Come on," urged Jean in her lazily friendly drawl. "It's simple enough once you get the hang of it." And she smiled before she added: "A latigo is just the strap that fastens the cinch. I'll show you."

"I'll bet Bobby Burns doesn't know that," said Muriel Gay, and got up from the bench. "It's awfully good of you—Mr. Burns is so——"

"I noticed that," said Jean, while Muriel was waiting for a word that would relieve her feelings without being too blunt.

Burns and Pete Lowry and the assistant had gone down the coulee, still studying the bluff closely. "I've got to ride down that bluff and rescue Lee from the outlaws," Muriel informed Jean, her eyes following her director gloomily. "He asked me last night if I could throw a rope. I don't know what for—it's an extra punch he wants to put in this picture somewhere. I wish to goodness they wouldn't let him write his own scenarios—he just lays awake nights lately thinking up impossible scenes so he can bully us afterward. He's simply gone nutty on the subject of punches."

"Well, it's easy enough to learn how to saddle a horse," Jean told Muriel cheerfully. "First you want to put on the bridle——"

"Burns told me to put on the saddle first, and then he cuts the scene just as I pick up the bridle. The trouble is to get the saddle on right, and then —that latigo dope!"

"But you ought to bridle him first," Jean insisted. "Supposing you just got the saddle on and your horse got startled and ran off? If you have the bridle on, even if you haven't the reins, you can grab them when he jumps."

"Well, that isn't the way Burns directed the scene yesterday," Muriel Gay contended. "The scene ends where I pick up the bridle."

"Then Robert Grant Burns doesn't

know. I've seen men put on the bridle last, but it's wrong. Lite Avery, and everybody who knows——"

Muriel Gay looked at Jean with a weary impatience. "What I have to do," she stated, "is what Burns tells me to do. I should worry about it's being right or wrong; I'm not the producer."

Jean faced her, frowning a little. Then she laughed, hung the bridle back on the rusty spike, and took down the saddle blanket. "We'll play I'm Robert Grant Burns, and don't know any better," she said. "I'll tell you what to do: Lay the blanket on straight—it's shaped to Pard's back, so that ought to be easy—with the front edge coming forward to his withers; that's not right. Maybe I had better do it first, and show you. Then you'll get the idea."

So Jean, with the best intention in the world, saddled Pard and wondered what there was about so simple a process that need puzzle any one. When she had tightened the cinch and looped up the latigo, and explained to Muriel just what she was doing, she immediately unsaddled him and laid the saddle down upon its side with the blanket folded once on top, and stepped close to the manger.

"If your saddle isn't hanging up, that's the way it should be put on the ground," she said. "Now you do it. It's easy."

It was easy for Jean, but Muriel did not find it so simple. Jean went through the whole performance a second time, though she was beginning to feel that nature had never fitted her for a teacher of young ladies. Muriel, she began to suspect, rather resented the process of being taught. In another minute Muriel confirmed the suspicion.

"I think I've got it now," she said coolly. "Thank you ever so much."

Robert Grant Burns returned then, and close behind him rode Gil Huntley and those other desperadoes who had helped to brand the calf that other day. Gil was leading a little sorrel with a saddle on—Muriel's horse evidently. Jean had started back to the house and her own affairs, but she lingered with a very human curiosity to see what they were all going to do.

She did not know that Robert Grant Burns was perfectly conscious of her presence even when he seemed busiest, and was studying her covertly even when he seemed not to notice her at all. Of his company, Pete Lowry was the only one who did know it, but that was because Pete himself was trained in the art of observation. Pete also knew why Burns was watching Jean and studying her slightest movement and expression—and that was why Pete kept smiling that little, hidden smile of his while he made ready for the day's work and explained to Jean the mechanical part of making moving pictures.

"I'd rather work with live things," said Jean after a while. "But I can see where this must be rather fascinating, too."

"This is working with live things, if anybody wants to know," Pete declared. "Wait till you see Burns in action; handling bronks is easy compared to——"

"About where does the side line come, Pete?" Burns interrupted. "If Gil stands here and holds the horse for that close-up saddling——" He whirled upon Gil Huntley. "Lead that sorrel up here!" he commanded. "We'll have to cut off his head so the halter won't show. Now, how's that?"

This was growing interesting. Jean backed to a convenient pile of old corral posts and sat down to watch, with her chin in her palms and her mind weaving shuttlewise back and forth from one person to another, fitting them all into the pattern which made the whole. She watched Robert Grant

Burns walking back and forth, growling and chuckling by turns as things pleased him or did not please him. She watched Muriel Gay walk to a certain spot which Burns had previously indicated, show sudden and uncalled-for fear and haste, and go through a pantomime of throwing the saddle on the sorrel.

She watched Lee Milligan carry the saddle up and throw it down upon the ground with skirts curled under and stirrups sprawling.

"Oh, don't leave it that way," she remonstrated impulsively. "Lay it on its side! You'll have the skirts kinked so it never will set right."

Muriel Gay gasped and looked from her to Robert Grant Burns. For betraying your country and your flag is no crime at all compared with telling your director what he must do.

"Bring that saddle over here!" commanded Burns, indicating another spot eighteen inches from the first. "And don't slop it down like it was a bundle of old clothes. Lay it on its side. How many times have I got to tell you a thing before it soaks into your mind?" Not by tone or look or manner did he betray any knowledge that Jean had spoken, and Muriel decided that he could not have heard.

Lee Milligan moved the saddle and placed it upon its side, and Burns went to the camera and eyed the scene critically for its photographic value. He fumbled the script in his hands, cocked an eye upward at the sun, stepped back, and gave a last glance to make sure that nothing could be bettered by altering a single detail.

"How's Gil—outside the line, Pete? All right. Now, Miss Gay, remember you're in a hurry, and you're worried half to death. You've just time enough to get there if you use every second. You were crying when the letter scene closed, and this is about five minutes afterward—you just had time enough to catch your horse and lead him out here to saddle him. Register a sob when you turn to pick up the saddle. You ought to do this all right without rehearsing. Get into the scene and start your action at the same time. Pete, you pick it up just as she gets to the horse's shoulder and starts to turn. Don't forget that sob, Gay. Ready? Camera!"

Jean was absorbed, fascinated by this glimpse into a new and very busy little world—the world of moving-picture makers. She leaned forward and watched every moment, every little detail. "Grab the horn with your *right* hand, Miss Gay!" she cried involuntarily when Muriel stooped and started to pick up the saddle. "Don't—oh, it looks as if you were picking up a wash boiler! I *told* you——"

"Register that sob!" bawled Robert Grant Burns, shooting a glance at Jean and stepping from one foot to the other like a fat gobbler in fresh-fallen snow.

Muriel registered that sob and a couple more before she succeeded in heaving the saddle upon the back of the flinching sorrel. Because she took up the saddle by horn and cantle instead of doing it as Jean had taught her, she bungled its adjustment upon the horse's back. Then the sorrel began to dance away from her, and Robert Grant Burns swore under his breath.

"Stop the camera!" he barked, and waddled irately up to Muriel. "This," he observed ironically, "is drama, Miss Gay. We are not making slapstick comedy to-day—and you needn't give an imitation of boosting a barrel over a fence."

Tears that were real slipped down over the rouge and grease paint on Muriel's cheeks. "Why don't you make that girl stop butting in?" she flashed unexpectedly. "I'm not accustomed to working under *two* directors!" She registered another sob which the camera never got.

This brought Jean over to where she could lay her hand contritely upon the girl's shoulder. "I'm awfully sorry," she drawled, with perfect sincerity. "I didn't mean to rattle you, but you know you never in the world could throw the stirrup over free, the way you had hold of the saddle. I thought——"

Burns turned heavily around and looked at Jean as though he had something in his mind to say to her; but, whatever that something may have been, he did not say it. Jean looked at him questioningly and walked back to the pile of posts.

"I won't butt in any more," she called out to Muriel. "Only, it does look so simple!" She rested her elbows on her knees again, dropped her chin into her palms, and concentrated her mind upon the subject of picture plays in the making.

Muriel recovered her composure, stood beside Gil Huntley at the horse's head just outside the range of the camera, waited for the word of command from Burns, and rushed into the saddle scene. Burns shouted "Sob!" and Muriel sobbed with her face toward the camera. Burns commanded her to pick up the saddle, and Muriel picked up the saddle and flung it spitefully upon the back of the sorrel.

"Oh, you forgot the blanket!" exclaimed Jean, and stopped herself with her hand over her too-impulsive mouth just as Burns stopped the camera.

The director bowed his head and shook it twice, slowly and with much meaning. He did not say anything at all; no one said anything. Gil Huntley looked at Jean and tried to catch her eye, so that he might give her some greeting or at least a glance of understanding. But Jean was wholly concerned with the problem which confronted Muriel. It was a shame, she thought, to expect a girl—and when she had reached that far she straightway put the thought into speech, as was her habit.

"It's a shame to expect that girl to do something she doesn't know how to do," she said suddenly to Robert Grant Burns. "Work at something else, why don't you, and let me take her somewhere and show her how? It's simple——"

"Get up and show her now!" snapped Burns, with some sarcasm and a good deal of exasperation. "You seem determined to get into the foreground somehow—get up and go through that scene and show us how a girl gets a saddle on a horse!"

Jean sat still for ten seconds, and deliberated while she looked from him to the horse. Again she made a picture that drove its elusive quality of individuality straight to the professional soul of Robert Grant Burns.

"I will, if you'll let me do it the right way," she said, just when he was thinking she would not answer him. She did not wait for his assurance, once she had decided to accept the challenge, or the invitation—she did not quite know which he had meant it to be.

"I'm going to bridle him first, though," she informed him. "And you can tell that star villain to back out of the way. I don't need him."

Still Burns did not say anything. He was watching her, studying her, measuring her, seeing her as she would have looked upon the screen. It was his habit to leave people alone until they betrayed their limitations or proved their talent; after that, if they remained under his direction, he drove them as far as their limitations would permit.

Jean went first and placed the saddle to her liking upon the ground. "You want me to act just as if you were going to take a picture of it, don't you?" she asked Burns over her shoulder. She was not sure whether he nodded, but she acted upon the supposition that he

did and took the lead rope from Gil's hand.

"Shall I be hurried and worried—and shall I sob?" she asked, with the little smile at the corners of her eyes and just easing the line of her lips.

Robert Grant Burns seemed to make a quick decision. "Sure," he said. "You saw the action as Miss Gay went through it. Do as she did—only we'll let you have your own ideas of saddling the horse." He turned his head toward Pete and made a very slight gesture, and Pete grinned. "All ready? Start the action!" After that he did not help her by a single suggestion. He tapped Pete upon the shoulder, and stood with his feet far apart and his hands on his hips, and watched her very intently.

Jean was plainly startled, just at first, by the businesslike tone in which he gave the signal. Then she laughed a little. "Oh, I forgot. I must be hurried and worried—and I must sob," she corrected herself.

So she hurried, and every movement she made counted for something accomplished. She picked up the bridle and shortened her hold upon the lead rope, and discovered that the sorrel had a trick of throwing up his head and backing away from the bit. She knew how to deal with that habit, however; but in her haste she forgot to look as worried as Muriel had looked, and so appeared to her audience as being merely determined. She got the bridle on, and then she saddled the sorrel. And for good measure she picked up the reins, caught the stirrup, and went up, pivoting the horse upon his hind feet as though she meant to dash madly off into the distance. But she only went a couple of rods before she pulled him up sharply and dismounted.

"That didn't take me long, did it?" she asked. "I could have hurried a lot more if I had known the horse." Then she stopped dead still and looked at Robert Grant Burns.

"Oh, my goodness, I forgot to sob!" she gasped. And she caught her hat brim and pulled her Stetson more firmly down upon her head, turned, and ran up the path to the house and shut herself into her room.

CHAPTER XII.

TO "DOUBLE" FOR MURIEL GAY.

While she breakfasted unsatisfactorily upon soda crackers and a bottle of olives which happened to have been left over from a previous luncheon, Jean sternly closed her mind to moving pictures, and meditated deeply upon the proper beginning of a book. The memory of last night came to her vividly, and she smiled while she fished with a pair of scissors for an olive. She would start the book off weirdly with mysterious sounds in an empty room. That, she argued, should fix firmly the interest of the reader right at the start.

By the time she had gotten the olive from the bottle, however, her thoughts swung from the artistic to the material aspect of those mysterious footsteps. What had the man wanted or expected to find? She sat down the olive bottle impulsively, and went out and around to the kitchen door and opened it. In spite of herself she shuddered as she went in, and she walked close to the wall until she was well past the brown stain on the floor. She went to the old-fashioned cupboard and examined the contents of the drawers and looked into a cigar box which stood open upon the top. She went into her father's bedroom and looked through everything, which did not take long, since the room had little left in it. She went into the living room, also depressingly dusty and forlorn, but try as she would to think of some article that might have been left there and was now wanted by some

one, she could imagine no reason whatever for that nocturnal visit. At the same time, there must have been a reason. Men of that country did not ride abroad during the still hours of the night just for the love of riding. Most of them went to bed at dark and slept until dawn.

She went out, intending to go back to her literary endeavors; if she never started that book, certainly it would never make her rich, and she would never be able to make war upon circumstances. She thought of her father with a twinge of remorse because she had wasted so much time this morning, and she scarcely glanced toward the picture people down by the corrals, so she did not see that Robert Grant Burns turned and looked at her, and then started hurriedly up the path to the house.

"Say," he called just before she disappeared around the corner, "wait a minute. I want to talk to you."

Jean waited, and the fat man came up breathing hard because of his haste in the growing heat of the forenoon.

"Say, I'd like to use you in a few scenes," he began abruptly when he reached her. "Gay can't put over the stuff I want, and I'd like to have you double for her in some riding and roping scenes. You're about the same size and build, and I'll get you a blond wig for close up, like that saddling scene. I believe you've got it in you to make good on the screen—anyway, the practice you'll get doubling for Gay won't do you any harm."

Jean looked at him, tempted to consent for the fun there would be in it. "I'd like to," she told him after a little silence. "I really would love it. But I've got some work that I must do."

"Let the work wait," urged Burns, relieved because she showed no resentment against the proposal. "I want to get this picture made. It's going to be a hummer. There's punch to it—or there will be if——"

"But, you see," Jean's drawl slipped across his eager, domineering voice, "I have to earn some money—lots of it. There's something I need it for. It's —important."

"You'll earn money at this," he told her bluntly. "You didn't think I'd ask you to work for nothing, I hope. I ain't that cheap. It's like this: If you'll work in this picture and put over what I want it'll be feature stuff. I'll pay accordingly. Of course, I can't say just how much—this is just a try-out; you understand that. But if you can deliver the goods I'll see that you get treated right. Some producers might play the cheap game just because you're green, but I ain't that kind, and my company ain't that kind. I'm out after results." Involuntarily his eyes turned toward the bluff. "There's a ride down the bluff that I want, and a roping—say, can you throw a rope?"

Jean laughed. "Lite Avery says I can," she told him, "and Lite Avery can almost write his name in the air with a rope."

"If you can make that dash down the bluff, and do the roping I want, why —Lord! You'll have to be working a gold mine to beat what I'd be willing to pay for the stuff."

"There's no place here in the coulee where you can ride down the bluff," Jean informed him, "except here behind the house, and there's no room to *dash*. Farther over there's a kind of trail that a good horse can handle. I came down it on a run once with Pard. A man was drowning, over here in the creek, and I was up on the bluff and happened to see him and his horse turn over—it was during the high water. So I made a run down off the point, and got to him in time to rope him out. You might use that trail."

Robert Grant Burns stood and stared at her as though he did not see her at

all. In truth, he was seeing with his professional eyes a picture of that dash down the bluff. He was seeing a "close-up" of Jean whirling her loop and lassoing the drowning man just as he had given up hope and was going under for the third time. Lee Milligan was the drowning man, and the agony of his eyes and the tenseness of Jean's face made Robert Grant Burns draw a long breath.

"Lord, what feature stuff that would make!" he said under his breath. "I'll write a scenario around that rescue scene——" Whereupon he caught himself. It is not well for a director to permit his enthusiasm to carry him into injudicious speech. He chuckled to hide his eagerness. "Well, you can show me that location," he said, "and we'll get to work. You'll have to use the sorrel, of course, but I guess he'll be all right. This saddling scene will have to wait till I send for a wig. You can change clothes with Miss Gay and get by all right at a distance just as you are. A little make-up maybe—she'll fix that. Come on—let's get to work. And don't worry about the salary; I'll tell you to-night what it'll be after I see you work."

When he had that mood, Robert Grant Burns swept everything before him. He swept Jean into his plans before she had really made up her mind whether to accept his offer or stick to her literary efforts. He had Muriel Gay up at the house and preparing to change clothes with Jean, and he had Lee Milligan started for town in the machine with the key to Burn's emergency wardrobe trunk before Jean realized that she was actually going to do things for the camera to make into a picture.

"I'm glad you are going to double in that ride down the bluff, anyway," Muriel declared while she blacked Jean's brows and put shadows around her eyes. "I could have done it, of course, but mamma is so nervous about my getting hurt that I hate to do anything risky like that. It upsets her for days."

"There isn't much risk in riding down the bluff," said Jean carelessly. "Not if you've got a good horse. I wonder if that sorrel is rope broke. Have you ever roped off him?"

"No," said Muriel, "I haven't." She might have added that she never had roped off any horse, but she did not.

"I'll have to try him out and see what he's like before I try to rope anything for a picture. I wonder if there'll be time now?" Jean was pleasantly excited over this new turn of events. She had dreamed of doing many things, but never of helping to make moving pictures. She was eager and full of curiosity, like a child invited to play a new and fascinating game, and she kept wondering what Lite would have to say about her posing for moving pictures. Try to stop her probably, and fail, as usual!

When she went out to where the others were grouped in the shade, she gave no sign of any inner excitement or perturbation. She went straight up to Burns and waited for his verdict.

"Do I look like Miss Gay?" she drawled.

The keen eyes of Burns half closed while he studied her. "No, I can't say that you do," he said after a moment. "Walk off toward the corrals—and, say! Mount the sorrel and start off like you were in a deuce of a hurry. That'll be one scene, and I'd like to see how you do it when you can have your own way about it, and how close up we can make it and have you pass for Gay."

"How far shall I ride?" Jean's eyes had a betraying light of interest.

"Oh, to the gate maybe. Can you get a long shot down the trail to the gate, Pete, and keep that sky line in the scene?"

Pete moved the camera, fussed and squinted, and then nodded his head.

"Sure I can. But you'll have to make it right away, or else wait till to-morrow. The sun's getting around pretty well in front."

"We'll take it right after this rehearsal if the girl can put the stuff over right," Burns muttered. "And she can, or I'm badly mistaken. Pete, that girl's——" He stopped short because the shadow of Lee Milligan was moving up to them. "All right, Miss—say, what's your name, anyway?" He was told, and he went on briskly: "Miss Douglas, just start from off that way—about where that round rock is. You'll come into the scene a little beyond. Hurry straight up to the sorrel and mount and ride off. Your lover is going to be trapped by the bandits, and you've just heard it and are hurrying to save him. Get the idea? Now let's see you do it."

"You don't want me to sob, do you?" Jean looked over her shoulder to inquire. "Because if I were going to save my lover I don't believe I'd want to waste time weeping around all over the place."

Burns chuckled. "You can cut out the sob," he permitted. "Just go ahead like it was real stuff."

Jean was standing by the rock, ready to start. She looked at Burns speculatively. "Oh, well, if it were real—I'd run!"

"Go ahead and run, then!" Burns commanded.

Run she did, and startled the sorrel so that it took quick work to catch him.

"Camera! She might not do it like that again, ever!" cried Burns.

She was up in the saddle and gone in a flurry of dust, while Robert Grant Burns stood with his hands on his hips and watched her gloatingly.

"Lord, but that girl's a find!" he ejaculated, and this time he did not seem to care who heard him. He cut the scene just as Jean pulled up at the gate. "See how she set that sorrel down on his haunches?" he chuckled to Pete. "Talk about feature stuff—that girl will jump our releases up ten per cent, Pete, with the punches I can put into Gay's parts now. How many feet was that scene? Twenty-five?"

"Fifteen," corrected Pete. "And every foot with a punch in it. Too bad she's got to double for Gay. She's got the face for close-up work—believe *me!*"

To this tentative remark Robert Grant Burns made no reply whatever. He went off down the path to meet Jean, watching her approach closely to see how nearly she resembled Muriel Gay, and how close she could come to the camera without having the substitution betrayed upon the screen. Muriel Gay was a leading woman with a certain following among movie audiences. Daring horsewomanship would greatly increase that following, and therefore the financial returns of these Western pictures. Burns was her director, and it was to his interest to build up her popularity. Since the idea first occurred to him, therefore, of using Jean as a substitute for Muriel in all the scenes that required nerve and skill in riding, he looked upon her as a double for Muriel rather than from the viewpoint of her own individual possibilities on the screen.

"I don't know about your hair," he told her when she came up to him and stopped. "We'll run the negative tonight and see how it shows up. The rest of the scene was all right. I had Pete make it. I'm going to take some scenes down here by the gate now with the boys. I won't need you till after lunch probably; then I'll have you make that ride down the bluff and some close-up rope work."

"I suppose I ought to ride over to the ranch," Jean said undecidedly. "And I ought to try out this sorrel if

you want me to use him. Would some other day do just——"

"In the picture business," interrupted Robert Grant Burns dictatorially, "the working hours of an actor belong to the director he's working for. If I use you in pictures, your time will belong to me on the days when I use you. I'll expect you to be on hand when I want you; get that?"

"My time," said Jean resolutely, "will belong to you if I consider it worth my while to let you have it. Otherwise it will belong to me."

Burns chuckled. "Well, we might as well get down to brass tacks and have things thoroughly understood," he decided. "I'll use you as an extra to double for Miss Gay where there's any riding stunts and so on. Miss Gay is a good actress, but she can't ride to amount to anything. With the clothes and make-up you—impersonate her. See what I mean? And for straight riding I'll pay you five dollars a day; five dollars for your time on the days that I want to use you. For any feature stuff, like that ride down the bluff, and the roping, and the like of that, it'll be more. Twenty-five dollars for feature stuff, say, and five dollars for straight riding. Get me?"

"I do, yes." Jean's drawl gave no hint of her inner elation at the prospect of earning so much money so easily. What, she wondered, would Lite say to *that?*

"Well, that part's all right, then. By feature stuff I mean anything I want you to do to put a punch in the story; anything from riding bucking horses and shooting—say, can you shoot?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Well, I'll have use for that, too, later on. The more stunts you can pull off, the bigger hits these pictures are going to make. You see that, of course. And what I've offered you is a pretty good rate, but I expect to get results. I told you I wasn't any cheap John to work for. Now get this point, and get it right: I'll expect you to report to me every morning here at eight o'clock. I may need you that day and I may not, but you're to be on hand. If I do need you, you get paid for that day, whether it's one scene or twenty you're to work in. If I don't need you that day, you don't get anything. That's what being an extra means. You start in to-day, and if you make the ride down the bluff, it'll be twenty-five to-day. But you can't go riding off somewhere else, and maybe not be here when I want you. You're under my orders like the rest of the company. Get that?"

"I'll try it for a week, anyway," she said. "Obeying your orders will be the hardest part of it, Mr. Burns. I always want to stamp my foot and say 'I won't' when any one tells me I must do something." She laughed infectiously. "You'll probably fire me before the week's out," she prophesied. "I'll be as meek as possible, but if we quarrel —well, you know how sweet-tempered I can be!"

Burns looked at her queerly, and laughed. "I'll take a chance on that," he said, and went chuckling back to the camera. To have a girl absolutely ignore his position and authority, and treat him in that offhand manner of equality was a new experience to Robert Grant Burns, terror among photo players.

Jean went over to where Muriel and her mother were sitting in the shade, and asked Muriel if she would like to ride Pard out into the flat beyond the corrals, where she meant to try out the sorrel.

"I'd like to use you, anyway," she added frankly, "to practice on. You can ride past, you know, and let me rope you. Oh, it won't hurt you, and there'll be no risk at all," she hastened to assure the other when she saw re-

fusal in Muriel's eyes. "I'll not take any turns around the horn, you know."

"I don't want Muriel taking risks like that," put in Mrs. Gay hastily. "That's just why Burns is going to have you double for her. A leading woman can't afford to get hurt. Muriel, you stay here and rest while you have a chance. Goodness knows it's hard enough, at best, to work under Burns."

Jean looked at her and turned away. So that was it—a leading woman who could not afford to be hurt! Some one else, who didn't amount to anything, must take the risks. She had received her first little lesson in this new business.

She went straight to Burns, interrupted him in rehearsing his chief villain for a scene, and asked him if he could spare a man for half an hour or so. "I want some one to throw a rope over on the run," she explained naïvely, "to try out this sorrel."

Burns regarded her somberly; he hated to be interrupted in his work.

"Ain't there anybody else you can rope?" he wanted to know. "Where's Gay?"

"'A leading woman,'" quoted Jean serenely, "'can't afford to get hurt!'"

Burns chuckled. He knew who was the author of that sentence; he had heard it before. "Well, if you're as fatal as all that I can't turn over my leading man for you to practice on, either," he pointed out to her. "What's the matter with a calf or something?"

"You won't let me ride out of your sight to round one up," Jean retorted. "There are no calves handy—that's why I ask for a man."

Whereupon the villains looked at one another queerly, and the chuckle of their director exploded into a full-lunged laugh.

"I'm going to use all these fellows in a couple of scenes," he told her. "Can't you practice on a post?"

"I don't have to practice. It's the sorrel I want to try out." Jean's voice lost a little of its habitual, soft drawl. Really these picture people did seem very dense upon some subjects!

"Well, now look here!" Robert Grant Burns caught at the shreds of his domineering manner. "My part of this business is producing the scenes. You'll have to attend to the getting ready. You—you wouldn't expect me to help you put on your make-up, would you?"

"No, now that I recognize your limitations I shall not ask any help which none of you are able or have the nerve to give," she returned coolly. "I wish I had Lite here, but I guess Pard and I can handle the sorrel ourselves. Sorry to have disturbed you."

Robert Grant Burns, his leading man, and all his villains stood and watched her walk away from them to the stable. They watched her lead Pard out and turn him loose in the biggest corral. When they saw her take her coiled rope, mount the sorrel, and ride in, they went, in a hurried group, to where they might look into that corral. They watched her pull the gate shut after her, lean from the saddle, and fasten the chain hook in its accustomed link. By the time she had widened her loop and turned to charge down upon unsuspecting Pard, Robert Grant Burns, his leading man, and all his villains were lined up along the widest space between the corral rails, and Pete Lowry was running over so as to miss none of the show.

"Oh, I thought you were all so terribly busy!" taunted Jean, while her loop was circling over her head. Pard wheeled just then upon his hind feet, but the loop settled true over his head and drew tight against his shoulders.

The sorrel lunged and fought the rope and snorted and reared. It took fully two minutes for Jean to force him close enough to Pard so that she might

flip off the loop. Pard himself caught the excitement and snorted and galloped wildly round and round the inclosure, but Jean did not mind that; what brought her lips so tightly together was the performance of the sorrel. While she was coiling her rope he was making half-hearted buck jumps across the corral. When she swished the rope through the air to widen her loop he reared and whirled. She jabbed him smartly with the spurs, and he kicked forward at her feet.

"Say," she drawled to Burns, "I don't know what sort of a picture you're going to make, but if you want any roping done from this horse you'll have to furnish meals and beds for your audiences." With that she was off across the corral at a tearing pace that made the watchers gasp. The sorrel swung clear of the fence. He came near going down in a heap, but recovered himself after scrambling along on his knees. Jean brought him to a stand before Burns.

"I'll have to ask you to raise your price, Mr. Burns, if you want me to run this animal down the bluff," she stated firmly. "He's just what I thought he was all along—a ride-around-the-block horse from some livery stable. When it comes to range work, he doesn't know as much as——"

"Some people. I get you," Burns cut in dryly. "How about that horse of yours? Would you be willing to let me have the use of him—at so much per?"

"If I do the riding, yes. Now, since you're here, and don't seem as busy as you thought you were, I'll show you the difference between this livery-stable beast and a real rope horse."

She dismounted and called to Pard—and Pard came to her, stepping warily because of the sorrel and the rope. "Just to save time, will one of you boys go and bring my riding outfit from the stable?" she asked the line at the fence; whereupon the leading man and all the villains started unanimously to perform that slight service, which shows pretty well how Jean stood in their estimation.

"Now that's a real, typical, livery-stable saddle and bridle," she observed to Burns, pointing scornfully to the sorrel. "I was going to tell you that I'd hate to be seen in a picture riding that outfit, anyway. Now you watch how differently Pard behaves with a rope and everything. And you watch the sorrel get what's coming to him. Shall I 'bust' him?"

"You mean throw him?" Burns, in his eagerness, began to climb the corral fence—until he heard a rail crack under his weight. "Yes, *bust* him, if you want to! John Jimpson! If you can rope and throw that sorrel——"

Jean did not reply to that half-finished sentence. She was busy saddling Pard; now she mounted and widened her loop with a sureness of the result that flashed a thrill of expectation to her audience. Twice the loop circled over her head before she flipped it out straight and true toward the frantic sorrel as he surged by. She caught him fairly by both front feet and swung Pard half away from him. Pard's muscles stiffened against the jerk of the rope, and the sorrel went down with a bump. Pard backed knowingly and braced himself like the trained rope horse he was, and Jean looked at Robert Grant Burns and laughed.

"I didn't bust him," she disclaimed whimsically. "He done busted himself." She touched Pard with her heel and rode up so that the rope slackened and she could throw off the loop. "Did you see how Pard set himself?" she questioned eagerly. "I could have gotten off and gone clear away, and Pard would have kept that horse from getting on his feet. Now you see the difference, don't you? Pard never would have gone down like that."

"Oh, you'll do," chuckled Robert

Grant Burns. "I'll pay you a little more and use you and your horse together. Call that settled. Come on, boys, let's get to work."

CHAPTER XIII.

PICTURES AND PLANS AND MYSTERIOUS FOOTSTEPS.

When Lite objected to her staying altogether at the Lazy A, Jean assured him that she was being terribly practical and cautious and businesslike, and pointed out to him that staying there would save Pard and herself the trip back and forth each day, and would give her time, mornings and evenings, to work on her book.

Lite, of course, knew all about that soon-to-be-famous book. He usually did know nearly everything that concerned Jean or held her interest. Whether, after three years of futile attempts, Lite still felt himself entitled to be called Jean's boss, I cannot say for a certainty. He had grown extremely silent upon that subject, and rather inclined to keep himself in the background as Jean grew older and more determined in her ways. But certainly he was Jean's one confidential friend—her pal. So Lite, perforce, listened while Jean told him the plot of her story. And when she asked him in all earnestness what he thought would be best for the tragic element, ghosts or Indians, Lite meditated gravely upon the subject and then suggested that she put in both. That is why Jean lavishly indulged in mysterious footsteps all through the first chapter, and then opened the second with blood-curdling war whoops that chilled the soul of her heroine and led her to suspect that the rocks behind the cabin concealed the forms of painted savages.

Jean's imagination must have been stimulated by her new work which called for wild rides after posses and wilder flight away from the outlaws, while the flash of blank cartridges and the smokepots of disaster by fire added their spectacular effect to a scene now and then.

Jean, of course, was invariably the wild rider who fled in a blond wig and Muriel's clothes from pursuing villains, or dashed up to the sheriff's office to give the alarm. Frequently she fired the blank cartridges—until Lite warned her that blank cartridges would ruin her gun barrel; after which she insisted upon using bullets, to the secret trepidation of the villains who must stand before her and who could never quite grasp the fact that Jean knew exactly where her bullets were going to land.

She would sit in her room at the Lazy A, when the sun and the big, black automobile and the painted workers were gone, and write feverishly of ghosts and Indians and the fair maiden who endured so much and the brave hero who dared so much and loved so well. Lee Milligan she visualized as the human wolf who looked with desire upon Lillian. Gil Huntley became the hero as the story unfolded—and while I have told you absolutely nothing about Jean's growing acquaintance with these two, you may draw your own conclusions from the place she made for them in her book that she was writing. And you may also form some idea of what Lite Avery was living through, during those days when his work and his pride held him apart, and Jean did "stunts" to her heart's content with these others.

A letter from the higher-ups in the Great Western firm, written just after a trial run of the first picture wherein Jean had worked, had served to stimulate Burns' appetite for the spectacular, so that the "stunts" became more and more the features of his pictures. Muriel Gay was likely to become the most famous photo-play actress in the West, he believed. That is, she would if Jean continued to double for her in everything save the straight dramatic work.

Jean did not care just at that time how much glory Muriel Gay was collecting for work that Jean herself had done. Jean was experiencing the first thrills of seeing her name written upon the face of fat weekly checks that promised the fulfillment of her hopes, and she would not listen to Lite when he ventured a remonstrance against some of the things she told him about doing. Jean was seeing the Lazy A restored to its old-time homelike prosperity. She was seeing her dad there, going tranquilly about the everyday business of the ranch, holding his head well up and looking every man straight in the eye. She could not and would not let Lite persuade her to give up risking her neck for the money the risk would bring her.

If she could change these dreams to reality by dashing madly about on Pard while Pete Lowry wound yards and yards of narrow, gray film around something on the inside of his camera, and watched her with that little, secret smile on his face; and while Robert Grant Burns waddled here and there with his hands on his hips and watched her also; and while villains pursued or else fled before her, and Lee Milligan appeared furiously upon the scene in various guises to rescue her; if she could win her dad's freedom and the Lazy A's possession by doing these foolish things, she was perfectly willing to risk her neck and let Muriel receive the applause.

She did not know that she was doubling the profit on these Western pictures which Robert Grant Burns was producing. She did not know that it would have hastened the attainment of her desires had her name appeared in the cast as the girl who put the "punches" in the plays. She did not know that she was being cheated of her rightful reward when her name never appeared anywhere save on the pay roll and the weekly checks which seemed to her so magnificently generous. In her ignorance of what Gil Huntley called the movie game, she was perfectly satisfied to give the best service of which she was capable, and she never once questioned the justice of Robert Grant Burns.

Jean started a savings account in the little bank where her father had opened an account before she was born, and Lite was made to writhe inwardly with her boasting.

Lite, if you please, had long ago started a savings account at that same bank, and for three years had cut out poker, and even pool, from among his joys, that his account might fatten the faster. He had the same object which Jean had lately adopted so zealously—but he did not tell her these things. He listened, instead, while Jean read gloatingly her balance and talked of what she would do when she had enough saved to buy back the ranch. She had stolen unwittingly the air castle which Lite had been three years building—but he did not say a word about it to Jean. Wistful-eyed, but smiling with his lips, he would sit while Jean spoiled whole sheets of perfectly good story paper, just figuring and estimating and building castles with the dollar sign. If Robert Grant Burns persisted in his mania for "feature stuff" and "punches" in his pictures, Jean believed that she would have a fair start toward buying back the Lazy A long before her book was published and had brought her the thousands and thousands of dollars she was sure it would bring. Very soon she could go boldly to a lawyer and ask him to do something about her father's case. Just what he should do she did not quite know, and Lite did not seem to be able to tell her; but she thought she ought to find out just how much the trial had cost. And she wished she knew how to go about setting some one on the trail of Art Osgood.

Jean was sure that Art Osgood knew

something about the murder, and she frequently tried to make Lite agree with her. Sometimes she was sure that Art Osgood was the murderer, and would argue and point out her reasons to Lite. Art had been working for her Uncle Carl, and rode often to the Lazy A. He had not been friendly with Johnny Croft—but then nobody had been very friendly with Johnny Croft. Still, Art Osgood was less friendly with Johnny than most of the men in the country, and just after the murder he had left the country. Jean laid a good deal of stress upon the circumstance of Art Osgood's leaving on that particular afternoon, and she seemed to resent it because no one had tried to find Art. No one had seemed to think his going at that time had any significance, or any bearing upon the murder, because he had been planning to leave, and had previously announced that he would go that day.

Jean's mind, as her bank account grew steadily to something approaching dignity, worked back and forth incessantly over the circumstances surrounding the murder, in spite of Lite's peculiar attitude toward the subject, which Jean felt but could not understand, since he invariably assured her, when she asked him outright, that he believed her dad was innocent.

Sometimes, in the throes of literary composition, she could not think of the word that she wanted. Her eyes then would wander around familiar objects in the shabby little room, and frequently they would come to rest upon her father's saddle or her father's chaps; the chaps especially seemed potent reminders of her father, and drew her thoughts to him and held them there. The worn leather, stained with years of hard usage and wrinkled permanently where they had shaped themselves to his legs in the saddle, brought his big, bluff presence vividly before her when she was in a certain receptive mood. She would forget all about her story, and the riding and shooting and roping she had done that day to appease the clamorous, professional appetite of Robert Grant Burns, and would sit and stare and think and think.

Always her thoughts traveled in a wide circle and came back finally to the starting point; to free her father and to give him back his home, she must have money. To have money, she must earn it, she must work for it. So then she would give a great sigh of relaxed nervous tension and go back to her heroine and the Indians and the mysterious footsteps that marched on moonlight nights up and down a long porch just outside windows that frequently framed white, scared faces with wide, horror-stricken eyes which saw nothing of the marcher though the steps still went up and down.

It was very creepy in spots. It was so creepy that one evening, when Lite had come to smoke a cigarette or two in her company and to listen to her account of the day's happenings, he noticed that when she read the creepy passages in her story she glanced frequently over her shoulder.

"You want to cut out this story writing," he said abruptly, when she paused to find the next page. "It's bad enough to work like you do in the pictures. This is going a little too strong; you're as jumpy to-night as a guilty conscience. Cut it out."

"I'm all right. I'm just doing that for dramatic effect. This is very weird, Lite. I ought to have a green shade on the lamp to get the proper effect. I —don't you think—er—those footsteps are terribly mysterious?"

Lite looked at her sharply for a minute. "I sure do," he said dryly. "Where did you get the idea, Jean?"

"Out of my head," she told him airily, and went on reading while Lite studied her curiously.

That night Jean awoke and heard

again the stealthy footsteps, like a man walking in his socks and no boots, going all through the house but never coming to her room. She did not get up to see who it was, but lay perfectly still and heard her heart thump. When she saw a dim, yellow ray of light under the door which opened into the kitchen, she drew the blanket over her head and got no comfort whatever from the feel of her six-shooter close against her hand.

The next morning she told herself that she had given in to a fine case of nerves, and that the mysterious footsteps of her story had become mixed up with the midnight wanderings of a pack rat that had somehow gotten into the house. Then she remembered the bar of light under the door, and the pack-rat theory was spoiled.

She had taken the board off the doorway into the kitchen so that she could use the cookstove. The man could have come in if he had wanted to, and that knowledge she found extremely disquieting. She went all through the house that morning, looking and wondering. The living room was now the dressing room of Muriel and her mother, and the make-up scattered over the center table was undisturbed. The wardrobe of the two women had apparently been left untouched. Yet she was sure that some one had been prowling in there in the night. She gave up the puzzle at last, and went back to her breakfast; but before the company arrived in the big, black automobile, she had found a stout hasp and two staples and had fixed the door which led from her room into the kitchen so that she could fasten it securely on the inside.

Jean did not tell Lite about the footsteps. She was afraid that he might insist upon her giving up staying at the Lazy A. Lite did not approve of it, anyway, and it would take very little encouragement in the way of extra risk to make him stubborn about it. Lite could be very obstinate indeed upon occasion, and she was afraid he might take a stubborn streak about this, and perhaps ride over every night to make sure she was all right, or do something equally unnecessary and foolish.

She did not know Lite as well as she imagined—which is frequently the case with the closest of friends. As a matter of fact, Jean had never spent one night alone on the ranch, even though she did believe that she was doing so. Lite rode over and slept in the gable loft over the old granary where no one ever went; and he left every morning just before the sky lightened with dawn.

He did not know that Jean was frightened by the sound of footsteps, but he had heard the man ride up to the stable and dismount, and he had followed him to the house and watched him through the uncurtained windows, and had kept his fingers close to his gun all the while. Jean did not dream of anything like that; but Lite, going about his work with the easy calm that marked his manner always, was quite as puzzled over the errand of the night prowler as was Jean herself.

For three years Lite had laid aside the mystery of the footprints on the kitchen floor on the night after the inquest as a puzzle he probably would never solve. He had come to remember them as a vagrant incident that carried no especial meaning. But now they seemed to carry a new significance—if only he could get at the key.

For three years Lite had gone along quietly, working and saving all he could and looking after Jean in an unobtrusive way, and believing in spite of himself that Aleck was guilty—and being careful to give no hint of that belief to any one. And now Jean herself seemed to be leading him unconsciously face to face with a mystery. It tantalized him. He knew the man, and for that reason he was all the more puzzled. What had

he wanted or expected to find? Lite was tempted to face the man and ask him; but on second thought he knew that would be foolish. He would say nothing to Jean. He thanked the Lord she slept soundly, and he would wait and see what happened.

Jean herself was thoughtful all that day, and was slow to lighten her mood or her manner even when Gil Huntley rode beside her to location and talked enthusiastically of the great work she was doing, for a beginner, and of the greater work she would do in the future if only she took advantage of her opportunities.

"It can't go on like this forever," he told her impressively for the second time before he was sure of her attention and her interest. "Think of you, working extra under a three-day guarantee! Why, you're what's making the pictures! I had a letter from a friend of mine—he's with the Universal. He'd been down to see one of our pictures—that first one you worked in. You remember how you came down off that bluff, and how you roped me and jerked me down off the bank just as I'd got a bead on Lee? Say, that picture was a *riot!* Gloomy says he never saw a picture get the hand that scene got. And he wanted to know who was doubling for Gay up here. You see, he got next that it was a double—he knows darned well Gay never could put over that line of stuff. The photography was dandy—Pete's right there when it comes to camera work, anyway—and that run down the bluff, he said, had people standing on their hind legs even before the rope scene. You could tell it was a girl and no man doubling the part. Gloomy says everybody around the studio has begun to watch for our releases, and they go just to see you ride and rope and shoot. And Gay gets all the press notices—say, it makes me sick!" He looked at Jean wistfully.

"The trouble is, you don't realize what a raw deal you're getting," he said, with much discontent in his tone. "As an extra you're getting fine treatment and fine pay; I admit that. But the point is, you've no business being an extra. Where you belong is playing leads. You don't know what that means, but I do. Burns is just using you to boost Muriel Gay, and I say it's the rawest deal I ever saw handed out in the picture game—and, believe me, I've seen some raw deals!"

"Now, now, don't get peevish, Gil." Jean's drawl was soft, and her eyes were friendly and amused. So far had their friendship progressed. "It's awfully dear of you to want to see me a real leading lady. I appreciate it, and I won't take off that lock of hair I said I'd take when I shoot you in the foreground. Burns wants a real thrilling effect close up, and he's told me five times to remember to keep my face turned away from the camera so they won't see it isn't Gay. If I turn around, there will have to be a retake, he says; and you won't like that, Gil—not after you've heard a bullet zip past your ear so close that it will fan your hair. Are—aren't you afraid of me, Gil?"

"Afraid of you?" Gil's horse swung closer, and Gil's eyes threatened the opening of a tacitly forbidden subject.

"Because if you get nervous and move the least little bit—— To make it look real, as Bobby described the scene to me, I've got to shoot the instant you stop to gather yourself for springing at me. It's that lightning-draw business I have to do, Gil. I'm to stand three-quarters to the camera, with my face turned away, watching you. You keep coming, and you stop just an instant when you're almost within reach of me. In that instant I have to draw my gun and shoot—and it has to look as if I got you, Gil. I've got to come pretty close in order to bring the gun in line with you for the camera. Bobby wants to show off the

quick draw that Lite Avery taught me. That's to be the 'punch' in the scene. I showed him this morning what it is like, and Bobby is just tickled to death. You see, I don't shoot the way they usually do in pictures——"

"I should say not!" Gil interrupted admiringly.

"You haven't seen that quick work, either. It'll look awfully real, Gil—and you mustn't dodge or duck, whatever you do. It will be just as if you really were a man I'm deadly afraid of, that has me cornered at last against that ledge. I'm going to do it as if I meant it. That will mean that when you stop and kind of measure the distance, meaning to grab me before I can do anything, I'll draw and shoot from the level of my belt; no higher, Gil, or it won't be the lightning draw—as advertised. I won't have time to take a fine aim——"

"Listen!" said Gil, leaning toward her with his eyes very earnest. "I know all about that. I heard you and Burns talking about it. You go ahead and shoot, and put that scene over big. Don't you worry about me—I'm going to play up to you, if I can. I'm going to *make* them recognize you. Listen! Pete's just waiting for a chance to register your face on the film. Burns has planned his scenes to prevent that—but we're just lying low till the chance comes. It's got to be dramatic, and it's got to seem accidental. Get me? I shouldn't have told you—but I can't seem to trick you, Jean. You're the kind of a girl a fellow's got to play fair with."

"Bobby has told me five times already to remember and keep my face away from the camera," Jean pointed out the second time. "Makes me feel as if I'd lost my nose, or was cross-eyed, or something. I do feel as if I'd lose my job, Gil."

"No, you wouldn't; all he'd do would be to have a retake of the whole scene, and maybe step around like a turkey in the snow, and swear to himself. Anyway, you can forget what I've said if you'll feel more comfortable. It's up to Pete and me, and we'll put it over smooth, or we won't do it at all. Bobby won't realize it's happened till he hears from it afterward. Neither will you." He turned his grease-painted face toward her hearteningly, and smiled as endearingly as the sinister, painted lines would allow.

"Listen!" he repeated, as a final encouragement, because he had sensed her preoccupation and had misread it for worry over the picture. "You go ahead and shoot, and don't bother about me. Make it real. Shoot as close as you like. If you pink me a little, I won't care—if you'll promise to be my nurse. I want a vacation, anyway."

CHAPTER XIV.

PUNCH VERSUS PRESTIGE.

It seems to be a popular belief among those who are unfamiliar with the business of making motion pictures that all dangerous or difficult feats are merely tricks of the camera, and that the actors themselves take no risks whatever. The truth is that they take a good many more risks than the camera ever records; and that directors who worship what they call punch in their scenes are frequently as tender of the physical safety of their actors as was Napoleon or any other great warrior who measured results rather than wounds.

Robert Grant Burns had discovered that he had at least two persons in his company who were perfectly willing to do anything he asked them to do. He had set tasks before Jean Douglas that many a man would have refused without losing his self-respect, and Jean had performed those tasks with enthusiasm. She had let herself down over a nasty bit of the rim rock whose broken line extended half around the coulee bluff,

with her rope between her and broken bones, and with her blond wig properly tousled and her face turned always toward the rock wall lest the camera should reveal the fact that she was not Muriel Gay.

She had climbed that same rock rim, with the aid of that same rope, and with her face hidden, as usual, from the camera. She had been bound and gagged and flung across Gil Huntley's saddle and carried away at a sharp gallop, and she had afterward freed herself from her bonds in the semidarkness of a hut that half concealed her features, and had stolen the knife from Gil Huntley's belt while he slept, and crept away to where the horses were picketed.

In the revealing light of a very fine moon effect which was a triumph of Pete's skill, she slashed a rope that held a high-strung "mustang"—so called in the scenario—and had leaped upon his bare back and gone hurtling out of that scene and into another where she was riding furiously over dangerously rough ground, the whole outlaw band in pursuit and silhouetted against the sky line and the moon—which was another photographic triumph of Pete Lowry.

Gil Huntley had also done many things that were risky. Jean had shot at him with real bullets so many times that her nervousness on this day was rather unaccountable to him. Jean had lassoed him and dragged him behind Pard through brush. She had pulled him from a "quicksand" bed—made of cement that showed a strong tendency to "set" about his form before she could rescue him—and she had fought with him on the edge of a cliff and had thrown him over; and his director, anxious for the "punch" that was his fetish, had insisted on a panorama of the fall, so that there was no chance for Gil to save himself the bruises he got. Gil Huntley's part it was always to die a violent death, or to be captured spectacularly, because he was the villain whose horrible example must bear a moral to youthful brains.

Since Jean had become one of them, he nearly always died at her hands or was captured by her. This left Muriel Gay unruffled and unhurt, so that she could weep and accept the love of Lee Milligan in the artistic ending of which Robert Grant Burns was so fond.

Jean had never before considered it necessary to warn Gil and implore him not to be nervous, and Gil took her solicitude as an encouraging sign and was visibly cheered thereby. He knew little of guns and fine marksmanship, and he did not know that it is extremely difficult to shoot a revolver accurately and instantaneously—whereas Jean knew very well that Gil Huntley might be thrown off ledges every day in the week without taking the risk he would take that day.

The scene was to close a full reel of desperate attempts upon the part of Gil Huntley to win Muriel; such desperate attempts, indeed, that Muriel Gay spent most of the time sitting at ease in the shade, talking with Lee Milligan, who was two-thirds in love with her and had half his love returned, while Jean played her part for her. Sometimes Muriel would be called upon to assume the exact pose which Jean had assumed in a previous scene, for "close-ups" that would reveal to audiences Muriel's well-known prettiness and help to carry along the deception. Each morning the two stood side by side and were carefully inspected by Robert Grant Burns, to make sure that hair and costumes were exactly alike in the smallest detail. This also helped to carry on the deception—to those who were not aware of Muriel's limitations. Their faces were not at all alike; and that is why Jean's face must never be seen in a picture.

This shooting scene was a fitting climax to a long and desperate chase over

a difficult trail; so difficult that Pard stumbled and fell—supposedly with a broken leg—and Jean must run on and on afoot, and climb over rocks and spring across dangerous crevices. She was not supposed to know where her flight was taking her. Sometimes the camera caught her silhouetted against the sky—Burns was partial to sky-line silhouettes—and sometimes it showed her quite close, in which case it would be Muriel instead of Jean, clinging desperately to the face of a ledge—ledges were also favorite scenes—and seeking with hands and feet for a hold upon the rough face of the rock. During the last two or three scenes, Gil Huntley had been shown gaining upon her.

So they came that morning to the location where the shooting scene was to be made. Burns, with the camera and Pete and Muriel and her mother and Lee Milligan, drove to the place in the machine. Jean and Gil Huntley found them comfortably disposed in the shade, out of range of the camera which Pete was setting up somewhat closer than usual, under the directions of Burns.

"There won't be any rehearsal of this," Burns stated at last, stepping back. "When it's done, it'll be done. You stand here, Jean, and kinda lean against the rock as if you're all in from that chase. You hear Gil coming, and you start forward and listen, and look —how far can she turn, Pete, without showing too much of her face?"

Pete squinted into the finder and gave the information.

"Well, Gil, you come from behind that bush. She'll be looking toward you then without turning too much. You grin, and come up with that eager I-got-you-now look. Don't hurry too much—we'll give this scene plenty of time. This is the feature scene. Jean, you're at the end of your rope. You couldn't run another step if you wanted to, and you're cornered, anyway, so you can't get away—get me? You're scared. Did you ever get that scared in your life?"

"Yes," said Jean simply, remembering last night, when she had pulled the blanket over her head.

"Well, you think of that time you were scared. And you make yourself think that you're going to shoot the thing that scared you. You don't put in half the punch when you shoot blanks—I've noticed that all along. So that's why you shoot a bullet—see? And you come as close to Gil as you can and not hit him. Gil, when you're shot you go down all in a heap—you know what I mean. And, Jean, when he falls, you start and lean forward, looking down at him—remember and keep your face away from the camera!—and then you start toward him kind of horrified. The scene stops right there, just as you start toward him. Then Gay takes it up and does the remorse-and-horror stuff because she's killed a man. That will be a close-up.

"All right, now—take your places. Sure your gun is loose so you can pull it quick? That's the feature of this scene, remember. You want to get it across *big*. And make it real—the scare, and all that. Hey, you women, get behind the camera! Bullets glance sometimes, and play the very mischief." He looked all around to make sure that everything was as it should be, and faced Jean again and raised his hand.

"All ready? *Start* your *action!*" he barked. *"Camera!"*

Jean had never before been given so much dramatic work to do, and Burns watched her anxiously, wishing that he dared cut the scene in two and give Muriel that tense interval when Gil Huntley came creeping into the scene from behind the bush. But after the first few seconds his strained expression relaxed; anxiety gave place to something like surprise.

Jean stood leaning heavily against the

rock, panting from the flight of the day before—for so must emotion be carried over into the next day when photo players work at their profession. Her face was dropped upon her arms flung up against the rock, in an attitude of complete exhaustion and despair. Burns involuntarily nodded his head approvingly; the girl had the idea, all right, even if she never had been trained to act a part.

"Come into the scene, Gil!" he commanded, when Jean made a move as though she was tempted to drop down upon the ground and sob hysterically. "Jean, register that you hear him coming!"

Jean's head came up, and she listened, every muscle stiffening with fear. She turned her face toward Gil, who stopped and looked at her most villainously. Gil, you must know, had come from "legitimate," and was a good actor. Jean recoiled a little before the leering face of him, pressed her shoulder hard against the ledge that had trapped her, and watched him in an agony of fear. One felt that she did, although one could not see her face. Gil spoke a few words and came on with a certain tigerish assurance of his power, but Jean did not move a muscle. She had backed as far away from him as she could get. She was not the kind to weep and plead with him. She just waited—and one felt that she was keyed up to the supreme moment of her life.

Gil came closer and closer, and there was a look in his eyes that frightened Jean, accustomed as she had become to his acting a part; there was an intensity of purpose which she instinctively felt was real. She did not know what it was he had in mind, but whatever it was she knew what it meant. He was almost within reach—so close that one saw Jean shrink a little from his nearness. He stopped and gathered himself for a quick, forward lunge——

The two women screamed, though they had been expecting that swift drawing of Jean's gun and the shot that seemed to sound the instant her hand dropped. Gil stiffened, and his hand flew up to his temple. His eyes became two staring questions that bored into the soul of Jean. His hand dropped to his side, and his head sagged forward. He lurched, tried to steady himself, and then went down limply.

Jean dropped her gun and darted toward him. Her face was like chalk as she turned it for one horrified instant toward Burns. She went down on her knees and lifted Gil's head, and looked at the red blotch on his temple and the trickle that ran down his cheek. She laid his head down with a gentleness wholly unconscious, and looked again at Burns. "I've killed him," she said, in a small, dry, flat voice. She put out her hands gropingly and fell forward across Gil's inert body. It was the first time in her life that Jean had ever fainted.

"Stop the camera!" Burns croaked tardily, and Pete stopped turning. Pete had that little, twisted grin on his face, and he was perfectly calm and self-possessed.

"You sure got the punch that time, Burns," he remarked unfeelingly while he held his palm over the lens and gave the crank another turn or two to divide that scene from the next.

"She's fainted! She's hit him!" cried Burns, and waddled over to where the two of them lay. The women drew farther away, clinging to each other with excited exclamations.

And then Gil Huntley lifted himself carefully so as not to push Jean upon the ground, and when he was sitting up he took her in his arms with some remorse and a good deal of tenderness.

"How was that for a punch?" he inquired of his director. "I didn't tell her I was going to furnish the blood sponge—I thought it might rattle her. I never thought she'd take it so hard or——"

Robert Grant Burns stopped and looked at him in heavy silence. "Good Lord!" he snapped out at last. "I dunno whether to fire you off the job or raise your salary! You got the punch, all right. And the chances are you've ruined her nerve for shooting, into the bargain." He stood looking down perturbedly at Gil, who was smoothing Jean's hair back from her forehead after the manner of men who feel tenderly toward the woman who cries or faints in their presence. "I'm after the punch every time," Burns went on ruefully, "but there's no use being a hog about it. Where's that water bag, Lee? Go get it outa the machine. Say! Can't you women do something besides stand there and howl? Nobody's hurt, or going to be."

While Muriel and Gil Huntley did what they could to bring Jean back to consciousness and composure, Robert Grant Burns paced up and down and debated within himself a subject which might have been called punch versus prestige. Should he let that scene stand, or should he order a "retake" because Jean had, after all, done the dramatic part—the "remorse stuff"? Of course, when Pete sent the film in, the trimmers could cut the scene—they probably could cut the scene just where Gil went down in a decidedly realistic heap. But it hurt the professional soul of Robert Grant Burns to retake a scene so compellingly dramatic—because it had been so absolutely real.

Jean was sitting up with her back against the ledge looking rather pale and feeling exceedingly foolish, while Gil Huntley explained to her about the "blood sponge" and how he had held it concealed in his hand until the right moment, and had used it in the interest of realism and not to frighten her, as she might have reason to suspect. Gil Huntley was showing a marked tendency to repeat himself. He had three times assured her earnestly that he did not mean to scare her so, when the voice of the chief reminded him that this was merely an episode in the day's work. He jumped up and thoughtfully assisted Jean to rise also, and gave his attention to Burns.

"Gil, take that same position you had when you fell. Put a little more blood on your face; you wiped most of it off. There! That right leg is sprawled out too far. Draw it up a little. Throw out your left arm a little more. Whoa! Enough is a plenty. Now, Gay, you take Jean's gun and hold it down by your side, where her hand dropped right after she fired. You stand right about here, where her tracks are. Get *into* her tracks! We're picking up the scene right where Gil fell. She looked straight into the camera and spoiled the rest, or I'd let it go in. Some acting, if you ask me—seeing it wasn't acting at all." He sent one of his slant-eyed glances toward Jean, who bit her lips and looked away.

"Lean forward a little—and hold that gun like you knew what it was made for, anyway." He regarded her glumly. "Say! That ain't a stick of candy you're trying to hide in your skirt," he pointed out, with an exasperated, rising inflection at the end of the sentence. "John Jimpson! If I could take you two girls to pieces and make one outa the two of you, I'd have an actress that could play Western leads, maybe.

"Oh, well—thunder! All you can do is put over the action so they'll forget the gun. Say, you drop it the second the camera starts. You pick up the action where Jean dropped the gun and started for Gil. See if you can put it over the way she did. She really thought she'd killed him, remember. You saw the real, honest-to-John horror dope that time. Now see how close you can copy it.

"All ready? *Start* your *action!*" And, a second later: *"Camera!"*

Brutally absorbed in his work he

might be; callous to the tragedy in Jean's eyes at what might have happened; unfeeling in his greedy seizure of her horror as good "stuff" for Muriel Gay to mimic. Yet the man's energy was dynamic, his callousness born of his passion for the making of good pictures. He swept even Jean out of her emotional whirlpool and into the calm, steady current of the work they had to do.

He instructed Pete to count as spoiled those fifteen feet of film which recorded Jean's swift horror. But Pete Lowry did not always follow slavishly his instructions. He sent out the film as it was, without comment. Then he and Gil Huntley counted on their fingers the number of days that would probably elapse before they might hope to hear the result, and exchanged knowing glances now and then when Robert Grant Burns seemed especially careful that Jean's face should not be seen by the recording eye of the camera. And they waited; and after a while they began to show a marked interest in the mail from the West.

TO BE CONTINUED.

AN AUGUSTA CHICKEN

WHEN the directory man called at the home of Miss Isabella Graham, No. 733 Telfair, Augusta, Georgia, and stated he was the census information man, Miss Graham gave the names of her mother and herself.

"No one else, ma'am—no menfolks?" inquisitively interrogated the directory man as he was departing.

"No one else but Valentine. And Valentine is poultry," jocosely retorted Miss Graham.

Valentine was at first a measly little chick. When he scrambled through his shell on Valentine Day, Miss Graham took pity on him, and carried him into her room and nursed and nurtured him. He lived and prospered, and was christened "Valentine," in honor of the day when he came into life.

But the directory man was matter-of-fact. For, in the 1914 city directory of Augusta, Georgia, page 317, is the entry:

"Graham, Valentine, poultry farm, b. 733 Telfair."

And is, probably, the only chicken in America with a place in the city directory of its town.

A TRIBUTE TO HIS WIFE

WHEN John D. Long was secretary of the navy, an admiral in the service was anxious to have a warship named after the admiral's wife. The request was put up to Mr. Long, and the admiral annoyed him with repeated inquiries as to whether the craft would be christened as he desired.

"Don't worry," Mr. Long told him one day. "When that boat is christened, you'll be thoroughly satisfied with the tribute to your wife."

The warship slid from the ways, splashed into the water, and was christened *The Vixen.*

SOUTH AMERICA, THE FUTURE MELTING POT

THE principal causes of emigration are: the prosperity of other countries and the opportunity of improved conditions of work and living there; economic, political, or religious oppression at home; ease and cheapness of travel from one country to another; inducements offered by countries seeking immigrants; the abnormal activity of steamship lines to induce emigration.

After the European war is over, no doubt the nations involved will do their utmost to restrict emigration and to conserve their remaining human resources. Therefore, the immigration from Europe, even to the United States, is likely to be much reduced, no matter how great may be the prosperity of this country.

Africa and South America are two great continents that are uncrowded and undeveloped. Africa, however, has offered little to attract the immigrant, and is not likely to for several generations. Furthermore, fifty-nine-sixtieths of this vast continent is owned by European powers, which is additional reason why, for some time to come, the tide of emigration from Europe will not turn in that direction.

South America is eighty-five per cent as large as North America. It offers a wider variety of climate. It is thinly populated. Its vast natural resources are undeveloped. The tremendous commercial and industrial expansion of South America is just beginning. Eventually, this will call for a great flood of manual labor. This demand has been met, thus far, to a large extent, from Asia, and it is from this source that future immigration will come.

With the exception of the British, Dutch, and French colonies on the Caribbean, none of the countries of South America is controlled by absentee owners. All the Latin-American republics are eager for immigrants. They welcome them, and offer all sorts of inducements. None discriminates against the yellow or brown races. None forbids the inducing of immigration or places any material restrictions about the admission of settlers.

Brazil and Argentina, for example, in the past have sought to draw immigrants from Europe by advertising their natural advantages, offering free ocean passage, free lands, et cetera, to colonists. These efforts have brought as many

as one hundred thousand in a single year from Italy to the Argentine; but the effects of the great war will close this source of supply. Therefore, these two rich and progressive countries are likely to lead their neighbors in the quest for new blood.

China and Japan, especially, are overcrowded. Every year many thousands of Chinese and Japanese emigrate to South America. The industrial awakening of that continent will cause an incredible increase in this movement of the human tides. The forerunners of this great migration are already becoming more and more apparent since the opening of the Panama Canal. When international maritime commerce is fully resumed, and capital flows into South America for the development of new enterprises, the immigration from Asia will assume vast proportions.

The problems that will grow out of this great shifting of population will be unique. South America will be the mixing bowl for alien races and alien creeds. In North America, these elements from the Far East never have been assimilated. Thus far, in Latin America, the contrary has been the case. But as to the future—it is like a hitherto untried experiment in chemistry: it is an even chance whether the result will be a blending or an explosion.

THE CIRCUIT RIDERS OF BUSINESS

NUMERICALLY the occupation of selling ranks third among all the callings in the United States. Nearly four million persons are more or less directly engaged in it every business day. It is surpassed only by agriculture and manufacturing. Science and technical education have increased the efficiency of the farmer and the artisan, but until lately the sales person has been self-taught. He has had to learn his lessons by experience—the costliest way for his employer and himself.

But a great change is taking place. It began about five years ago. To-day there are many teachers of the science of salesmanship. In the great cities, huge retail establishments, employing thousands of clerks, have regular schools where their help may learn how to sell goods. The courses run from the primary grades, for new clerks who are being "tried out," to classes for the heads of departments.

In the smaller cities and towns the greatest good is being done by various universities, which have "selling" as one of their extension courses. These colleges carry the education to those who need it by sending out teachers, who make a round of half a dozen places, teaching country clerks and merchants. These instructors are called the "circuit riders of business," because usually their visits are a week apart.

They try to dignify the sales person's job by showing him that if he goes at it right, he can make his work as interesting and as profitable as medicine or law or any of the learned professions.

These teachers, who travel the same circuit week after week until the courses are completed, are men who have had long, practical experience as salesmen, and who also have the faculty of imparting their knowledge to others. Their work is various and difficult. In each new town the clerks and merchants fire volleys of questions at them, until they are satisfied that the "professors" know

what they are talking about. Then they bring them all their knotty problems to solve. After a little, the students become intensely interested. They become real salesmen instead of order takers. Then, because their efficiency is so much increased, they get more pay, and climb higher and higher up the ladder, until they reach places of greater responsibility, which otherwise they never would have attained.

THE EVER NORTHWARD MARCH OF WHEAT

A GREAT grain expert definitely announced, some fifty years ago, that wheat never could be grown profitably in North America outside the valleys of the Mississippi and Ohio, and that its production north of the Great Lakes was impossible.

About the same year, a Scotchman, David Fife, living in "Canada West"—now Ontario—received a little seed wheat from a cargo that had reached Glasgow straight from Dantzic. He sowed it in the spring, but it proved to be winter wheat, and none ripened save three ears, apparently from a single plant. Fife planted this seed the next spring, and got such splendid results from his experiment that he persisted, year after year. That was the origin of Red Fife, a famous Canadian wheat, which marked, perhaps, the first important step in the great northward movement of the grain belt.

Years of patient experimenting followed—with wheats from Siberia, India, the Himalayas, and from Lake Ladoga, north of the Russian capital, six hundred miles higher latitude than Winnipeg. This Ladoga wheat, particularly, was cross-bred with the Red Fife, and finally the early-ripening grain that was sought was achieved.

Crossbreeding the wheat berry requires infinite care and much time. The covering chaff must be separated from one of the tiny wheat flowers that has not reached maturity. With a pair of tiny forceps, the anthers are removed, and the flower is ready to be fertilized with pollen brought from another variety. After this is done, the flower case is closed as before, and is tied up in a little paper bag attached to a bamboo cane, to hold it upright and protect it until harvest time. Six years' experimenting produced about seven hundred kernels—half a teacupful—the result of five thousand flowers carefully worked.

From these crosses sprang the several wheats now widely grown in the Canadian Northwest. They ripen from four to twelve days earlier, but the days thus gained in this campaign to the northward means hundreds of miles and millions of bushels. Experimenting continues diligently. It has been predicted that in ten years more Canada promises completely to change the conditions of the wheat markets of the world.

AERIAL MAIL ROUTES

IN a good many parts of the United States it takes from ten hours to three days to carry mail between points that are only a hundred miles or so apart in an air line. This is because the country in between is so up on edge—broken by mountains and cañons, with unbridged and impassable rivers thrown in for good measure. The long detours that have to be made have bothered the post-office people for years.

Aërial mail service has been talked of for some time. At aviation meets now and then letters have been delivered by flying machines, just to show that it could be done. But only lately has the government taken this matter up seriously, with a view to establishing regular routes for the carriage of the mails in this way. The experiments that have been tried have resulted satisfactorily, even under the most adverse conditions. In his latest annual report, the postmaster general recommended that aërial mail service be introduced wherever topographical conditions make it desirable, and Congress subsequently appropriated $50,000 for that purpose. Air routes are to be established between various points in Alaska and in the Rockies. As these prove their utility, the scope of this method of mail carrying will be enlarged. Eventually, no matter in what far place a man may live, the rural mail carrier, in his airship, will deliver letters and papers to him with almost as much regularity as if he dwelt by a well-traveled road.

Within the last few years, air craft have become safe and reliable. They have had their most searching trials in the great war. But their dependability for peaceful purposes has been established beyond question. They are being used every day for patrolling electric-power lines in the mountains, where the snows lie deep from early autumn to midsummer. On great sheep and cattle ranches in the West they are being employed by the managers to keep track of the movements of the flocks and herds. It used to take two weeks to cover on horseback and automobile a ranch of one hundred and twenty-five square miles. With air craft it is now being done in less than a day.

OUR FAITH

THE man who loves his native people well—his Virginians, and Hoosiers, old salts, and young bloods, Texas Rangers, and Maine foresters—is not dazzled by the cheap splendor of surfaces. Nor is he impressed by the herd of racy millionaires, the swagger and arrogance of the overlords. He refuses to bow the head to smashing successes and the mountains of plunder.

He remembers the Republic of the Spirit which we have erected with the open door, the free road, the manhood ballot, and the popular education. We have a spiritual possession in America, which ennobles the immigrant, and cheers the plodder, and makes the life of clerk and farmer and newsboy significant. Each one of us is partaker in opportunity. That means we live in hope. Our men are not broken. Our women are not suppressed. Our faults are the faults of young men in a hurry.

We deny that history is a closed record. We forbid the individual to think of himself humbly and sadly. We believe in the free will, the fresh start, the forgiveness of sins, and the resurrection of the lost cause. We have a religion. We did not know we had a religion, because it was celebrated in the sunshine, instead of behind stained glass.

It is a religion of hope, but it is a sane hope. We believe in America, its men and women, its cities and countryside, and back of institutions, its spirit: that buoyancy which travels at express speed and tears through obstruction, as if matter were an illustration, and the human will a creator in the first morning of time. It is a spirit which would rewrite Genesis.

The Heel of Achilles

By Alan Sullivan

Author of "The Younger Son," "Renton's Code," Etc.

On the trail of the stolen Sussex Ruby, the famous stone that for a hundred years was the eye of the Buddha in the Upper Ganges Temple. A story of the detective and the smuggler, with the action on board an Atlantic liner

THERE was nothing unusual about him, except, perhaps, his eyes. These moved constantly, almost furtively, as he walked slowly westward on Piccadilly. His slight, erect figure, with its alert, sallow face and dark brows, was only one of thousands that one may see in New York. But here his very complexion and briskness differentiated him from most of the passers-by. His gaze roved so swiftly that none on whom it rested could say that he had regarded them.

Halting abruptly before a window full of the material which has made England what she is, he went in, and, seating himself on a long bench, said in an even, high-pitched voice: "I want a pair of tan shoes, size eight, narrow width."

An attendant, undoubtedly related to a bishop, so reverential was his manner, knelt at the customer's feet, measured respectfully, and, in a few moments, produced a pair of shoes.

"Shoes, I said; not low shoes," repeated the American, with a touch of irritation. "Don't you know what shoes are?"

The head salesman hurried up. "The gentleman means boots," he interjected gently.

"Oh, yes," laughed the stranger. "I forgot. I've got to speak English here. I guess you don't understand American?"

"We generally understand it, sir," said the salesman, coughing softly into a milky palm, "but we can't speak it.

An inscrutable glance flashed from the dark eyes, but the man's face was perfectly calm. He had unwittingly uttered a great truth. "You see, sir," he went on, "it doesn't really matter what one calls them if one sells them. Is that shoe, as you call it, sir, quite comfortable over the instep?"

"First rate pair of boots, as they say here," chuckled the American. "Better try on the left foot. There! That——"

He stopped abruptly. Behind him sounded a voice.

"I say I want a pair of yellow boots. Size eight, middle width."

Turning very slowly and deliberately, he saw a tall, fair-haired, sloping-shouldered young man who looked like Achilles and was staring directly at him, and as he stared a faint flush crept delicately into his smooth cheeks. He looked excessively clean, youthful, and muscular. The American returned the stare without a shade of recognition in his dark eyes. A close observer might have noted the fingers of his left hand clench tight, and an involuntary stiffening of the slight figure. They stood for an instant thus, and a nameless challenge seemed to jockey through the air.

A few moments later the tall man stood up and stamped a yellow foot.

"That's all right," he said hastily. "Take 'em off, will you?"

The American tones came in sharply: "Deliver them to Room 317, the Cecil. They must be there this evening sure."

Paying rapidly, he went out with another swift glance at the last comer. One could have sworn there was derision in it. The Englishman stepped quickly to the door, and looked after the dwindling figure. "By gad, he's a game one," he said thoughtfully, and slipped out behind him.

In three paces the salesman was at his side. "I beg your pardon, sir, but you forgot to pay for your boots."

The tall young man stared at him. "Oh, did I buy some boots?"

"Why, yes, sir. Size eight, middle width."

"Of course I did. I'm very stupid to-day." He took out a card. "Send them to that address with the bill, and, I say, if they're not there to-night I don't want 'em."

Twenty-four hours later, among the crowd on the Liverpool landing stage, the American might have been seen wedging himself toward the first-class gangway of the *Gigantic*. Simultaneously a small, nondescript man with a weak mouth and watery eyes walked toward the second class. He glanced at the official who examined his ticket, and then disappeared among a variegated crowd. Immediately behind the American came a tall young Englishman with his gaze fixed on the slim shoulders ahead of him. He was burdened with rugs and ulsters, and a contented smile flickered on his smooth face. The two reached the deck together. Each wore a new pair of yellow boots.

The dark man looked up sharply, and laughed

"Ah, we meet once more! Our tastes are, it seems, very much alike." Then he added, with the suspicion of a sneer: "I wouldn't even be surprised if we actually shared the same cabin."

Again a pink flush grew in his companion's cheek. He slowly unfolded his ticket. "You actually think that that would be remarkable. I have the upper berth in No. 102."

"And I have the lower. Fate is very kind."

"Do you think," said the Englishman diffidently, "that this voyage is actually necessary? Isn't it rather a waste of time for—for both of us? What do you say, Mr.—Mr.——"

"Thornton, please; Thornton. As to the voyage, I wouldn't miss it for anything. Lovely month to cross in—June. Sea air always agrees with me, and, besides, are you quite crazy? What is it to you whether I cross or not?"

"Nothing much. Only a couple of weeks."

Mr Thornton produced his cigar case. "You take things too seriously," he smiled, extending it, "Mr.—Mr.——"

"Agnew," snapped the Englishman, and ferreted out his pipe. "Matters shall be entirely as you wish—that is, for the immediate present."

The voyage went very smoothly. The occupants of cabin No. 102 spent much of their time together. They played nap, to the exclusion of the more expensive poker. Agnew always drank Irish and water, while Thornton touched nothing but Bronx cocktails. At the concerts they sang charmingly, Agnew's bass blending with Thornton's rather thin but very sweet tenor. Their chairs occupied one of the best nooks on the port side. They seemed, in short, inseparable.

The *Gigantic* was well inside Cape Race when, one morning, bending over the after rail, Thornton pointed out on the lower deck a small man with a weak mouth and watery eyes.

"Who is he?" said Agnew.

"Name is Ashman. He's a great smuggler. At least, so I was told by

a man on the inside in New York. No affair of mine, you know, but I thought it might interest you under the circumstances, Mr. Agnew," he drawled.

Agnew grinned. "Go on."

"Ashman is interesting because he doesn't suggest any particular ability. That's where people so often go wrong. Take yourself, for instance. I'd bet anything you're shadowing me, and yet" —here his eyes twinkled—"I don't suggest any particular capacity for anything."

Agnew rapped his pipe on the rail, and stowed it carefully in a chamois case. "No, you don't suggest anything in particular, but"—he drew out a leather pocketbook—"this photograph does."

The American started, but the other went on imperturbably: "It suggests cunning, a sense of humor, pluck, and a particularly marked initiative. Such a man would be hard to corner. Don't you think so?"

Thornton glanced at his own portrait, took his cigar out of his mouth, and regarded it carefully.

"The Sussex Ruby," he said casually.

"Of course; what else? My dear fellow, you do it extremely well."

"This is very interesting. You have, of course——'

"I have. The ruby, as you are particularly aware, disappeared from Duckton's, on Old Bond Street, just two weeks ago to-day, the tenth. Next morning, curiously enough, you were in Bromley and motored across to Croydon, where you took a room in St. Augustine Avenue for three days. One of my men had the room opposite. On Saturday you went to Dorking by way of Redhill. Charming country about Dorking, isn't there? On the Monday you came to town, obviously to get yellow boots. I have reason to know that you have the ruby at the present time and have sent a wireless to New York."

Again Thornton scrutinized the brown veins on the wrapper of his cigar. "Everything you say is extraordinarily interesting. It confirms all I have heard about the thoroughness of the English police system," he said thoughtfully. "And, since you know I have the ruby, and since obviously I cannot get ashore before you do, it would certainly appear that you have got me where you want me. You are young in the service, and such a performance will be much to your credit."

Agnew fumbled again for his pipe. "Yes, I know all that, but," he burst out explosively, "it's a rotten job!"

"You surprise me." The American's brows were lifted high. "What! You match your brains against those of a man fifteen years older than yourself! You trace him everywhere and indeed beat him at his own game. My dear sir, you do indeed surprise me."

"Oh, you needn't think it's going to make any difference. Your jig is up, anyway."

"I know, I know. You've made that quite clear, but"—he hesitated and looked at his captor almost tenderly— "it makes me sick to see a man of your brains doing detective work. Why don't you get on the other side of the fence? That's the finest game in the world. To know that they want you, and pass them in the street and have them look at you. Ah, my dear Mr. Agnew, you are wasted where you are. Why, I could put you onto a——"

"If you don't stop talking like that," put in Agnew gruffly, "I'll smash you in the jaw."

Thornton bowed. "Your arguments are, as usual, subtle and incontrovertible. Shall we change the subject back to rubies? The Sussex Ruby is a true Burma pigeon blood. Every lapidary knows that it is a cabouchon and weighs about sixty carats. It came from the Mogok Mines north of Mandalay. Its history is curious. Stolen by a native, it was sold for a trifle to an East In-

dian Company trader. He brought it to India, where for a hundred years it was in the eye of a Buddha in a temple on the upper Ganges. It was again stolen at the time of the Mutiny, and came to the Westfords. Their estate is at Crowhurst, not far from Reigate." He paused, then added cynically: "Lord Westford had sent it to London for safe-keeping at the time of the robbery you mention. Its only market value is to cut up into small stones—a very easy matter," he concluded cheerfully.

The Englishman turned and stared at him curiously. "I'm sorry you're in this," he said thoughtfully. "You—you don't strike me as being that kind."

A cigar pitched down to the river of hissing foam that sped swiftly by. Thornton laughed as it struck the water. "It's the game—can't you understand? —the most exciting game in the world. Money doesn't figure. I couldn't settle down and spend it if I had it. Every man you pass is a mystery—and a possibility. Of course, there's always the probability that one will be tripped up." He glanced quizzically at his companion. "Just as you have tripped me. That's part of the game. It's like cutting up a ruby. One may lose most of it by bad cutting."

"We'd better go below," snapped Agnew. "It's time to dress for dinner." And at dinner Thornton raised his glass and caught his companion's eye across the table. "To the game," he said, smiling.

Another day slid by, and New York was but twenty-four hours distant. That night there was great peace in cabin No. 102. Agnew, on his back, snored contentedly. Below him Thornton lay motionless on his side. Only a glimmer of light reached them from the grating over the door. On the sofa were two neat mounds of clothing, and beneath each glowed a pair of yellow boots.

It was nearly midnight when the figure in the lower berth moved ever so little. The dark eyes opened. Moments crept by with no sound save the rush of water outside the open porthole in the passageway. Presently Thornton spoke, in a half whisper:

"Agnew, are you awake?"

There was no reply from above. He waited, and spoke again. Still there was no answer. Then very, very gently the head of the man in the upper berth turned slightly outward. The eyelids did not even quiver, and no motion of the steel mattress betrayed him.

With infinite care, a white-clad leg protruded from below. Thornton paused, it seemed to him, for ages before the other leg swung outward. In another instant, the flicker of an electric flash light crept over the floor and hovered over one pair of yellow boots. The man above gave no sound. He rested, motionless and inert, his long, flaxen lashes lying low on a sleep-flushed cheek. Again Thornton paused; then, half erect, leaned forward, peered through the door into the passage, and drew suddenly back. The broad shoulders of a steward were almost within reach. He turned swiftly, as Thornton crouched out of sight.

"Ah, that is it, is it?" said the latter, under his breath. He glanced at the upper berth. "So you thought of that, too, bless you."

It was ten minutes before he dropped on his knees and reached out a long arm at one pair of yellow boots, the pair opposite his own clothes. Very quickly and silently he grasped the left one. He touched nothing else, till, with the same caution, he groped back to bed and lay breathing hard. And all the time no sign of consciousness had come from above where the figure of Agnew rested. The long lashes were unstirring, but, had his companion examined closely, the least pucker might have been observed in the far corner of the mouth.

Muffling the flash light so that its eye fell directly in his lap, Thornton turned the sole of the boot upward. For the next quarter of an hour, he labored diligently with a sharp instrument that glittered in the tiny white beam. Frequently he stopped to listen acutely, but nothing could be heard except the vessel's frame creaking as she pitched in the long swell.

A faint snore came from the passageway, and he slipped again to the floor. Agnew moved slightly, and the American stood like a statue till the sleeper's breathing grew deep and heavy. Then, on hands and knees, he stretched across and with extraordinary rapidity put his own left boot beside Agnew's right one. Another swift motion, and his own pair was complete. The bootmaker himself could not have marked the difference. He glanced upward at the curve in the steel mattress. "Nice boy!" he murmured. "Nice boy! It's a darn pity, but——" He rolled over and closed his eyes.

Sandy Hook was abreast at noon. Thornton's elbow touched the Englishman's as they gazed.

"I'm real sorry to leave you," he said affably. "This has been a right interesting voyage. I guess you thought I had that ruby from the way I spoke of it. Gosh, that's nothing! I'd like to show you round little old New York. You've got to be careful in a real city, don't you know."

Agnew grunted. "That's very decent of you, only, you see, this isn't our last voyage. We'll be going back together in three days."

The American laughed. "I declare you do romance. It's queer I should have taken such a shine to you, after the way you've talked to me, and we so different. I guess," he added coolly, with a downward glance, "we've only got one thing in common, that's our boots. Blame good boots, too—they don't put so much hand work on them out here." He paused; then sympathetically: "You're favoring your left leg—anything wrong?"

"I twisted it this morning." Agnew's lip trembled as he spoke. His eye wandered to the lower deck. "There's your friend. He seems to be interested in us."

Ashman's watery eyes met those of Thornton, but only for a fraction of time. He looked away instantly. The American stooped to pick up a handkerchief that had fluttered to his feet.

"Why don't you get after him? He's much more likely to have your ruby than any one on the *Gigantic*. My dear man," he continued, "take a word from me. Don't make a fool of yourself. It's fatal if you do it in a big way. I've only seen you for six days, but, upon my word, I like you. Now don't—don't for Heaven's sake"—here he laid a slim hand on Agnew's arm—"make an ass of yourself just because you think I've got a ruby concealed somewhere on my person. I haven't, darn your thick British skull, I haven't."

"I know you." Agnew's lips closed like a trap, then he added evenly: "I know you feel very well disposed toward me—and thank you—and that doesn't make the slightest difference. Now we'll just stay here till the passengers are all off. For your information, I might say that the captain is aware of everything, and will give me any assistance I require."

"Oh, that's all right; I knew that long ago—the stewards, too. Nothing I like more than waiting in comfort while passengers get off. So you're going to let that trickster Ashman go without a word?"

"Thank you, I have my hands full at present. Another time, perhaps, but not to-day."

It seemed an age before the *Gigantic* was docked. Then they both watched while first and second-class travelers disembarked. One of the earliest was

Ashman. This time he did not look up, but hurried into the customhouse with a single valise. His nondescript face was red with the North Atlantic sun. Agnew, frowning down at the dwindling crowds, saw two men hurrying to the gangway. They glanced up, and he raised his hat. In another moment, they mounted quickly.

"Mr. Claxton, I think," said Agnew.

The other nodded, held out his hand, and shot a keen glance at Thornton. "Ah, an old friend! Hello, Charley!. Had a good trip?"

Thornton colored. "Fine—just fine. It's great traveling with my friend, here. May I ask what the devil you want?"

Claxton chuckled. "There's one thing about Charley we like, Mr. Agnew. He's always cheerful, either coming in or going out."

Agnew took out a match and lifted his left foot, then thoughtfully put it down. "We might perhaps get to business. I should like to see something of New York—as much as possible. We take the *Plutonic* on Friday."

"We like the *Plutonic,*" put in Thornton brightly. "Same line, same service, same everything."

"It's the same old Charley," laughed Claxton. "Come along; we'll get to business at once." He led the way. Behind came the suspect, followed by Agnew and the second detective.

The latter whispered over the Englishman's shoulder: "Claxton knows his tricks—you're all right now."

The procession halted in a small room furnished with a long, bare table and three common chairs. Two porters followed with Thornton's luggage—a trunk and suit case. One detective set to work on these.

"Strip!" said Claxton sharply.

Thornton smiled responsively, and began to undress. Very deliberately he handed coat, waistcoat, trousers, and underclothes to the chief detective, who shook them casually and laid them on the table. This was a matter of form, and both knew it. Claxton looked between the suspect's toes and into his mouth, then ran his fingers through his dark hair.

"Swallowed it, Charley?"

Thornton grinned and glanced at Agnew. The Englishman's face was full of impatience.

Claxton took up the yellow boots.

"If it isn't here, he hasn't got it, Mr. Agnew. This is an old trick of his, but I'm afraid it's out of date by this time. We'll look through his baggage, but Charley's too sharp a hand for double-bottomed trunks or any such foolishness. Now I'll show you one of his former dodges."

He took a narrow chisel from the table drawer and thrust it flat into the heel. The outer layer of leather lifted, then another and another. Not a line of Agnew's face changed while he watched. Presently the chisel was laid back on the table.

"I'm afraid he's beaten you."

Agnew squared his shoulders, and seemed about to speak. Then he stooped and began to unlace his left boot. He paused, looking up with the laces between his fingers.

"I sleep very lightly, Mr.—Mr. Charley."

"Do you?" There was not a quiver in the clear voice.

"Yes; last night particularly so."

Claxton breathed sharply and fixed his eyes on Thornton's calm face.

"And in consequence," continued Agnew, "I saw things that interested me very much." He turned to Claxton with the yellow left boot. "Will you kindly look inside the tongue of the left boot Mr. Thornton wore and see if there is any mark?"

"Yes. The letter 'A' in indelible ink."

"Thank you; my mark and my boot."

"What!"

"And now kindly dissect this one. It

is Mr. Thornton's. He made a slight mistake last night."

The suspect's arms dropped to his sides and little wrinkles crept around his eyes. "I knew it," he said sharply.

"Knew what?"

"Knew I'd made a mistake. Any fool ought to know that you would not sleep that last night, when"—he hesitated—"there was so much in the balance."

"Thank you—what do you find, Mr. Claxton?"

The chisel was rammed strongly in. Beneath the second layer it struck something hard.

"And you wouldn't believe me when I told you I had nothing," sighed Thornton regretfully. "Ah, Mr. Agnew, so young and yet so stern."

Claxton snorted and pried off the leather. In a neat little cavity lay a smooth, rounded, pear-shaped globule of what looked like red glass. He held out his hand as Agnew sprang to take it.

"A good job, sir! Congratulations! You have caught the slipperiest one of them all."

"May I dress, please? I'm not cold but modest," said the smooth tones.

"Sure! It's a beautiful stone, Mr. Agnew."

But the Englishman had picked it out of the cavity and was holding it against the light. Thornton, drawing on his trousers, looked at him with a twinkle.

"Beautiful stone, Mr. Agnew."

But Agnew's hand had begun to shake. His pink cheeks assumed a strange and yellow tinge. "This is not the Sussex Ruby." His voice quavered in spite of himself.

Claxton was at his side in an instant. "What?"

"Don't you recognize it?" asked Mr. Thornton, fastening his braces. "Perhaps you don't know the Sussex Ruby when you see it."

Agnew's eyes flashed. "Confound you!" he rasped, advancing threateningly. "I'll——"

"Hold on!" said Claxton. "He's been stringing you, that's all."

But Mr. Thornton, who was now putting on his collar, only said: "Don't you remember?"

"What?" stuttered the Englishman, white with rage.

"Why, I told you you were on the wrong track. I told you that you would never find me with the Sussex Ruby. I told you it was the game and not the money that got me; and, by George, I even told you where you would find it, and you only laughed and said you had your hands full."

"What do you mean?" Agnew avoided Claxton's eyes. He was full of a futile desire to kill something.

"Don't you remember?" repeated Thornton, pulling his cravat into a perfect knot. "Don't you remember a little fellow I told you was Ashman?"

"What was Ashman like?" broke in Claxton, with dawning suspicion. He knew Thornton of old.

"Why—why, he was a miserable little man with watery eyes and a weak mouth. A second-class passenger. He landed before we did."

"So did the Sussex Ruby," said Thornton quietly, slipping on his coat.

Agnew dropped into a chair. He began to feel dizzy.

"Straight! Who has it? You know me; now answer!" rapped out Claxton. "Is it Slim Andrew?"

Thornton drew out his watch. "Let me see. He left about an hour ago. It's his scoop, you know, not mine. No, he hasn't got it now—and I don't know who has. In fact," he concluded, picking up his hat, "as you very well know, Claxton, there won't be any Sussex Ruby to-night. It will be in twenty pieces." He turned to the door. "Is there anything else, gentlemen?"

Claxton glanced into the anxious face. "We can't do anything else. You see, nothing is proved. We can, and of course will, shadow him," he said,

under his breath, "but Charley will know that as well as we do. He's right about the ruby. It's probably broken by now. It's the only thing a fence could do with it."

Thornton stopped at the door and began to draw on a pair of yellow chamois gloves. "I'm real sorry to part with my traveling companion," he said, looking at Agnew with a tantalizing smile on his smooth face, "but I guess you'll perk up and make quite a nice detective. That little trip of mine round Sussex didn't really mean anything. I heard sideways that Andrew was going to do a little business, and I could see two detectives all blown up with beef and beer that were trying to shadow me, so I guessed I'd give them a little run into the country. But, say, those are elegant boots we got in Piccadilly. Well, so long, old man. If you want to get in touch with me, just write to my friend Claxy, here—he'll know where I am. Well, so long, gentlemen; so long."

LITERATURE FROM NEW ENGLAND

WILLIAM D. HASSETT, the journalist, is a member of the National Press Club in Washington. Moreover, he is well grounded in the classics, and is a voracious reader—wherefore his clubmates consider him a literary critic of no mean ability. In fact, for a long time he was known as the man who never read anything unless it was marked by great ability or genius.

His downfall came one afternoon when he was discovered perusing with profound and absorbed interest a weekly paper from his home State in New England. Shocked and surprised, his friends seized the influential-looking journal and read aloud this item:

"The speaker of the afternoon, Mrs. James Borden Estee, spoke on 'The Science of Success.' She has the rare faculty of speaking for an hour or more on a given subject, without notes and without repetition; one grammatical, well-rounded sentence following another rapidly, with logical sequence."

The Hassett reputation for reading only the products of genius took a tumble right there. It was demolished absolutely when this announcement was read aloud:

"The second sketch was an acrobatic stunt by Cadets Brooks and White, who risked their necks and apparently every bone in their bodies in a series of gravity-defying stunts which won the applause of the audience. After these events the floor was cleared, and dancing was enjoyed."

THE UNREASONABLE WOMAN

MRS. MACGREGOR had suffered greatly during her life because of her husband's inebriety. One day, as she was going down the street, she encountered him just as he emerged from a saloon.

"Sandy," she exclaimed in righteous indignation, "you ought to be ashamed of yourself, coming out of a saloon!"

"What do you want me to do?" expostulated Sandy gravely. "Stay in there the rest of my life?"

Spirit of the West

By William Dudley Pelley

Discussing the question of whether the West has become civilized; whether, as the sheriff puts it, Westerners have "degenerated into soft-living specimens of mollycoddles, fit only to keep score at a domino party or carry wallets containing cards with the bearer's name printed on 'em"

PICTURESQUE as a setting by Remington galloped Hooty Malone through the late afternoon. He sang as he rode, but the song bothered the tireless bronc not in the least, for with ears laid back and eyes half closed, he pounded out the miles through the sagebrush to where the smoke of Sago City rose like the signal fire of civilization at the foot of the distant mountains.

There was nothing especially extraordinary about Hooty. He toted neither gun nor chaps on this particular afternoon, for he was riding into town. Hooty was a cowboy, but aside from the long frock coat, only the sagebrush and the sombrero proclaimed either his calling or his habitat.

It was Barret's Clearing, where the sagebrush trail merged in the main road to Sago City, that he encountered Old King Cole. Round the gentle slope of rusty-colored land the latter swung, and both horses chanced a ringbone to dodge the imminent concussion. The presence of another meant civilization for Hooty, and immediately he merged in that soft, low drawl of speech that had found for him a name.

The sun gleamed brightly on the breast shield of Old King Cole as he wheeled his horse in the dust.

"You sausage-mounted batterin'-ram," roared the irate sheriff, "blow your whistle in nearin' a crossin'. You'd carry away the car bumper at the end of the track on a sidin'. What's your infernal rush? Is there a female after you?"

"Up to your usual tricks, are you, sheriff?" laughed Hooty. "Rustlers nor Democrats don't know you're round till you prod your personality into 'em so far that if the trigger was pulled the barrel would bust at the hilt."

"Goin' to the city?" asked the sheriff.

"Yaas," drawled Hooty; "going to see a movie show and women with parasols, and drink sarsaparilla and watch men wearin' suspenders. Incidentally, I'm supposed to get the boss a bottle of paregoric and the baby some Old Crow, not to mention some safety pins and corn salve and eighteen inches of elastic to make a pair of strangle holds for the missus' personal bank."

"Speed up," answered the sheriff; "so am I."

They wheeled their horses and trotted forward together.

"What's doin'?" asked Hooty, grudging the noise he placed in the words. "Hear you got a feller out to Peter's that skipped from his wife and kids in Chicago, and jailed the Chinese cook at Burbank's for mistaking laudanum for vanilla in a plum cake."

"The West ain't what it used to be, Hooty," said the sheriff sadly. "When I first come out, the redskins was thicker than flies in a Sunday dinner —and as troublesome. I remember when drinks cost a dollar apiece, and

every one after ten on Saturday night meant a pot shot at anything from an oil lamp to a man of family. Them was the good old days, Hooty. There was joy at being sheriff then. The West has gone civilized, Hooty. Look at yourself, for example—you're ridin' into town of a Saturday afternoon with a soft-boiled shirt. Time was when a boiled shirt was about as tantalizing to hip cannon as a stick of licorice to a small boy with a clean blouse and a cent. And Sago's got a mayor that sleeps in pajamas and a hotel where you can get ice water seven minutes after ringin' for it. All that's left is the mountains, the mustangs, and the Vermont schoolma'ams. We've fallen on barren days, my son—barren days!"

Hooty would have replied, but, rounding a bend in the road, a riderless horse stood before them, the bridle reins motionless in the sand, half asleep, with closed eyes and lowered head. Down by the brook's side which flowed beneath the road, Buster Cameron held a dripping tin can to his lips, and gazed intently into the firmament. Buster was a stout little chap of forty-five, who lived alone over toward Hasting's place, used a hay press to pack down his first dollar into his jeans, and rode about his real estate in carpet slippers, first because leather shoes cost money; second, because a corn was beholden on his left small toe that nothing but blasting powder could dislodge.

Hooty and the sheriff rode down the trifling embankment to allow their horses to drink, while Buster planted the tin can bottom upward on a stick. Thirst of man and animals being satiated, the three cantered forward together.

"I was saying," went on King Cole, discoursing on a favorite theme, "that the West ain't what it used to be. I wish something would happen to liven things up again. Honestly, sometimes when I go to draw my check for bein' sheriff, I feel like fillin' out the stub for the county clerk for the satisfaction of performin' real physical labor for the money."

"Well, yaas," drawled Hooty; "I admit the West has changed. But there's one point where I disagree with you, King. We may have changed the brand of our wild and woolly Westernism, but we ain't left adventure and romance behind on the trail. Whether you're East or West, or Detroit or Dallas, right there's adventure, if you only open your eyes and look for it. You're too violent, King. You're lookin' for the wrong kind of excitement. Get human; admit that we've progressed; say we've sifted down into finer meal; be glad that we ain't satisfied any longer to eat beefsteak that's been pummeled tender with the butt of a six-shooter."

The sheriff shook his head.

"But Hooty's right," squealed Buster.

"Wrong!" snapped the sheriff. "To prove you're wrong, I'll tell you what I'll do. When we reach Sago, we'll go into the bar of the Palace Hotel. I know Bill, the barkeep, there. You fellers agree to put up ten dollars apiece against the hundred-dollar bill I got on my hip. We'll give it to Bill to hold. One week from to-day we'll meet in the Palace again, and the money goes to the one who's had the biggest adventure durin' the next seven days. I'm bettin' you fellers won't have an adventure worth two kicks at a yaller dog. If you do, the money goes to the chap that has the biggest. I'm offerin' this just to prove to you that we live in a powder-puff world; that we've degenerated into soft-living specimens of mollycoddles, fit only to keep score at a domino party, or carry wallets in our clothes containin' cards with our names printed on 'em."

Before Hooty's vision, in truly cinematographical fashion, suddenly flickered the picture of a girl. Hooty be-

held her beneath the moon. And the third finger of her left hand was as nude as the day the lady was born. And Hooty's mind certainly was running on movies, for the scene snapped away and he saw himself pricing adamantine dewdrops in the Sago Jewelry Emporium, waited on by a young man who winked one eye as he showed you the collection.

Eventually the three horsemen rode down the main street, where the last round of the watering cart was wetting down all the curb-strung bicycles. They dismounted and entered the swinging doors of the Palace.

The sheriff was spokesman. "Bill," said he to the barkeep, "me and my two friends want you to hold the stakes on a little bet. Sit down, Bill. Come, boys, peel out!"

The barkeep was accustomed to such affairs. They ran all the way from fifty cents on the Jones' twins being boys to five against a thousand that if Roosevelt was president Mexico would be as neat and orderly as your Aunt Jane's front parlor.

The sheriff laid a bright, crisp one-hundred-dollar bill between them about the table. Hooty regarded it with curiosity. He had never before seen a hundred-dollar bill. It appeared an awful chunk of responsibility delegated to one small slip of paper. But he placed a tenner beside it, and the two waited winkingly while Buster found ten greasy dollar bills in various portions of his anatomy.

"Now, Bill," said Cole, "listen, and get this straight: I'm lamentin' this ladylike refinement of the West. I claim that the age of adventure is past —that there's nothing left for a healthy man to do but support his family, grow bunions, and read the 'Advice to the Lovelorn,' in the Chicago papers. These two hicks have conspired themselves into the belief that as much adventure and romance is floating round the West as ever, only it's sheer, and fine-grained, after trickling through the sieve of civilization. We've agreed to keep eyes and ears open during the coming week, and at this same time next Saturday afternoon we're supposed to show up at this joint and state the most out-of-the-ordinary thing that's happened to us in the interim. Do you get it? You're to be judge—unless you judge wrong, then I'll be judge. If somethin' alarmin' and bloodthirsty and mannish happens, you're to pass over the roll to the one that's got the biggest hatful. If they can't report anything above seein' a ghost, or gettin' cut with a safety razor, or proposin' to some fool woman, I'm to get the whole pot. But there's only this to the rules and regulations: If any of us brings back a yarn we can't tell to a justice of the peace without bein' guilty of jeopardy, in order to entitle him to the pot, he's supposed to tote along some presentable souvenir of the occasion, like lawyers in court drag in old love letters and laudanum bottles or boxes of Christmas cigars in breach-of-promise suits. You get me, Bill?"

"Sure! It listens interesting. Good luck to you!"

II.

It is not the intent of this narrative to follow the minute vicissitudes of Hooty's week. Out and away over the great planet girths of rolling space in the sunrise, the long, dreamy summer days in the creaking saddle, the holy sunsets when a titanic conflagration roared on the western horizon—to die away into old silver, and finally deaden into lead—then the vaulted nights in the moonlight and the stars, when the herd blurred motionless in the half-lit darkness like an acre of scrub pine in the hills back home—every day was the same. But nothing occurred out of the ordinary—no gun play, no redskins, no outlaws, no rustlers. Not even a

confidence man called at the ranch house with "Mrs. Whittle's Dream Book" or recommendation of a reliable matrimonial agency.

On Wednesday night, Hooty rode over to Grey's to call on the girl. The girl did not wear a six-shooter, nor break wild horses, nor could she pot a coyote at sixty yards. She wore a green poplin dress that reached to her ankles. Her folks had just bought a Flivver car. She was absolutely no different than the girl at the corner of Walnut and Hawthorn Streets, in Lambertville, New Jersey—who is afraid of fuzzy caterpillers, and thinks Maurice Costello is the best actor in the movies.

While they sat out on the shadowed veranda, waiting for her folks to return from the Sago City Theater in the new car, and while the fussy little ticking clock in the silent parlor inside struck ten, and while the girl lying against him in the hammock said she thought seriously of going to New York to study music in the fall, wild resolutions seared through Hooty's head to hold up the Sunset Limited or provoke a Chinaman to wrath, or propose without the ring. But riding homeward late on the trail he realized the swift and certain retribution to follow any such procedure, and dumbly cursed what Old King Cole had so aptly described as "barren times.'

It was a rather sullen and sarcastic Hooty who watched the sun sinking on the beautiful, balmy afternoon on the following Friday. While snapping pebbles disconsolately at the tiny brown bug crawling along the piazza floor, he suddenly became aware of hoofs on the cross-meadow trail. In another instant, Bunny Foster hove in sight round the corner of the barn, at a deadly gallop. What was more, Bunny was excited. It stood out all over him; you might discern it at a distance.

Sighting Hooty, he yanked up abruptly at the steps.

"Hoot," he exclaimed, leaping on to the piazza, "I been stuck up—waylaid—plugged at by a holdup man! When I turned in the trail near Barret's Crossing, a fellow rode out of the brush with a handkerchief over his face and ammunition round his belt, like the grub outfit on a pack mule. I swear I ain't never seen him nor his mount before, and when he see I was for makin' a getaway, he chased me a mile up Cronin's hill and down the valley toward the Y outfit. Some horse he had, too! I potted him a couple, and I guess they struck bone, for he drew up quick, and went the other way like a torpeder. Jerusalem! There ain't been a holdup round here since 1898. And I had half a month's pay on my hip, too. Where's the boss?"

The man with the overdue mortgage who awoke one morning to find a meteor of diamonds imbedded in his lawn had nothing on Hooty Malone as he grabbed at Bunny's throat to choke off the auditory disturbance of atmosphere resulting therefrom.

"Come out behind the barn and say that over again!" gasped Hooty. "Say it slow, so my ears can drink in the intoxicating luxury of your incomparable larynx. I pray for a cyclone and I get a highwayman. Bunny, I'll whack up with you—twenty out of the hundred."

"Have you been chewin' loco?" demanded Bunny. "Or are you just plain crazy? I got chased by a robber, you pieface! He potted me with his gun, understand? Lord, it looked like the entrance to a tunnel! Anybody'd think it was funny. If the Old Man is home I'm going to have him raise a posse to get that feller."

"You're going to do nothing of the kind," commanded Hooty. "Have you got any lead left in that persuader you sometimes call your shootin' iron?"

"Four bang-up, paradise-passin' shots, you phosphate," the other declared, "and another boxful in my trunk. But if you think——"

"Ax that monologue," commanded Hooty, "hook it; give it the trapdoor; clap a hat over it; hire a midnight cat to drown it out. Bunny, you and me is goin' to corral that feller with the naked eye. I'd go alone, only I want you for Exhibit A, to prove I do it. Don't talk back, or I'll make you look like the lap dog the old lady sat on by mistake. This is a serious business. I've got a perfectly drinkable ten-spot up on a wager with a barkeep in Sago on the contention that the West is still unembalmed, and adventure not yet nix. I hate to wade into your robber, Bunny. He may need the money. But I need the pot worse. Don't flag your chaps away from this spot the length of a playin' card while I saddle my nag. If you do, your name is Mud. Mud—with a capital M. Glue to the ground, boy, for if I come back from the barn and find you've pulled any Paul Revere stuff I'm going to roll you so flat that a piece of stair carpet side of you would look like Billiam H. Taft!"

Hooty made the barn on the run, and his sudden advent into the big stall sent his broncho trying to climb the opposite wall. A mighty flop of the saddle, a lurch at the girth, the grunt of the cinch, the click of metal against bone as he knocked the bridle bit between the pony's teeth, and, with a straining of leather, Hooty was out of the barn, dodging the stable-door top as he rode.

"Get them cartridges!" commanded Hooty.

"Have a heart!" whined Bunny. "I gotter girl I wanta marry in June——"

"So have I, only it's September," declared Hooty. "Come! Shake a leg! Or are you yellow?"

Bunny's face flamed at the taunt, and he moved into the near-by low bunk house.

"You and me's hereby constituted into a combination of minuteman and Texas Ranger, Bunny," Hooty purred, as they rode away, "and before midnight we're goin' to give the wooden-legged janitor at Sago a prisoner that'll scare the last speck of varnish off its cork!"

"Why don't you get Old King Cole to help?" demanded Bunny. "He's paid to do that sort of thing!"

"And have him cop all the good things of life—even my ten?" demanded Hooty. "Not on your Brownie snapshot, son! Every man is entitled to the life liberty, and pursuit of the happiness of the guy who gets gay in Montana with a handkerchief round his mug and the ambition of Robin Hood. Bunny, a lariat round that chap's arms means a wife and family for me—not to mention half of Grey's ranch that comes with the girl. I'd cage Emmeline Pankhurst single-handed for either one!"

They were over the lower pasture as Hooty ended this monologue. Into the Sago City Trail their ponies swung, neck and neck, for give him credit—Bunny was not yellow.

The sun set over Mount Pisgah. The sagebrush swam in a sea of bronze. Coyotes began to whine and yelp far down in the bed of Robber's Roost Lake. The lake, like the robbers, had gone long ago. Hooty, having on his working clothes, and the day's work occasionally including the placing of a broken-legged cayuse out of misery brandished a sinister steel weapon, an took a pot shot at a passing stump to test the pull on the trigger.

Seven miles stretched between the ranch and the spot where Bunny had been intercepted. The calm, dreamy afterglow had disappeared, as they finally rounded the top of Cronin's hill and saw the Sago City Road dimly spread before them.

"Thank Providence and the weather

bureau there's goin' to be a moon," breathed Bunny, as they brought their horses to a walk and slowly descended the valley trail to where it touched the highway. Equally weighing against the passing day in the west, a mellow, fluted radiance was glowing on the eastern hilltops that in another hour would be a full moon, clear and cold above the mountains.

"Is your cannon working?" drawled Hooty.

"So smooth the jack rabbits are in danger," the other answered. "I'm even afraid of the moonshine on the barrel. The vibration might loose the trigger."

"Then shoot first and investigate afterward," commanded Hooty, and no further word was spoken as they wound down the remaining mile.

At last, Bunny drew up his pony and rose in his stirrups.

"Right here's where I seen him," he informed, looking off over the wonderful moonlit country. "See the clump of dark brush over to the right? That's where he sat his horse, waiting. If you get down, you could follow his tracks almost by moonlight."

Hooty dismounted. He struck a match, and, kneeling in the sand, he waved it to and fro over the trail.

Both men were suddenly attracted by the antics of Bunny's horse. The halted pony champed at the bit, swung his drooping head interrogatively from side to side, pointed his ears at the night sounds coming over the evening darkness, from time to time watching the Sago Road intently.

"This darned cayuse sees something we don't," whispered Bunny. He strained his eyes far into the elfin dark. "Listen!" he finally commanded.

Hooty rose to his feet, and listened.

The moon had now long since appeared over the eastern horizon and mounted—a great, golden plate—upward to the zenith. The sky above them, clear with a million stars, seemed a gigantic turquoise sieve, through whose tiny apertures some of the radiance of the beyond shone through. The night was quiet—so quiet that the yapping of a far-off coyote, the hoot of an owl, or the least rustling in the sagebrush came to their ears with uncanny sharpness.

The horses of the two men nipped playfully at one another. Then Bunny's mount turned his head suddenly and whinnied sociably across the darkness. He received a terrific jab from Hooty's fist.

"Hoot," whispered Bunny, "there's another nag around here some place, sure as doughnuts!"

"Yes," replied Hooty at length, "a horse is coming from somewhere, but whether up or down the road or on the trail behind us I can't make out."

"We better duck till we get our bearin's," advised Bunny. "We don't want to get potted for bad men ourselves."

Bunny swung down, threw his lines to the ground, and the two men led their horses into the sagebrush. They wallowed through the sand to the distant clump of vegetation from which the raider of a few hours before had ridden to intercept Bunny.

The senses of their horses had been the finer, for three full minutes passed before down the road from the north, headed toward Sago City, came the long, even lopes of a galloping animal. Suddenly, in the moonlight, there appeared round the bend a solitary horseman, in precisely the manner that the week before Hooty had encountered Old King Cole.

The rider swung by the head of the trail and on toward Sago City. The men were too hidden in the brush to make out more than the horse's back and the swaying figure of its rider carried weirdly along on the top of the straggling growth bordering the highway.

"Who is he?" whispered Hooty.

Bunny shook his head. "Listen!" he commanded.

The night rider had stopped. Hooty swung to his mount, and discerned two figures moving mysteriously about a few hundred yards down the road.

"Bunny, there's two of them!" ejaculated Hooty. Then simultaneously the two faced one another; the same thought flashing in their minds. "You don't suppose——"

"Yes," declared Bunny, "I do! The guy that chased me is doin' a land-office business in this locality. Whoever that last chap was, I'll swear he's gettin' stuck up for his wad, over beyond them bowlders!"

The two men could make out the figures of the horses wheeling round and round in the road. Hooty whipped out his gun and kicked his horse in the ribs. With the well-known scraping of brush against wooden stirrups, the two shot forward.

"For the love of Mike," groaned Bunny, "are you goin' to commit suicide?"

"Come on, you lotus-eater!" commanded Hooty. "There's only one way to tackle a proposition like this. That's in a rush. Wherever there's a battle, there you'll find a Malone. You and me is going to take that little skit by surprise. Sure as shootin', Bunny, he's getting off with a stick-up!"

They dashed from the brush into the open road. Bright in the moonlight stood silhouetted the image of a powerful man on a black horse facing another who held his hands above his head. A felt hat was pulled low over the eyes of the first; a handkerchief covered the lower part of his features. The solitary horseman who a moment before had crossed the head of the Bar Seventy Trail sat gazing ominously into a murderous-appearing implement on whose polished barrel the moonlight glinted brightly.

What happened, transpired quickly!

The catapult of two thundering horsemen!

Two thunderous reports!

A cry of pain!

The simultaneous leaps of four frightened horses!

Then the man with a handkerchief concealing his features bent low over his animal, and spurred in maddened fury for the sagebrush trail. Like the pounding of the approaching Sunset Limited came the thunder of two pursuing horses' hoofs, the smaller of the two riders whirling his lariat round his head as he rode, with a joyful gleam in his cool and steady eye.

"My gun's gone!" roared Hooty. "I've dropped it, Bunny. Rope him, or make way for somebody that can run!"

As the quarry whirled into the trail, Bunny rose in the stirrups. Round and round his head whistled the great lariat, the biceps of his cordy little arms standing out like the strands of a cable. He bent slightly backward, then he heaved the rope in the night!

III.

Bunny lay on the ground!

He lay very, very still.

A hundred feet away, his saddleless horse cut a great circle through the brush and ended up sniffing the roots of the bushes. Between them lay the saddle with the broken girth—from its pommel dangling the ineffective lariat.

From far up the trail came the hoarse, jeering laugh of the holdup man, and he dipped from sight over the rise of land.

Hooty knelt at the side of his companion.

"Bunny, Bunny," he whispered, "are you hurt bad?"

Bunny, doubled like a jackknife, rolled face upward on the sand and groaned softly.

"Let me grunt a little while, Hoot,"

he said grimly. "My shoulder hit a rock and made a dent in it—the rock, I mean. Better jump down the road and see his nibs. I'm all right for a while."

"By gum!" ejaculated Hooty; "where is he?"

Hooty swung into the saddle, jerked his horse back to the road and down to the spot of the holdup.

But the spot was deserted!

All Hooty found was his gun lying on the white sand in the moonlight. He fastened his right foot, swept over, picked it up, shoved it in his belt. "Rather lose the robber than you, old top," he said to the weapon, as he returned to Bunny, still inert upon the sand.

The two men passed the night out under the stars. It was no new sensation—they did it often while on duty. The Milky Way hung like a great haze of white fleece up and down the heavens. Now and then the warm night breeze stirred the sagebrush. But no one passed on the Sago Road and no one returned over the trail.

Hooty caught the saddleless broncho, dropped the coils of his stake rope, and got the hobbles from his saddle horn. After a while he gathered dried leaves, sticks, and grass and built a small fire. By its light he examined the shoulder. The little man gritted his teeth, and swore he would be all right in a little more time. So Hooty passed his night instead of chasing his robber. So he watched by his pal while the moon grew pale with the spent passion of too much giving, and morning flared at last in wonderful streaks of color bowling along the eastern horizon.

IV.

Hooty was ahead of time at the Palace bar the following afternoon. At daylight he had painfully borne Bunny homeward. The doctor who came from the city pronounced the shoulder broken. That was why Hooty had not followed the trail of the holdup man by daylight, although he saw the other's tracks plainly enough where he had dipped suddenly off the main route, down over Bottomless Gulch, to the ford over Mustang River.

This time Hooty wore a gun, but the article was not his own. It was a strange gun and a costly one—with several notches cut in the handle. This was the gun he had picked from the road.

"The son of a gun was no amateur," commented Hooty, examining the weapon for the twentieth time. "If every notch means a dead man he's certainly contributed to some cemetery! This howitzer certainly ought to get me that hundred and twenty!"

Neither Buster nor Old King Cole had arrived as he ordered the barkeep to bring him a tall one—with the collar on the bottom.

The barkeep wiped off the marble-topped table, and smiled his one-sided smile.

"Anything doin', Hoot?" he sarcastically inquired. "Did they cut the beans out of your grub? Did a rich uncle die? Or did you receive a proposal from a widder?"

"Yaas," said Hooty, sipping the beer, "I had an adventure."

"A hundred and twenty dollars' worth?"

"Every cent of it."

Punctual to the minute walked in Old King Cole and Buster. A grim, incongruous smile appeared on the former's face. Buster appeared to have lost his last friend, indeed, ten of them, each one perfectly spendable. Noting the look in Hooty's eye, however, the sheriff dropped quickly into a chair.

"What's up, son?" demanded King. "You look as if you robbed a bank."

"Speaking of adventures," commented Hooty, "call Bill over."

The barkeep came, the bar being otherwise empty.

"You said," began Hooty, "that the spirit of the West was dead. You inferred that rustlers and robbers and bad men and widders had reformed or taken the Jerusalem Limited."

"I did."

"Well," continued Hooty, with smile triumphant, "I've had an adventure that knocks the spots out of your old argument. And the romance is on the way, P. D. Q., when I take the pot to pay for the ring that goes to a certain lady whose name we don't mention."

"What's your story?" demanded the sheriff.

"I haven't any story," replied Hooty. "I've only got two exhibits. The first I picked up in the middle of the Sago Road at nine o'clock last night. The second I found on the trail to Bar Seventy, where the track turns down to Mustang River."

With dramatic sweep, Hooty drew from one pocket two articles. The first was the beautiful, notched gun, which he handed to the sheriff without speaking. The second was a felt slipper—and all that he said to Buster was:

"I always thought you'd sell your soul for money, Buster, but I didn't suppose you'd turn highwayman and rob your friends to settle a bet. The first law of betting is that the sure thing is barred."

The sheriff jumped up from the table.

"You!" he gulped at Buster. "So it was *you* who held me up on the Sago Road last night? You pin-feathered fathead! You worse than shrimp! Lucky I dropped my gun, or by now you'd been hefted by silver handles. And I thought Hooty and the other feller was reënforcements. Who was he, Hooty?"

"Bunny Foster," Hooty grimly replied. "We were chasin' this money-grubbin' coyote, when Bunny's saddle girth busted. Bunny's at home now with a broken shoulder—seein' things. I had to give up the chase, and stay by Bunny. How about the whack-up, Bill? Who gets the pot?"

"Do I get you right," asked the bartender, "that Buster was the holdup man, Sheriff Cole the victim, and Hooty did the rescue? Am I to decide which of the three—holdup man, victim, or rescuer has the most amazin' experience?"

"Yes," said the sheriff, "you got the correct drop on the proposition."

The bartender rubbed his shiny, misshapen poll reflectively, while the three startled men waited his decision.

The former at length arose and walked, with blank expression, to the cash register on the end of the bar. He looked for a long time into the till.

At length, instead of lifting out the hundred, the ten, and the one-dollar bills, he lifted the weight in the compartment of tens and took therefrom twelve yellowbacks—twelve ten-dollar bills instead.

Returning, he thoughtfully made the wad into equal divisions of three piles, four bills each.

"According to my best judgments and beliefs, sports," said he, "that is the only way I know how to settle the bet!"

The sheriff stared long and hard before him, then from the pile of his own division of the spoils to Hooty's face

Finally he reached over and too Buster's portion out of his greedy fingers. Slapping it down on his own pile, he made one lump of the money and shoved it over to Hooty.

"I take it all back, Hooty," said he. "The spirit of the old West ain't dead yet. The pot belongs to you! The chap who has the most wonderful experience is the guy that deliberately abandons the biggest thing he's after in life to help a pal who's fallen by the wayside helpin' him."

The Ordeal

By George Woodruff Johnston

Author of "The Hidden Clew," "The Girl From Nowhere," Etc.

An uncommon mystery story of an amateur detective who is aided in his work by a series of horrific incidents that dog the culprit—incidents apparently explicable only on supernatural grounds

ONE day in early summer my friend and former pupil, Doctor Radbury, called me up by telephone.

"That you, Doctor Dannart?" he asked. "Good! Glad I caught you in. Can you make a quick run to the Covert, the Jardyne place, on the River Road?"

"What's the trouble?"

"Compound fracture of the skull, pressure symptoms, hemorrhage; and say, if you come you'll have to bring everything for an operation along, nurses and all."

I did some rapid thinking. Then——

"Can you keep the man alive for half an hour?"

"I'll try. But it's a woman—old Mr. Jardyne's widow."

"All right," said I. "In thirty minutes I'll be there, or else in jail for breaking the speed laws."

A ten-dollar bill slipped into the orny hand of a rube sheriff who was lying in wait for scorchers like me at Pellington, the last town we passed through, saved me from arrest, but when he found out I was a doctor the man wanted some free medical advice besides, and we were three minutes behind my schedule when we flashed past the gatekeeper's lodge at the Covert and pulled up under the big porte-cochère of the house. I drew off my gloves and glanced over my shoulder. The ride had been a wild one, I admit, and though the two nurses I had brought from town looked scared, it was a comfort to see them still sitting in the back seat, with my assistant, young Doctor Arc, wedged in between them, and to learn that neither they nor any of my apparatus and appliances had been bounced out of the car.

Radbury ran to the door to meet us. Smart chap Radbury! He had, while waiting, transformed a small bedchamber into an operating room of sorts, and by the time we had washed up and had our gowns on, and the instruments and dressings arranged, he had the patient ready on the table.

It turned out to be a nasty case, and when at last we lifted the injured woman off the table and into bed, her condition was very precarious.

"Chances slim—not?" asked Radbury as we were changing and freshening up a huge-domed bathroom of black marble with painted tritons and mermaids careering over the ceiling.

"Afraid so. Pretty girl, too. By the way, you said she was somebody's widow, didn't you? Looks a bit young for that."

"She is, though," Radbury declared. "She married old Amos Jardyne, who was a sort of cousin of mine, a year or two ago. He died last week, you know."

"Let me see—I heard some talk about that marriage. What was it?"

"Everybody heard some talk about it at the time, I expect," he answered. "It made an awful rumpus. You see, Amos had granddaughters older than his new wife. But I don't blame the girl. She was as poor as they make 'em, and an orphan besides, and he was a decent old chap and treated her kindly. She was grateful, too; I'll say that for her. And she made him very happy."

"How did she get this ugly knock?" I inquired. "I don't believe you've told me."

"Fell into a fireplace and banged her head against an andiron."

"Fell?"

"Yes. Fainted, maybe. Fact is, Cousin Amos' will was read this morning, and an exciting scene it was—enough to bowl any girl over, especially a shy young thing like Margaret Jardyne."

"Hope you yourself came in for something nice."

"Hardly," smiled Radbury. "But I did almost as well as anybody except the widow. When Cousin Amos got through giving and devising and bequeathing things to his 'beloved wife Margaret,' there was scarcely enough left to go round among his blood relations."

"I believe it would make me faint, too," I laughed, "if somebody remembered me handsomely in a will. By the way, Jardyne was rich, wasn't he?"

"Oodles and oodles!" exclaimed Radbury. "But between you and me, I think the old chap might have evened things up more. Of course, I don't count; I'm a way-off cousin. But there were his three sons and a daughter by his first marriage. They were all here to-day, and a sprinkling of grandchildren, and his secretary, and I—in fact, everybody who had been named in the will. Some of them were pretty hot by the time Mr. Jepperton, Cousin Amos' lawyer, finished reading it, especially the eldest son, Harry, and his wife."

"Row, was there? What happened?"

"Well, there was not so much of a row, as rows go. But it takes people living in the seventh social heaven like the Jardynes to put the real cold-barbed hooks into other people. Pretty soon they had the widow crying. Then she up and told everybody that she had begged and begged Amos not to cut his children off. She had tact enough not to mention that he had done this because of the beastly way they had treated her—a fact, however, they knew quite well already. But nobody believed her, and she got frightened when some of the young ones present began to jeer and sneer at her and make side remarks about adventuresses and the like, and she bungled and bumped along in what she was trying to say, until, after a while, she was sobbing so convulsively she had to stop. It got me—that speech of hers. I felt awfully sorry for the poor girl, but what could I do?"

"Then she collapsed, did she?"

"No. Her maid got her upstairs, and, when she came back later, she found her mistress flat on her back, with her head in the fireplace, unconscious, and blood all over everywhere. It was the andiron——"

"Let's have a look at that andiron Radbury," I interrupted; "and suppose you send somebody for the maid."

We passed through the darkened room where Mrs. Jardyne lay, with the nurse we had left on duty sitting at her side. She was still in profound coma, and though a brief examinat disclosed that she had hardly rallied at all, there was, at the moment, nothing more that surgical skill could do for her. As I bent over her slender figure, stretched out in all its deathly quietude, I began to feel an amazing pity for this young girl, bereft so recently of her only friend and protector, and now likely to lose her own life as well.

II.

Mrs. Jardyne's apartments at the Covert consisted of a large, bay-windowed corner room, part boudoir, part library, a dressing room, the great domed bathroom I have already spoken of, the bedroom in which she now lay, and, connecting with it, a smaller bedchamber, sometimes occupied by her maid, and which had been used for the operation just finished. As Radbury and I entered the first room mentioned we found the maid, whom he had summoned, already there—a bright, fresh-looking, rosy-cheeked girl, named Anna Cope. She was talking at the door with some under servants, who had buckets and mops in their hands.

I went at once to the fireplace. It was quite deep, was lined with dove-gray tiles, and housed two fancifully fashioned, wrought-iron andirons. A small blood clot, threaded with a few long black hairs, clung to the horizontal portion of one of these, while a great deal of blood, now dried, had run over the bottom of the fireplace and the tiled hearth outside. There were, however, no stains to be found elsewhere.

"Tell me," said I to the maid, "where did you leave Mrs. Jardyne when you brought her upstairs?"

"On the sofa in her bedroom, sir."

"Where did you find her later on?"

"She was lying here." She pointed toward the fireplace.

"Was she clothed in a way to have received visitors—members of the household, I mean?"

"Yes, sir. I had taken off her dress and shoes, and put on a tea gown and slippers. She still wore them."

"Were you long away from her?" I pursued.

"Let me see—luncheon is at two, and I was back in time to dress her for it; about an hour and a half, I think, sir."

"You saw no one enter these rooms in the meanwhile?"

"No, sir. I was downstairs in the servants' sitting room. It was about a quarter to two when I came up again."

"And what did you do when you saw what had happened?"

"I don't rightly remember, sir. I was so frightened I——"

"She came flying down the steps, screaming, and all of us rushed up here," interposed Radbury. "Then Mrs. Harry Jardyne fainted, and the secretary came near doing so, too, and we had a crazy time generally. But finally I chased everybody out, and when Anna came to her senses we two got Mrs. Jardyne onto the bed, and I sent for you."

At this point I told the maid to leave the room, but to wait outside the door within call.

"Radbury," I asked, "did you ever see a person who was standing up drop in a faint?"

"Lots of times," he replied. "Students and young nurses at their first operation, for instance."

"Then, if you will think a moment, you must realize that Mrs. Jardyne's fall was not due to that cause. She would have crumpled up in a heap, just like a handkerchief that slips from one's hand. Of course she might have straightened out later, but never on earth would her head have reached as far back in that fireplace as the blood clot and hairs show that it did. And there's another thing," I continued: "I've seen persons who have fainted and tumbled down and bumped their heads. But it has been my experience that a head injury so received by a young person and bad enough to require a surgeon's help is something extremely rare. And, andirons or no andirons, I have yet to see a smash like Mrs. Jardyne's which resulted from a faint."

Radbury looked at me surprisedly. "That's so," he affirmed. "How stupid of me! But what then? You don't

suppose there could be anything—crooked—in this affair, do you?"

"Who can tell!" I replied. "But it looks to me as if Mrs. Jardyne had been pushed or struck from in front, and had fallen backward with force and at full length. See here!" I added. "This was the way it might have been."

Thereupon I took a long lead pencil from my pocket, and, holding it vertically, with the point resting on the mantelpiece, I gave the upper end a light tap. The pencil fell, but in doing so struck against a crumpled bit of paper lying between two vases, and rolled off onto the floor.

"Try again!" said Radbury. "Experiments rarely succeed the first time."

But this one was never repeated, for in pushing the piece of paper aside so that it might not again interfere with the falling pencil, I glanced at it casually. Immediately a word or two typewritten upon it caught my eye. I seized it eagerly and smoothed it out.

"Where did this come from, Radbury?" I demanded.

"I can't say," he answered, gazing at the strip of paper vacantly.

I called Anna Cope, and repeated my question.

"That? Oh, it dropped from Mrs. Jardyne's hand when we started to carry her to her bedroom," she answered, with some hesitation.

"But how did it get there on the mantelpiece?" I asked.

"When I came back here it was lying on the floor, crumpled up in a little ball, sir. I threw it into the waste-paper basket——" She stopped, and her rosy cheeks grew rosier still.

"Then——" I pursued.

"I was curious—and I took it out again—and read it," Anna stammered. "I didn't understand what it meant, but as long as Mrs. Jardyne was holding it when she got faint and fell, I thought I'd better save it. So I laid it on the mantelpiece."

I hastily examined the waste-paper basket standing beside the library table, the table itself, and every foot of floor space in the room. It was summer, and there were no ashes or litter in the fireplace. I could not discover another scrap of torn paper anywhere.

"Well," said I, "this time a woman's curiosity was of some use. One thing more, Anna, and then you may go: Has the basket been emptied, or has anything else been taken out of this room since Mrs. Jardyne left it?"

"No, sir," the girl replied. "As you came in I was just telling the chambermaids not to clean up till you had gone."

When she had departed, I spread out the piece of paper on the table and studied it. It was a strip about three inches long, and was obviously part of the left side of a typewritten sheet. The words it contained were few, some of them incomplete; they read as follows:

my seal
this the

above named testa
day of
in our presence, who
presence of each othe
witn

One glance at the foregoing was enough to identify it. It had formed part of a will. The last five lines alone sufficed to explain the nature of the document which had been mutilated.

"Radbury," said I, "this case is interesting—too interesting for me to leave. I believe I'll stay here and send Doctor Arc to town to look after me work till I get back. Meanwhile, I'll see how Mrs. Jardyne is doing, and you—find out if the lawyer, Mr. Jepperton, is still here, will you? I'd like to have a word with him."

III.

I had "*a* word" with Mr. Jepperton, and since I am rather a quick-tempered person it came near leading to more

than speech. He was a sharp-nosed man, with tight-buttoned lips and a furtive eye, and when Radbury introduced us he had one foot on the step of an automobile which was waiting to carry him to the station at Pollington.

"I never discuss my clients' affairs with strangers," he snapped when I started to question him about Mr. Jardyne's will.

"Have it your way," said I. "I merely wanted to learn now what everybody will be at liberty to read in the newspapers as soon as the will is probated."

"I would suggest that you curb your curiosity and wait till then," he remarked acidly as he got into the machine.

It was right at this point that I nearly boiled over. "But," thought I, "my fine friend, I know another way of making you open up, simpler, even, than boxing your ears."

"It's because I shall be obliged to wait," I said quietly, "that I am now about to ask you a favor. As you pass through Pollington will you kindly tell the sheriff to come over here?"

"The sheriff! What for?" He turned about sharply and glared at me.

"I'd like to see him. For one thing, he owes me ten dollars. And, incidentally, while he's at the Covert, he might be wanted to arrest the assailant, perhaps the murderer, of Mrs. Jardyne."

That knocked Mr. Jepperton off his high horse, as I was sure it would. Without more ado, he condescended to follow Radbury and me upstairs. And, seated at the table in Mrs. Jardyne's library, he even unbuttoned his lips and gave me all the information I desired of him.

It appeared that he knew of no will of Mr. Jardyne's other than the one he had read that morning. Its main provisions were as follows:

First, a relatively small sum in cash was to be distributed among Mr. Jardyne's four children, his few remaining relatives—including Radbury—his secretary, and the servants.

Second, the bulk of his fortune was devised to Mr. Jepperton, in trust, for the benefit of the widow. Until she was twenty-five years old, she was to receive the income thereof. On her twenty-fifth birthday the entire property was to be turned over to her, the principal, I mean—I can hear the crusty old lawyer reel it off now—"in absolute estate and in fee simple."

"Good! Now we are getting at it!" said I. "But suppose Mrs. Jardyne doesn't survive this injury, or dies before she is twenty-five; what then?"

"The trust is to cease and determine," Mr. Jepperton answered, "and the property is to be divided between the surviving children of the late Mr. Jardyne, share and share alike, or their descendants per stirpes. And——"

"That's the very thing I wanted to find out," I interrupted. "If we fail to save Mrs. Jardyne's life who would benefit? Not you, Radbury, nor other distant relatives, nor the secretary, nor the servants. Who, then? Solely the three sons and one daughter of Mr Jardyne's first marriage. Get that?"

Radbury began to fidget. "Yes," he murmured; "I get it all right. But surely you don't mean to hint——"

"No. I don't hint at anything or anybody. But it may be useful to know who would gain by a fatal accident to Mrs. Jardyne."

"Whew!" Radbury breathed. "I never dreamed—— But where does this bit of typewriting come in?"

I showed it to Mr. Jepperton.

"I know nothing about this," said he. "What are your conclusions in reference to it?"

Before answering, I said: "Pardon me a moment," and, taking a sheet of note paper from a rack on the desk, I

proceeded to jot down an outline of the situation as I saw it, principally to clarify and set in order my own ideas regarding it. Having finished, I read aloud what I had written, as follows:

First: No bits of torn paper were to be found in the room, and nothing had been removed from it. Therefore, the fragment which had dropped from Mrs. Jardyne's hand did not represent one of many pieces into which a will had been torn, but a single piece detached from such a document.

Second: Either Mrs. Jardyne had held the will and another person had snatched it from her, leaving this portion of it in her hand, or she, herself, had tried to seize the paper from the grasp of that other person.

Third: Only a will made by her late husband could have concerned her vitally enough to impel her to use force in the effort to secure it, or to retain it.

Fourth: The will thus mutilated must have been of a later date than the one produced and read by Mr. Jepperton; for, if made prior thereto, it would have been thereby nullified and have possessed value for nobody.

Fifth: Under the terms of the torn will, Mrs. Jardyne's share of her husband's estate could scarcely have been greater than under the instrument read, whereas it might have been less. If the last, it would have accorded with her own wishes. She had stated that very morning in the presence of the family that she had begged Mr. Jardyne not to disinherit his children.

Sixth: Therefore, since this will must have disposed of her husband's property in a manner which she had openly declared just and proper, it was not she who was trying to retain and suppress it. On the contrary, it must have been precisely the other way about. She was evidently endeavoring to seize it from some one else.

Seventh: From whom? Surely not from any member of the family. For such a one, if in possession of a later will of Mr. Jardyne's, benefiting himself, his sister, and his brothers at the expense of the detested widow, would not have deferred to her, but would have produced the instrument publicly, and that would have been the end of it.

"The only criticism I have to make," said Mr. Jepperton dryly as the reading came to an end, "is that you have started without any premises in fact, and have reached no conclusion. Otherwise what you have there is a rather pretty bit of reasoning."

With that, he rose and started to go.

"Don't forget to give my message to the sheriff, though," I called after him. "He and my 'pretty bit of reasoning,' as you term it, are likely to land somebody in jail before morning."

"You seem to act as if it were all over except the shouting," smiled Radbury incredulously, when we were once more alone.

"No; I'm not as far as that yet," I rejoined. "But if my argument proves anything it is that some one came into this room this morning during the hour and a half immediately preceding luncheon. That person had possession of a later will of Mr. Jardyne's in which his children were better treated. This will, I believe, was used as a club to threaten Mrs. Jardyne, to extort something from her—money, or—or—worse. She snatched at the document, and, in the struggle that ensued, tore off a piece of it, and was thereupon shoved or knocked down and suffered a fracture of the skull. Though the family would have benefited by the death of the widow, no member of it—for the reasons I have given—could have been concerned in the affair. It was somebody else. But who?"

"I give it up!" said Radbury, shrugging his shoulders.

"Well, let's see if we can discover Of course, if Mrs. Jardyne survive her injuries, she can clear up the mystery with a word. But the chances are against her recovery, and under the most favorable circumstances a long time will elapse before her mental faculties are thoroughly restored. Therefore, we must work the problem out unaided, and it is imperative that this be done quickly in order to prevent, if possible, the criminal's escape. Now, Radbury, who were in this house this morning aside from relatives of the Jardynes?"

"Mr. Jepperton, Mr. Jardyne's secretary, whose name is Soffit, and the servants. That's all I know of."

"Where were all these people when the maid came running downstairs with the news of Mrs. Jardyne's fall?" I inquired.

"I don't know where the servants were, nor the secretary. The rest of us were in the big library on the first floor—had been there, come to think of it, ever since Mr. Jepperton had finished reading the will."

"I was right in one of my conclusions, you see," said I, "for that lets all of you out. But didn't you tell me that the secretary hurried into this room with the rest, and that he nearly fainted?"

"Yes," Radbury answered. "He was here, and he almost collapsed, probably from the sight of so much blood."

"Where did he happen to be when he heard the maid scream, I wonder? Did he say?"

"No, and I have no idea. All he talked about was the blood and of how sick it made him."

Radbury had now mentioned this fact three times. I took note of the circumstance, and an idea suddenly popped into my head.

"Look in on Mrs. Jardyne, will you, Radbury?" I asked. "I want to telephone to town. And, by the way, is there a servant here who is to be thoroughly trusted?"

"The butler, Jarvis, has been with Cousin Amos since he was a boy. I'm sure he can be depended upon."

"That's fine!" said I. "Bring him up here in half an hour, please, and then run away and play till dinner time."

I hastened to the telephone, and, calling up Doctor Arc, instructed him to drop everything else and fetch me certain articles from my laboratory. Then I had a long talk with the butler. Finally, a little before the hour set for dinner—my assistant having arrived in the meantime—I went downstairs.

IV.

The long, eventful summer afternoon was drawing to a close, and, as the air was warm and I found no one about the house, I strolled out upon a balustraded terrace of white marble, at one end of which some servants were setting a table for dinner under a fancifully colored awning. A row of ornate urns crowned the balustrade, and in them gorgeous flowers flamed amid rich green plants and drooping vines. Other terraces, dotted here and there with leaping fountains, descended to the river's edge, and on one of these I saw a number of men and women dressed in mourning. I joined them, and introduced myself. With the exception of Brantley Tryce, the husband of Mr. Jardyne's only daughter, and his former secretary, Mr. Soffit, they were all Jardynes by birth or marriage, and in looks and manner were like a thousand others who daily decorate club windows and horse show and opera boxes.

After a few perfunctory inquiries as to Mrs. Jardyne's condition, they returned to the topic they had been discussing upon my approach—a certain Pekingese dog called Chung. They might wrangle when alone together, but they would have died rather than display to a stranger like myself the anxiety they felt as to the outcome of the widow's injury, or the effects of the stunning blow they had received so short a time before, when a dozen typewritten words had blasted all their hopes and justifiable expectations of a liberal inheritance.

Mr. Soffit, a slender, restless-eyed young man, with blond hair and sensitive lips, took his cue from them. He was neither to be led nor driven into any talk concerning the events of the morning.

Indeed, from the whole attitude of those surrounding me—so aloof, so unapproachable—I saw how futile would have been an attempt to ascertain the truth through the usual forms of investigation, and I also realized what a difficult part I, as an amateur detective, would have to play, and what an offensive mask of ill breeding I must assume in playing it.

Presently Radbury and Arc appeared, and a few minutes later we were summoned to dinner, where I found myself placed between Mr. Jardyne's daughter, Mrs. Brantley Tryce, and the wife of his third son, Arthur, with Mr. Soffit directly opposite me.

By the time the Pekingese dog had been replaced on the conversational carpet by a blue-ribbon Pomeranian belonging to Mrs. Harry Jardyne, cocktails were served. They were composed of clams and other ingredients whose taste I did not recognize, and in color were a very pale pearl gray.

"What's this?" I asked a manservant as he handed me a curious little wicker-covered bottle.

"It's a sauce—a great favorite in the house, sir."

"Try it, doctor," suggested Mrs. Tryce pleasantly. "I am sure you will like it. My father brought the recipe with him from South America a long time ago."

I poured a half teaspoonful of the colorless liquid into my cocktail glass, and Mr. Soffit did the like from a similar bottle the butler handed him.

"But you must stir it, Doctor Dannart—see? Like this!" said the secretary. "It's rather sharp, and——"

He stopped abruptly, and stared at his glass. The contents had suddenly turned red.

"None of that for me!" I laughed loudly. "It looks too much like blood!"

Instantly the talk about the table ceased, and all eyes were turned on Soffit's glass. Mrs. Harry Jardyne—she who had fainted in the morning at sight of the fireplace—winced and turned pale. The others looked embarrassed. Mr. Soffit smiled nervously and glanced about, but his eyes swerved back to the glass in front of him as if drawn thither by strings.

"Odd!" exclaimed Brantley Tryce, with his gaze on his own cocktail, which, like all the rest, except Soffit's, retained its former pale-gray color.

Nothing more was said. But this painful episode, coupled with my own crass behavior, had produced a profound effect upon everybody. Memories of the gruesome incidents of the morning were revived and intensified. The servants removed the entire course, while Mrs. Harry Jardyne swiftly changed the subject, and soon all were chatting constrainedly of other things. Finally it became only too evident that the Jardynes had set me down as a boor, and, as the meal progressed, I was more and more ignored by everybody.

It had not, however, proceeded very far, when Moselle wine was handed about, to which most of those at table added iced mineral water from a siphon. It seemed to promise a pleasant and cooling drink for a warm summer day, and when a servant appeared beside me I held up my glass, half full of wine, that he might fill it with the sparkling water. A moment later the butler performed a like service for Mr. Soffit.

Instantly the contents of the secretary's glass, from the palest amber color, turned crimson. He glared at it for a second or two; then his hand began to tremble, the glass slipped from his grasp, rolled to the edge of the table, and fell with a crash onto the marble floor.

The woman sitting next him sprang to her feet. The napkin in her lap, like the tablecloth, was deeply stained, and on the snow-white stones, amid a litter of broken glass, lay what might

readily have been mistaken for a pool of blood.

"Mr. Soffit," said I, my gaze fixed steadily upon him, "you seem unlucky to-day. Everything you touch becomes red. Even I have had enough of that color for a while—with the fireplace full of it—pfui! it was a ghastly sight!"

He answered nothing, but shivered, lowered his eyes, sank back in his chair, and took no further interest in what went on. Indeed, this second incident, which, like the first, affected his meat and drink alone, abruptly ended the meal. The servants quickly removed or hid all traces of the accident, but the women would have seen that red stain upon the tablecloth, though fifty snowy napkins had been laid above it, and to the eyes of such of them as sat on Mr. Soffit's side of the table, and who, despite themselves, were peeping over the backs of their chairs, rivers of water could never make that marble floor quite white again. The men, whispering together, were frankly puzzled. Chance? Practical joke? Legerdemain? What was it? Yet even they felt a touch of the uncanny, and leveled cold, questioning eyes upon the secretary.

As Mrs. Harry Jardyne hastily rose, followed by the rest of us, a gardener appeared on the terrace and began to water the flowers blooming in the urns upon the balustrade. He did it so clumsily, however, that the marble floor was sprinkled all about them, and though the butler himself carefully wiped it up the flags were still damp as we passed over them on our way to the other end of the terrace, where coffee, liqueurs. and cigars had been set out.

"Look! Look! There it is again!" cried some one behind us in a voice of abject terror.

We all whipped round, and saw the secretary, pale as a sheet, stagger for an instant and sink almost to his knees. Every footmark he had made in crossing the moist area of the floor stood out sharply defined upon the pure-white stones. They were red from toe to heel.

"Blood! Blood!" he chattered, hiding his eyes in his hands. "It's horrible! I can't get rid of it!"

"Come with me!" said I. "I can show you more—the blood that you spilled yourself!"

He dropped his hands, and gazed at me, dumfounded. Then fear again shook him, and he cried: "I confess! I did it! But, God help me, I did not try to kill her! I would give anything in the world to have her get well—anything!"

"You blackmailed her, or tried to. What did you want of her—love or money?" I demanded harshly.

"Money," he answered in a trembling voice. "Mr. Jardyne was dead. I had lost my place—had saved nothing—was desperate!"

"You thought to frighten her by showing her a later will of Mr. Jardyne's—a will in which she had been given less and his children more than in the other. You did not believe her when she said this morning that such was the very thing she had begged her husband to do. But when you stood face to face with her in her room and she repeated this you were convinced she spoke truthfully, and changed your tack. You told her then that unless she gave you money you would destroy this second will, would thus defeat her wishes, and shatter the hopes of Mr Jardyne's children—possibly ruin them. Am I not right?"

"Yes, I did all that."

"And you did more," I rapped back at him. "When she snatched at the will you held, you struck her—a woman, the widow of the man who had been kind to you!"

Soffit again hid his eyes.

"Where is that will? Give it to me!" I commanded.

"It is no will at all," he whined abjectly. "I wrote it out at Mr. Jardyne's dictation the night before he died. But he never signed it—did not live long enough."

"Give it to me!" I repeated sternly. He fumbled in his pocket, and handed me a number of folded sheets of paper. The last, or outside one, of these was torn, and it was plain to be seen that the strip dropped by Mrs. Jardyne fitted the tear perfectly. It was as he had said; the will had never been signed. Save as an expression of Mr. Jardyne's intentions, thus altered at the intercession of his wife, the document was valueless.

"You are worse than I thought you," said I to Soffit; "a low cheat as well as a potential murderer. You first endeavored to deceive this young girl into believing that this was a genuine will. Then, to prevent her gaining possession of it, and through fear of exposure, you tried to kill her. But you were too much of a coward. At the sight of blood you turned tail and ran away.

"Mr. Jardyne," I continued, moving to where he, the eldest son and present representative of the family, was standing with the others, looking on in speechless amazement, "Mr. Jardyne, I asked the lawyer to send the sheriff here from Pollington, and told him of my suspicions in this case. But he sneered at my deductions, and has not done so. Will you kindly telephone for that officer, and, until he comes, have this man carefully guarded? I have trapped him, as you see. I accuse him of assault with intent to kill your father's widow. It may be that I shall charge him with worse—murder! I cannot tell whether Mrs. Jardyne will recover or not. I have done practically all that I can do for her. But I will say this: I have never had a life intrusted to me that I more ardently desired to save. Young, poor, and fiercely tempted as she must have been at thought of the enormous wealth that would one day be her own, yet she risked her life—may, indeed, have lost it—in the effort to secure justice for you and the other children of your father. If she recovers she will rejoice in seeing that such justice is done; of that I feel absolutely certain. If, on the contrary, she should die—now that you have seen into her heart—no one, I trust, no one, I believe, will do more to keep her memory green than you and your kindred."

V.

That night, when the sheriff had taken Soffit away with him, and all the temporary guests at the Covert had returned to their homes except Mr. Harry Jardyne and Radbury, the former asked me how the ordeal, of somewhat medieval type, to which the secretary had been subjected, had been arranged.

"It was an easy trick," said I. "A well-known chemical, called phenolphthalein, was used. Phenolphthalein, in simple alcoholic solution, is as colorless as water, but add a trace of alkali thereto, and this solution turns red. All that was necessary for my purpose was to have the butler pour some of an alcoholic solution of phenolphthalein upon Mr. Soffit's clams and into his wine, and to dissolve an alkali in the sauce and mineral water furnished him. When the sauce was added to the clams and the mineral water to the wine, all having been treated as I have described, the desired reaction took place in each case, and the thing was done. The footmark effect was achieved in the same way. Here the water in the gardener's watering pot had been made alkaline, and powdered phenolphthalein—itself white—was sprinkled under the table and in front of Soffit's chair, where he would be sure to coat the soles of his shoes with it. The same reaction brought about a like

change in color, and the secretary's conscience and imagination did the rest."

After our chat and our cigars were finished and the others had gone to bed, I put a fresh nurse on duty beside Mrs. Jardyne, and sat for the rest of the night on the terrace, where the air was cool, and the nurse, whenever she desired, could call to me from the sick-room window above. And this I did many a time again, watching the rising and setting of the stars, and listening to the tinkling of the fountains and the soft murmurs of the summer nights as one followed another, each bringing an ever-stronger draft from the cup of life to the girl widow upstairs. And then at last there came a night, more beautiful than all the rest, when she herself walked out upon the terrace, and I realized that my task was done, but that while she had ceased to be my patient, I had gained in her a dearly loved and lifelong friend.

The Dominant Voice

HIGH above the traffic clanging sounds the whanging and the banging
Of the loud pneumatic hammer far and near,
And each nerve and fiber quivers at the blows that it delivers
As its irritant vibrations reach the ear,
Yet the brash pneumatic hammer makes a healthy sort of clamor
Which awakes us with its vigorous appeal
From a somnolent condition to a state of keen ambition
As it batters and it clatters on the steel!

Oh, the blood's a warmer liquor and the feet are moving quicker
As this jaunty voice of progress rises high;
And the steel frames clamber higher toward the goal of men's desire,
Like a dreamer's magic towers in the sky;
Here's a voice of youth and daring and of courage all uncaring,
Here's the song of life that's practical and real,
For the chantey of endeavor in a world that strives forever
Is the clamor of the hammer on the steel!

Yes, the hammer's strident rattle is a sort of call to battle,
It's the war whoop of the wonder-working clan,
Or a trumpet blast to hustle with your heart and head and muscle,
It's the city's mighty challenge to a man.
It's the voice that scorns disaster, and it makes the pulse beat faster,
And you tramp your doubts and questions under heel,
For the march song of the city isn't sweet or soft or pretty,
It's the clamor of the hammer on the steel!

BERTON BRALEY.

The Man From the Bitter Roots

By Caroline Lockhart

Author of "Me—Smith," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

Partners in a placer mine located in the Bitter Root Mountains, Bruce Burt and "Slim" Naudain become enemies in the course of time. Slim is really a little insane. When the first deep snow of the season blankets and buries everything, Naudain, in a fit of rage tries to kill Burt, but in defending himself Burt throws Slim, who gashes his neck with the ax he has seized as a weapon, and dies. Burt is overcome at the tragedy. Witnesses appear unexpectedly—two half-frozen men, one an old guide, Uncle Bill Griswold, and a city sportsman, T. Victor Sprudell. Both are exhausted and hungry, but Uncle Bill is more concerned about his Chinese cook, left sick and helpless in a tent up the mountains. Burt offers to go after the unfortunate Chink even though it may mean his own death. Instructing Sprudell to see that Slim's mother and sister receive their share of gold dust, and also asking the successful business man to attend to the placer claim for them, Burt goes out into the blizzard never expecting to return. Days pass without word from him. Uncle Bill and Sprudell hold that he is dead. The wily and conceited Sprudell returns to civilization and puffs himself in the papers as a modest hero achieving great deeds in the snow-covered mountains. In his newspaper notoriety Sprudell is interviewed by a girl-reporter, Miss Dunbar, who singularly enough proves to be the half-sister of Slim. Her mother is dead. With crafty schemes revolving in his brain, Sprudell informs her that Bruce Burt murdered her brother, but he does not tell her of the promising placer claim. He plans to lay hold of it and, possibly, marry the unsuspecting girl. Sprudell sends an engineer to Ore City to lay claim to the rich land, and unexpectedly Bruce Burt turns up at the hotel there. Learning of what is afoot he goes to Bartlesville, faces Sprudell, and realizes the full plot against him. Bruce thereupon seeks for Slim's half-sister but cannot find her. Sore and disappointed, he looks for capital to back him in his Bitter Root project. Finally he meets an eccentric capitalist, Harrah, who says if Bruce will meet and knock out the fighter called "The Spanish Bulldog" he will furnish money for the placer mine. Willing to take any chance, Bruce agrees to the bargain.

(A Four-Part Novel—Part Three)

CHAPTER XV.

MILLIONS!

WOULD the car never come? Would it never come! Helen walked once more to the corner from the shelter of a building in one of the outlying mill districts where an assignment had taken her.

The day was bitterly cold, with a wind blowing which went through her coat and skirt as though they were lightweight summer clothing. She held her muff against her cheek as she peered up the street, and the dark background accentuated the drawn whiteness of her face. The girl was really suffering terribly. She had passed the chattering stage, and was enduring dumbly, wondering how much longer she could stand it, knowing all the time that she must stand it, as there was no place to go inside, and missing the car, which ran at half-hour intervals, meant missing the edition.

She was paid to stand it, she told herself as she stamped her feet, which were almost without feeling, and the thoroughbred thing to do was to endure stoically what cannot be helped without any fuss or whining.

Each icy blast that made her shrink and huddle closer to the wall of the

This story began in the POPULAR dated August 7th.

big storage building caused her to wonder if this was the kind of exposure which the doctor had told her was suicidal. She could guard against wet feet in a measure, but there was no escaping the misery of the long waits and rides in such weather as prevailed at present.

There was one way of escaping it. Unconsciously her hand inside her muff tightened upon a letter which had been given her as she was leaving the office; the way which had flashed across her mind when Sprudell's card had dropped from his first box of flowers was now open to her if she chose to take it.

He had come East, from Bartlesville, several times since their first meeting upon the pretext of business, but it required no great acumen to discover that these visits were mostly for the purpose of seeing her. Helen understood perfectly that he intended asking her to marry him.

She turned her back to the wind now, and drew out his letter for a second reading—it might help pass the endless minutes—though it did not seem as though anything could divert her mind from her present suffering. As she fought the wind in turning the pages one would scarcely have gathered from her expression that the note contained a cordial dinner invitation.

Everything about it grated upon her—and the note was so eminently characteristic. She observed critically the "My dear Miss Dunbar" which he considered more intimate than "Dear Miss Dunbar." She disliked the round vowels formed with such care that they looked piffling, and the elaborately shaded consonants. The stiffness, the triteness of his phraseology, and his utter lack of humor made his letters dull reading, but most of all his inexact use of words irritated her; it made him seem so hopeless—far more so than bad spelling. She even detested the glazed note paper which she was sure was a "broken lot" bought at a bargain in a department store.

"To-night I have a matter of supreme importance to impart," she read, "make every effort to join me. The evening may prove as eventful to you as to me, so do not disappoint me, mignonne."

"Mignonne!" Her lips curled scornfully. "Idiot! Imbecile! Ignoramus!" Savagely: "Donkey!"

She leaned a shoulder against the cold bricks of the warehouse, her head drooped, her chin quivered, and a tear slipped down her cheek to turn to frost on the dark fur of her muff.

Helen was too analytical, and she had had the opportunity of knowing and observing men in too many walks of life not to have a fairly good insight into Sprudell's character by this time. At least she understood him to the extent of reading his motives and interpreting his actions with tolerable accuracy. She tried to be charitable, and endeavored not to dwell upon the traits which, in the light of his lover's attitude, made him ridiculous. When she received tender offering of stale fruit cake and glucose jam from a cut-rate grocer, large boxes of candy from an obscure confectioner, and other gifts betraying the penurious economy which always tempered his generosity, she endeavored to assure herself that it came merely from the habit of saving in small ways which many self-made men had in common. She dwelt resolutely upon his integrity, upon the acumen which had made him a business success, yet in her heart she could not help likening him to a garment of shoddy material aping the style of elegance. While endeavoring to palliate these small offenses, Helen knew perfectly that they were due to the fact that he was innately what was known in the office vernacular as a "cheap skate," striving to give the impression of generosity at a minimum of expense.

Helen had grown sensitive about her

cough, and shrank from comment upon it. She did her best to stifle it, and herself spoke of it lightly, but to-day, when she came into the warm air of the office after the nightmare of a wait on the corner and the long, cold ride afterward, it set her coughing violently, so violently that it attracted the attention of her neighbor, who called over the partition jocularly, but with a note of seriousness in his voice:

"We'll have to ship you to Colorado, Miss Dunbar, if you go on like that!"

Helen caught her clasped hands to her breast in a way she had when startled.

"Yes?" she answered lightly, but her expression was frightened.

People were noticing! It was the last straw needed. When she laid out her most becoming frock that evening it was the white flag of capitulation. The odds were too heavy; she felt she must surrender before it was too late. While she dressed her hair with more than usual care she scrutinized her face closely for that indefinable look which conveys to the initiated something more than the languor of fatigue.

If Helen had cared at all for Sprudell's approbation she would have had the reward for her pains in the pleased, self-satisfied air of proprietorship with which he followed her to the table he had reserved in the fashionable restaurant of the Hotel Strathmore. He missed none of the interested looks directed at her as she passed, and glowed with satisfaction.

"If they notice her like this in a city," he thought triumphantly, "she'll make 'em sit up in Bartlesville!" Sprudell's cup of happiness seemed running full.

"You're looking great to-night," he whispered as they sat down.

"Fine feathers," she smiled slightly, "my one good gown."

"My dear, you can have a hundred —a thousand!" he cried extravagantly. "It's for you to say."

Helen made no reply, and he seemed to expect none. She studied him curiously, wondering what had happened. He was tremulous with suppressed excitement, elated with an elation that was like intoxication, and he ordered with a lavishness which made him conspicuous.

But Sprudell was indifferent to appearances, seeming to survey the world at large from the height of omnipotence, and it seemed to Helen that every objectionable trait he had was exaggerated, twice enlarged under the stimulus of this mysterious, exalted mood. His egotism loomed colossal; he was oblivious to everything and everybody but himself, else he could not have failed to have seen the growing coldness in her eyes.

Helen herself had little appetite, so while Sprudell partook of the numerous courses with relish, she inspected him anew from the critical viewpoint of the woman who intends to marry without love. As she dissected him it occurred to her that Sprudell combined in himself every petty feminine prejudice she had. She disliked his small, red mouth, which had a way of fixing itself in an expression of mawkish sentimentality when he looked at her, and there was that in the amorous, significant light in his infantile blue eyes which sickened her very soul. She disapproved of his toddling walk, his fat, stooped shoulders, his spats, and general appearance of overemphasized dapperness. The excessive politeness, the elaborate deference which he showed her upon occasions exasperated her. And it was incredible, she thought, that a part in a man's back hair should be able to arouse such violence of feeling. But it did. She hated it. She loathed it. It was one of her strongest aversions. She had hoped never even to know a man who parted his back

hair, and now she was going to marry one.

She tried to imagine herself going through life making a pretense of taking his learning and his talents seriously, of refraining carefully from calling attention to his errors, or correcting his misstatements, of shielding him from the ridicule which his pedantry must bring upon him when he mingled with his superiors, smoothing over smarts when he bulled and "talked down," without convincing his adversaries, as Helen had seen other women do. But could *she* do it? When it came right down to brass tacks, as she expressed it, could she exchange herself, her freedom, her individuality, all the years to come, if many were spared her, for the chance to get well and for relief from anxiety about food and clothes and shelter?

Sprudell meanwhile was revolving in his mind the best method of imparting effectively and dramatically the news which was burdening him. He considered beginning with a Latin quotation from his vest-pocket manual—"Labor omnia vincit," or something like that—but ended, when he felt the right moment had arrived, by stating the fact bluntly:

"I'm going to be as rich as Crœsus."

Helen looked up quickly, and saw that Sprudell's red lower lip was trembling with excitement.

"My dear," solemnly, "I shall have fabulous wealth." He was about to add magnanimously: "And I have decided to ask you to share it," but checked himself for a more opportune time later in the evening; besides, being sure of her and her answer, he wanted just now to talk about himself.

Undoubtedly he was in earnest. She could see that from the intensity shining in his eyes. Wonderingly she took the pamphlet which he withdrew from its envelope and passed to her, watching her face eagerly.

PROSPECTUS OF THE BITTER ROOT PLACER MINING COMPANY.

proclaimed the outside page, and the frontispiece contained a picture of seven large mules staggering up a mountain trail under a load of bullion protected by guards carrying rifles with eight-foot barrels.

"That illustration is *my* idea," he said proudly.

"It's very—alluring," Helen conceded.

"Wait till you go on."

The first paragraph of the text read:

We have, with infinite hardship and difficulties, and at large personal expense, secured absolute legal ownership and physical possession of eight placer claims, making 160 acres of the richest unworked placer ground in the United States.

THE PROPERTIES.

Queen of Sheba No. 1. Area about 15 acres.

Section 1. 600 x 300 feet. Examined by the best obtainable placer experts and under the most favorable conditions money could afford.

Prospect Shaft No. 4. Through natural, clean sand and fine river gravel. Depth of pit, 10 feet. Every foot showed gold in paying quantities. A 4-foot streak, extremely rich, passes through this section. Bed rock was not reached, but the values increase with depth, as is usually true.

Average workable depth of this section, 60 feet.

Average assay, .6235 per cubic yard.

600 x 300 x 60 = 400,000 cubic yards @ .6235	$249,400
Estimated cost of working, 5 cents per cubic yard	20,000
Estimated net profit (say)	$229,000

"That's one of the poor claims," he explained carelessly. "We probably won't bother with it.

"The yardage of the Pot of Gold and claims Eureka 1 and 2 totaled millions, while the leanest, next to the Queen of Sheba, yielded a net profit of seven hundred thousand dollars."

Then the monotony of facts and figures was varied by another illustration showing a miner in hip boots and a

sou'wester blithely handling a giant which threw a ten-inch stream into a sand bank.

"I drew the rough sketch for that, and the artist carried out my idea." Sprudell wished to convey the impression that along with his other gifts he had artistic talent had he chosen to develop it.

Helen read at random:

"Numerous prospect holes, cuts, and trenches fully corroborate the value of the ground. There are rich streaks and spots, yielding twenty-five cents to fifty cents to the pan, of what area the giant alone will tell. Every surface foot yields gold in paying quantities. It is pay dirt from the grass roots. While we confine our estimates to the actual ground examined, nevertheless we are certain the real wealth lies on bed rock.

"The home claim, with its rustic log cabin, provides a delightful home for those interested in the enterprise, supplying comforts and luxuries which money cannot purchase in large cities. Game and fish, in greatest abundance, infest its dooryard. We have seen fifty grouse and twenty mountain sheep within three hundred feet of the doorway. Bear may be had at any time for the going after.

"It must be borne in mind, all of these placers are the ancient beds of at least two separate periods of a great river, consequently, bed rock will undoubtedly reveal fabulous wealth which cannot be uncovered in an examination. It would be useless to attempt to exaggerate the possibilities of these properties. The plain, simple facts are far more potent than unestablished fiction could possibly be.

"All the claims we have described represent virgin ground, something seldom found, now, anywhere in the United States. There is not a wagon track in the whole valley. It has, heretofore, been too difficult of access to tempt capital to come in here. We have changed the whole situation. Our sawmill, which we now have in operation, is the wonder of the place, and is, of course, our Salvation, for without that, of course, we could not construct flumes to put water upon our placer ground.

"We have partially constructed a wagon road to shorten and make less arduous the fierce trip into this paradise. Nevertheless, it is a paradise, when once within its charmed environments. Gold is the commonest product there.

"This is quite sufficient.

"The confidential details which accompany this prospectus will make known our financial requirements.

"We know we have a great fortune in sight, but, hidden away in the greater depths, are unknown possibilities of fabulous riches; for this great river is noted for its richness on bed rock. Millions have been taken out of its sand with the crudest devices.

"We have demonstrated our good faith, and our confidence in the worth of these properties, by a personal expenditure approximating fifty thousand dollars in cash.

"We have taken every legal precaution and necessary physical step to insure an absolutely safe and profitable investment.

"We are now ready, and desire, to finance a close corporation, with a limited capital, to operate this property on a scale BEFITTING ITS IMPORTANCE."

Helen closed the pamphlet and passed it back. She knew nothing of mining, and had no reason to doubt its truth or Sprudell's honesty. Not only the facts, but the magnitude of the possibilities as he had outlined them were bewildering. He might, indeed, grow as rich as Crœsus, but from somewhere, unexpectedly, the swift realization came to Helen Dunbar she could not marry him if she knew that to refuse meant the beginning of starvation on the morrow!

It was not upon any lofty moral grounds that she must base her decision to refuse him, not because she was too honorable or too conscientious to marry without love in her present circumstances, but because, in the particular case of Sprudell, it would have been an actual physical impossibility. A woman less strong in her likes and dislikes, less violent in her prejudices, might have accomplished it, but Helen knew now clearly that he was more than distasteful; he was obnoxious to her from every angle, but chiefly the repugnance she felt was physical. She shrank from the touch of his hand upon her arm, the slightest contact.

"Well?" He looked at her, exultant, gloating. For the moment he had the

appearance of a person to whom had been granted every human wish. His eyes blazed, his pink face was florid. Dazzled, intoxicated by the prospects of his wealth, he felt himself all-powerful, immune from the consequences of rude manners and shameless selfishness, safe from criticism among the very rich.

It occurred to him wildly that he'd liked to throw the cut-glass rose vase on the floor—and pay for it.

"Well?" he demanded arrogantly.

Helen raised a finger. "Listen! Isn't that your name? Yes—the boy is paging you."

Sprudell ostentatiously opened the telegram which was brought to him, secretly pleased at seeming to be thus pursued by the requirements of his large business interests, but his frown of importance and air of a man with weighty matters to decide was wasted upon Helen, who was watching a lively party of men making its way to a near-by table reserved for six.

Sprudell read:

> The original locator has beat us to the water right. Applied by wire while I was snowed up. Advise making best terms possible with him. Letter follows. DILL.

Sprudell looked as though some one had struck him in the face.

Helen was still watching the advancing party. She murmured, with a smile of amusement, as Sprudell laid the telegram down:

"Here, coming in the lead, is our unfailing news supply—Wingfield Harrah. You've heard of him, no doubt. Behind him, the big one, that huge chap with the black eyes, is the mysterious Samson from the West who whipped the 'Spanish Bulldog.' 'The Man from the Bitter Roots,' they call him, but no one knows his name."

Subconsciously, Sprudell heard what she said, and his eyes followed hers. Helen turned her head quickly at the start he gave. His face was more than colorless, it was chalky even to the lips.

"Burt!" he exclaimed involuntarily. "Bruce Burt!"

CHAPTER XVI.

SLIM'S SISTER.

Helen felt something volcanic in the air with the stare of mutual recognition which passed between Sprudell and Burt. But it was Sprudell's face that held her eyes; it fascinated her. The expression upon it changed it so completely that she had a queer feeling of sitting opposite an utter stranger. It was as though something suppressed but powerful had risen from the depths of his nature to show itself in one illuminating flash before he crushed it back.

It was not resentment, fear, hatred; it was *malice,* a sly, purposeful malice that would crawl like a reptile through any slime to strike. His vindictiveness, his passion for revenge, rose in this unguarded moment to stamp itself upon his face like a brand. Helen had thought of him contemptuously as a bounder, a conceited ignoramus; he was more than these things—he was a dangerous person! This was a fact that she never lost sight of it again.

Helen saw, too, Bruce's start of surprise, the quick hardening of his face, and the look he gave Sprudell, if not exactly triumph, was certainly satisfaction. Before he took his seat he glanced at her, then back again, with a puzzled, questioning expression.

"Who are those men?" Sprudell asked quickly in an undertone, and she noticed that he was breathing hard.

He seemed to be making mental notes when she told him their names briefly. Of Harrah he already knew, for the sportive philanthropist and millionaire, whose dare-devil escapades and eccentricities kept him much in the pub-

lic eye, figured frequently in the public prints outside his native city.

The one stipulation which Bruce had made when he consented to meet the Spanish Bulldog was that his name should not be known in the event of the match being mentioned in the papers, so Harrah had complied by introducing him to his friends by any humorous appellation which occurred to him. It proved a wise precaution, since directly Bruce's challenge had been sent and it was known that he was Harrah's protégé, the papers had made much of it, publishing unflattering snapshots after he had steadily refused to let them take his picture.

It was true enough, as Helen had said, he had whipped the Spanish Bulldog, loosened his tenacious grip in a feat of strength so sensational that the next morning he had found himself featured along with the war news and a bank failure.

They called him "The Man from the Bitter Roots," and a staff artist depicted him as a hairy, prehistoric aborigine that Wingfield Harrah had had captured to turn loose on the Spanish gladiator, none of which humor Bruce relished, for Sprudell's taunt that "muscle was his only asset" still rankled, and would until he had demonstrated that it was not.

The betting odds had been against him in the athletic club, for Bruce's size oftimes made him look clumsy, but if Bruce had a bear's great strength he had also a bear's surprising quickness and agility. And it was the combination which had won him the victory. Unexpectedly, with one of the awkward but swift movements which was characteristically bearlike, Bruce had swooped when he saw his opening and thrown the Bulldog as he had thrown Slim, over his shoulder. Then he had whirled and pinned him—both shoulders and a hip touching squarely. There had been no room for dispute over the decision. Friends and foes alike had cheered in frenzy, but beyond the fact that the financial help which Harrah promised was contingent upon his success, Bruce felt no elation. The whole thing was a humiliation to him.

But Harrah had been as good as his word. They had filed into his top-floor room one evening—Harrah's friends, headed by Harrah. They had seemed to regard it as a lark, roosting on his bed and window sill and table, while Bruce dropped naturally to a seat on his heel, camp-fire fashion, with his back against the wall, and to their amusement outlined his proposition and drew a map of the location of his ground on the carpet with his finger.

But they had not taken much interest in detail; they were going into it chiefly to please Harrah. Bruce saw that clearly, and it piqued him. He felt as though his proposition, his sincerity, counted for nothing. A man, it seemed, had no weight in their world unless he stood for something by birth and inheritance or achievement. While their unconscious attitude nettled him more than ever it put him on his mettle.

Bruce's brief acquaintance with Harrah already had opened up new vistas, shown him unknown possibilities in life. They were sport-loving, courteous, generous people that Harrah drew about him—merry-hearted as those may be who are free from financial worry—and Bruce found the inhabitants in this new world eminently congenial. He never had realized before how much money meant in civilization. It was comfort, independence, and, most of all, the ability to choose to a great extent one's friends instead of being forced to accept such as circumstances may force upon one.

Bruce saw what any one may see who looks facts in the face, namely, that aside from health, money is the greatest factor contributing to happiness, no matter how comforting it may be to

those who have none, and the hope of none, to assure themselves to the contrary. There may even be doubts as to whether a rich invalid would offer to exchange his check book for the privilege of being a healthy pauper if there was any chance of his being taken up.

Yet Bruce could not help a certain soreness that all he had fought for so doggedly and so unavailingly came so easily as the result of a rich man's whim.

Laughingly, with much good-humored jest, they had made up the twenty-five thousand dollars between them and then trailed off to Harrah's box at the opera, taking Bruce with them, where he contributed his share to the gayety of the evening by observing quite seriously that the famous tenor sounded to him like nothing so much as a bull elk bugling.

Harrah's subscription, which had headed the list, had been half of his winnings, and the other half had gone to his favorite charity—"The Home for Crippled Children. "If you get in a hole and need a little more I might dig up a few thousand," he told Bruce privately, but the others stated plainly that they would not commit themselves to further sums or be liable for assessments.

Bruce had gone about with Harrah since then. With so notable a sponsor the world became suddenly a pleasant, friendly place and life plain sailing, but now every detail had been attended to, and, eager to begin, Bruce was leaving on the morrow, this dinner being in the nature of a farewell party.

To see Bruce in the East and in the company of these men, on top of Dill's telegram, was a culminating blow to Sprudell, as effective as though it had been planned. Stunned at first by disappointment, then startled and astonished by Bruce's unexpected appearance, all his thoughts finally resolved themselves into a furious, overmastering desire to defeat him. Revenge, always his first impulse when injured, was to become an obsession. Whatever there was of magnanimity, of justice, or honor in Sprudell's nature was to become poisoned by the venom of his vindictive malice where it concerned Bruce Burt.

Bruce had altered materially in appearance since that one occasion of his life in Sprudell's office, when he had been conscious of his clothes. Those he now wore were not expensive, but they fitted him, and for the first time in many years he had something on his feet other than hobnailed miner's shoes. Also, he had laid aside his Stetson because, as he explained when Harrah deplored the change, he thought "it made folks look at him." "Folks" still looked at him, for even in the correct habiliments of civilization he somehow looked picturesque and alien. So powerfully built and tanned, with his wide, forceful gestures when he talked, and his utter lack of self-consciousness, there was stamped upon him indelibly the freedom and broadness of the great outdoors.

He was the last person, even in that group, all of whose members were more or less notable, who would have been suspected of a cold-blooded murder. He attracted Helen; she could not keep her eyes from him, thinking who and what he was and feeling the strangeness of the situation, while as often as he dared he turned his head to look, not at Sprudell, but at her, and always with the same puzzled, questioning expression.

Helen took it for granted that his object in coming East was to meet the Spanish Bulldog, but Sprudell knew better. He had seen enough of Bruce to guess something of his fixity of purpose when aroused, and Dill's telegram confirmed it. But he had thought that naturally Bruce would return to the West at once to try and hold his claims,

from which, when he was ready, through a due process of law, if necessary, Sprudell would eject him.

To find him here, perhaps already with formidable backing, for the moment scattered Sprudell's wits, upset him; the only thing in his mind which was fixed and real was the determination somehow to block him. He had lost his desire for conversation, and when, for appearances, Helen would have kept up at least a semblance of interest in each other, he replied in curt monosyllables, as soon as possible making the movement to go.

A vaguely defined plan for action was already forming in Sprudell's head, and he wanted to be alone to perfect it and put it into execution if feasible; besides, knowing that in the matter of the water right Bruce had for the time outwitted him, he was far from comfortable.

Bruce, on his part, was not too attentive. His mind and his eyes kept wandering to Sprudell's companion. Where had he seen her? Or was it only some one she resembled? Whoever she was she was far too nice a girl to be dining with that—with that—— His black brows met in a frown, and his fingers clenched under the table.

He liked her dainty profile and her hair, her poise, the quiet independence of her manner, and, above all, she looked so—sensible. He wondered if Sprudell meant to marry her. Pshaw! He did not believe a nice girl like that would have him—and so much younger. Then, facing him as she arose, she smiled ever so faintly at the waiter as she thanked him for picking up her glove, and Bruce knew her! Slim's sister! Older, thinner, with the youthful roundness gone, but still Slim's sister! There was no mistaking the sweetly serious eyes and the faintly smiling lips with which he had grown so familiar in the long days when he had little else to do but look at her picture.

She passed the table without a glance, and in something like a panic he watched her leave the room. He would never see her again! This was the only chance he'd ever have. Should he sit there calmly and let it pass? He laid his napkin on the table, and explained as he rose hastily:

"There's some one out there I must see. I'll be back, but don't wait for me."

He did not know what he meant to say or do beyond the fact that he would speak to her even if she snubbed him.

She had stepped into the cloakroom for her wrap, and Sprudell was waiting in the corridor. Immediately that he saw Bruce he guessed his purpose, and the significance of a meeting between them rushed upon him. He was bent desperately upon preventing it. Sprudell took the initiative and advanced to meet him.

"If you've anything to say to me, Burt, I'll meet you to-morrow."

"I've nothing at all to say to you except to repeat what I said to you in Bartlesville. I told you then I thought you'd lied, and now I know it. That's Slim's sister."

"That is Miss Dunbar."

"I don't believe you."

"I'll prove it."

"Introduce me."

"It isn't necessary."

Helen stopped short in the doorway at sight of Bruce.

"Are you ready, Miss Dunbar?" Sprudell asked, with loud emphasis upon the name.

She nodded.

Sprudell glanced over his shoulder at Bruce with a smile of malice, but Bruce did not see it for looking at the girl. Why should there be that look of hostility which was half horror in her eyes? On a sudden desperate impulse, and before Sprudell guessed his intention, he walked up to her and

asked doggedly, though his temerity made him hot and cold:

"Why do you look at me like that? What has Sprudell said? I haven't intended to offend you. Forgive me if I've stared, but you look so much like——"

"I forbid you to answer this fellow—to talk to him!" Sprudell's voice shook, and his pink face had again taken on the curious chalkiness of color which it became under stress of feeling. Forgetting prudence, his deferential pose, forgetting everything that he should have remembered in his rage at Bruce's hardihood and the fear of exposure, he shook his finger threateningly before Helen's face.

On the instant her chin went haughtily in the air, and there was a dangerous sparkle in her eyes as she replied:

"Your manner is offensive—quite."

He laid his hand upon her arm, and none too gently, as though he would have turned her forcibly toward the door.

Helen withdrew from his touch.

"I intend to hear what Mr. Burt has to say."

"You mean that?"

"I do."

"Then you may get home as best you can," Sprudell cried furiously. "You'll stay alone."

"As you like." Helen faced him, defiant and scornful. "I'm not entirely helpless."

"You just light out whenever you're ready, Sprudell," Bruce drawled.

"You'll repent this—both of you. Remember what I say." With a malignant look at Bruce he vanished, leaving them standing side by side.

"I didn't expect to stir up anything like this, Miss Dunbar," Bruce said when the last turn of the revolving door shut Sprudell into the street. "But don't you worry; I'll see that you get home."

There was no answering gleam of humor in Helen's eyes as she replied: "I'll take a taxicab, and I prefer to go alone. If you have anything to say to me, Mr. Burt, please say it and be brief." She moved toward the nearest parlor, where they were practically by themselves.

"I want to know why you look at me as though I had injured you?"

"Do you?" Helen asked slowly, regarding him with relentless eyes. "How else would I look at the man who killed my brother?"

Bruce's astonishment was too genuine to be feigned.

"I killed your brother? Why, Miss Dunbar, I know no one of your name."

"He was my half brother—Frederic Naudain."

"You *are* Slim's sister, then." Understanding illumined Bruce's face. "That's why Sprudell did not want me to meet you! I see. His actions now are plenty plain. Miss Dunbar, what has he said to you? Won't you tell me? I came East on purpose to find you. I'm here to try and make amends."

"Amends for a cold-blooded, premeditated murder?" Bruce brōke into a perspiration at the cold scorn in her voice.

"Sprudell told you that?"

"Yes."

Watching him closely, she saw that his tanned skin changed color.

"That's not true," he answered, with an effort. "It was self-defense." He stopped. Through the wide archway, with its draperies of gold and royal purple, a procession of bare shoulders, exquisite gowns, and jewels was moving to and fro. Radiant women, queenly women, gracious or haughty as they chose, but all confident, self-assured, and beside them their men, with their air of consequence and conscious power. How at the antipodes the picture seemed with the vision Bruce was seeing, and he could feel again the

warm gush over his hand when Slim lay on his back fighting, striking at him. It sickened him. How could he tell Slim's sister! He had imagined himself telling her with delicacy so she should not shrink from him, and he blurted it out brutally.

"He came at me with the ax, and I threw him over my shoulder. He fell on the blade and cut a vein and artery. Slim bled to death."

Her profile was white, and she did not look at him as she asked:

"And you quarreled over——"

"Salt," he forced himself to answer. How ridiculously petty it sounded. "I gave a handful to some mountain sheep and it made Slim sore. But the poor little devils they——"

She waited for him to go on, but he was done. His plea of self-defense as justification sounded cowardly. He had known that Slim would be furious about the salt, and he had deliberately provoked him. He had no right to ask her to forgive him—to regard him as anything but an enemy——

"Well?"

He wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

"I suppose you think they should hang me. Maybe they should. I was to blame for wrangling with him when he quarreled. I was to blame for staying. I should have seen that he was going crazy."

She looked at him quickly.

"He was—not himself?"

"A maniac for the time—raving. But there's no use harrowing your feelings, and my friends are waiting. I guess, when it's simmered down, my anxiety to make amends was to ease my conscience. There's some business—but I'll write you about that later if you'll give me your address. I know you don't want to talk to me. It was good of you to do what you did. I'll remember it always, Miss Dunbar, and now I'll put you in a taxi if you'll let me?"

Could anything be more commonplace, more different, from the ending he had pictured? He could not help adding: "I suppose you hope they'll hang me yet."

"You're wrong," she answered gravely, "because now I understand. What you have told me is all too familiar. Father, mother—we all have been my brother's victims; if I could prevent it you should not be another. He had these insane rages from a child, and when he was older he beat a stableboy almost to death. Defending him in the courts, paying damages for that and other things he did, ruined us. But mother and I had come to think, because we heard no more of his dreadful scrapes out West, that he had learned to control himself and was doing better. My mother died waiting for him to come home, and I, too, had let myself expect it. Now you must go back to your friends. I'll give you my address, and I'll see you at nine to-morrow morning if it's not too early."

"Too early! I'll be sitting on the steps at daybreak if you say so."

The shabbiness of the hotel where Helen lived surprised him. It was worse than his own. She had looked so exceptionally well dressed the previous evening that he had supposed that what she called ruin was comparative affluence, for Bruce had not yet learned that clothes are unsafe standards by which to judge the resources of cityfolk, as on the plains and in the mountains faded overalls and a ragged shirt are equally untrustworthy guides to a man's financial rating. And the musty odor that met him in the gloomy hallway—he felt how she must loathe it. He had wondered at the early hour she'd set, but when Helen came down she quickly explained:

"I must leave here at half past, and if you have not finished what you have to say I thought you might walk with me to the office."

The office! It shocked him that she should have to go to an *office,* that she had "hours," that anybody should have a claim upon her time by paying for it.

"I have to work," she told him. "Did you think I was an heiress?"

"Last night you looked so—what is it they call it?—stunning that I thought——"

"Relics of our past greatness," Helen interrupted. "A remodeled gown that was my mother's. One good street suit at a time and a blouse or two is the best I can do. I'm a wonderful bluff in the evening."

Bruce knew then that her poverty hurt, though she was smiling.

"Which reminds me that I've some money for you that Slim left—five hundred dollars." How thankful he was that he had not touched it when he had been so often tempted of late.

"But I've had it!" Helen's eyes opened widely. "Mr. Sprudell gave it to me when he gave me my letter and the picture."

Just in time Bruce caught the grin which started to overspread his face. Helen, looking questioningly into his eyes, could not understand their sudden sparkle.

"That was another five hundred dollars," Bruce lied glibly. "I turned it over to him in gold dust. I suppose he gave it to you in cash?"

"Yes—in bank notes." She caught her lower lip between her teeth for a second, and added: "The other went to pay an old debt, and this, just now, means so much to me."

The tears welled up in her eyes, and, though she bit her lip hard for self-control, they kept coming. The last thing she had expected to do was to cry, but she could not help it. Laying her arm on the high back of the worn plush sofa, she turned and hid her face on it.

Whether it was relief or the swift sympathy she read in Bruce's eyes, Helen never could have told. She only knew at the time that she would have given worlds to have choked back the tears which mortified her.

Helen rarely cried; the last time had been so long ago that she could not remember, and they were now as unexpected to herself as they were to Bruce. But tears, however embarrassing, sometimes have a way of breaking down barriers that might otherwise be years in falling, if ever.

Bruce remembered having seen his mother cry, through homesickness and loneliness, softly, uncomplainingly, as she went about her work in the ugly frame house back there on the bleak prairie. And he remembered the roars of rage in which Peroxide Louise had voiced her jealousy. But he had seen few women cry, and now he was so sorry for her that it hurt him; he felt as though some one had laid a hand upon his heart and squeezed it.

He crossed to her quickly, and sat down beside her.

"Is there anything I can do—anything that you would ask of Slim if he were here? You've no idea how I've looked forward to being allowed to do something for you. Please tell me."

She shook her head.

"There's nothing. It's relief, I suppose—the money."

"Have you needed it so badly?"

"Yes, this winter. It means the chance to go away—South—to get well." Then she raised her tear-stained face and told him.

Mingled with Bruce's sharp anxiety was a joyful feeling that she needed him, and he had not fully realized before how much he wanted to be needed—to mean something to somebody.

"Why couldn't you come West?" he asked eagerly, and he told her of Ma

Snow and the Hinds House in the mountains.

"It's too far away," Helen answered wistfully, "too expensive. I must go some place where I need not spend so much for railroad fare and can live cheaply. If I were clever I might help out with short stories so my five hundred would last longer, but I'm not; I'm only persevering—through necessity."

"If everything goes well this year," Bruce said slowly, wondering if he should tell her, after all, lest something go wrong. "If there's no slip-up, no miscalculations or accidents, you need never bother your head again about being either. If all goes as I hope you can go through the world with flying colors if you were stupid as an owl."

She listened, her brown eyes shining with intelligent interest and understanding while he told her of the placer and of her interest in it because of Slim, his purpose staying East, and, after he had failed to find her, of his success, and, shamefacedly, the means by which he had accomplished it. He found himself talking eagerly about the comparative merits of pole and block, Hungarian and caribou riffles, explaining undercurrents and their purpose, mercury traps, and his probable use of cocoa matting as a covering for the "table" at the end of the sluice box.

Once he was started, it seemed to Bruce that he must have been saving up things all his life to tell to Helen Dunbar. He had so much to say and such an appallingly little time to say it in.

He told her about his friend, Old Felix, and about the "sassy" blue jays and the darting kingfisher that nested in the cutbank where he worked, of the bush birds that shared his sourdough bread. He tried to picture to her the black bear lumbering over the river bowlders to the service-berry bush across the river, where he stood on his hind legs, cramming his mouth and watching over his shoulder, looking like a funny little man in baggy trousers.

Encouraged by her interest and sympathy, he told her of his hero, the great Agassiz; of his mother, of whom even yet he could not speak without a break in his voice, for she was as real and dear to him as the day she died; and of his father, as he remembered him, self-centered, harsh, silent, riding among his cattle.

In the middle of a sentence, Bruce stopped short and colored to the roots of his hair. It had dawned upon him suddenly that he had talked, babbled about himself, for nearly an hour. He, Bruce Burt, who had so little opportunity or inclination to talk that he sometimes wondered that his vocal cords did not weaken through disuse, had talked a steady stream of personalities. How he must have wearied her! How ridiculous he must seem!

"Why didn't you stop me?" he demanded ruefully as he apologized. "Why have you let me prattle like some old soldier in a home? I suppose it wouldn't be the least use to tell you that it's not the usual thing? But you're more than half to blame for pretending to be interested."

"But I was—I am," Helen declared. "What you've told me is all so different from the things, the people, the life I know that it is fascinating."

Bruce warned her:

"Don't encourage me or I'll start again. For, mortified as I am, I've an insane desire to keep at it. I'm ransacking my brain this minute to see if there's anything more I know."

He walked with her to the office, wishing with all his heart that each block was one mile long, and, lest he miss a single word she had to say, gently but firmly pushing aside pedestrians who threatened to come between them.

"Partners in business always write to

each other when one partner is away," Bruce hinted at the steps, when she turned to say good-by. He was smiling, but she saw the wistfulness in his eyes. He added: "I'd like to know how it feels to draw something beside a mail-order catalogue."

"If you would like me to——"

"*Like* you to——" Bruce interjected with such fervor that Helen blushed.

To cover her momentary confusion, she said lightly:

"If past experiences had taught me to believe in the efficacy of prayer I'd pray that your success might come quick, but since, to the present, my prayers have always been answered the other way I've grown skeptical of results. It's like a fairy tale—the future you have told me I dare look forward to—almost too good, too wonderful, to be true. But I believe you, and I shall not mind anything that happens now, however disagreeable, for I shall be telling myself that in a few months at most it will all be done, and the world may seem again the good old happy place is used to be."

Bruce took the hand she gave him, and looked deep into her eyes.

"I'll try—with all my might," he said huskily, and in his heart the simple promise was a vow.

He watched her as she ran up the steps and disappeared inside the wide doors of the office building, feeling again the pang at the thought that she had "hours"—that she had to work for pay.

As he turned away he met the vacant gaze of a nondescript person lounging on the curbing. It was the fourth or fifth time that morning he thought he had seen that same blank face.

"Is this town full of twins and triplets in battered derbies?" Bruce asked himself, eying the idler sharply as he passed. "Or is that hombre tagging me around?"

CHAPTER XVII.

A PRACTICAL MAN.

Bruce's thoughts were a jumble of dynamos and motors, direct and alternating currents, volts and amperes, when James J. Jennings' papier-mâché suit case hit him in the shins in the lobby of the hotel which was headquarters for mining men in the somnolent city of Portland.

Jennings promptly dropped the suit case and thrust out a hand which still had ground into the knuckles oil and smudge acquired while helping put up a power plant in Alaska.

"Where did you come from—what are you doing here?" Bruce had seen him last in Alberta.

"Been up in the north country, but"—James lifted a remarkable upper lip in a shy grin of ecstasy—"I aims to git married and stay in the States."

"Shoo—you don't say so!" Bruce exclaimed, properly surprised and congratulatory.

"Yep," he beamed, then drooped as he added mournfully: "So fur I've had awful back luck with my wives; they allus die or quit me."

Taken somewhat aback, Bruce ventured the hope that his luck might change with this his last—and, as Jennings explained—fifth venture.

"I kinda think it will," the prospective bridegroom declared hopefully. "Bertha looks—er—*lasty*. But what about you? I never knew you'd even *saw* a city."

"I'm a sure-enough sour dough," Bruce admitted, "but I did stray out of the timber. Register, and I'll tell you all about it; maybe you can help me."

Jennings, Bruce commented mentally as he watched him walk to the desk, was not exactly the person he would have singled out as the hero of five serious romances. Even five years before, in the Kootenai country, Jennings

had been no matinée idol, and time had shown him no leniency.

He had bent knees, protuberant, that seemed to wabble. A horseman would have called him knee sprung and declared he stumbled. His back was stooped so his outline was the letter S, and "CARE," in capitals, was written on his corrugated brow. No railroad president with a strike on ever wore a heavier air of responsibility, though the suit case, which gave out an empty rattle, contained James' earthly all. His teeth were yellow fangs, and his complexion suggested a bad case of San José scale, but his distinctive feature was a long, elastic upper lip which he had a habit of puffing out like a bear pouting in a trap. Yet James' physical imperfections had been no handicap, as was proved by the fact that he was paying alimony into two households, and the bride on the horizon was contemplating matrimony with an enthusiasm equal to his own.

While Jennings breakfasted, Bruce told him the purpose of his visit to the Pacific coast, hoping that out of the wide experience with machinery which Jennings claimed he might make some useful suggestions; besides, Bruce found it a relief to talk the situation over with some one he had known.

"I don't pretend to know the first thing about electrical machinery," he said frankly. "I only know the results I want—that I must have. I've got to rely on the judgment and honesty of others, and there's such a diversity of opinion that I tell you, Jennings, I'm scared to death lest I make a mistake. And I can't afford to make a mistake. I've left myself no margin for mistakes; every dollar has got to count."

"There's one thing that you want to remember when you're workin' in an isolated country, and that the need of strength—strength and simplicity. These newfangled——"

Bruce interrupted eagerly:

"My idea exactly—durability. If anything breaks down there that can't be repaired on the place it means laying off the crew from a month to six weeks while the parts are going in and out to the factory."

Jennings nodded.

"That's it; that's why I say strength above everything." Nearly half a century of frying-pan bread had given Jennings indigestion, and now as he sipped his hot water he pondered, bursting out finally: "If I was you, Burt, I'll tell you what I'd do, I'd install the old-type Edison machines for that very reason. You can't break 'em with a trip hammer. They're so simple a kid can run 'em. There's nothin' about 'em to git out of repair onct they're up. If you aim to work that ground with scrapers I'll tell you now it's goin' to be a big drag on the motors. Of course they're a little bit heavier than these newfangled——"

"But the agents tell me these newer and lighter machines will stand it."

Jennings blew out his elastic upper lip and shrugged a shoulder.

"Maybe they know more than I do; maybe they do, but it's to their interest to talk 'em up, ain't it? I'm no college electrician; I'm a practical man, and I been around machinery nigh on to fifty year, so I know them old-fashioned motors. They'll stand an overload, and, take my word for it, they'll git it on them scrapers. These newfangled machines will stand jest about what they're rated at, and you can't tell me anything differenter. *I* say them old-type Edison machines is the thing for rough work in that kind of a country. Ain't I seen what they can do on drudgers? Besides, you can pick 'em up for half the price, and as good as new with a little repairin'."

"I wonder if they *would* do the work," Bruce murmured to himself thoughtfully.

"What interest would I have in tellin' you if they wouldn't?" Jennings demanded.

"I didn't mean that the way it sounded," Bruce assured him quickly. "I was thinking that if they would do the work and I could save something on the price of the machinery I'd sure breathe easier."

"Do the work!" scornfully. "You can pull off a chunk of mountain with a good donkey engine and them motors. Why, on the drudgers up there in Alasky——"

"Do you know where you can get hold of any of these machines?"

"I think I do," Jennings reflected. "Before I went down North I knowed where they was a couple if they ain't been sold."

"Suppose you look them up and find out their condition—will you do this for me?"

"Bet I will, old man; I'd like to see you make a go of it. I gotta show up at Bertha's, then I'll run right out and look 'em over and report this evenin'."

Jennings kept his word, and when Bruce saw him cross the office with a spray of lilies of the valley in his buttonhole and stepping high like an English cob he guessed that he either had been successful or his call upon Bertha had been eminently satisfactory. He was correct, it proved, in both surmises.

"They're there yet," he announced, with elation, "in good shape, too. The motors need rewinding, and there's some other little tinkerin', but aside from that—say, my boy, you're lucky—nearly as lucky as I am. I tell you I'm goin' to git a great little woman!"

"Glad to hear it, Jennings, but about this machinery—what's it going to weigh? I don't know that I told you, but I mean to take it down the river."

"Bad water?"

"It's no mill pond," Bruce answered dryly. "Full of rapids." Jennings looked a little startled, and Bruce added: "The weight is a mighty important feature."

Jennings hesitated.

"The dynamos will weigh close to twenty-two thousand, and the whole plant fifty thousand pounds approximately."

"They weigh a-plenty"—Bruce looked thoughtful—"but I reckon I can bring them if I must. And there's no doubt about the must, as a wagon road in there would cost twenty thousand dollars."

As the outcome of the chance meeting, Bruce bought the machines upon Jennings' recommendation, with a saving of much money, and Jennings furthermore was engaged to make the necessary repairs and install the plant on the river. It was a load off Bruce's mind to feel that this part of the work was safe in the hands of a practical, experienced man who was accustomed to coping with the emergencies which arise when working far from transportation facilities.

Once this was settled there was nothing more for Bruce to do in Portland and a great deal to be done upon the river, so he said good-by to Jennings and left immediately.

On the journey from the Pacific coast to Spokane the gritting of the car wheels was a song of success, of achievement. Bruce felt himself alive to the finger tips with the joy of at last being busy at something worth while.

He had gone directly to the river from the East, taking a surveyor with him, and as soon as his application for the water right in Little Squaw Creek had been granted he got a crew together, composed chiefly of the magnates from Ore City, who, owing to Dill's failure to take up the options, found themselves still at leisure and the financial depression unrelieved.

Ore City nursed a grievance against Dill, and it relieved its feelings by in-

venting punishments should he ever return to the camp. Bruce, too, often speculated concerning Dill; it looked as though he had purposely betrayed Sprudell's interests. Certainly a man of his mining experience knew better than to make locations in the snow and to pass assessment work which was obviously inadequate. From Sprudell, Bruce had heard nothing, and, engrossed in his new activities, all but forgot him and his treachery, his insults, and mysterious threats of vengeance.

Before leaving for the Pacific coast to buy machinery, Bruce had mapped out for the crew the work to be done in his absence, and now, upon his return, he found great changes had come to the quiet bar on the river. There was a kitchen, where Toy reigned, an arbitrary monarch, and a long bunk house built of lumber sawed by an old-fashioned water wheel which itself had been laboriously whipsawed from heavy logs. Across the river the men were straining and lifting and tugging on the green timbers for the five hundred feet of trestle which the survey demanded in order to get the two hundred-foot head that was necessary to develop the two hundred and fifty horse power needed for the pumps and the scrapers, with a plentiful allowance for loss by transmission.

Bruce was not long in exchanging the clothes of civilization for the recognized uniform of the miner, and in flannel shirt and overalls he toiled side by side with Porcupine Jim, Lannigan, and the other local celebrities on his pay roll, who, by heroic exertions, were pushing the trestle foot by foot across Little Squaw Creek.

The position of "general manager," as Bruce interpreted it, was no sinecure. A general manager who worked was an anomaly, something unheard of in the district where the title carried with it the time-honored prerogative of sitting in the shade issuing orders, sustained and soothed by an unfailing supply of liquid refreshment.

And while the crew wondered, they criticized—not through any lack of regard for Bruce, but merely from habit and the secret belief that whatever he did they could have done better. In their hours of relaxation it was their wont to go over his plans for working the ground, so far as they knew them, and explain to each other carefully and in detail how it was impossible for Bruce, with the kind of a "rig" he was putting in, to handle enough dirt to wash out a breastpin. Yet they toiled none the less faithfully for these dispiriting conversations, doing the work of horses, often to the point of exhaustion.

When the trestle was well along, Bruce commenced sawing lumber for the half mile of flume which was to bring the water from the headgate across the trestle to the pressure box above the power house. He sawed in such a frenzy of haste, for there was so much to do and so little time to do it in, and with such concentration that when he raised his eyes the air seemed full of two by fours and bottoms. When he closed them at night he saw "inch stuff" and bottoms. When he dreamed it was of saw logs, battens, and bottoms.

Spring came unmistakably, and Bruce waited anxiously for word from Jennings that the repairs had been made and the machinery was on its way to Meadows, the mountain town one hundred and fifty miles above, where the barges would be built and loaded for their hazardous journey.

As the sun grew stronger daily, Bruce began to watch the river with increasing anxiety. He wondered if he had made it clear to Jennings that delay, the difference even of a week, might mean a year's postponement. The period nearest approaching safety

was when the river was at the middle stage of the spring rise—about eight feet above low water. After it had passed this point only the utterly foolhardy would have attempted it.

Bruce's nerves were at a tension as the days went by and he saw the great green snake swelling daily with the coming of warmer weather. Inch by inch the water crept up the sides of "Old Turtleback," the huge, glazed rock that rose defiantly, splitting the current in the middle. A few hot suns would melt the snowbanks in the mountains to send the river thundering between its banks until the very earth trembled and its navigation was unthinkable.

The telegram came finally, and Bruce, in his intense relief, felt that he could almost have embraced Smaltz, the man who brought the news that the machinery was boxed and on its way to Meadows, as little as he liked him.

"Thank God *that* worry's over!" Bruce ejaculated as he read it, and Smaltz lingered. "I may get a night's sleep now instead of lying awake listening to the river."

"Oh, the machinery's started?"

Bruce had an impression that he already knew the contents of the telegram in spite of his air of innocence and his question.

"Yes," he nodded briefly.

"Say, me and Porcupine Jim been talkin' it over and wonderin' if we'd pay our own way around so it wouldn't cost the company nothin', if you'd let us come down with a boat from Meadows?"

"Can you handle a sweep?"

"Can I?" Smaltz sniggered. "Try me!"

Bruce looked at him a moment before he answered. He was wondering why the very sight of Smaltz irritated him. He was the only man of the crew that he disliked thoroughly. His boastful speech, his swaggering walk, a veiled insolence in his eyes and manner made Bruce itch to send him up the hill for good, but he would not allow himself to be influenced by his personal prejudices, since Smaltz was unquestionably the best all-round man he had. While he boasted he had yet to fail to make good his boastings, and the tattered credentials he had displayed when he had asked for work were of the best. When he asserted now that he could handle a sweep it was fairly certain that he could not only handle one, but handle it well. Porcupine Jim, Bruce knew, had had some experience, so there was no good reason why he should not let them go since they were so anxious.

"I've engaged the front sweepmen for the other two boats," Bruce said finally, "but if you and Jim want to take a hind sweep each and will promise to obey orders I guess there's no objections."

"Surest thing you know," Smaltz answered in the fresh tone that rasped Bruce. "An' much obliged. Anything to git a chanst to shoot them rapids. I'd do it if I wasn't gittin' nothin' out of it just for the fun of it."

"It won't look like fun to me with all I'll have at stake," said Bruce soberly.

"Aw, don't worry; we kin cut her." Smaltz tossed the assurance back airily as he walked away, looking sharply to the right and left over his shoulder. It was a habit he had. Bruce often had noticed it, along with a fashion of stepping quickly around corners, peering and craning his neck as if perpetually on the alert for something or somebody. "You act like some feller that's 'done time'—or orter. I'll bet a hundred to one you know how to make horsehair bridles," Woods, the carpenter, had once told him pointedly, and the criticism had voiced Bruce's own thoughts.

In the mail which Smaltz had brought down from Ore City was a letter from

Helen Dunbar. It was the second he had had, and he told himself, as he tore it open eagerly, that it had come none too soon, for the first one was well-nigh worn out. He could not get over the surprise of discovering how many readings three or four pages of scraggly handwriting will stand without loss of interest.

Now, as he tried to grasp it all in a glance, the friendliness of it, the confidence and encouragement it contained made him glow. But at the end there was a paragraph which startled him—always the fly in the ointment—that gave rise to a vague uneasiness he could not immediately shake off.

> I ran up to the city one day last week, and whom do you suppose I saw with Wingfield Harrah in the lobby of the Hotel Strathmore? You would never guess. None other than our versatile friend, T. Victor Sprudell!

How did they meet? For what purpose had Sprudell sought Harrah's acquaintance? It troubled as well as puzzled Bruce, for he could not think the meeting an accident because even he could see that Harrah and Sprudell moved in widely different strata of society.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PROPHETS OF EVIL.

The difference between success and failure is sometimes only a hair's breadth, the turning of a hand, and, although the man who loses is frequently as deserving of commendation as the man who wins, he seldom receives it; and Bruce knew that this would be particularly true of his attempt to shoot the dangerous rapids of the river with heavily loaded boats. If he accomplished the feat, he would be lauded as a marvel of nerve and skill and shrewdness; if he failed, he would be just a plain fool, in the estimate of Meadows.

While the more conservative citizens of the mountain town refrained from publicly expressing their thoughts, a coterie known as the "Old-timers" left him in no doubt as to their own opinion of the attempt. Each day they came to the river bank as regularly as though they had office hours, and stationed themselves on a pile of lumber near where Bruce calked and tarred the seams of the three boats which were to make the first trip through the rapids. They made Bruce think of so many ancient ravens as they roosted in a row croaking disaster. By the time the machinery was due to arrive, they spoke of the wreck of the boats as something foreordained and settled. They differed only as to where it would happen.

But Bruce refused to let himself think of accident. He knew water; he could handle a sweep; he meant to take every precaution, and he could, he *must* get through.

The river was rising rapidly now, not an inch at a time but inches, for the days were warmer—warm enough to start rivulets running from sheltered snowbanks in the mountains. Daily the distance increased from shore to shore. Sprawling trees, driftwood, carcasses, the year's rubbish from draws and gulches swept by on the broad bosom of the yellow flood. The half-submerged willows were bending in the current, and water mark after water mark disappeared on the bridge piles.

Bruce had not realized that the days of waiting had stretched his nerves to such a tension until he learned that the freight had really come. He felt for a moment as though the burdens of the world had been suddenly rolled from his shoulders. His relief was short-lived. It changed to consternation when he saw the last of the machinery piled upon the bank for loading. It weighed not fifty thousand pounds, but all of ninety—nearer a hundred! Dumfounded for the moment, he did not see

how he could take it. The saving that he had made on the purchase price was eaten up by the extra weight and the excessive freight rates from the coast and on the branch line to Meadows. More than that, Jennings had disobeyed his explicit orders to box the smaller parts of each machine together. All had been thrown in the car helter-skelter.

Not since he had raged at Slim had Bruce been so furious, but there was little time to indulge his temper, for there was now an extra boat to build upon which he must trust Smaltz as front sweepman.

They all worked early and late, building the extra barge, dividing the weight and loading the unwieldy machinery; but the best they could do, counting four boats to a trip instead of three, each barge drew from eight to twelve inches of water.

Though he gave no outward sign and went on stubbornly, the undertaking under such conditions even to Bruce looked foolhardy, while the croakings of the Old-timers rose to a wail of lamentation.

The last nail was driven, and the last piece loaded, and Bruce and his boatmen stood on the bank at dusk looking at the four barges, securely tied with bow and stern lines, riding on the rising flood. Thirty-seven feet long they were, five feet high, eight feet wide, while the sweeps were of two young fir trees over six inches in diameter and twenty feet in length. A twelve-foot plank formed the blade which was bolted obliquely to one end and the whole balanced on a pin. They were clumsy looking enough, these flat-bottomed barges, but the only type of boat that could ride the rough water and skim the rocks so menacingly close to the surface.

"There's nothin' left to do now but say our prayers." Smaltz jocularly broke the silence.

"My wife hasn't quit snifflin' since she heard the weight I was goin' to take," said Saunders, the boatman upon whom Bruce counted most. "If I hadn't promised, I don't know as I'd take the risk. I wouldn't, as it is, for anybody else, but I know what it means to you."

"And I sure hate to ask it," Bruce answered gravely. "If anything happens, I'll never forgive myself."

"Well, we can only do the best we can—and hope," said Saunders. "The water's as near right as it will ever be, and I wouldn't worry if it wasn't for the load."

"To-morrow at eight, boys, and be prompt. Every hour is counting from now on, with two more trips to make."

Bruce walked slowly up the street, and went to his room, too tired and depressed for conversation down below. The way bill from the station agent was even worse than he had expected, and the question which he asked himself over and over was whether Jennings' underestimation of the weight was deliberate misrepresentation or bad figuring. Whatever the cause, the costly error had shaken his faith in Jennings.

Bruce was asleep as soon as his head touched the pillow. The last thing he remembered was Smaltz's raucous voice in the barroom below boasting of the wicked rapids he had shot in the tumultuous "Colorady" and on the Stikine in the Far North.

The noises of the barroom ceased at an early hour, and the little mountain town grew quiet, but Bruce, in a sleep that was sound and dreamless, was not conscious of the change.

It was midnight, and long past—well toward morning—when, in the sleep which had been so profound, he heard his mother calling, calling in the same dear, sweet way she used to call him when, tired out with following his father on long rides, he had overslept in the morning:

"Bruce! Bruce, boy! Up-a-daisy!"

He stirred uneasily and imagined that he answered.

The voice came again, and there was pleading in the shrill, staccato notes:

"Bruce! Bruce! Bruce!"

The cry from dreamland roused his consciousness at last. He sat up, startled. There was no thought in his mind but the boats—the boats! In seconds, not minutes, he was in his clothes and stumbling down the dark stairway. There was something ghostly in the hollow echo of his footsteps on the plank sidewalk as he ran through the main street of the still village.

He saw that one boat was gone from its mooring before he reached the bank. He could see plainly the space where it had been. The other boats were safe —but the fourth—— He stopped short on the bank for one brief second, weak with relief. The fourth barge was loose, and it had drifted all of forty feet, but by some miracle it had jammed against the third barge and temporarily held. The water was slapping against the side that was turned to the stream, and the other was bumping, bumping against the stern of the third boat, but the loose barge was working a little closer to the current with each bump. A matter of five minutes more at the most, and it would have been started on its journey to destruction.

Bruce sprang to the stern of the third barge and dragged the loose bowline from the water. It was shorter by many feet—the stout, new rope had been cut! It was not necessary to strike a match—the starlight was sufficient to show him that. He stared at it, unable to credit his own eyes. He scrambled over the machinery to the stern. The stern line was the same—cut square and clean. If further evidence was needed, it was furnished by the severed portion which was still tied around a bush.

There was no more sleep for Bruce that night. Bewildered, dumfounded by the discovery, he rolled himself in a "tarp" and lay down on the boat's platform. So far as he knew, he had not an enemy in the town. There seemed absolutely no reasonable explanation for the act.

CHAPTER XIX.

AT THE BIG MALLARD.

The sun rose the next morning upon an eventful day in Bruce's life. He was backing his judgment—or was it only his mulish obstinacy?—against the conviction of the community. He knew that if it had not been for their personal friendship for himself, the married men among the boatmen would have backed out. There was excitement and tension in the air.

The wide, yellow river was running like a mill race, bending the willows, lapping hungrily at the crumbling shore. The bank was black with groups of people, tearful wives and whimpering children, lugubrious neighbors, pessimistic citizens. Bruce called the men together and assigned each boat its place in line. Beyond explicit orders that no boatman should attempt to pass another and the barges kept a safe distance apart, he gave few instructions, for they had only to follow his lead.

"But if you see I'm in trouble, follow Saunders, who's second. And, Jim, do exactly as Smaltz tells you—you'll be on the hind sweep in the third boat with him."

In addition to a head and hind sweepman, each barge carried a baler, for there were rapids where at any stage of the water a boat partially filled. The men now silently took their places, and Bruce on his platform gripped the sweep handle and nodded.

"Cast off!"

The barge drifted a little distance slowly, then faster; the current caught it and it started on its journey like some great, swift-swimming bird. As he

glided into the shadow of the bridge, Saunders started; before he turned the bend, Smaltz was waving his farewells, and as Meadows vanished from his sight the fourth boat, the heaviest loaded, was on its way.

Bruce drew a deep breath; rest was behind him; the next three days would be hours of almost continual anxiety and strain.

The forenoon of the first day was comparatively easy going, though there were places enough for an amateur to wreck; but the real battle with the river began at the Pine Creek Rapids—the battle that no experienced boatman ever was rash enough to prophesy the result. The sinister stream, with its rapids and whirlpools, its waterfalls and dangerous channel rocks, had claimed countless victims in the old days of the gold rush; and there were years together since the white people had settled at Meadows that no boat had gone even a third of its length. Wherever the name of the river was known, its ill fame went with it, and those feared it most who knew it best. Only the inexperienced—those too unfamiliar with water to recognize its perils so long as nothing happened—spoke lightly of its dangers.

Above the Pine Creek Rapids, Bruce swung into an eddy to tie up for lunch; besides, he wanted to see how Smaltz handled his sweep. Smaltz came on, grinning; and Porcupine Jim, bareheaded, his yellow pompadour shining in the sun like corn silk, responded instantly to every order with a stroke. They were working together perfectly, Bruce noted with relief, and the landing Smaltz made in the eddy was quite as good as the one he had made himself.

Once more Bruce had to admit that if Smaltz boasted he always made good his boast. He believed there was little doubt but that he was equal to the work.

An ominous roar was coming from the rapids, a continuous rumble like thunder, far back in the hills. It was not the most cheerful sound by which to eat, and the meal was brief. The gravity of the boatmen who knew the river was contagious, and the grin faded gradually from Smaltz's face.

Life preservers were dragged out within easy reach; the sweepmen replaced their boots with rubber-soled canvas ties and cleared their platform of every nail and splinter. When all was ready, Bruce flung off his hat and laid both hands upon his sweep.

"Throw off the lines," he said quietly, and his black eyes took on a steady shine.

There was something creepy, portentous, in the seemingly deliberate quietness with which the boat crept from the still water of the eddy toward the channel.

The baler in the stern changed color, and no one spoke. There was an occasional ripple against the side of the boat; but, save for that distant roar, no other sound broke the strained stillness. Bruce crouched over his sweep like some huge cat, a cougar waiting to grapple with an enemy as wily and as formidable as himself. The boat slipped forward with a kind of stealth, and then the current caught it.

Faster it moved, then faster and faster. The rocks and bushes at the water's edge flew by. The sound was now a steady boom! boom! growing louder with every heartbeat until it was like the indescribable roar of a cloudburst in a cañon—an avalanche of water dropping from a great height.

The boat was racing now with a speed which made the flying rocks and foliage along the shore a blur—racing toward a white stretch of churning spray and foam that reached as far down the river as it was possible to see. From the water, which dashed itself to whiteness against the rocks, there still came the mighty boom! boom! which had put the fear into many a heart.

The barge was leaping toward it as though drawn by the invisible force of some great suction pump. The hind sweepman gripped the handle of the sweep until his knuckles went white, and Bruce over his shoulder watched the wild water with a jaw set and rigid.

The heavy barge seemed to pause for an instant on the edge of a precipice with half her length in mid-air before her bow dropped heavily into a curve of water that was like the hollow of a great, green shell. The roar that followed was deafening. The sheet of water which broke over the boat for an instant shut out the sun. Then she came up like a clumsy Newfoundland, with the water streaming from the platform and swishing through the machinery, and all on board drenched to the skin.

Bruce stood at his post, unshaken, throwing his great strength on the sweep this way and that—endeavoring to keep it in the center of the current—in the middle of the tortuous channel through which the boat was racing like mad. And the hind sweepman, doing his part, responded with all the weight of his body and strength he possessed to Bruce's low-voiced orders almost before they had left his lips.

Quick and tremendous action was imperative, for there were places where a single instant's tardiness meant destruction. There was no time in that mad rush to rectify mistakes. A miscalculation, a stroke of the sweep too little or too much would send the heavily loaded boat, with that tremendous, terrifying force behind it, crashing and splintering on a rock like a flimsy-bottomed strawberry box.

For all of seven miles, Bruce never lifted his eyes, straining them as he wielded his sweep for the deceptive, submerged granite bowlders over which the water slid in a thin sheet. Immovable, tense, he steered with the sureness of knowledge and grim determination until the boat ceased to leap and ahead lay a little stretch of peace.

Then he turned and looked at the lolling tongues behind him that seemed still reaching for the boat, and, straightening up, he shook his fist.

"You didn't get me that time, doggone you; and, what's more, you won't!"

All three boats were coming, rearing and plunging, disappearing and reappearing. Anxiously he watched Smaltz work until a bend of the river shut them from all sight. It was many miles before the river straightened out again, but when it did he saw them all riding safely, with Smaltz holding his place in line.

Stretches of white water came at frequent intervals all day, but Bruce slept on the platform of his barge that night more soundly than he ever had dared hope. Each hour that passed, each rapid that they put behind them, was so much done; he was so much nearer his goal.

On the second night, when they tied up, with the Devil's Teeth, the Black Cañon, and the Whiplash passed in safety, Bruce felt almost secure, though that he dreaded most remained for the third and last day.

The boatmen stood, a silent group, at The Big Mallard.

"She's a bad one, boys, and looking wicked as I've ever seen her." There was a furrow of anxiety between Bruce's heavy brows.

Every grave face was a shade paler, and Porcupine Jim's eyes looked like two blue buttons sewed on white paper as he stared.

"I wish I was back in Meennyso-ta." The unimaginative Swede's voice was plaintive.

"We dare not risk the other channel, Saunders," said Bruce briefly. "The water's hardly up enough for that."

"I don't believe we could make it," Saunders answered. "It's too long a chance."

Smaltz was studying the rocks and current intently, as though to impress upon his mind every twist and turn. His face was serious, but he made no comment and walked back in silence to the eddy above where the boats were tied.

It was the only rapid where they had stopped above to "look out the trail ahead," but a peculiarity of The Big Mallard was that the channel changed with the varying stages of the water, and it was too dangerous at any stage to trust to luck.

It was a stretch of water not easy to describe. Words seem colorless—inadequate to convey the picture it presented or the sense of awe it inspired. Looking at it from among the bowlders on the shore, it seemed the last degree of madness for human beings to pit their lilliputian strength against that racing, thundering flood. Certain it was that The Big Mallard was the supreme test of courage and boatmanship.

The river, running like a mill race, shot straight and smooth down a grade until it reached a high, sharp, jutting ledge of granite, where it made a sharp turn. The main current made a close swirl, and then, fairly leaping, made a sudden rush for a narrow passageway between two great bowlders, one of which rose close to shore and the other nearer the center of the river, the latter being covered thinly with a sheet of water which shot over it to drop into a dark hole that was like a well, rising again to strike another rock immediately below and curve back. For three hundred yards or more, the river seethed and boiled, a stretch of roaring whiteness, as though its growing fury had culminated in this foaming fit of rage—and from it came uncanny sounds like children crying, women screaming.

Bruce's eyes were shining brilliantly with the excitement of the desperate game ahead when he put into the river, but nothing could exceed the carefulness, the caution with which he worked his boat out of the eddy so that when the current caught it should catch it right. Watching the landmarks on either shore, measuring distances, calculating the consequences of each stroke, he placed the clumsy barge where he would have it, with all the accurate skill of a good billiard player making a shot.

The boat reached the edge of the current; then it caught it full. With a jump like a racehorse at the signal, it was shoooting down the toboggan slide of water toward the jutting granite ledge. The blanched baler in the stern could have touched it with his hand as the boat whipped around the corner, clearing it by so small a margin that it seemed to him his heart stood still.

Bruce's muscles turned to steel as he gripped the sweep handle for the last mad rush. He looked the personification of human daring. The wind blew his hair straight back. The joy of battle blazed in his eyes. His face was alight with a reckless exultation. But, powerful, fearless as he was, it did not seem as though it were within the range of human skill or possibilities to place a boat in that toboggan slide of water so that it would cut the current diagonally, miss the rock nearest shore, and shoot across to miss the channel bowlder and that yawning hole beneath. But he did, though he skimmed the wide-mouthed well so close that the baler stared into its dark depths with bulging eyes.

The boat leaped in the spray below; but the worst was past, and Bruce and his hind sweepman exchanged the swift smile of satisfaction which men have for each other at such a time.

"Keep her steady—straightaway!" He had not dared yet to lift his eyes to look behind save for that one glance.

"My God! They're coming right together!"

The sharp cry from the hind sweep-

man made him turn. They had rounded the ledge abreast, and Smaltz's boat inside was crowding Saunders hard. Saunders and his helper were working with superhuman strength to throw the boat into the outer channel in the fraction of time before it started on the final shoot. Could they do it? Could they? Bruce felt his lungs, his heart, something inside him hurt as, with a sharp intake of breath, he watched that desperate battle whose loss meant not only sunk machinery but very likely death.

Bruce's hands were still full getting his own boat to safety. He dared not look too long behind.

"They're goin' to make it! They're almost through! They're safe!" Then shrilly: "They're gone! They've lost a sweep!"

Bruce turned quickly at his helper's cry of consternation, turned to see the hind sweep wildly thrashing the air while the boat spun around and around in the boiling water, disappearing, reappearing, sinking a little lower with each plunge. Then, at the risk of having every rib crushed in, they saw the baler throw his body across the sweep and hold it down before it quite leaped from its pin. The hind sweepman was scrambling wildly to reach and hold the handle as it beat the air. He got it, held it for a second, then it was wrenched out of his hand. He tried again and again before he held it, but finally Bruce said huskily:

"They'll make it—they'll make it sure if Saunders can hold her a little longer off the rocks."

His own boat had reached quieter water. Simultaneously, it seemed, both he and his helper thought of Smaltz. They took their eyes from the boat in trouble, and the hind sweepman's jaw dropped. "They've struck!" he said unemotionally, dully, as he might have said: "I'm sick," "I'm hungry."

Yes, they'd struck. If Bruce had not been so absorbed, he might have heard the bottom splintering when she hit the rock.

Her bow shot high into the air and settled at the stern. As she slid off, tilted, filled, and sank, Smaltz and Porcupine Jim both jumped. Then the river made a bend which shut it all from Bruce's sight. It was a half a mile before he found a landing. He tied up and walked back, unexcited, not hurrying, with a curious quietness inside.

Smaltz and Jim were fighting when he got there. Smaltz was sitting astride the latter's chest. There were epithets and recriminations, accusations, countercharges, oaths. The Swede was crying, and a little stream of red was trickling toward his ear. Bruce eyed him calmly, contemplatively, thinking what a face he made and how ludicrous he looked with the sand matted in his corn-silk hair and covering him like a tamale casing of corn meal as it stuck to his wet clothes.

He left them and walked up the river, where the rock rose like a monument to his hopes. With his hands on his hips, he watched the water rippling around it, slipping over the spot where the boat lay buried with some portion of every machine upon the works, while like a bolt from the blue the knowledge came to him that since the old Edison type was obsolete, the factories no longer made duplicates of the parts.

CHAPTER XX.

"THE FORLORN HOPE."

It was August. "Old Turtleback" was showing up at the diggin's, and the river would reach low-water mark with less than half a foot.

Pole in hand, big John Johnson of the crew stood on the rocking raft anchored below The Big Mallard and opposite the rock where the boat had sunk and smiled his solemn smile at Bruce.

"Don't know but what we ought to name her and break a bottle of ketchup over the bow of this here craft afore we la'nch her."

"'The Forlorn Hope,' 'The Last Chance,' or something appropriate like that," Bruce suggested; but there was too much truth in the jest for him to smile. This attempt to recover the sunken boat was literally that. If it was gone, he was done. His work, all that he had been through, was wasted effort; the whole an expensive fiasco, proving that the majority are sometimes right.

The suspense which Bruce had been under for more than two months would soon be ended one way or the other. Day and night, it seemed to him, he had thought of little else than the fate of the sunken boat. His brain was tired with conjecturing as to what had happened to her when the water had reached its flood. Had the force of it shoved her into deeper water? Had the sand which the water carried at that period filled and covered her? Had the current wrenched her to pieces and imbedded the machinery deep in the sediment and mud?

Questioning his own judgment, doubtful as to whether he was right or wrong, he had gone on with the work as though the machinery was to be recovered, yet all the time he was filled with sickening doubts. But it seemed as though his inborn tenacity of purpose, his mulish obstinacy would not let him quit, driving him on to finish the flume and the five-hundred-foot trestle forty feet high with every green log and timber snaked in and put in place by hand; to finish the pressure box and penstock and the two hundred feet of pipe line riveted on the broiling hillside when the metal was almost too hot to touch with the bare hand. The foundation of the power house was ready for the machinery, and the Pelton water wheel had been installed. It had taken time and money and grimy sweat. Was it all in vain?

Asking himself the question for which ten minutes at most would find the answer, Bruce sprang upon the tilting raft and nodded.

"Shove off!"

As Bruce balanced himself on the raft while the Swede poled slowly toward the rock that now rose from the water the size of a small house, he was thankful that the face can be made at times to serve as so good a mask. Not for the world would he have had John Johnson guess how afraid he was, how actually scared to death when the raft bumped against the huge, brown rock and he knew that he must look over the side.

Holding the raft steady, Johnson kept his eyes on Bruce's face when he peered into the river and searched the bottom through water that was nearly but not quite opaque. Not a muscle of Bruce's face moved nor an eyelid flickered in the tense silence. Then he said quietly:

"John, she's gone."

A look of sympathy softened the Swede's homely face.

Bruce straightened up.

"Gone!" he reiterated. "Gone!"

Johnson might guess a little, but he could never guess the whole of the despair which seemed to crush Bruce like an overwhelming weight as he stood looking at the sun shining upon the back of the twisting green snake of a river that he had thought he could beat; Johnson never had risked and lost anybody's money but his own; he never had allowed a woman he loved to build her hopes upon his judgment and success. To have failed so quickly and so completely—oh, the mortification of it! The chagrin!

Finally Johnson said gently:

"Guess we might as well go back."

Bruce winced. It reminded him what going back meant. To discharge the

crew and telegraph his failure to Helen Dunbar, Harrah, and the rest, then to watch the lumber dry out and the cracks widen in the flume, the rust take the machinery, and the water wheel go to ruin—*that's* what going back meant —taking up his lonely, pointless life where he had left it off, growing morbid, eccentric, like the other failures sulking in the hills.

"There were parts of two dynamos, one fifty-horse-power motor, a keeper, and a field, beside the flywheel in the boat." Bruce looked absently at Johnson, but he was talking to himself. "I wonder—I wonder——" A gleam of hope lit up his face. "John, go up to Fritz Yandell's and borrow that compass that he fished out of the river."

Johnson looked puzzled, but started in a hurry, and in an hour or so was back, still puzzled. Compasses, he thought, were for people who were lost.

"It's only a chance, John; another forlorn hope; but there's magnetic iron in those dynamos, and the needle might show it if we can get above the boat."

Johnson's friendly eyes shone instantly with interest. Starting from the spot of the wreck, he poled slowly down the river, keeping in line with the rock. Ten, twenty, thirty, fifty below the rock they poled, and the needle did not waver from the north.

"She'd go to pieces before she ever traveled this far." The glimmer of hope in Bruce's eyes had died. "Either the needle won't locate her or she's drifted into the channel. If that's the case, we'll never get her out."

Then Johnson poled back and forth, zigzagging from bank to bank, covering every foot of space, and still the needle hung steadfastly to its place.

They were all of fifty feet from where the boat had sunk, and some forty feet from shore, when Bruce cried sharply:

"Hold her steady! Wait!"

The needle wavered, agitated unmistakably, then the parts of the dynamos and the fifty-horse-power motor in the boat dragged the reluctant point of steel slowly, flutteringly, but surely from its affinity, the magnetic north.

Bruce gulped at something in his throat before he spoke:

"John, we've *got* her!"

"I *see* her!" Johnson executed on the rocking raft a kind of dance. "Lookee!" He pointed into the exasperatingly dense water. "See her, there —like a shadow—her bow is shoved up four, five feet above her stern. Got her?"

"Yes."

Then they looked at each other joyfully, and Bruce remembered afterward that they giggled hysterically like two boys.

"The water'll drop a foot yet," Bruce said excitedly. "Can you dive?"

"First cousin to a muskrat," the Swede declared.

"We'll build a raft like a hollow square, use a tripod, and bring up the chain blocks. What we can't raise with a grappling hook we'll go after. John, we're going to get it—every piece!"

"Bet yer life!" John cried responsively. "If I has to git drunk to do it and stand to my neck in water for a week."

CHAPTER XXI.

TOY.

Bruce paused in the blithesome task of packing six by eights to look at the machinery which lay like a pile of junk on the river bank. Each time he passed he looked at it, and always he felt the same burning hot impatience and sense of irritation.

The days, the weeks, months, were going by, and nothing moved.

Two months Jennings had named as the maximum of time required to set up the machines and have the plant in working order. "We'll be throwin' dirt

by the middle of July," he had said confidently, and it was now close to the middle of September. The lost machinery was no longer an excuse, as every piece had been recovered by grappling and diving and landed safely at the diggin's.

Twice the whole crew save Jennings had dragged a heavy barge fifteen miles up the river, advancing only a pull at a time against the strong current, windlassing over the rapids with big John Johnson poling like mad to keep the boat off the rocks; sleeping at night in wet clothing, waking stiff and jaded as stage horses to go at it again. Six days they had been getting up, and a little over an hour coming down, while two trips had been necessary owing to the low stage of the water, which now made the running of a deeply loaded boat impossible. It had been a severe test of endurance and loyalty in which none had fallen short and no one among them had worked with more tireless energy than Smaltz or his erstwhile friend but present enemy, Porcupine Jim.

There was amazingly little damage done to the submerged machinery; and when the last bit of iron was unloaded on the bank, the years which had come upon Bruce in the weeks of strain and tension seemed to roll away. Unless some fresh calamity happened, by September surely they would be "throwing dirt."

Now, as Bruce changed the lumber from the raw spot on his right shoulder to the raw spot on his left shoulder, he was wondering how much more of a chance was due Jennings, how much longer he could hold his tongue. A more extended acquaintance with this "practical man" had taught him how easily a virtue may become a fault.

In his insistence upon solidity and exactitude, he went beyond the point of careful workmanship and became a putterer. He was the king of putterers. He could outputter a plumber. And when he had finished, it was usually some unimportant piece of work that any man who handled tools could have done as well in half the time.

Bruce had a favorite bush, thick, and a safe distance from the work, behind which it was his wont to retire at such times as the sight of Jennings puttering while the crew under him stood idle, became too much for Bruce's nerves.

"He'd break the Bank of England!" Bruce would exclaim in a vehement whisper behind the bush. "If he'd been on the pay roll of Sety I. they'd have dug up his work intact. It's fierce! As sure as shooting I'm going to run out of money!"

Yet so long as Jennings *was* in charge, Bruce would listen to no attacks upon him behind his back, and Jennings had succeeded in antagonizing almost all the crew. With the same regularity that the sun rose, he and Woods, the carpenter, had their daily set-to, if over nothing more important than the mislaying of a file or saw. No doubt they were at it now.

Bruce sighed. It seemed eons ago that he had had time to watch the kingfisher flying to his nest or the water ousel ducking and teetering sociably at his feet. They never came any more, neither they nor the black bear to his service-berry bush, and Old Felix had learned in one bitter lesson how his confidence in man had been misplaced. Nothing came any more but annoyances, trouble, and, thinking of trouble, Bruce wondered what was the matter with Toy. He had looked as grim and forbidding at breakfast as a Chinese god of war.

But it was no time to speculate with a load of lumber grinding into his sore shoulder, so Bruce hurried on across the slippery foot log and up a steep pitch to see the carpenter charging through the brush brandishing a saw as if it was a saber.

"I want my 'time'!" he shouted when he saw Bruce. "Him or me has got to quit. I won't work with that feller; I won't take orders from the likes o' him! I never saw a man from Oregon yit that was worth the powder to blow him up. Half-baked, no-account fakers, the whole lot of 'em—allus a-hirin' for somethin' they cain't do! Middle West renegades! Poor white trash! Oregon is the New Jersey of the Pacific coast; it's the Missoury of the West. It ought to be throwed into some other State and its name wiped off the map. That there Jennin's has got the earmarks of Oregon printed on him like a govermint stamp. Every time I see that putterin' webfoot's tracks in the dust it makes me hot. He don't know how to put up this plant no more'n I do, and you'll find it out. If an Oregonian'd be offered a job teachin' dead languages in a college he'd make a bluff at doin' it if he couldn't write his own name. Why, them webfeet——"

"Just what in particular is the matter?" Bruce asked as the carpenter paused, not for want of verbal ammunition, but because he was out of breath.

"Matter!" panted Woods. "He's got us strainin' our life out puttin' up them green four by eights when they's no need. They'd carry a ocean cable, them crossarms would. Four by fives is big enough for all the wire that'll be strung here. John Johnson jest fell out'n a tree a-liftin' and like to broke a lung."

"Do you feel sure that four by fives are strong enough?"

"Try it; that's all I ask."

"You'd better come back to work."

The carpenter hesitated.

"I don't like to quit you when you need me, but"—he waved the rip saw in a significant gesture—"if that Oregonian gives me any back talk I aims to cut him up in chunks."

It was the first time Bruce ever had countermanded one of Jennings' orders, but now he backed Woods up. He shared the carpenter's opinion that four by fives were strong enough, but he had said nothing, supposing that Jennings was following precedent and knew what he was about. Woods, too, had voiced a suspicion which kept rising in his mind as to whether Jennings *did* know how to put up the machines. Was it possible that the unimportant detail work which Jennings insisted upon doing personally in order that it might be exactly right was only a subterfuge to put off as long as possible the day when the show-down must come? Or was it in his mind to draw his generous wages as long as he safely might, then invent some plausible excuse to quit?

Bruce was not a fool, but neither was he apt to be suspicious of a person he had no good reason to mistrust. He had made every allowance for Jennings' slowness, but his bank account was rapidly reaching a stage where, even if he would, he could no longer humor Jennings' mania for solidity. *Something* had to move, and, taking Jennings aside, Bruce told him so.

The look which darkened Jennings' face when his instructions to Woods were countermanded surprised Bruce. It was more than chagrin; it was—ugly. It prejudiced Bruce against him as all his puttering had failed to do. The correctness or incorrectness of his contention concerning the crossarms seemed of less importance than the fact that Bruce's interference had impaired his dignity, belittled him in the eyes of the crew.

"Am I the constructin' ingineer, or ain't I? If I am, I'm entitled to some respect." More than ever, Jennings looked like a bear pouting in a trap.

"What's your dignity got to do with it?" Bruce demanded. "I'm general manager when it comes to that, and I've been packing crossarms like a mule. This is no time to talk about what's

due you; *get results.* This pay roll can't go on forever, Jennings. There's an end. At this rate it'll come quick. You know what the success of this proposition means to me—my first—and I beg of you don't putter any more; get busy and put up those machines. You say that fifty-horse-power motor has got to be rewound——"

"One man can't work on that alone," Jennings interrupted in a surly tone. "I can't do anything on it until that other electrician comes in."

"Get Smaltz to help you."

"Smaltz! What does he know? Him holding out for them four-be-five crossarms shows what he knows."

"Sometimes I think he knows a good deal more than he lets on."

"Don't you think it!" Jennings sneered. "He don't know half as much as he lets on. Jest one of them rovin' windjammers pickin' up a little smattering here and there. Run a power house in the Cœur d'Alenes. Huh, what's that? This here feller that I got a-comin' is a 'lectrical genius. He's worked with me on drudgers, and I know."

Glaring at the victorious carpenter, who, being human, sent back a grin, Jennings went to the power house, mumbling to the last that "four be fives" would never hold.

"I think I go now, I think."

"Toy!"

The old Chinaman at his elbow was dressed for traveling in a clean, unironed shirt, and his shoes had been newly hobbed. His round, black hat was pulled down purposefully as far as his ears would permit. All his possessions were stuffed into his best overalls, with the legs tied around his waist and the pair of attached suspenders worn over his shoulders so that at first glance he presented the startling appearance of carrying a headless corpse pick-a-back.

Bruce looked at him in astonishment. He would as soon have thought of thus suddenly losing his right arm.

The Chinaman's yellow face was impassive, his snuff-brown eyes quite blank.

"I go now," he repeated.

"But, Toy——" There are a special set of sensations which accompany the announcement of the departure of cooks. Bruce felt distinctly when his heart hit his boots. To be without a cook just now was more than an annoyance; it was a tragedy, but mostly it was the Chinaman's ingratitude that hurt.

"I go," was the stubborn answer.

Bruce knew the tone.

"All right—go!" he answered coldly. "But first I want you to tell me why."

A flame of anger leaped into Toy's eyes, his whole face worked, he was stirred to the very center of his being.

"She kick on me!" he hissed. "She say I no can cook!"

Bruce understood instantly. Jennings' bride had been guilty of the one unforgivable offense. His own eyes flashed.

"Tell her to keep out of the kitchen."

Toy shook his head.

"I no likee her; I no stay."

"Won't you stay if I ask you as a favor?"

The Chinaman reiterated, in his stubborn monotone:

"She kick on my glub; I no likee her; I no stay."

"You're going to put me in an awful hole, Toy, if you go."

"She want my job, I think. All light; I no care."

Bruce knew him too well to argue. The Chinaman could see only one thing, and that loomed colossal. He had been insulted; his dignity would not permit him to breathe even under the same roof with a woman who said he could not cook. He turned abruptly away and jogged down the trail with

the overalls stuffed with his possessions bobbing ludicrously on his back.

Heavy-hearted, Bruce watched him go. If Toy had forgotten that he owed him for his life he would not remind him, but he had thought that the Chinaman's gratitude was deeper than this, although, it is true, he never had thanked him or indicated in any way that he realized or appreciated what Bruce had done. Nevertheless, Bruce had believed that in his way Toy was fond of him, that deep under his yellow skin there was loyalty and a passive, undemonstrative affection. Obviously there was none.

Bruce would not have believed that anybody with oblique eyes and a shingled cue could have hurt him so. Of the three men he had befriended, two had already turned the knife in him. He wondered cynically how soon he would hear from Uncle Bill.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE GENERAL MANAGER.

Jennings and Woods were now sworn enemies, and the stringing of the wires became a matter of intense interest, as this was the test which would prove the truth or fallacy of Jennings' cantankerous harping that the crossarms were too light.

In isolated camps where there is no outside diversions such tests of opinion become monotonous matters, and the present instance was no exception. Mrs. Jennings, too, had taken sides—her husband's naturally—and the anti-Jennings faction was made to realize fully the possibilities for revenge which lie within the jurisdiction of the cook.

The alacrity with which Jennings' bride stepped into Toy's shoes convinced Bruce that the Chinaman had been correct in his assertion, but he was helpless in the circumstances, and accepted the inevitable, being able for the first time to understand why there are wife beaters.

Jennings had opined that his bride was "lasty." She looked it. "Bertha" stood six feet in her moccasins and lifted a sack of flour as the weaker of her sex toy with a fan. She had an undershot jaw and a nose so retroussé that the crew asserted it was possible to observe the convolutions of her brain and see what she had planned for the next meal. Be that as it may, Bertha had them cowed to a man with the possible exception of Porcupine Jim, whose hide mere sarcasm could not penetrate. There was general envy of the temerity which enabled Jim to ask for more biscuits when the plate was empty. Even Smaltz shrank involuntarily when she came toward him with her mouth on the bias and a look in her deep-set eyes which said that she would as soon, or sooner, pour the steaming contents down the back of his neck than in his cup, while Woods averred that "Doc" Tanner, who fasted forty days, didn't have anything on him.

Nobody but Jennings shared Bertha's hallucination that she could cook, and he was the recipient of special dishes, such delicacies as cup custard, toast. This in nowise added to Jennings' popularity with the crew, and when Bruce suggested as much to the unblushing bride she told him, with arms akimbo and her heels well planted some three feet apart, that if they didn't like it let 'em come and tell her so.

Bertha was looking like a gargoyle when the men filed in for supper the night before the stringing of the wires was to begin. The fact that men antagonistic to her husband dared walk in before her eyes and eat seemed like bravado, a challenge, and filled her with such black resentment that Bruce trembled for the carpenter when she hovered over him like a fury with a platter of bacon.

Woods, too, felt his peril, and, intrepid soul though he was, seemed to contract, withdraw like a turtle into his flannel collar as though already he felt the sizzling grease on his unprotected pate.

Conversation was at a standstill in the atmosphere charged with Bertha's disapproval. Only Porcupine Jim, quite unconscious, unabashed, heaped his plate and ate with all the loud abandon of a Berkshire Red. Emboldened by the pangs of hunger a long way from satisfied, John Johnson tried to "palm" a fourth biscuit while surreptitiously reaching for a third. Unfortunately John was not sufficiently practiced in the art of legerdemain, and the biscuit slipped from his fingers. It fell off the table, and rolled like a cart wheel to Bertha's feet.

"Shan't I bring you in the shovel, Mr. Johnson?" she inquired in a tone of deadly politeness as she polished the biscuit on her hip and returned it to the plate.

John's ears flamed, also his neck and face. The honest Swede looked like a sheep-killing dog caught in the act. He dared not answer, and she added:

"There's *three* apiece."

"Mrs. Jennings, I haven't put the camp on half rations yet." Bruce was mutinous at last.

The bride drew herself up and reared back from the waistline until she looked all of seven feet tall. The row of short locks that hung down like a row of fish-hooks beneath a knob of black hair seemed to stand out straight, and the window rattled in its casing as she swarmed down on Bruce.

"Look-a-here, young feller, I don't need no boss to tell me how much to cook!"

Jennings protested mildly:

"Now don't you go and git upset, Babe."

"Babe" turned upon him savagely:

"And don't you go to takin' sides! I'm used to livin' good, an' when I think what I give up to come down here to this hole——"

"I know 'tain't what you're used to," Jennings agreed in a conciliating tone.

Smaltz took this occasion to ostentatiously inspect a confection the upper and lower crusts of which stuck together like two pieces of adhesive plaster.

"Looks like somebudy's been high-gradin' this here pie."

The criticism might have touched even a mild-tempered cook; it made a demon of Bertha. She started around the table with the obvious intention of doing Smaltz bodily harm, but at the moment, Porcupine Jim, whose roving eye had been searching the table for more food, lighted upon one of the special dishes set before Jennings' plate.

It looked like rice pudding with raisins in it! If there was one delicacy which appealed to James' palate more than another it was rice pudding with raisins in it. He arose from the bench in all the pristine splendor of the orange-colored cotton undershirt in which he worked and dined, and reached for the pudding. It was a considerable distance, so he was unable to reach it by merely stretching himself over the table, so James, unhampered by the rules of etiquette as proscribed by a finical society, put his knee on the table and buried his thumb in the pudding as he dragged it toward him by the rim.

Without warning he sat down hard, and so suddenly that his feet flew up and kicked the table underneath.

"Leggo!" he gurgled.

For answer Bertha took another twist around the stout neckband of his orange undergarment.

"I'll learn you roughnecks some manners!" she panted. "I'll git the respect that's comin' to a lady if I have to clean out this here camp!"

"You quit now!" He rolled a pair of

wild, beseeching eyes around the table. "Somebudy take her off!"

"Coward—to fight a woman!" She fell back with a section of James' shirt in her hand, with the other reaching for his hair.

He clapped the crook of his elbow over his ear, and started to slide under the table when the special Providence that looks after Swedes intervened. A long, plump, shining bull snake took that particular moment to slip off one of the log beams and bounce on the bride's head.

She threw herself on Jennings, emitting sounds like forty catamounts tied in a bag. The flying crew jammed in the doorway, burst through, and never stopped to look behind until they were well outside.

"Hy-sterics," said the carpenter, who was married; "she's took a fit."

"Hydrophoby; she must a bit herself!" Porcupine Jim was vigorously massaging his neck.

The bride was sitting on the floor beating her heels when Bruce put his head in the door cautiously:

"If there's anything I can do——"

Bertha renewed her screams at sight of him.

"They is!" she shrieked. "Git out!"

"You don't want to go near 'em when they're in a tantrum," advised the carpenter in an experienced tone. "But that's about the hardest one I ever see."

Jennings, staggering manfully under his burden, bore the hysterical Amazon to her tent, and it remained for Bruce to do her work.

"That's a devil of a job for a general manager," commented John Johnson sympathetically as he stood in the doorway watching Bruce, with his sleeves rolled up, scraping assiduously at the bottom of a frying pan.

Bruce smiled grimly, but made no reply. He had been thinking the same thing himself.

Bruce often had watched an ant trying to move a bread crumb many times its size, pushing with all its feet braced, rushing it with its head, backing off and considering, and going at it again. Failing, running frantically around in front to drag and pull and tug. Trying it this way and that, stopping to rest for an instant, then tackling it in fresh frenzy —and getting nowhere, until, out of pity, he gave it a lift.

Bruce felt that this power plant was his bread crumb, and, tug and push and struggle as he would, he could not make it budge. The thought, too, was becoming a conviction that Jennings, who should have helped him push, was riding on the other side.

"I wouldn't even mind his riding," Bruce said to himself ironically, "if he wouldn't drag his feet."

He was hoping with all his heart that the much-discussed crossarms would hold, for when the wires were up and stretched across the river he would feel that the bread crumb had at least *moved.*

When Bruce crossed to the work the next morning, the "come along" was clamped to the transmission wire and hooked to the block and tackle. Naturally, Jennings had charge of the stretching of the wire, and he selected Smaltz as his assistant.

All the crew, intensely interested in the test, stood around as Jennings, taciturn and sour, puttered about his preparations.

Finally he cried:

"Ready-o!"

The wire tightened, and the slack disappeared under Smaltz's steady pull. The carpenter and the crew watched the crossarm anxiously as the strain came upon it under the taut wire. Their faces brightened as it held.

Smaltz looked at Jennings quizzically.

"More?"

"You ain't heard me tell you yet to stop," was the snarling answer.

"Here goes, then!" Smaltz's face wore an expressive grin as he put his

strength on the rope of the block and tackle, which gave him the pull of a four-horse team.

Bruce heard the crossarm splinter as he came up the trail through the brush.

Jennings turned to Woods and said offensively:

"Old as you are, I guess I kin learn you somethin' yet."

The carpenter's face had turned white. With a gesture, Bruce stopped his belligerent advance.

"Try the next one, Jennings," he said quietly.

Once more the slack was taken up, and the wire grew taut—so taut it would have twanged like a fiddle string if it had been struck. Jennings did not give Smaltz the sign to stop even when the crossarm cracked. Without a word of protest, Bruce watched the stout four-by-five splinter and drop off.

"There—you see—I told you so! I knowed!" Jennings looked triumphantly at the carpenter as he spoke. Then, turning to the crew: "Knock 'em off—every one. *Now* I'll do it right!"

Not a man moved, and for an instant Bruce dared not trust himself to speak. When he did speak it was in a tone that made Jennings look up, startled:

"You'll come across the river and get your time!" His surprise was genuine as Bruce went on. "Do you imagine," he asked, savagely trying to steady his voice, "that I haven't intelligence enough to know that you've got to allow for the swaying of the trees in the wind, for the contraction and expansion of heat and cold, for the weight of snow and sleet? Do you think I haven't brains enough to see when you're deliberately destroying another man's work? I've been trying to make myself believe in you—believe that in spite of your faults you were honest. Now I know that you've been drawing pay for months for work you don't know how to do. I can't see any difference between you and any common thief who takes what doesn't belong to him. Right here you quit. Vamose!" Bruce made a sweeping gesture. "You go up that hill as quick as the Lord will let you!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

"GOOD ENOUGH."

"Alf" Banule, the electrical genius for whom Jennings had sent, and who had taken Jennings' place as constructing engineer, had the distinction of being the only person Bruce had ever seen who could remove his socks without taking off his shoes. He accomplished the feat with ease for the reason that there were never any toes in the aforesaid shoes. As he himself said, he would have been a tall man if there had not been so much of him turned up at the end.

The only way he was able to wear shoes at all, save those made to order, was to cut out the toes; the same applied to his socks, and the exposed portion of his bare feet had not that dimpled pinkness which move poets to song. From the rear, Banule's shoes looked like two bobsleds going downhill, and from the front the effect of the loose soles was that of two great mouths opening and closing. Yet he skimmed the river bowlders at amazing speed, seeming to find no inconvenience in the flap-flapping of the loose leather as he leaped from rock to rock.

In contrast to his yawning shoes and a pair of trousers, the original shade of which was a matter of uncertainty, together with a black sateen shirt whose color made change unnecessary, was a stylish Tyrolese hat—green felt—with a butterfly bow perched jauntily on one side. And underneath this stylishness there was a prematurely bald head covered with smudges of machine grease which it could readily be believed were souvenirs of his apprentice days in the machine shop. If indifference to ap-

pearances be a mark of genius it would be impossible to deny Banule's claim to the title.

He was the direct antithesis of Jennings, harnessed lightning in clothes, working early and late. He flew at the machinery like a madman, yelling for wrenches and rivets and bolts, chiseling and soldering and oiling, until the flywheel was on its shaft in the power house, and the dynamos, dragged at top speed from the river bank, no longer looked like a pile of junk. The switchboard went up, and the pressure gauge and the wiring for the power-house light. But for all Bruce's relief at seeing things moving, he had a feeling of uneasiness lest there was too much haste. "Good enough—that's good enough!" were the words oftenest on Banule's lips. They filled Bruce with vague forebodings, misgivings, and he came to feel a flash of irritation each time the genius said airily: "Oh, that's good enough."

Bruce warned him often: "Don't slight your work; do it right if it takes twice as long."

Banule always made the same cheering answer: "Don't worry; everything is going fine; in less than a month we'll be generating juice." And Bruce tried to find comfort in the assurance.

When Bruce pulled the lever which opened the valve, and heard the hiss of the water when it shot from the nozzle and hit the wheel, and watched the belt and shaft and big flywheel speed up until the spokes were a blur and the breeze it created lifted his hair, it was the happiest moment of his life. When he saw the thread of carbon filament in the glass bulb turn red and grow to a bright, white light he had something of the feeling of ecstasy that he imagined a mother must have when she looks at her first-born—a mixture of wonder and joy.

Important as the power house was it was only a small portion of the whole. There was still the ten-inch pump in the pump house with its seventy-five-horse-power motor, and the donkey engine with the fifty-horse-power motor to get to working right, not to mention the flume and sluice boxes with their variety of riffles and every practicable device for trapping the elusive fine gold. And not the least of Bruce's increasing anxieties was Alf Banule, with his constant "Good enough!"

It was well toward the end of October, and Bruce, hurrying over the trail with sheets of mica for Banule, who was working on the submerged motor, which had to be rewound, noticed that the willows were turning black. What a lot had happened since he had noticed the willows turning black last year! A lifetime of hopes and fears and new experiences had been crowded into twelve flying months.

His mind, straying for a moment from the work and its many problems, he fell to thinking of Helen Dunbar and her last letter. When he was not thinking of undercurrents or expanded metal riffles, or wondering anxiously if the ten-inch and eight-inch pumps were going to raise sufficient water, or if the foundation built on piling, instead of cement, was really "good enough," Bruce was thinking of Helen Dunbar.

She had written in her last letter—Bruce knew them all by heart:

I had a visitor yesterday. You will be as surprised, when I tell you who it was, as I was to see him. Have you guessed? I'm sure you haven't. None other than our friend Sprudell—very apologetic—very humble and contrite, and with an explanation to offer for his behavior that was really most ingenious. There's no denying he has cleverness of a kind—craft, perhaps, is a better word.

His humility was touching, but so unlike him that I should have been alarmed if he had not been so obviously sincere.

Nevertheless his visit has upset me. I've been worried ever since. Perhaps you'll only laugh at me when I tell you that it is because I am afraid for *you*. Truly, I am!

I don't know that I can explain exactly so you'll understand, but there was something disturbing which I *felt* when he spoke quite casually of you. There was that in his manner which was almost too intangible to put into words, but it was like a gloating, secret satisfaction, as though he had the best of you in some way—the whip hand.

It may be just a silly notion, one of those fears that pop into one's head in the most inexplicable way, and stick, refusing to be driven out by any amount of logic. Tell me, is there anything that he can do to you—any way that he can harm you?

I am nervous—*anxious*—and I cannot help it.

She was anxious about him! That fact was paramount. Somebody in the world was worrying over *him*. He stopped short in the trail with fresh wonder of it. Every time he thought of it it gave him a fresh thrill. His face, that had been set in tired, harsh lines of late, softened with a smile of happiness.

And he did so long to give her substantial evidence of his gratitude. If that machinery ever started—if the scrapers ever got to hauling dirt—her reward, his reward, would come quick. That was one of the compensating features of mining; if the returns came at all they came quick. Bruce started on, hastening his footsteps until he almost ran.

The electrical genius was driving a nail with a spirit level when Bruce reached the pump house, and Bruce flared up in quick wrath.

"Stop that, Banule! Isn't there a hammer on this place?"

"Didn't see one handy," Banule replied cheerfully; "took the first thing I could reach."

"It just about keeps one pack train on the trail supplying you with tools."

"Guess I am a little careless." Banule seemed unruffled by the reproach—because he had heard it so many times before, no doubt.

"Yes, you're careless," Bruce answered vigorously, "and I'm telling you straight; it worries me, for I can't help wondering if your carelessness extends to your work. There, you know, you've got me, for I can't tell. I must trust you absolutely."

Banule shrugged a shoulder:

"This ain't the first plant I've put up, you know." He added: "I'll guarantee that inside two weeks we'll be throwin' dirt. Eh, Smaltz? Ain't I right?"

Smaltz, who was stooping over, did not immediately look up. Bruce saw an odd expression cross his face—an expression that was something like derision. When he felt Bruce looking at him it vanished instantly, and he straightened up.

"Why, yes," with his customary grin. "Looks like we orter make a *start*."

The peculiar emphasis did not escape Bruce, and he was still thinking of the look he had caught on Smaltz's face as he asked Banule:

"Is this mica right? Is it the kind you need?"

Smaltz looked at Banule from the corner of his eye.

"'Tain't exactly what I ought to have," Banule responded cheerfully. "I forgot to specify when I ordered, but I guess I can make it do; it's good enough."

It seemed to Bruce that his overstrained nerves snapped all at once. He did not recognize the sound of his own voice when he turned on Banule:

"S'help me, I'm goin' to break every bone in your body if you don't cut out that 'good enough'! How many hundred times have I got to tell you that nothin's good enough on this plant until it's right?"

"I didn't mean anything," Banule mumbled, temporarily cowed.

Bruce heard Smaltz snicker as he walked away.

The sluice boxes upon which Bruce was putting the finishing touches were his particular pride. They were four

feet wide and nearly a quarter of a mile in length. The eight-per-cent grade was steep enough to carry off bowlders twice, three times, the size of a man's head when there was a force of water behind them.

The last box was well over the river at a point where it was sufficiently swift to take off the tailings and keep it free. The top earth which had to be removed to uncover the sand bank was full of jagged rocks that had come down in snowslides from the mountain, and below this top earth was a strata of small, smooth bowlders—"river wash."

This troublesome "overburden" necessitated the use of iron instead of wooden riffles, as the bumping and grinding of the bowlders would soon have worn the latter down to nothing. So for many weary trips a string of footsore pack horses had picked their way down the dangerous trail from Ore City, loaded to their limit with pierced iron strips, rods, heavy sacks of nuts and bolts.

It had been laborious, nerve-racking work, and every trip had had its accident, culminating in the loss of the best pack horse in the string, the horse having slipped off the trail, scattering its pack, as Smaltz announced it, "from hell to breakfast."

But the iron strips and rods were made into riffles now and laid. Bruce surveyed the whole with intense satisfaction as he stood by the sluice boxes looking down the long grade. It was *his* work.

There was cocoa matting under the riffles of the first six boxes. Halfway the length of the sluice boxes the finest gravel, yellow and black sand dropped through perforated sheet-iron grizzles into the "undercurrents," while the rocks and bowlders rushed on through the sluice boxes to the river.

At the end of the undercurrents there was a wide table having a slight grade, and this table was covered with Canton flannel, over which was placed more riffles of expanded metal. And, as a final precaution, lest some infinitesimal amount of gold escape, there was a mercury trap below the table. While Bruce was expecting to catch the greater part of it in the first six sluice boxes, he was not taking a single chance.

Now, as he stood by the sluice boxes looking their length, he allowed himself to dream for a moment of the day when the mercury, turned to amalgam, should be lying thick with gold behind the riffles; to anticipate the unspeakable happiness of telegraphing his success to Helen Dunbar.

Even with the tangible evidence before his eyes it was hard to realize that, after all the struggle, he was so near his goal. The ceaseless strain and anxiety had left their marks upon his face. He looked older by years than when he had stood by the river dipping water into his old-fashioned cradle and watching Slim scramble among the rocks.

But it would be worth it all—all and more—he told himself exultingly, if he succeeded, as he must. His eyes shone with enthusiasm, and he tingled with his joy as he thought what success meant.

A sound behind him brought him back to earth. He turned to see Toy picking his way gingerly over the rocks.

"You old rascal!" he cried joyfully. "Dog-gone, I'm glad to see you, though you don't deserve it!"

"I come back now," the Chinaman announced serenely. "No go 'way no more, I think."

TO BE CONCLUDED.

The fourth and final installment of this story will appear in the POPULAR MAGAZINE on the stands two weeks hence, September 20th.

Temperament

By H. C. Witwer

Author of "In This Corner," "An Even Break," Etc.

Nobody has ever been able to explain why some men who have been brave in smaller crises become cowards in the supreme battle. There is nothing to do but accept the fact and try to subvert it by subtlety, as the prize-fight manager does in this story—which, by the way, Mr. Witwer declares, is "almost a biography of one of the finest fellows in the ring today, with the necessary allowances for fiction."

IT'S no trouble at all for me to understand this Mademoiselle de Leon's cannin' her private secretary because he wore a purple tie with a green shirt. I know just how she felt when that boob came in with them on. Temperament? Sure! Don't laugh at it, son, because there *is* such an animile, as Who's This says, and I've seen it in men, women, and racehorses. You got it and I got it—maybe we call it somethin' else, but it's the old stuff, just the same.

If you read anything else in the sportin' final but the baseball dope, you might have noticed where one of these here trusts has just stuck one over the well-known U. S. government. Down around the second paragraph there's a whole lot of stuff about the bright, risin', and promisin' young lawyer who helped put it over.

I guess you'll think I've slid from the wagon when I tell you that a few years ago that same young jury kidder was the best heavyweight that ever pulled on a glove—and I don't bar none of them when I say *that!* Son, there ain't a man livin' that could stand up with this guy for three rounds—*in the gym!* In the *ring*—that's another story and the one I'm goin' to tell you. When I get through, I'll lay nine to five that you'll say I got the right dope on this temperament thing.

This guy's bringin'-up ruined him for a box fighter. The biggest bum that ever stalled through ten rounds with another one had more chance than he did, although he carried the greatest wallop I've ever seen. He had the build of a Willard, the speed of a bullet, and the kick of a mule in both hands. Some layout, eh? Well, it all ran for Sweeney as soon as this old temperament stuff got on the job—he just didn't belong—get me? It was the stuff in his dome that queered him—his *heart* was all right.

When he came to me, he said his name was Reynolds—so I'm goin' to call him that. He was practically fresh from college. It seems that when he was about halfway through the rah-rah foundry the head of the family picked a loser and shot the works on it. When the final results came in, the old man's proposition wasn't among the first ten. The old guy wasn't just built for pickin' nothin' but winners, so when he got the flash—the insurance company had to make good. The young guy rushes

home from college and finds he is chief mourner at two funerals—his dad's and his own. All the old man left was his best wishes. When they started the fall meeting of the college that year, Reynolds wasn't among the entries.

He had six feet two of bone and muscle, an A-1 rep as a football player, and a terrible yearnin' to be a lawyer; so he hustled around tryin' to fool the landlord by cashin' on them few items. After a couple of months, he had more experience than his old man had picked up all his life and an offer of a fifteen-per-week job. He lasted nearly a week on the pay roll, and then, on the fifth day, the boss must have pinched the stenographer in puttin' his arm around her, because she hollered. Reynolds comes a-runnin', takes a flash at the picture, and a wallop at the boss. When friend boss comes back to life, his first official act is to can Reynolds. The stenographer stuck her nose up at him on the way out.

Back in the old hall room that night, Reynolds looked at the picture of his dad he kept on his bureau and begged his pardon for thinkin' him a quitter.

But that wallop he had stuck over on his ex-boss made him think—and as long as you can do that you got a chance. Reynolds sat on the side of the bed until the milk wagons started out on their routes, but when he finally turned in he had picked a way to gather in enough coin to pay his startin' fee at the old college again, so he could give this lawyer thing another whirl.

Jimmy Williams, of the *News,* sent him to me. I had a pretty good stable at the time—Young Lewis, Kid Michaels, Cyclone Edwards, and guys like that. The only thing I was shy on was a good heavy. The white hopes was gettin' all the money them days. It was before Willard bounced Johnson and killed the market. Only the good ones can get the big money now. It wouldn't be tellin' it to say that I was glad to see this guy, because Williams had wrote me a letter about him, and the worst thing he called him was the next heavyweight champ; so I figures if he is any good at all I could can my phony diamond and get a real one.

I didn't give him too much encouragement, but turned him over to Young Fleming, one of the handlers, to be tried out. Fleming had been a fair light heavy before he took to trainin' on high balls. After that he was a comer one year and a hanger-on at trainin' camps the next. They took Reynolds in a dressin' room and staked him to a pair of trunks and gloves. He took the kiddin' from the bunch good-naturedly, but after he stood up in the fightin' togs and they got a good look at him, they didn't go very far with it.

Son, you should have been there! This Reynolds could sing a song in Latin, tell you how much eighty times ninety-six was offhand, and what was the principal seaport of Southern Arania; but when he put up his hands against this old battler of mine he was a scream! I allowed for him bein' a little slow, but this guy was terrible! Fleming hit him a dozen times without a return. He had no guard at all, and he was so clumsy he made this old-timer look like a streak of lightnin'. Of course, after the first flash, the bunch commenced to ride him to a fare-you-well, and that didn't make him go any better—but he stood up to his trimmin', though, like a major. He never tried to hold; he didn't know enough to feint—he just kept right on walkin' into jabs, swings, crosses—everything Fleming had. And Fleming was lettin' them go, let me tell you—it had been a long time since he had a chance like this!

I had just about made up my mind to go down to the *News* office and bawl Williams out for sendin' me a tramp like that, when, comin' out of a clinch, Fleming, havin' decided to bounce this guy, stepped forward, jabbed lightly

with his right for the opening, and then started his once-famous left swing. Reynolds, seein' what was due, threw up his own left tryin' to stop it. This other guy was wide open, and he took it right on the chin.

Before Fleming come back to life, I felt like I had been through a Turkish bath! On the level, I thought he was never goin' to be with us again. We worked over him half an hour, at that. This big Reynolds guy stands there, lookin' at him layin' on the floor, like he was in a trance. I never seen nobody so surprised in my life. He looked like a guy seein' Niagara Falls for the first time. Finally, when we gets Fleming sittin' up in a chair, Reynolds walks over to him and shoves a couple handlers aside.

"I want to apologize," he says, holdin' out his glove to Fleming. "I had no idea I hit you that hard—it was purely accidental!"

He was blushin' like a schoolboy, too.

Fleming looks up at him, shakin' his head to clear it.

"I'm sure glad you wasn't mad at me," he says to Reynolds. "And I hope when you *do* get peeved I'll be in the next county."

He turns around to the rest of us.

"*Some* wallop!" he says.

That was how Reynolds made himself solid with me. Any guy that's got a kick like that hidden away is worth a bet any time he starts, because all he's got to do is land one time and you cash.

I had some of the cleverest men in the ring come up to the camp at one time or another and work with this guy. They showed Reynolds everything they had, and not a bit of it was wasted. He was one of them guys that make you right away—you can tell 'em somethin' once and they never forget it. In six months' time it was a treat to watch him in action; he was faster than a great many lightweights, and he could get to any man on earth with that long reach of his—and, son, when he got to you, it was *good night, nurse!*

Eddie Lane was the guy I picked out for the first victim. Lane was a good old war horse that had fought 'em all. He never knocked anybody cold worth mentionin', but nobody had ever bounced him, either. They all gave him an awful trimmin', but they'd break their hands tryin' to stop him—all the young sport writers used to rave over his gameness every time he'd go in and take one of these trimmin's. But, son, without knockin' Lane any, it wasn't half as much not bein' yellow as it was old Mother Nature. This Lane guy was so tough you couldn't bounce him with an ax; that was *one* thing that helped him stay, and he knew that if he laid down he wouldn't get no more fights, that was the other.

But even though I was wise to all this, I couldn't give him a chance of stayin' the route with Reynolds. I says to myself: If this bird of mine ever hits him with that left—if he was the Woolworth Building, he'd take a dive!

The day before the fight, I took Reynolds up to the hotel after he had his final work-out, and if ever a fighter looked like ready money, he sure did right then. I knew that when he stepped in the ring he was goin' to make them sit up and nudge each other, and when he'd land that wallop the town would be ours. He was almost too good lookin' to be true—with his blond hair, kinda wavylike, and his red, rosy cheeks. The muscles stood out on his back and arms like they do in them underwear ads you see in the subway, and he carried his two hundred and ten pounds ringside like one of them tango artists, he was that light on his feet.

When we got to the hotel, he said he wanted to write some letters, so I left him; but before I went away I felt him out a little.

"Well, son," I says, "you're goin' to get your first real try-out to-morrow

night, and, although it ain't no championship battle, there's an awful lot dependin' on what you show. Don't try to *box* this guy Lane; go right after him from the bell—if you can bounce him with the first wallop, so much the better——"

He broke in, laughin':

"I hope Lane will give me a hard fight," he says, showin' them white teeth of his. "I never felt as fit in my life—I don't think the bout will last very long. I know what's at stake."

"Well, don't think too hard about it," I tells him. "Put your mind on somethin' else—all you got to remember is that if you back this guy against the ropes and *then* slam him, he'll go over into the boxes. That always makes it look better, and it reads well in the papers the next mornin'."

I didn't bother him any more until after I had taken him down and fed him that night. Then I made him go upstairs and hit the hay about nine o'clock. I tucked him in under the covers, trained to the bone. A woman with her first baby would be careless alongside of the way I looked after him before that fight.

Now here's where this temperament stuff comes in. Reynolds went to bed all right—he was dozin' off when I left the room. *But he never closed an eye until I rapped on the door the next mornin'!* He just laid there between the covers—figurin' out what would happen if this Lane guy bounced *him.* He told me afterward—a long time afterward—that every time he'd get to where he'd be dozin' off he'd see himself flat on the canvas, a yellin', crazy crowd around him, and the referee countin' him out!

Yellow? Nope, you're wrong, son—you're makin' the same mistake they all do. There was no more yellow in Reynolds than there is in stove polish. He had the *real* gameness—the *real* sand. The kind of stuff that makes a man, *knowin'* he's built like that, go in and fight like blazes to the last bell. *That's* gameness—when a guy knows he's got a weak spot, say a glass jaw or somethin', and he knows if he gets hit there it's curtains, and that while he's fightin' this other guy he's got to battle the pictures that's formin' in his head, too—when a guy like *that* climbs in the ring and says: "Come on, let's go!"—*there* is one game guy! But these other ones—all they got to fight is the guy in the ring—they *can't* think! Got me?

Reynolds belonged in the class he's in now—workin' with his head instead of his hands—where he is now he needs this here temperament stuff, but a prize fighter with nerves is like water and oil—they don't belong together and they won't go together. Suppose all the guys on the police force come from Fifth Avenue—they'd break up the kids' crap games, all right, and take any drunk on earth to the lockup. But there's more excitin' things than that break in this town, son, and that's why it's a good thing they got a lot of the coppers from Ellis Island—the real place to pick your fightin' men. Not the guys that make the merry, dashin' charge, with the horns blowin' and flags wavin' and the chorus singin' the "Star-spangled Banner"—but the boys that go in the dive, down in Chinatown somewhere, crawl down in the dark cellar, with them funny little noises you hear about three a. m. in a place like that all around them, step over the rats and things and single-handed bring out the guys that shot the old banker, often takin' them on three at a time—*them's* fightin' men.

Well, to get back to Reynolds. I didn't need him to tell me that he had had a rough passage that night when I saw him the next mornin'. When I did ask him, though, he stalled me and said he had a fine night's rest. But, son, I've been handlin' fighters for a long time, and them there circles under his eyes was the tip-off for me. He was as nerv-

ous as a cat all afternooon, and a couple of times I figured on havin' the fight postponed. Once I kinda suggested callin' it off.

"No!" he says, turning on me all of a sudden. "Let's get it over with."

That was enough for me—*"let's get it over with."* I knew then that unless Lane stuck his jaw out early it would be a tough fight for Reynolds.

There was a good crowd at the club—the papers had noticed us a little, partly because the boys were friends of mine, but mostly because there was a good story about twice a week in this here college boy, fightin' to get enough dough to learn this law stuff. Bein' somethin' of a press agent in a small way, I had made no secret of that.

Reynolds climbed into the ring for his first fight lookin' more like a winner than any man I've ever sent to the post. *Twenty minutes later, he was counted out—cold!*

From the minute he stood up and looked out over that mob while he was bein' announced until Lane shot two hard lefts to his stomach and another on his jaw, he never had a chance. Where was his wonderful wallop? Search me; he must have put it in the bottom drawer of the bureau or somethin' at the hotel. He got off on the wrong foot and could never get right. For one thing, it was the first time he had ever swapped punches with anybody with more than half a dozen lookin' on, and here was about two thousand, not only lookin' on but ridin' him as well, and he looked like such a hick you couldn't blame 'em. He forgot all the stuff I had showed him, and he had absolutely nothin'. He missed so many punches that he fought himself out tryin' to hit this other guy, who got his number in the first round and just stood off and kidded him along. In the fourth round, Reynolds walked into Lane wide open, and this guy sets himself and it was all over.

When we got back to the hotel that night and got up to our rooms away from the bunch, I asked him what was the matter. I hadn't said much to him before. He didn't say a word—just sat there lookin' at the floor.

"Well," I says, "what was it? Was that guy an old college chum of yours or somethin'—or did you mislay your wallop before you came to the club?"

He don't answer—just shakes his head and mumbles somethin' to himself.

"Were you afraid of him?" I says, tryin' it again.

At that he laughs a little hard, nasty laugh. Then he gets up and walks over to me.

"When the bell rang for the first round in that ring to-night," he begins, "I had just conquered a desire to get up and run out of the building. I had a much harder tussle with myself before I subdued it than I did with Lane. I—I can't just explain it to you—I just lost my nerve, I guess. Let it go at that. I'm sorry I didn't come up to your expectations after all the trouble you've taken with me——" He walks over to the bureau at that, opens the drawers, and starts throwin' collars and things into a suit case—his voice just trailed off somewhere down in his throat.

"Wait a minute!" I says, walkin' over to him. "Where do *I* get off?"

He looks at me kinda puzzled.

"Oh, I see!" he says then. "You keep whatever money is due me for to-night—I wouldn't touch a cent of it."

I stood there lookin' at him for a minute, and what I was goin 'to say just faded out of my mind. He was just a big, clean-lookin' kid—the boy wasn't much past the votin' age, and he'd had a fairly rough time up to date. First his dad kissin' off, then the college thing goin' blooey, and now he sees he don't belong even with the roughnecks. But he wasn't doin' no whinin'—not that bird. He was whistlin' a little air all

out of tune through his teeth, and slammin' his clothes in the suit case as if he was just goin' on a little pleasure jaunt—while all the time he was feelin' the things his dad had just before he croaked. I don't make no secret of the fact that I liked that kid from the first day I laid an eye on him—I never had no kids of my own, and—well, I had set my heart on this guy makin' good, and I wasn't goin' to see him get the worst of it without a battle.

"Son," I says finally, "I won't get sore at you for what you said about the money. I don't blame you; you and me play in different leagues. But that ain't what I was thinkin' about—I'm a roughneck, all right, just like you got me figured; but *I* took hold of you to make a fighter out of you—or, if you want to put it your way, to make you good enough to get this money for the lawyer stuff. I never laid down on no job yet, and I ain't goin' to quit on this one. Now, do you want to take another whirl at it—or did you get enough to-night?"

I curled my lip up a little when I said the last—this was deep stuff; I wanted to shake him up some, make him think I had some doubt of his sand.

But it got by him—went over his head. I guess I'm a bum actor. He grabs me by my shoulders and swings me around.

"You'll give me another chance?" he says, like he wants to believe it but can't.

"Sure!" I says. "I'll give you another chance, and I'll see that Lane does, too—I'll bet you'll bounce that bum in a round the next time; I——"

I thought for a minute he was goin' to cry—on the level. He swallows a couple of times, walks over and looks out the window for a minute, and then comes back to me.

"I'll never forget this," he says. "I can't just say what I feel now, but I don't think you'll regret your decision ——" He sticks his jaw out, and his thin lips flattened back on his teeth. "I'll make good this time or——"

He stopped and held the pose. Son, he looked like the real goods at that minute!

The next day he showed up at the camp bright and smilin'. The bunch laid off him—I had seen to that, so there were no cracks made about his misplay of the night before. Within a few minutes he was boxin' rings around everybody I had for him to work with, and when he got goin' with Young Fleming—well, I had to step in and stop it. Fleming was hangin' on, almost out on his feet. Two of the other guys refused to box with him.

A month afterward he knocked Eddie Lane out in two rounds. I used up a week before that battle tellin' Reynolds what a terrible bum Lane was at his best and how he had gone back three miles since the first fight. And that's the stuff I had to feed this guy on all the time. When he fought a bum, he was a world beater. He hit them once and it was all over. Put him in the ring with a big leaguer, and he was through. He wouldn't quit, and he got to where he could keep the other guy away and stall through to the limit, but that let him out. He had no confidence in his wallops, and he'd get so wild he couldn't hit a barn. He was a champ among bums and a bum among champs—but in the gym nobody could touch him!

That boy did everything on earth to beat that stuff, but it was no use—he wasn't born that way, and that's the way it went. Fight a bum, all over in two rounds; fight a good one, stall through to the finish.

Right before Christmas a guy comes over here from England by the name of Soldier Evans. He had made quite a stir on the other side by bouncin' the heavyweight champion of Australia. It seems he hit this Australian guy when his head was turned—the wallop caught

him in the neck, and they buried him two days afterward.

This guy Evans was a little different from the usual run of foreign fighters that come over here—he come right up to his press notices. One by one he knocked the bums out in a round or two, and then he starts mowing down the sure-enough fighters—four months after he landed here he was the biggest card in the country. Every time he started they packed 'em to the doors.

The big idea come to me one mornin' when I was watchin' Reynolds punchin' the bag at the trainin' camp. The more it cooked and sizzled around in my dome, the better I liked it; and before I hit the hay that night I had fallen for it so much that I could hardly wait until the next mornin' to get busy on it.

A week later, I had signed Reynolds to meet Soldier Evans for ten rounds at the Garden—but just sayin' it that way don't tell it at all. I had to chase around night and day after this Evans guy's manager, dig up and post a five-thousand-dollar forfeit for appearance, and agree to take fifteen per cent of the house, win, lose, or draw. Then I had to see all the sport writers and beg 'em to smoke up the fight. The last job was the toughest of the lot, because none of them could see how Reynolds would have a chance with this English man-killer.

If Reynolds had been yellow, he had a fine chance to show the streak before I signed him up. He *knew* this guy had croaked the Australian heavy, and he knew the way he was bouncin' 'em over here—but when I asked him if he'd take a chance and fight this guy, he didn't even let me finish tellin' him the conditions of the bout.

"Say," he broke in on me, "wouldn't it be great if I beat that fellow? You bet I'll fight him—this is the chance I've been looking for. Sign me up!"

Don't you have to hand it to him for that?

I saved my big stuff until exactly one hour before the fight, and while we were in the dressin' room waitin' for the end of the last preliminary, I let it go.

"Son," I began—I always called him "son"—"I got a surprise for you, so get ready. You ain't goin' to fight Soldier Evans!"

He jumped a foot from the chair—on the level.

"What do you mean?" he says, when he got his breath.

"Soldier Evans," I says, "broke his hand yesterday afternoon at his trainin' camp. He can't get a glove on. To save their forfeit and the money that's in the house, they brought down one of his sparrin' partners—a guy that looks enough like the Soldier to be his shadow. Even the newspaper bunch ain't wise, and they're goin' to announce this guy as the Soldier—yes, and they could introduce him as that to the Soldier's own mother and she'd have to put on her glasses to tell the difference. I never seen nothin' like it before in my life—but it's one of them funny things that happen now and then, them two guys bein' so much alike."

"Nobody knows this but you?" he says finally, givin' me a funny look.

"Nobody outside of the Soldier's camp," I says; "and here's where the big joke comes in: This guy that you're goin' to fight to-night is clever and that lets him out. He ain't got wallop enough to dent an egg, and he can't take *anything* on the jaw. He'll be about the worst bum you've ever seen—you ought to stop him in no more than four rounds."

A guy stuck his head in the door then and told us to get ready.

We had to walk over guys to get to the ring. The newspaper bunch had used me white, and there was quite a few present that thought it was an even fight—but most of them were there because they knew this English guy had killed somebody; and, bein' a fight

crowd, they were figurin' on the outside chance that he might repeat—sportin' blood is what they'd call it.

While we sat in the ring waitin' for this other guy to show up, I was doin' some heavy thinkin'. Of course that stuff I had told Reynolds about Evans not goin' to fight was a fairy tale; and, while it might sound foolish to you, I had figured over it all night before I sprung it. My idea was this: whenever Reynolds fought a bum, he just waded right into him, and about two applications of that left of his generally sent the crowd home in a good humor. But when he knew he was up against a tough man, his thinkin' apparatus would get goin' and it was the old stuff, see? He had to fight one guy in the ring and another in his head. So I figured if I could only get him to think he was fightin' some tramp instead of the English champion, he'd sail into this guy at the bell and I'd take a chance on the rest. It was playin' a hundred-to-one shot, I know, but I had to do somethin'. This guy would never get anywhere the way he *was* fightin', and I figured that if by any chance he ever *beat* this guy and then found out he had actually trimmed Soldier Evans, that would kill this temperament stuff forevermore.

I held onto my roll until I could get nine to five for it, and then I bet everything but the clothes I had on. Yes, and I placed it like a sailor. I bet that Reynolds would win, that the fight wouldn't go the limit, and that *my* boy would cop by a knock-out. When I got through, I stood to be in hock for about six months if the kid didn't come through.

Finally the Soldier climbs into the ring and bows to the big hand he got. It was the first good look I had gotten at this bird, and if there had been a hole in my shoe my heart would have gone right on down to the basement. He was a gorilla for your life—they announced his weight at two hundred and thirty, but that was a conservative guess. He had one of them heavy, intelligent faces like you see on an ox, big, thick arms and legs, hidin' behind a crop of hair that covered him almost like fur. When *my* boy stood up beside him to look at his bandages—well, it looked like a crime! The guy from the *Express* turned to another fellow and says:

"That's the kind of matches that's killin' the game here. He'll *murder* that boy!"

It looked just like that, too. The kid had a good grip on himself, though—he was pale as whitewash, but as cool as any old-timer. I took a good look at him—and grabbed a little two to one that he'd stay the limit.

When he come to his corner waitin' for the bell, I whispered in his ear:

"Now, son, you know what to do—go right after this guy and find his jaw—then we'll go home and count up. Remember, some time you'll get a big law case, and you won't be nowhere if you don't keep your head. Let this guy fall, and you'll beat that temperament stuff so bad it'll *never* come back!"

The bell rang before I could say any more, and the kid is off the chair and in the middle of the ring before this slow-moving guy has straightened up. They fiddled around for a while, and then—out shoots the kid's left. It glanced off the Soldier's head, and he comes back with a jab that shook Reynolds from head to feet. The crowd gets busy then—that was the usual tip-off—and in a minute they are beggin' the Englishman to knock Reynolds out until the roof of the Garden wabbled under the noise.

Well, the kid stalled the round out, but that's all. He just lasted. The old stuff was back again—he had been hurt, and he was through. I begged him to take a chance and go after this guy—yes, and I guess I called him his real

name, too—but it was no use. He *wanted* to, but he simply couldn't do it. That jab had paralyzed any chance he might have had. It was only a question now of how long he could stay with this Englishman. The newspaper bunch was shakin' their heads and givin' me nasty looks—that's how bad it was.

In the next round, the kid went down twice—takin' a long count each time. And the referee walked over and asked me if I didn't think another round would be enough.

"I don't want to lose my license," he says. "This kid is in a bad way."

"This will be the last," I told him, gettin' the sponge ready and kissin' my bank roll good-by.

Some time, when you ain't got nothin' to do, go in some newspaper office and look up the files on that scrap. Them writin' guys told it a whole lot better the next mornin' than I can. All *I* can give you is the facts—they gave it two columns with all the side trimmin's they know how to get out of a typewriter.

The bell rang for the third round, and the kid gets up kind of weary and stumbles to meet this guy comin' in. He managed to fall in a clinch and stayed there until the Soldier shoves him away. He fell against the ropes, bounced back, and took a left cross on the chin.

He went down in his corner—right in front of me—half on his side, with his face turned toward the crowd. He was right opposite the fifteen-dollar boxes. There's a party in the one nearest him of three guys that look like wine agents and two women that looked like—well, they wasn't out of place there—get me?—all dolled up within an inch of their lives and havin' a great time watchin' this boy get his. The male members of the troupe is jumpin' up and down like maniacs, out of breath from yellin' for the finish. Funny about them kind of guys, ain't it? If you slapped one of them on the wrist, he'd yell for the police.

I went around after the fight to give one of them women a hundred-dollar bill, but she was gone. I might have raised the ante if she'd been there—because just as the referee has got to "seven, eight," and the kid is makin' a last game effort to pull himself up by the ropes this woman jumps up and yells:

"He's a quitter—throw him out!"

I didn't even think the kid heard it—there was lots other noise—but he twist himself around and takes a good look at her and then he shakes his head and works his way up to his feet. As the referee steps aside I threw in the sponge—not knowin' what was goin' on in the kid's head.

The sponge fell between the kid and this other guy, who, seein' it, backs away. But the kid kicks it flyin' out of the ring and pushes the referee back. This stuff gave him time to clear his head, and he backs slowly around the ring with the Soldier followin' him up, ready to put over the haymaker.

The crowd seemed almost speechless for a minute, and then some of them hollered for the referee to stop it. But *I* didn't—*I got the flash*—I seen a look on the kid's face I never had before, and my heart bumped against my ribs like it was comin' through. The smile was gone, and where it used to be was a set of flashin' white teeth, clamped down hard on his lips—his one good eye was as hard and cold lookin' as a tiger's. I felt like jumpin' up and doin' a jig—*I* knew what it meant—he had the fightin' face at last!

The Soldier shot one over for a feeler and it glanced off the kid's side; and then for the first time that night *my* boy took charge. He landed a hard left to the Soldier's face—it was too high to do much damage, but the stuff behind it rocked this guy back on his heels. Son, you should have heard that crowd then—and me——

The kid keeps right after this other

guy and never lets him set—he shot lefts and rights at this guy until he must have thought it was rainin' gloves and every one of them hurt.

It came all of a sudden—I saw the kid's right flash out and land on the Soldier's middle—he dropped his arm—just for a half second, but it was a plenty. The kid brought his left over—just like he did in the gym—and the English champ never heard himself counted out. No, and nobody else did, either. You couldn't have heard the battle of Gettysburg when Soldier Evans went down, because about five thousand lunatics let off steam at once!

I shoves away a couple of dozen guys that's tryin' to shake the kid's hand and pat him on the back—a few minutes before they were callin' him a yellow bum, such is life in the fight game.

While the handlers are unlacin' his gloves, he tells me how it happened.

"When Evans hit me that last time," he said, "I thought the roof had fallen in. When my brain began to clear a little, I saw I was down and heard the referee counting me out, the yelling crowd, and all the rest of it. Then out of all that jumble something cut through the din like a knife. It was a woman's voice, and she said: *'He's a quitter!'* Did *you* hear it?" He stops and looks up at me.

I nods my head.

"That's what they called my father—after he died. Well, it all came to me at once. I got up with no thought of *beating* Evans. I only had *one* idea, *and that was to live down that word.*"

"And you sure did, son," I says. "If you don't believe it, read the papers to-morrow mornin'."

He throws back his head and laughs like the kid he was.

"That was fine of you telling me that story about the Soldier's double," he says; "and I almost believed it, too."

"When did you find out you were up against the real article?" I asked, feelin' like a kid caught in the jam closet.

"Oh, I knew it all the time," he says, still laughin'. "You see, the week *you* were chasing around arranging this fight *I* spent my afternoons watching him train."

That was his last fight—in the ring. He went back to college with some of the money I won. That day in the hotel when he swore he would make good, I knew as sure as I know my name that he would.

I see by the papers he *is!*

GOING SOME

BILL JONES, who lived in Chicago, owned a flock of carrier pigeons of which he was immensely proud. His pride led to such continued boasting that it bored, annoyed, and peeved his friends. One of these friends, Tom Smith by name, told him one day:

"I have to make a trip from Chicago to Los Angeles, and I'm willing to bet you a hundred dollars that I can take one of your blooming pigeons out there and turn it loose and you will never see it again."

The bet was made, and Tom Smith, having arrived within two miles of Los Angeles, clipped the pigeon's wings and threw the helpless bird out of the car window. Thirty days later he returned to Chicago, and asked Bill Jones for the stake money.

"You don't win," remonstrated Bill. "That pigeon came home."

"He did!" exclaimed Tom, thoroughly incredulous.

"Yes," replied Jones. "But, good Lord, his feet were sore!"

The Call of the White Water

By Raymond S. Spears

Author of "A Venture in Private Preserves," "The Saffron Witness," Etc.

The story of Old Dett Kuneal, who was almost too old to be in the woods at all. He had had a brave past, however, and that saved him from being the butt of rude jests and practical jokes in the logging camp

OLD DETT KUNEAL lived by himself in the Black River logging camp. He sat in the same lobby, he slept in the same dormitory, he ate at the same table, and he hung his shirt to dry on the same wire with the other men of the crew, but he was an old, old man, and he was apart from the others.

His mustache was so large that it bushwhacked his face, his nose sticking out of the gray roll like a little, round point; his eyes were lost in a frowse of dangling eyebrows; his ears lurked among windfalls of locks from his head top—a large head on square-topped shoulders. His chest was deep; his body, legs, and arms were long. His feet, misshapen by the rubbered felts which he wore, were curiously small.

He came into the lobby, went upstairs, and brought back from the office in the rear of the dormitory a box of hooks and points for mounting peaveys. The men could hear him coming, grunting under the weight, cursing under his breath. He dropped the box at the head of the steep, ladderlike stairs, and came backing down them, pulling the box after him; and as he got below the level of the upper floor, the weight came packing down upon his shoulder and head, and, with a low gasp, he began to double up under the weight, hanging on but not strong enough to hold his own.

Big Hank McCoy was leaning against the water barrel on the far side of the lobby when he saw what was taking place. He skipped across the floor, his arms reaching and his black whiskers flying. He leaped straight up as the man and box began to fall, and caught both, one in each hand, wrapping his left leg around the stair board while he stood on the other foot.

In three more seconds, all the men in the lobby were gathered at the foot of the stairs, lending willing hands to ease down the box and the old man. When the two were safe, Big Hank began to swear:

"Why, you dad-blasted, slick-footed old cuss! Lettin' them irons fall'd bust up the hull danged spring drive! Why didn't yo' say yo' wanted them out to the blacksmith shop? What we here for, anyhow? Get back there where ye b'long!"

"My foot slipped," the old man excused himself. "The bottoms of them rubbers is wored smooth as the trail to hell."

Trip Fonda seized the box and ran along the boards laid across the slush and mud from the camp door to the blacksmith shop, and Old Dett stumped along after him, mumbling to himself, cursing the slippery rubber that he said had betrayed him.

When he was well out of hearing, Big Hank shook his head sadly.

"The old man's gettin' old! Slippin' on the lobby stairs——"

"That's right," another echoed. "But he was a good man in his day!"

"That's what he was!" Big Hank exclaimed, with enthusiasm. "Best ever, son. There wa'n't any white water he wouldn't ride in his day—Hudson River, Au Sable, Black River, West Crick, St. Regis—I don't expect there's any white water in the Adirondacks he don't know. He was three years in Michigan, too, on the big pines. I seen fellers 'at seen him out there, an' soon's he got used to it he was good as anybody. But now he's old. Po'r old devil—downed by fifty-pound of peavey irons!"

"I've heard say he was as good as any one." Boss Maloon nodded his head. "I didn't know him till about fifteen years ago."

Thinking of the old man made the boys feel pretty glum. They were sitting around, waiting for the ice to break up so that they could begin the spring drive. That was harder than working.

Big Hank McCoy got up and walked around in a circle, and sat down again; some of the boys felt their chins to see if they didn't need a shave, though they had all shaved within a day or two. Trip Fonda upset the bench on which five men were sitting, and as they dashed through the door in full chase, Big Hank put his leg out and all five men went sprawling before the door in the slush.

"I can't stand this!" Hank swore, a minute later. "I'm going out to Forestville."

"So'm I! So'm I!" several others agreed.

Big Hank, Trip, Dell King, and Tim Viller finally started. The walking, they knew, would be hard, for there were ten miles of soft roads alternating with ice ridges. Thinking of these things kept most of the men from going, much as they longed for something to do.

The four turned to the right up the ridge on the tote road. As they started, men called out "Good-by!" and the camp noise attracted the attention of the men in the blacksmith shop.

"Hold on!" Moke Dalmac called. "I'm goin', too!"

"Hurry up, then!" Big Hank yelled, and Moke ran to draw some money from Foreman MacBeth. Old Dett Kuneal came plodding out, and, without saying anything, joined the four who waited for Moke. The other loggers looked at one another with genuine concern. Big Hank asked:

"Want us to bring you a nip, Dett?"

"No." The old man shook his head. "Go out an' get it myself."

"Holy smoke! You can't make it," Hank declared. "Look at the roads! Why, you'll—you aren't—— Don't try it, old boy! I'll bring you a quart."

"No, I'm goin'!" Kuneal shook his head sullenly.

"No, you won't!" Big Hank laughed stagily. "I won't let you!"

"All right." Old Dett shook his head and turned away, holding his face down, and the loggers looked the other way so they wouldn't see that whipped poise. But they were glad he wasn't going.

"The old son of a gun would sure be bushed," they excused themselves.

Poor Old Dett! He was rheumatic, stooped, shaken, and burned out. He was almost too old to be in the woods at all. Except for his brave past, he would have been the lobby dog, butt of every man's rude jests and practical jokes—but Big Hank saved him from those things. His ability and woods knowledge kept him in his job at forty dollars a month in spite of his age and weakness, and he earned it all. He told the blacksmith how to set up the knock-down bobs, gave the drivers pointers on doctoring horses, he could set an ax

blade on the helve so that it hung better than any other man could make it, he could pick a haul-road route with the best of them, he could untangle almost any kind of logging difficulty.

So they left him standing in the doorway of the camp looking after them and making them feel ashamed of themselves. They plodded on, and when they found how bad the walking was, they cursed themselves for fools for undertaking the journey.

It was an hour to supper time when they arrived at Scoom Mulvane's, in Forestville, and plodded up the hotel steps with tired gait to reshape their ideas over the bar. Big Hank was in the lead, as always, and at the barroom door he stopped with an oath.

There was Old Dett Kuneal, standing alone before the bar, with his whisky glass full, a sly smile on his countenance, though he did not turn to greet the fellows of his crew.

"How in the jumping-up Jerusalem crickets did you——" Big Hank began, and then he turned and said, with a knowing shake of his head at the men with him: "It's none of our business, boys. The old cuss has a trick or two left up his sleeve yet."

"He come across by the Bousefeld place," Dell King grinned, patting the old man's back. "I seen his tracks in the road at Enoben. That was the best way, too. Must of come right by my house."

Then they all treated around, and bought bottles, which they said is the cheapest way. Then they treated one another, making a great show of secrecy by going out into the horse shed, or around into the barn, or at least going into the hallway and closing the doors so that no one could see them drinking.

By supper time they were in a state of unsurpassed dignity. The dignity was infectious, beginning with Old Dett himself. For some reason, Old Dett did not give way to the liquor as he usually did.

"Boys!" he said, for he was in good humor at having beat them to it. "Boys! Stand up straight! Keep yer shoulders back! Step up! Step up!"

None of his companions failed to yield obedience to the old man, but stood up as straight as they could, and before very long they were standing so very straight that the smalls of their backs were from four to seven inches ahead of the plumb line from the backs of their necks to their heels.

Word that the boys from the Black River camp had a new kind of a storm on was passed around, and by supper time there were a dozen or fifteen spectators standing or sitting around Harvey's hotel office, watching the picturesque woodsmen perform. Dell King sang, in a mournful tone of voice:

"Oh, I come from out the timber
  Where the evergreens grow tall,
Which I cut from May to September
  And then skid them in the fall.

"In the winter I do haul them
  From the cuttin' to the dump,
An' pile up the spruce an' balsam
  To await the springtime slump.

"Then I drive 'em down the river,
  Down each reach an' rifty bend,
Till I get to gay Mocksilver
  Which is the log drive end.

"There's a little girl a-standin'
  At the log boom near the dam,
Waiting till I make a landin'
  From the batteau upon the jam.

"Oh, that gal, if she only knowed it,
  Never ought to meet me there,
For when I had my chance I throwed it,
  A puff of smoke in frosty air.

"So you see me now, my friends,
  An old and drunken Hick,
No one to care for me, my friends,
  But the boss who's up the crick."

Old Dett Kuneal had heard the song a thousand times. He had sung it for

fifty years, perhaps. He had sat sometimes with tears rolling down his cheeks when some good voice mellowed the broken lines and smoothed the jagged rhyme, for this is the song of a thousand tunes, and of ten thousand lacks of tunes. He had danced to the tune that some sang it to, and he had marched to other tunes.

Now he stood stock-still, took his hat off his head, and listened with an expression which none of the men there had ever seen on his face before. As Dell sang, Old Dett whispered the words till he came to the lines:

"There's a little girl a-standin'
At the log boom near the dam,
Waiting till I make a landin'
From the batteau upon the jam."

These words Old Dett repeated aloud, and then fell to whispering again till King had dragged out the last wailing, tenor note.

"Hurrah! Boys!" Big Hank McCoy shouted. "Come on, now! Have another one for the song!"

"Hold on, boys!" Old Dett exclaimed. "Hold on, I tell ye, boys!"

He stood staring toward the wall of the office, a wall that showed beautiful curly birch ceiling, darkened by the fumes from ten thousand tobacco pipes. Old Dett stood breathless, his lips parted, his eyes shining.

The men looked from one to another, spectators and participants. They looked at Old Dett with an expression that changed from amusement to wonderment; for the old logger was raising his hands, his jaws were opening, and his eyes were staring into scenes that none there could divine. Hank McCoy, swaying where he stood, gazed uncertainly for a long while, and then, with an oath, he broke in upon the old man's reverie:

"What's the matter, Dett? You old, white-headed, feather-footed, leather-faced, owl-eyed, white-water skipjack! Wake up, I tell ye—wake up!"

Old Dett blinked and shook his head. A watery grin suffused his lips, and he glanced around from face to face.

"It's so, boys!" he declared, grinning. "It's so!"

"What's so, you old, daddy-long-legged, rubber-heeled, jam buster, you?"

McCoy caught the old man by the shoulders and dragged him into the bar-room, where he announced that it was time to have another drink out of the glasses. When the round was up, Big Hank demanded:

"Now, you white-haired, pork-eatin' old hell-divin' water dancer, what's so? What's that you said was so, an' I hadn't said you could say it was so yet?"

There was a loud laugh that died away quickly, except that Tim Viller laughed along in an automatic, hysterical sort of way—a monotonous succession of gurgling chuckles. The spectators saw in Old Dett's face a new fire, an idea of some kind burning its way from within and brightening his countenance, turning it white.

'It's so!" he muttered. "By glory, it's so!"

"What's so? Spit 'er out, 'fore I cuff it out yer teeth!" Big Hank snapped.

"Why, I wrote that song," Old Dett remarked, looking around with staring eyes. "I could sing it myself onct. Listen! The's a lillel gal a-standin'——"

"Whoe-e-e!" the logger yelled at this discovery of another of Old Dett's accomplishments. "The ol' whippo'rwill's a-singin' in the elm!"

"Hooray!" Big Hank roared to be heard above the din. "Of all the dad-blasted, white-throat, hermit-thrush, chickadee song sparrers 'at I ever heard, Old Dett's the slam bangdest. Come on, boys! Old Dett's writ an' sung a song. Come on! Let's get drunk!"

It was incredible, the amount the loggers drank. They spent their money, and then, as it was closing hour, anyway, Mulvane announced that it was time to go home. He called all hands

to have one more on the house, and then turned out the barroom lights, locked the bar door, and then the door leading into the barroom.

The loggers stumbled and shambled down the porch steps to the roadway, and they had maundered along several rods when Big Hank McCoy made a discovery, and called a loud halt to announce it:

"Why, it's rainin'—rainin' like the sky was fallin' down! Hurrah, boys! The big thaw's come! Now we got the logs to drive down the creek!"

"Theh's a little gal a-standin'
At the log boom near the dam,"

a cracked voice broke in upon the heavy silences and the falling roars of the night.

"He mus' think a lot of that ol' song," somebody said.

"Say, Dell!" Old Dett's voice called out. "Sing that old song ag'in, won't ye? It's true, Dell! I want to hear it ag'in. You'll sing it, won't ye?"

"Course I will!" Dell answered, and as he led the way up the hill along the main street of Forestville beyond the creek bridge, Dell sang so loud that he made all the people along the way from Dave Jones' store to Corey Garlock's house turn over in their beds.

Thus the members of the log crew left town and took their wavering courses up the icy ridges between the fields of soft and mealy snow. They stumbled and staggered along. The night was black, and the rain was pouring down. First one, then another would take the lead. Even Old Dett had his turn in front, but whether he knew it or any of the men knew it is a question.

They stumbled through Enoben, almost running down the icy slopes of Light's Hill, and then groaned with anguish as they made their way up past Odit's. They stood on Finch's corner and had a long argument, which ended with their all turning up the Black River Road, which was their best road to camp, though the road by the old Bousefield place was shorter.

They passed the last house, Jim Rose's, and a little later crossed Black River bridge and entered the big woods. They were now on their last lap to camp. The woods dripped and rattled, for there the rain was almost sleet. The creek on their right roared.

"The run-out's comin!" Big Hank McCoy shouted. "By Monday we'll be drivin' 'em down!"

When they were within two miles of camp, Old Dett suddenly called out:

"Hold on, boys!"

"Now what's the matter?" Big Hank demanded, turning fiercely in the dark.

"Say, boys, I'm going back; I'm goin' on down now! I hear somebody callin'. Don't you hear 'em callin', Hank?"

"You ol' fool! Yer drunk!" Big Hank declared. "Them's the rifts."

"I ain' drunk," Old Dett replied. "Somebody's callin'."

"It's jes' the stones rollin' down the rifts," Trip Fonda said with gravity. "That's what it is."

"Tha's right," the others echoed, and Big Hank continued: "Un'erstan', don' yo', old sport? Stones boundin' down make a racket. Tha's wha' yo' hear, ol' boy."

"Guess I know poundin' rocks," Old Dett answered. "Somebody hollerin'. Ice goin' out the riffs, an'—— Theh 'tis! I gotter go, boys! Yo' know th' ole song, boys: 'The's a lillel gal a-standin'.' S' long, boys!"

"S' long!" the others responded, but Big Hank McCoy turned back once more to add: "Darned ole fool! Don' hear nothin'! Come on!"

But Old Dett turned back and turned down a winter haul road toward the lower log dump. Big Hank stood blinking and swearing to himself for a while, and then followed his other mates up the tote road toward the camp.

As the spree makers stumbled and ambled along, the woods began to turn gray. One minute the stars were shining; the next, all but one had gone a-glimmering. They came down to the camp, and their arrival was like the coming of an army. They were talking and mumbling in many voices for each man —squeaks, growls, jaunty declarations, sobbing, and among the rest a mixed chorus which repeated: "There's a lillel gal a-standin' at the log boom near the dam." They slammed the door into the lobby, and they hung their wet outside shirts over the wires above the stove; they talked and swore as they fumbled up the steep, almost impassable dormitory stairs. One by one, they made their painful way among the labyrinthian maze of the cots, staggering and tumbling over them, and at last came surely to their own bunks and fell asleep the moment they touched their beds.

All the other men were awake, and it was just time to stir out. The sizzling of pork frying in the kitchen and the odor of fried grease were in the air. The boys lay waiting for the foreman's "All up!" when outside there was a thin, childish cry:

"Hello, papa! Come quick!"

Every sober man leaped to his feet, and in half a minute some of them were tumbling down into the lobby to open the door for the visitor. It was a little girl, the ten-year-old daughter of Dell King, and she wanted him.

"Mamma's took bad!" she declared. "Make him come quick!"

Three men, led by Foreman MacBeth, scurried up to the dormitory and attacked King. MacBeth got the ammonia bottle, and the others applied the bastinado to the man's feet. It sounded as though the whole crew were fighting in the dormitory; but King was roused up, and he came down, the fact that his wife was sick having penetrated to his consciousness.

"What's the matter, Lily?" he asked, and the little girl piped up:

"Mamma's took bad. I come up the road, but I got lost; but the man took me off the logs when they broke out, an' I knowed my way soon's it got light, an' mamma said bring some ginger 'cause we ain't got any."

"Ginger, is it?" MacBeth exclaimed, and in a minute the logger and his daughter were heading down the road together with a can of ginger.

"Who was that man?" MacBeth asked. "She must have got down the haul road to the dump. Look the cots over, will you, Maloon? See if those fellows who went out are all back."

Boss Maloon went up to the dormitory. He tramped heavily among the cots for a minute, and then came to the head of the stairs.

"Hank, Trip, Tim are all here," he called down. "King has gone out. Is Old Dett down there? He isn't in his bed."

"Hello—Dett! Dett Kuneal!" a shout went up. "Hello! Look again, Maloon! He might of got in the wrong cot."

They looked, but Old Dett was not to be found.

"Wake Big Hank up!" MacBeth ordered, and then himself led the way to McCoy's cot. It was like trying to stir the hibernating slumbers of a grizzly bear, and about as safe. But two men held each leg, two held each arm, and as the man began to recover another seized his hair. Choking with ammonia fumes and coming through the throes of a hideous nightmare, Big Hank at last divined that it was his friends who were bringing him to, and he heard through the uproar in his senses the question:

"Say, Hank, where's Old Dett? Did you see Dett? Where's Dett, Hank?"

"Old Dett," repeated Big Hank at last, and the man at his hair relaxed his grip, the others gradually withdraw-

ing their holds. "Old Dett—sure! We found 'im down there. How the devil? Yes, he started back—— Le's see—— Yes, he come right along good's we did. Le's see—— Cross the bridge an'—— Oh, he heard somethin', he said. I remember now! He turned down the winter haul road to the lower dump. What in——"

"Judas priest! What for?" MacBeth demanded.

"Said he heard somebody callin'——"

"He did, all right!" MacBeth exclaimed. "Come on, boys! Old Dett's down by the river!"

"Breakfast!" the cook's husband shouted, but MacBeth shook his head, saying: "Wait'll we come back!"

Away went the crew, one behind the other, half running up the tote road and along the ridge side down the valley to where the winter haul road crossed it.

There they found the little girl's tracks coming up, fresh in the mealy sledway. Older tracks showed where she had by mistake turned down that way. Old Dett, when he left the others, had followed her toward the creek. MacBeth and his men ran at top speed down to the dump, following the tracks.

The thaw had broken up the ice and opened the long rifts below the dump. The logs in the lower end of the still water had been carried downstream to lodge in the ice gorge next below somewhere. The girl's old tracks led out upon the banked snow and disappeared where the logs had rested before the break-out.

"She was on the logs!" MacBeth exclaimed. "How did she ever get ashore?"

"Here's where Old Dett came a-runnin'!" Big Hank exclaimed. "Lord! Look how he jumped!"

Sure enough, through the soft snow for a hundred yards the old man's tracks were diverging from the haul road as he cut across down the creek. They followed down the ice lodged along the creek bank for a little way, and then his rubbers had jammed into the soft ice where he had made a mighty jump, right out over the rolling, chocolate-brown, foaming rifts.

"He was jumpin' to a log!" Foreman MacBeth exclaimed, stopping and looking out into the flood of the open rifts.

They saw that the little girl's tracks were coming upstream along the bank, and these they followed down for three hundred yards. There, above the Pardy Place Cascade, they found where she had fallen as if out of the sky, upon the snow. She had rolled over and over on the snow away from the creek bank, ten feet from the water's edge.

"He threw her ashore here!" MacBeth said, stopping to read the snow. Below the cascade, over masses of bowlders, was a black suck, and at the foot of the pool the ice and logs were caught in a huge gorge. The men gathered behind Foreman MacBeth and stared down the foaming white water of the fall into the depths. Then, as they took off their hats, they turned and looked up the long rift bend, where chunks of ice and an occasional log were bounding and pounding down, where the rolling bowlders were making the ground tremble as the flood tore them loose and carried them down.

"Yes, sir!" MacBeth shouted, so that all heard. "He come down them rifts with the gal in his arms—riding the logs! Lord! How I'd loved to seen the old cuss in his prime ag'in! And when he seen he was goin' down into the black suck, he throwed her—savin' her!"

Big Hank shook his head.

"We'll find him somewhere down below in the alders," he said. "The old boy knowed it was comin'—I seen him watchin' it, singin': 'Theh's a little gal a-standin' at the log boom by the dam.' He heard it callin', boys. An' he run to meet it! Good old white-water man!"

Chief of Construction

By Clarence Herbert New

Author of "In the Service," Etc.

What the Japanese had to do with the building of a great dam in the Philippines. How an American engineer wrestled with a problem beset with international difficulties

ON the veranda of the headquarters shack, perched upon the mountainside, five hundred feet above sea level, Archer lighted his pipe and looked broodingly down upon the scintillating arc lights and moving lanterns along the great dam in process of construction across the narrow valley of the Rio Casignan. Around the shoulder of the mountain lay a great cup between forked ridges of the Sierra Madre—a cup whose sides were three thousand feet high, and whose only outlet was a pass, less than two miles wide, through which the Casignan ran down to the Pacific. The completed dam would impound a lake giving sufficient power to electrify a railway system throughout northern Luzon, and run several individual plants as well.

The night shift were just going to work. In the brilliant moonlight of the northeast monsoon, he could see the day men straggling along up the slope to the bunk houses, the lanterns of the foremen by the concrete-mixing engines, and the sparkling water of the Pacific, five miles to the eastward. There had been no evidence of slackening in the daily activities nor any unusual groping of the men at odd times, but for several days he had been conscious of a sinister undercurrent. His assistants—bright fellows from Harvard and Cornell—had been congratulating themselves upon an apparent early completion of the work, without mishap. Archer, however, from the breadth of his experience in many lands, habitually sniffed trouble when things ran most smoothly, which explained the personal equation that had led to his selection as chief engineer.

From the nearest bunk house came the faint echo of a somewhat heated discussion over the evening meal. He found himself listening to it speculatively—and was not surprised when a dozen or more of the men straggled out with their pipes, and climbed the slope to headquarters. As they stepped heavily around the end of the veranda, Archer shifted his chair slightly to face them, and discarded his pipe for a long cigar.

"Well, men, what seems to be the trouble? Brady, suppose you do the talking!" The engineer's tone was quiet and friendly. Every man on the job liked him personally. But he possessed that subtle air of command which is recognized and deferred to the world over.

Brady, the big leader, whom he had singled out, fumbled with his cap, and absent-mindedly shoved the still-lighted pipe into his trousers pocket.

"Well, sir, it's them Japs an' Filipinos do be botherin' us that bad we'll not work with 'em another day!"

"What's the matter with them, Brady? Don't they keep up with the work? Are they delaying you?"

"No, sir. They're used to the climate, an' they do be workin' too fast for us! They'll not leave us a minute for breath, between the shovelin' an' mixin'!"

"Then I suppose you're looking for more pay?" suggested Archer. "Is that it? I understand that several unions have been formed in Manila, and that you've all joined one of them. But to the best of my knowledge I'm paying the union scale now."

"'Tis not the pay, sir. Ye've treated us dacently—I'll say that for ye. But it's not right that brown men should be bossin' an' sassin' white men—tellin' 'em to hurry up, an' givin' 'em no time to breathe in this heat. O' course, we'll not be standin' for that. An' when we swipe 'em one on the ear, just to teach 'em manners, they do be jumpin' on us with bolos an' them short Jap knives. An' the messes they do be eatin' would make a dog sick!"

"M-m-m! Brady, there are a hundred more of the Japs and Ilongotes than you white men. You've just admitted the Japs do about thirty per cent more work in a day. You're asking me to fire them. Well, suppose, for the sake of peace, I do so? That'll leave us shy three hundred men, and we could use even more. If the monsoon changed to-morrow, there wouldn't be weight enough of the concrete to stand the water pressure. The rains are still two months off luckily, but we've got to work full time in those two months to play safe. Now, can you supply me with, say, four hundred white men within a week?"

"Faith, ye'll not find that many good men idle in the whole island, I'm thinkin', sir!"

"Exactly!" said Archer. "I knew it was an impossible proposition when I asked you the question. I've been all over this, you know, before you came to me. Well, what's the answer? We don't dare hold up the work a single day—all of you can see that! I can't let three hundred good men go because a less efficient hundred and fifty can't get along with them! Isn't there some way you can patch up your differences with them?"

The men shook their heads stubbornly.

"No, sir. We'll not work with them brownies! An' mebbe ye mightn't find the work goin' along so easy, when we're gone!"

"Is that a threat?" demanded Archer. "I don't bluff worth a cent!"

"Faith, ye do not!" responded Brady heartily. "You're a good two-fisted fightin' man, sir—we'll say that for ye! All the same, I'm thinkin' ye'd best not leave us go!"

"Oh, if you put it that way, Brady, I shall *have* to. The steam lighter is down at the mouth of the river now. You will all get your time at eight o'clock in the morning, and go aboard of her with your dunnage. She'll catch the coast steamer, around the island, at Baler—some time in the afternoon. As far as I'm concerned, there is no hard feeling in this. I'm sorry you can't stay with me, and I hope you have good luck in getting other jobs very soon. As for the dam here—we'll manage to worry along somehow."

Through the stillness, after the men had left him, came the faint echo of a crashing "wireless" spark from the operating room inside the shack—the "aërials" stretched from skeleton towers on the mountaintop, twelve hundred feet above—and he caught enough to understand that his principal assistant, Jimmy Trent, was talking with the company agent in Manila. From the mutter of voices, McCormack, the big gang boss, appeared to be with him asking for certain information. Presently the boss came out upon the veranda.

"Oh, *there* you are, chief!" said McCormack. "Say, I don't like the looks of things over there in Manila! Barry

needs a whole lot of punching up, if you ask *me!*"

"Hmph! What's the matter with Barry?" asked Archer.

"Well, he knows we've only got about three weeks' supply of cement, because I've told him so twice. But he doesn't seem to think it's a serious matter. He ought to have lit into them cement people in Frisco like a ton of brick, an' got some *action!* But he says, to-night, calm as you please, that he ain't been advised of no shipments *yet*—expects a *cable* about 'em every day. Talk like that don't do *us* no good, you know."

"I think Barry is doing the best he can, Mac; he's been acting under my instructions in the matter for the last two weeks. And if you'd come to me about the cement instead of bothering him, I might have relieved your mind. I ordered a cargo down from Hongkong as soon as I heard of the delay in Frisco shipments. It'll be in Manila tomorrow—on one of the T. K. K. boats —and around here as soon as it can be transshipped."

"That's good news!" cried McCormack. "I thought I wouldn't bother *you* about it—you've got enough on your mind without that." Trent came out on the veranda, lighting his pipe. "Say, didn't I hear some of the men up here a few minutes ago?"

"Yes. Brady and his gang. Says he can't get along with the natives. The union men are all getting their time in the morning, and going down to Baler on the lighter."

There were exclamations of dismay at this matter-of-fact statement.

McCormack muttered something in his teeth. "Ain't that the limit!" he exploded. "Means a strike, I suppose. We'll not be able to get another man in Luzon!"

"I don't know where you get any such idea as that," said Archer quietly. "There won't be any strike. Those men simply quit—that's all. I'll be working a full force here before the end of the week."

"Where'll you get 'em? Filipinos—and *Japs?*" McCormack's tone was bitter.

"Possibly. What's the matter with them?"

"Aw, *shucks!*" said McCormack disgustedly. "I ain't got no use for them yellow chaps takin' away the work of white men!"

Archer eyed the big gang boss seriously for a long moment. "Look here, Mac—if you're going to do much engineering in the Orient, you might as well get the idea out of your system that conditions here are anything like those in the States! I had nothing but native labor in China and India—had practically no trouble. Some knifing among themselves, which I naturally paid no attention to. But they do more work and better work than the average white man in this climate. If you know how to handle 'em, they're not so slow as people think. But all that is aside from the mark. I'm getting what labor I *can* for this job—and the job is going to be completed. Of course, if you feel *dissatisfied*——"

The face of the big Irishman reddened perceptibly in the moonlight. For a second he was on the edge of flaming out; then he studied the chief's face. It was clean-cut, tranquil, half smiling, but the eyes had the glint of polished steel. The man was an even six feet of length, but so well proportioned that he appeared shorter. The Irishman outweighed him by thirty or forty pounds, and seemed bigger in every way, yet he had once seen the engineer knock a much heavier man flat with a single blow, and rather doubted his own ability to handle him. At the bottom, he was intensely loyal to a chief whom he respected for the sheer manliness of him.

"Forget it, Archer! You're the boss. When I don't like things, I say so. But

you don't need to pay no attention to that."

Archer smiled. "Oh, I know you, Mac. I want you to stick around. This isn't any kindergarten game, over here. Things get on my nerves just as much as they do on yours. By the way, I think it might be as well for your foreman to pack their artillery until this bunch leave on the lighter in the morning. They may have grafted a few sticks of dynamite. Perhaps we can look for a little trouble before they get away, but I think you can handle it without killing any of them. Reckon I'll stroll down and take a look-see."

Stepping quietly into the big living room of the Japanese bunk house, where a number of squatting figures were busy with rice bowl and chopsticks, Archer ventured a pleasant word or two in Nipponese, and asked for Hauroko Yati, the Jap foreman or padrone. A half-naked coolie ran into an adjoining room. In a moment, a businesslike figure in khaki appeared in the doorway, bowing from the hips, like a jackknife.

"Will honorable chief come in?"

The little room was spotlessly clean. Near the window was a cheap but polished roll-top desk, its pigeonholes filled with neat packages of memoranda, its large drawers packed with blue prints, labeled in ideographs. There were two revolving chairs and a small drawing board. Upon the wall hung a topographic map of the Sierra Madre range and Rio Grande Valley. Upon one corner of the desk stood a green china vase with a large spray of yellow jasmine. In another corner of the room an army cot, neatly made up. As he bowed the engineer to the best chair, Hauroko took a box of cigars from one of the drawers—and they had scarcely seated themselves, when one of the coolies trotted in with iced tea and lemons. As the little Nipponese made no motion to light one of the cigars himself, but sat awaiting the pleasure of his visitor, Archer opened his own cigar case, with a smiling nod of invitation.

"Didn't I understand that you were a varsity man, Hauroko?"

"Oh, yep! Cornell—part term."

"How did you happen to come down looking for *this* job?"

"Wanted experience. Technical part I have acquire' at Ithaca—but not the experience."

"H-m-m! You seem to have your people well in hand. What's the trouble between them and the others?"

"Honorable Irish and American, being much in favor of pay envelope and resulting whisky—but no respec' for dam. Nipponese, being different constitution—think dam is great improvement for Luzon—feel excessive respec' for work—take seriously the concrete mix. Those other men do not respec' Nipponese. They do not like that we do much better work. They punch the fist on Nipponese—which is very degrading. Nipponese reply with the knife—which I do not forbid, only in extreme case. I tell them they must not kill. Yep—I think, by and by, you let those men travel excursion to Manila."

"Why do you think I'd do that? Why not let *your* people go?"

"For the reason that honorable chief understand his business—best more than other engineer I have met—and the rains will come in two month."

"All the more need for keeping every man I've got! I'd be a fool to reduce my force, wouldn't I?"

"Oh, yep. But in three days I bring from Rio Grande and little barrios surrounding, two, three, four hundred Nipponese—all good for concrete mix—all work for one yen—and rice."

"Hmph! You *can*, eh? One yen isn't as much as the union scale, but I can get native labor for three reals, Mex."

"Yep. But those reals mus' be *cash*

—every pay day. My Nipponese accepting pay orders for three, four, seex month away, if cash is short in your treasury. So they mus' have one yen for interest on the wait-for-cash. You see?"

"Hmph! How does it happen that you're sure of getting three or four hundred of your people over along the Rio Grande?"

"Because engineer man not much good unless he look ahead. When those other men join union, and not standing the heat very good because of whisky, I see disadvantage for honorable dam. Those union are not Oriental institution—very good for American labor—no use where diff'rent Oriental caste work together—not proper idea in the East. So I write plenty of Nipponese—get little job for daily eating while patiently waiting. Good job at one yen arriving presently."

"So you think the union men will be leaving soon, eh?"

"Oh, yep. The Brady man being very profane in bunk house this evening—I think perhaps he pulling his freight to-morrow morning."

"Suppose he tries to make trouble? Suppose he comes back with a gang, armed, and tries to run your people off the job?"

"Nipponese will see them first. If honorable chief says shoot, they make plenty of scrap with those other men!"

"Where will they get the guns?"

"Oh, some of my people have guns. Not all—but plenty for Brady man crowd."

"The devil they have! Hmph! I'm afraid it'll be too risky for me to have them around. They might take it into their heads to clean me out—and Trent and McCormack, as well! Might feel like running this job themselves!" It seemed to Archer that there was a perceptible softening of the fathomless Oriental eyes—and a curve of incredulous amusement about the thin lips.

"Nipponese not being Malays or Negritos, honorable chief, how possible is that? Nippon is civilize' nation—not barbarian. We do what mus' be done for mikado and our national honor—very true. But when honorable person treat us like same kind of honorable person, we mus' treat heem just so, the same. Otherwise, we disgrace Nippon. If any of my people should not obey orders of honorable chief, Hauroko compel to do hara-kiri."

"All right, I trust you. Get your men here as soon as possible. We can work five hundred, and still give the concrete time to set. I don't want any fights with the men who are quitting, but you might post enough of your people along the dam to catch anybody who tries using dynamite."

Toward morning, there was a heavy detonation at the farther end of the dam. A German was carried up to the hospital shack with a shattered foot and hand, and one of the Japanese lost considerable blood. But this was the only disturbance, and the strikers all left on the lighter with their dunnage. Upon the second evening following, the big dam resembled an ant heap sprinkled with fireflies, with the largest gang of men since construction began.

Again Trent and the rest of the staff were jubilant. There were men enough to rush the work, and apparently clear sailing ahead. But Archer was uneasy about his cement. Barry, the company's agent, had telegraphed that the Hongkong lot had arrived on the T. K. K. boat, but that the unions would not permit its transshipment. It seemed at the most but a temporary delay—the San Francisco shipments might turn up at any moment—yet Archer had had too much experience to depend upon uncertainties. And it was a hint dropped by Hauroko Yati one day which sent him riding over the mountain trail into the Neuva Ecija Valley, where he caught one of the Lingayen trains into Manila.

Next morning, he hunted up a very dignified Japanese, over in Binondo, who proved to be a baron of the empire, and head of a large exporting house, with branches in various cities. This courteous individual admitted being one of the minor shareholders of the Principe Construction and Power Company, anxious to see the project in successful operation. He agreed to deliver, at the river mouth, all the cement required, of any specified brand, accepting in payment treasury orders dated one and two years ahead. Among other things in their conversation, he volunteered some information which set the engineer thinking. Sakuchi had picked up his shares, three or four at a time, in Manila; and he was under the impression that some of the larger shareholders were selling out for anything they could get.

When Archer returned to Principe, no cement had arrived. During his ride from Tarlac across the mountains, Barry had telegraphed that all San Francisco shipments were being held up because no payments had been made for a month past. He had gone to Steinberger, the treasurer of the company, in considerable excitement, to demand an explanation, and had been calmly informed that there was barely enough cash available for the next month's labor. A bond issue was to be placed upon the market within a few weeks, but, in his opinion, there was considerable doubt as to its being subscribed. Jimmy Trent, McCormack, and Eversley were a pretty glum trio when Archer reached headquarters, and found them on the veranda. It took but a few moments to put him in possession of the facts. McCormack was perceptibly nervous as he admitted having less than a week's supply of material on hand; but the engineer's leisurely manner of lighting his cigar was reassuring.

"There'll be five thousand tons of cement here day after to-morrow, gentlemen! We should worry, eh?"

"Say, chief," cried McCormack, "you're the most heartening thing that ever came over the pike! How did you do it? Oh, well, I don't give a darn, as long as we get the stuff. But, say, we ain't out of the woods yet. How about *stone?* That bunch in Manila have stopped the shipments on that, too! Of course, there are any amount of bowlders lying about the valley, here, but we've no time to have them broken up. Three hundred men couldn't begin to break it fast enough for the mixers."

"Do you know that little bay inside of Punta Tarigtig, forty-five miles up the coast? Cliffs look like brown rock, or clay—but there's a five-hundred-foot beach of very coarse pebbles—about seven miles around, I should say. The dato, whose tribe live in the hills at the head of that bay, told me I could have all the stone I wanted to cart away. You'd better send up both the steam lighters to-night, and keep 'em going until Barry can charter a three-thousand-ton boat and get it around here."

"Hmph! Does the dato *own* that beach?"

"That question isn't likely to come up until long after the stone is in the dam. His title is probably good enough for a test cast in the courts, because his people are the only ones along that strip of coast. But about the worst any court might do would be to make us cough up one peso a ton, Mex—in the high and far-off time."

"Well, I ain't hard to suit, an' I ain't huntin' round for no trouble that don't come to me. We'll just annex that stone and rastle it into concrete. Oh, by Jiminy! I 'most forgot to tell you: The general and Miss Dorothy are runnin' down from Hongkong on the China Navigation boat in a few days. Barry says they're likely to come around here.

I told him there wa'n't no decent place to put 'em up, but he says Miss Dorothy's dead set on seeing the job."

A thoughtful look came into the engineer's eyes. There were reasons why he would have ridden fifty miles through the jungle for an hour with Dorothy Clayton—a confidential talk with the general was, above everything, what he would have wished for at that moment. But he had an impression that he wasn't done with the strikers—and a construction camp on the edge of the jungle, twenty miles from the nearest native port, was no place for a woman.

"How are they coming around? On one of the coasters? You want to get that from Barry, so we can have a boat meet 'em at Baler."

Archer was examining the first load of gravel next afternoon, when a hundred-foot gas yacht dropped anchor off the company's pier and sent a corpulent, white duck figure up the river in her small launch—the man was puffing up the steep ascent to headquarters when the engineer joined him.

"Hello, Steinberger! I thought this sort of thing was a bit too rough for you. It's your first call upon us, isn't it?"

Archer was formal only when called before a directors' meeting. At other times, especially in the field, he had a most annoying way of forgetting the deference customary toward employers or superiors. Steinberger took himself very seriously, resenting offhandedness in any employee. So he merely grunted, and retired within his dignity until seated on the veranda with a cheroot and a cooling drink at his elbow.

"How do you like the look of things, as far as we've got?" Archer asked.

"You seem to have been spending money—yes," answered the fat man. "There is much concrete down there—but I'm afraid it is all wasted."

"Hmph! I don't agree with you. That's as good a bit of construction work as you ever saw in your life—or any one else."

"You should not be so positive, young man—and you must wait until you hear what I say. Business is rotten bad in the islands. Everybody is selling out and going away. Our stock is 'way down—nobody buying. There is not money in the treasury for more than one month's labor—nothing for material. Our bond issue, most probably, will not be subscribed. So I come over here at much inconvenience to order that you stop work for the present—and wait until things look better."

He did not meet the cold, steely glance from the engineer's eyes—but he resented the sharp rap of the question shot at him:

"Are those *your* orders, or General Clayton's, Steinberger?"

"That is not of consequence. The general is not in the islands—he does not know the situation. You are not in position to question the orders, young man!"

"Say, listen here, will you!" snapped Archer. "The general is managing director of this company—I take orders from no one but him. And if he gave me any such order as that, I'd pay no attention to it!"

"You—you—whippersnapper! What do you mean—eh?"

"Just look around the shoulder of the mountain—at that valley! We're building a cork for a mighty big bottle. Three weeks after the rains set in, that'll be a lake with a good many square miles of water—and, as the dam stands now, we haven't weight enough to hold it. We've spent several millions on mighty good work—every dollar of which will be swept away unless we get concrete enough laid to hold it against a frightful pressure. A lot of our stock is held by widows and people of small incomes—they'd lose every cent they put in!"

"That is unfortunate," said Steinberger, "but it does not alter the case. You cannot go on without money and material. Well—there is no more money—and the material people will not sell us more until they are paid. I understand you ordered cement from Hongkong, upon your own responsibility—it is in Manila—the union will not permit it to be transshipped, and the union is right. You have no business to fire the white men and work with coolies. So—you will stop the work, young man—yes?"

"Oh—yes—I—will—not, Steinberger! Not for one little minute. I'll get all the material I need—and if it's necessary to find it, I'll get the money, too—somehow! But you can gamble your last dollar this work doesn't stop until the dam is completed! And, if I were you, Steinberger, I'd look over the treasury accounts a little more carefully. I know to a penny what we've spent here. I know what the bond interest and the salaries amount to. According to my figuring, there should be very nearly a million dollars to our credit in the banks to-day. As far as the work is concerned, it won't make any difference whether it's there or not—but *some* day there's going to be a strict accounting."

Steinberger carefully cut the tip from another cigar and puffed upon it thoughtfully for several moments.

"Look here, my young friend—perhaps I was hasty, and hurt your feelings. Well, I did not intend that. I am much distressed over the affairs of the company. I can see your point of view; but you must help us to save further loss—not fly in the face of facts. Look here, out of my own pocket I will guarantee your salary for another year, if you will be reasonable, and obey orders of your employers—and stop the work—at once! Possibly you may be a little short of money just at present—well—I thought that might be the case, and brought some for you. Here are ten thousand dollars—for which you will give me a receipt."

The engineer shot one quick glance at Steinberger's expressionless face—then quietly got upon his feet.

"All right—wait a second until I get a receipt blank from my desk!" Archer was gone but a moment. "Do you mind if I count this over? H-m-m—seems to be all right—thanks! Here's your receipt for ten thousands dollars *on the material account of the company!* It isn't much, but I reckon it's money saved from the fire. Steinberger—it only needed this bribe to prove that you are a crook—that you've got some damned good personal reason for wanting the work stopped on this job! Hey, *Jimmy,* come out here and witness this receipt, will you? Now, I'll give you just three minutes to leave this shack and start back for your gas boat, out yonder! If you don't get a move on, I'll give you assistance! One——"

The look in Steinberger's eyes was murderous—but he deliberately got out of his chair and waddled down the slope without another word. Trent had heard, through the open window of the wireless room, his admission that there was still cash enough in the banks for a month's labor; and, at Archer's suggestion, he at once flashed this statement to Barry, in Manila.

There was much speculation among the staff that evening as to what Steinberger's game could be. Information having been obtained from Barry that General Clayton and his daughter had left Hongkong on the China Navigation Company's steamer three days before, Trent began calling with his spark about ten o'clock—locating her before midnight. The general was sent for, and Archer gave him a detailed account of Steinberger's visit—with the result that neither of the Claytons' names appeared in the list of arriving passengers,

which secured a day in Manila for the putting through of certain operations before their presence was suspected. Then a directors' meeting was called—at too short notice for the treasurer to accomplish anything, even if he had suspected the information in Clayton's possession.

At the end of the week, a long, deep-sea yacht, with two squat funnels, painted the smoke gray of the navy, dropped anchor off the mouth of the Rio Casignan. A launch was smartly lowered into the water, and the general, with his daughter and a big man in white flannels, came ashore. McCormack recognized the stranger as Mr. Frederick Dorrington—a millionaire yachtsman, who was said to spend several months of every year at sea upon his beautiful cruising yacht *Mystery,* and when the party reached headquarters, Archer discovered in him a former roommate at the Troy Polytechnic.

In the evening, when the party settled down upon the veranda for a discussion of the situation, the general explained how matters stood in Manila and New York.

"When I received Henry's message on the boat, gentlemen, I can assure you I was more than disturbed. The way the stock was acting in Wall Street told me something was wrong—and started me out here as quickly as I could arrange to come. I will endeavor to explain as briefly as possible. The 'Jones bill' for Filipino independence is now before the Senate—and I fear it will pass eventually. Meanwhile, the administration has been turning over many of the civil offices in the islands to natives—forestalling the action of the bill by putting the gov'ment, as far as possible, in native hands. The result, naturally, has been to utterly discourage American and European business men who have money invested here. They feel that once the hand of the United States government is withdrawn from these islands, one of two things will happen: Japan or some other power will promptly seize the archipelago—or else, under native misrule, exploited by the very few educated Filipinos for their own pockets, there will be a reign of anarchy and warring factions under which no man's life or property will be safe. Naturally our business men here are selling out for anything they can realize, and leaving the islands." There was a thoughtful silence for several moments—broken by Jimmy Trent.

"You think, then, general, that it really isn't much use completing the dam—think that the railway development of northern Luzon won't be carried out if we complete it?"

"No, suh! I cannot honestly say I believe that. I have more confidence in the ultimate common sense of our people and government—when they wake up to the real facts here. These islands are *the richest territory in the United States—without question!* They control a large part of the Oriental trade. They offer us an outlet for American manufactures which it would be suicidal to throw away. And the Filipinos have absolutely no case—logically or legally. Our American Indians had a thousand times better one because they had really owned the land for many centuries—yet we did not permit them to withstand the march of civilization. If we give the islands up—we merely make a present of them to some other country. Gentlemen, I'm so positive that our government will come to its senses before it is too late that I have gambled every dollar I have in the world on the success of this project! I have succeeded in purchasing enough of our stock in Manila to give me a fifty-five per cent holding—though Steinberger held me up for twenty points above the market on the shares he sold me. We elected a new board of directors—including Harry Archer,

here, as first vice president and managing director—and we mean, somehow, to float another bond issue within a month. If, on account of the war, it should not be subscribed, I fear we shall be in rather a desperate position for lack of money to strengthen the construction before the rains."

"How about the railway development comp'ny, general? Are they going to lay down and quit?"

"No, suh! A majority of their stock is represented upon our own board. They'll wait until our dam has stood the test of a monsoon flood—after which they'll begin construction immediately. I'm informed they have ample funds. The principal matter which is causing me anxiety is the probability of trouble over our labor and material. We cannot buy either without cash or credit. At present there is very little cash in the banks, and I find, to my amazement, that our treasurer has not paid a cent for material during the last month—which, of course, very seriously impairs our credit. Barry told me he understood Henry was considering some arrangement by which material might be obtained, but I fear he was oversanguine."

"Don't let the labor and material worry you, general," said Archer. "I'm getting all we need, on one and two years' time—sixty per cent of the labor payable in orders on our treasurer, dated ahead."

"You amaze me, suh—though, of course, I'm deeply gratified. May I ask with whom you are dealing on such liberal terms?"

"The labor is contracted for with Hauroko Yati—our Japanese foreman—who is a Cornell graduate, and appears to be a man of some influence among his countrymen. The cement is coming from Baron Sakuchi, of Nagasaki, who happens to be one of our minor shareholders, anxious to see the dam a paying proposition. The stone I'm getting as a free gift from Dato Laspanaldo, up the coast—costs us merely the transportation—though the Philippine government may eventually put in a claim for its market value."

"Aren't you putting yourself rather dangerously into the hands of the Japs, old man?" asked Dorrington impulsively. "Of course, this is none of my business—but you know there's been a lot of talk about Japanese feeling against us!"

Archer shook his head.

"Hmph! If you'd been practicing your profession, Fred, instead of enjoying life as an ocean prince, you'd have accustomed your system to the fact that an engineer is always between the devil of obstacles to be overcome and the deep sea of dangerous, money-eating delay. This dam *must* be safe when the rains come—it's going to be completed and successfully operated to generate power for various necessary uses. In order to accomplish this, I use what I can get. I'm risking a pretty good-sized claim against the company, at some future time, if we can't pay as we go. But the alternative is to chuck into the scrap heap six or eight million dollars of our stockholders' money, already spent on construction. As for the Japanese end of it—there has been nothing in Japanese commercial dealing for the last quarter century to imply that they are pirates, or likely to rob any one of his property without just compensation." He broke off to ask: "What is it, Jimmy?" as Trent came out of the operating room, where they had heard the muffled crash of the wireless spark for some time.

Trent was evidently under stress of excitement. He spoke rapidly:

"Barry says about five hundred men from the unions, including those we had, are coming up the valley on one of the Lingayen trains in the morning—and intend hiking across the mountains to drive off our Japs and Ilongotes."

There was a silence of consternation among the visitors and the younger engineers.

"Get the army wireless at Manila headquarters!" shouted Archer. "Have them take a message for the general commanding. Tell him five hundred white men are hiking up into the hills belonging to the Negritos and Dato Buigani—presumably to stake claims on a rumored gold strike, though they're giving some other excuse as a blind! If the general gets that within an hour, there'll be a battalion of the constabulary on the trail through Buigani's territory ahead of those fools, and they'll be sent back, with considerable language, if not under arrest. The whole island has been posted with army proclamations warning hunting and mining parties against committing any overt act which might antagonize the various tribesmen—and all the newspapers carry the same notice. Hmph! If Brady and his men are sober, I'm surprised at their trying anything like a hike through the dato's jungle. They know that not a man of them would go back alive—unless by dumb luck."

Dorrington took General Clayton and Miss Dorothy back aboard the yacht for the night—but seemed too much interested in the construction work to suggest departure. In the morning, a smaller yacht anchored just inside the *Mystery*. The man who stepped from her launch—inquiring for the engineer in chief—was dressed in a pongee suit, the weight and texture of which ran into considerable money. He was rather below average height—with swarthy complexion and closely clipped black mustache. But his bearing—his quiet though assured manner—was that of a personage with wide experience, accustomed to command.

When the party from the *Mystery* came ashore, he was introduced by Archer as Baron Sakuchi, of Nagasaki and Tokyo; and, during their morning tour of inspection, made himself so thoroughly agreeable that Dorrington invited him to join them at tiffin on his yacht. It was a very congenial party of five who remained chatting over coffee and cigars in the after saloon of the *Mystery*. For some reason which Archer couldn't understand, Dorrington seemed very much interested in the baron's anecdotes of Japanese life. Presently, however, he guessed what the millionaire had in mind. Knowing the Oriental character better than most Americans, it occurred to him that a little frankness under such conditions might promote better understanding.

"Baron, I've an impression that Mr. Dorrington would like to know something of the real feeling in your country toward the United States, but he doesn't wish to ask what might be considered an impertinent question."

Sakuchi's face softened in a genial smile.

"Ah! Our good host has been reading the American papers—yaes? The question is not impertinent. We are all cosmopolitans here—even Miss Clayton, I think. Myself, I have serve' two years with our embassy in Washington, where, necessarily, I could not talk with freedom permissible in surroundings like these. So, then, let us exchange views quite openly. In our Nipponese cities, where large part of the population read newspapers, the man in the street feels slighted that America admits, without restriction, an ever-increasing number of undesirables from slums of Europe—men, women, children, who, from hereditary weakness or impaired mentality, can never be anything but dangerous burden upon your great republic—while she excludes all but small portion of sober, industrious, law-respecting Japanese. As nation, we Nipponese have very real pride in what we are and what we have accomplish'—so discrimination of that sort rankles, when we stop to think of

it. Ordinarily, the matter would be quickly forgotten by all save those who wish to obtain admission to your country. But journalistic impulse is much same in Nippon as in the States. Our editors must sell papers—must create excitement—keep people stirred up—so talk against American restrictions. But newspaper talk amounts no more and no less with us than with you. In event of any real act of hostility upon part of your government, it would undoubtedly rouse fighting spirit to a pitch difficult to control. But, without such most improbable act, it is not serious enough to consider."

"How about the Philippines? It is thought by a good many people that Japan wants the islands for herself—very much."

"That is one of those half truths which lead to great deal of misunderstanding. If United States is determined to throw islands away, Nippon has more right to them than present inhabitants—because thousands of our people were living in Philippines for centuries before Spanish occupation—hundreds of years before ancestors of present Filipinos ever set foot in them. But, excepting Nipponese from Kyushu, our most southerly island, our people do not keep health in Philippine moisture and heat. Fever and dysentery are fatal in large percentage of cases. If we took islands, we should be forced to maintain army of at least two hundred thousand men to police them, which would be serious drain upon our resources. The islands have cost United States over billion of dollars to put in condition where money investment, life, and property are reasonably safe. If you abandon them, we would have serious proportion of that billion to spend over again in establishing our own government here—and that would be staggering drain upon us. Of course, large number of Nipponese are now in Philippines—with steady employment, or business in which they have invested considerable money. Many of them possess repeating rifles and revolvers, because they foresee revolution and all kinds trouble the moment your hand is partly withdrawn, and they mean to protect their lives and property."

"I suppose they feel they can place some reliance upon your government, also, baron?"

"As to that—well—yaes, if necessary. Your greatest danger up to when present war was declared was not from Nippon, but from Germany. Fortunately, there will be no further danger from this source during next century, at least, as Germany, like all other European countries, will be exhausted by present war. In any event, we should never permit German occupation. If, under Filipino rule, archipelago becomes nest of pirates that eastern Borneo and Celebes were a few years ago, we shall occupy them and establish our own government. I suppose, really, it amounts to question of either Nippon or United States. One or the other *must* remain here to maintain order. The islands are certainly rich enough to eventually pay enormous profit to owners or administrators."

The baron's frank statements produced a very favorable impression upon his hearers. His visit to the construction camp had been to ascertain Archer's facilities for handling the material at the pier, and his weekly cement requirements. This being settled, he gave a parting dinner on his own yacht—and left.

Next evening, when the party were enjoying the tropical moonlight on the headquarters veranda, Jimmy Trent came to the door of the wireless room and called Archer.

"Barry wants a talk with you, chief! He says there's the devil to pay over there in Manila."

The engineer stepped quickly inside, and sat down at the operating table.

"O. K.—Archer. Let's have it, Barry!"

"Constabulary turned back strikers' expedition this end jungle trail. Threatened arrest if offense repeated. Steinberger had strong pull with alcalde and Filipinos. Told general he was treasurer of company—acting for officers and stockholders. Said you had been discharged, and had seized dam—fortified it—hired gang of armed Japs—meant to complete dam for improper uses. Steinberger said strikers hired by directors—not unions—to go over and regain possession of dam. That, if not allowed to hike across mountains, they would be sent around by steamer. Asked for detail constabulary to go along and back them up. I had talk with general. Constabulary will not be sent at first. But if your Japs shoot strikers, he'll send battalion."

"We'll shoot if they come. See Franklin Ames, new treasurer, and Hobart Selden, president Railway Syndicate. Explain situation—instruct them see general commanding—convince him Steinberger is liar and embezzler. Charter fast coaster, one trip. Ship two hundred reels barbed wire—five hundred iron fence posts. Get them started to-day. We'll look out for this end. G. P. M."

When Archer stepped out upon the veranda, Dorrington got up from his chair, with the remark:

"I noticed something at this end of the dam that didn't look just right to me, Harry. If the general and Miss Clayton will excuse us a few minutes, suppose we go down and take a look at it—eh?"

The moment they were out of earshot, his tone changed, and he began talking with considerable emphasis: "I read that spark, old man—heard just what you said, and guessed Barry's end of it—reckon I'd better tell you something, in strict confidence. When I left Troy, I went out to South Africa, as you know. Coming back, I was employed to consult with the army engineers on some government work—drifted into rather close touch with the state department. For the last three years I've been doing a lot of secret-service work for our government. My boat, out there, is supposed to do about twenty-two knots—but thirty-two is nearer her gait in anything but exceedingly rough weather. In both the for-'ard and after-deck houses I've six-inch rifles of the latest pattern—and a couple of torpedo tubes under water—also, Maxims and small arms for my crew. I can—and do—rig an extra funnel in half an hour, and otherwise alter her appearance. Now, if you'll stop and think a moment, you'll see what a risk you're running in permitting any fight between your Japs and the strikers ——"

"In just what way—for example?"

"You're giving Steinberger a bully opportunity to say you're heading an armed insurrection of Japanese, and that it's the first move in a coup d'état by Japan to grab the Philippines. He'll have the United States army over here pronto! If you resist *them,* it makes his story good—if you don't, they'll hold up your work long enough, pending investigation, to let him buy up a lot of your stock for two or three dollars a share, and make a couple of millions on the deal—also, to prevent your strengthening the dam in time for the rains. What were you going to do with that barbed wire?"

"String it all around the dam, and connect it with the dynamo. That'll stop 'em without firing a shot!"

"Bully good idea—*if you get it here in time!* Frankly, I don't believe you can—that cuss will send five hundred men by next coaster. And you want to remember that he'll have the moral support not only of the unions, but of mil-

lions in the United States, as well! The Californians have raised so much of a muss about the 'yellow peril,' that any hint of Japanese firing upon Americans will be like waving a red rag at a bull. You'll have the whole country up in arms—*and under such conditions there may be very easily some retaliation upon Japs in the United States which Japan simply could not overlook!* You're lighting a cigarette over a powder magazine!"

"Sounds like good common sense, Fred—but you can gamble your last dollar I'll never let those strikers take possession here! I'll have to figure it out some other way—that's all! Just let me *think* for a second or two. H-m-m-m—say, look here! You're sure you can alter the appearance of your boat in an hour or so, are you? Completely? Hmph! Will you turn her over to me for a couple of weeks? Put the officers and crew absolutely under my orders?"

"M-well—if I'm guessing anywhere near right as to what's in your mind, it's a pretty risky proposition. Still—I reckon I'll have to chip in and back your play, just for old times' sake. To hell with the risk! Ordinarily, a cipher cable from me to the state department would stop that commandant in Manila right where he is—but if it gets to your Japs firing on Americans, the job'll be way over my head! Might loosen up a little, Harry—and give me some idea of what your scheme is like?"

The engineer puffed thoughtfully upon his pipe—his hands deep in the pockets of his riding breeches. As he looked down at the arc lights and lantern sparks along the big dam—picturing to himself paralysis of the work and final catastrophe through the scoundrelly machinations of the unscrupulous gang of speculators headed by Steinberger—the square jaw suddenly gripped the amber pipestem with a force that snapped it like a toothpick. Absent-mindedly taking out a cigar and lighting it, without realizing just what had struck the pipe, he began talking again:

"I'll bet a red apple that Barry's on the job this minute, trying to find out what boat that gang will leave on. There's no island coaster until the end of the week—Steinberger won't wait that long, if I know him. There are over a dozen German steamers laid up in Manila Bay until the end of the war—several of 'em passenger boats, with plenty of accommodation—and Steinberger would have no trouble in chartering one for a run around here, *keeping inside the three-mile limit!* Those Germans would be tickled to death with a little pin money on their interest account, in a charter like that. H-m-m—our navy boys are watching that bunch of boats rather closely, in order to avoid neutrality complications. One of the lieutenants told me last week they rather suspected one of them—a four-thousand-ton, half-passenger. She took in two thousand tons of Nagasaki coal the other day—and she's about the only one of the lot that would be in shape to sail at an hour's notice. That coal would take her more than twelve thousand miles, at thirteen knots—keep her at sea forty days—and I'll bet the agents will jump at a chance of getting her out from under the eyes of the navy commanders in Manila Bay so easily. She's the *Hilda von Tirpitz*—used to be an Australian liner. Now, if by any chance they *do* charter her——Come on up to the shack! I'll get Barry!"

They had barely rejoined the party, when Trent came out of the wireless room with a memorandum pad in his hand.

"Say, chief! I reckon Barry's got a friend in Steinberger's camp. He had word, a few minutes ago, that the gang have chartered some old German steamer lying off the mouth of the

Pasig—the *Hilda von Something-or-other*—sounded like *Trapix*—and will be outside Corregidor, hiking this way, by ten o'clock in the morning."

"Hmph! Was she the *Hilda von Tirpitz?*"

"*That's* the name! You've got it. There's a lot of 'static' in the air tonight, and I didn't get the letters clearly—but that's the name, all right. Couldn't be anything else!"

"M-well—that works out about as I hoped it might. I'd know that boat ten miles away, on a clear day, from her two little funnels and her humpy superstructure. Now, listen here, Jimmy! I'm putting you in charge for a few days—possibly a couple of weeks. Give you full instructions in the morning—tell you just how far you can go, and where you pull up. General, we'll take you and Miss Dorothy up the coast as far as the mouth of the Rio Grande—we'll overhaul the Manila coaster there and put you aboard! You'll know exactly what must be done with the government people in Manila to checkmate Steinberger—and you don't want to lose much time doing it, either——"

He was interrupted by Dorothy Clayton, who calmly inquired:

"May I ask why I'm to be dumped from a nice clean yacht, upon which I'm very comfortable, to a smelly little tub of a coaster, with Spaniards and Filipinos, for at least two or three days? I object!"

"Well—er—fact is, Miss Dorothy, Fred's going to run me up north a little way—possibly as far as one of the coal islands—and we may have some people aboard who'll be rather unpleasant—may strike bad weather, too——"

"In the dry monsoon? Hmph! Mr. Dorrington, if it's necessary for daddy to be in Manila on business before you can take him there, I've nothing to say; but I shall remain on the *Mystery,* if you don't mind!"

"Why, under ordinary circumstances—er—of course——"

"Oh, come! Don't be mean! I want to see the fun! If you and Harry Archer can stand it, I'll take my chances. Can't any more than get killed, you know—and one of the earthquakes might do that. I'm staying aboard—you can't lose me!"

Dorrington looked helplessly at Archer, who merely grinned.

"All right, young woman, have your own way! I never questioned your sand, that I remember."

Now, a story might be written of that mysterious voyage, alone—there was certainly incident enough—and some action—but it was merely a detail in the fight to complete the Rio Casignan Dam. After Steinberger and his fellow sharpers had scraped and combed the neighborhood of Manila for every available man willing to fight for three pesos—gold—per day, the most they were able to get was five hundred and twenty. These they armed with secondhand Mausers and a couple of machine guns—shipping them before ten in the morning, as Barry had said, on the *Hilda von Tirpitz.*

The boat did better than her regular thirteen knots, and reached the northern end of Luzon at seven o'clock next morning. As she was rounding Punta Mayraira, as much inside the three-mile limit as she dared go, her captain noticed what appeared to be a torpedo-boat destroyer—with three funnels and a single pole mast—inside of him. This mysterious craft began edging out, keeping pace with the *Hilda,* knot for knot, foot for foot, until she was so close alongside that Captain Hinklemann was forced to steer his craft farther out to avoid collision. When it became apparent what the mysterious stranger was about, Hinklemann turned squarely about to steam back for Manila—but the stranger, obeying her helm more quickly, was around before

him—and again edged him farther out to sea.

By that time he was so rattled that the one thing uppermost in his mind was avoiding the apparently imminent collision. When he woke up—at a six-inch projectile which raised a water-spout just ahead of him—the shore was obviously a good ten miles away. He threw up his hands, and stopped his engines. Then the white ensign of Britain fluttered up the jack staff on the stranger's stern—and a voice megaphoned him that he must proceed directly to the island of Yap, in the Carolines, at full speed. Any attempt at evasion or treachery would be followed by the sinking of his steamer in mid-ocean. On the second night he tried dousing his lights, but a shot from his starboard quarter made him start up his dynamo again very promptly.

Four days after his capture, he was turned over as a prisoner of war, and his ship a prize, to the English naval officer who had taken over the Carolines from the Japanese.

As the yacht *Mystery*—two funnels, two masts, extra-long deck houses—raced back through the San Bernardino Passage to Manila in two days and four hours, Dorothy Clayton studied the chief of construction as she had never studied a man before. If she were to believe her woman's instinct, he wanted her as only a strong man wants his mate—but he had never put this in words. At a time when she was receiving proposals from men considered extremely desirable by her society friends, this—unconventional but masterful—individual piqued her by a seeming indifference to her existence. So—she had refused one wealthy "catch"—put off another one indefinitely—until she could attach this engineer's scalp to her belt, and feel that it would remain there. And then, upon the after deck one evening, without preliminaries, without so much as by your leave—she found herself in the creature's arms, actually returning the maddening kisses pressed upon her lips. Presently she was conscious of a superb solitaire being squeezed over the knuckle of her third finger.

"Oh, Harry! It's *beautiful!* But—of all the cool *nerve!* Where did you ever get the idea that I would—well ——"

"Why, that was simple enough. I just had to have you—that was all! Of course, I've been some busy, off and on, since we started the dam—and Manila isn't much of a place to get a really good stone, anyway. I picked that one up three years ago, in Madras—when I'd just finished the cantilever bridge for the nizam. He told me the man I wanted to see—chap handles nothing but Old Mine gems. You were in Europe at the time, I think. Now, let's get down to business! Dorrington's getting up a syndicate by cable for our new bond issue, so we'll have plenty of working capital in a couple of weeks. Unless something's broken loose since we left, I suppose I can take a week or ten days in Manila—we'll run up to Hongkong and back, if you like—or Fred will lend us the yacht. Can't manage a wedding at St. Thomas', but I reckon the army and navy people will give us a pretty lively send-off in Manila—I know a lot of 'em, both English and American. How about it, honey?"

She snuggled closer in his arms—and kissed him, in a shy, hesitating way.

"Well, you're chief of construction, and I've sort of noticed that what you say generally *goes.* Honestly, I don't quite know whether I'm on my head or my heels!"

Letters of a Cowboy to a Lady Friend

By Robert V. Carr

Author of "Love Lyrics of a Cowboy," Etc.

There is a fool born every minute; and the girl to whom this cowboy writes is of opinion that the proverb has a very direct application to the cowpuncher-penman who here sets forth his experiences and his aspirations

FRIEND GIRL: Landed in Chicago here all O. K. I am going out this afternoon to see the moving-picture boss and get a job. I am sure I can land the job as a feller was just telling me that good moving-picture cow-punchers was scarce. He said moving-picture actors made big money up as high as forty thousand a year. How's that hit you, Cary—forty thousand dollars a year? Beats riding the range for forty iron bucks a month, don't it. I'll be right up there with the best of them in no time, for I got the class and grade. So you can get ready to come down here right away. As for the engagement ring I will buy you a dozen diamond rings when I get the job. We will sure fly high you and me, Cary, on forty thousand a year.

This is writ later. I seen the moving picture boss and he did not kiss me by a long shot. But I am getting ahead of myself. When I first went down to the moving-picture place they said the boss was busy. I remained around for a spell and then come back but no boss. A kind little child of a telephone girl told me I had better come back in the morning which I did. She reminded me of you so much and she told me that the boss was easy to get up to right after breakfast and I thanked her kindly. I remained around for a while longer talking with her and telling her that she favored a Western girl so much that it would make a looking glass cross eyed trying to tell which one was the right one to reflect back. She has your eyes and the same way of looking at a man sideways.

Well I found the boss at last and told him I wanted a job riding for the pictures as cowpunching had about played out in Montana though a man could pick up some change breaking horses or riding for prizes at blow-outs and the Frontier doings at Cheyenne. He did not come back with no bokay or music by the band by a long shot but told me that there was whole families in my fix. He said for me to stick around for a while and he might find use for me although any time that he wanted a cow-puncher to ride for the pictures he could get one out of a cattylog the same as you would order a set of hair pins. That made me kind of hot for you know what prizes I pulled down at Cheyenne and that I can ride anything that wears hair. He said at present that I could get no more job than a snow bird as they were cutting down on account of the dutchmans raising so much h—— I mean trouble across the water but if I stuck around for a few weeks he might find use for me. I told him he was missing a good chance to hire a man who could ride anything that wore hair but he said that he had heard men talk that way for nine thou-

sand years and that any time he wanted a cow-puncher he could go down to the bread line and get one or whittle one out of a stick. That sure made me sore and I would have spotted him one in the jaw but for getting pulled and I would not be pulled in this mans town for nothing as I would stand no show and they would send me up for ninety years for hitting a moving picture boss. He then said for me to come around in two weeks and he would see. I said I thought he was kindness itself in not telling me to call again in two years but he said not to mention it. Then he turned and bawled at a gobbler who wanted to sell him something on paper. I guess the fellow was a play writer for he sure ducked when the moving picture boss bawled at him.

Before I left I had another talk with the telephone girl on account of her reminding me so much of you. She has many of your pretty ways, Cary. One thing she said was that I had such a dreamy expression in my eyes that I reminded her of a scout in Buffalo Bill's show. I said I got that dreamy expression from playing poker and winning as high as four bits on a pair of deuces. She said she knowed nothing of poker or any of the pitfalls of life and I guess she don't as she has such a innocent nose.

This is sure a big town, Cary. You could slam Miles down here and lose it and slam Billings down and lose it and slam Helena down and lose it too. I never know when I am going to reach my rooming house. I just shut my eyes and repeat what is on a silver dollar. I got a place to board at $4 a week room and everything. I wont say that the board is anything to set a man crazy and I would a whole lot rather throw my feet under your table at the Ranch House than eat this petreefied stuff they call chuck here. Never you mind when I make a stake you wont have to wait on no table in no hotel like the Ranch House.

Write soon as I am beginning to walk in a circle I am that lonesome for you.

Yours with all kinds of U-no-whats,

HENRY.

P. S.—I thought I had better not get the ring just yet as I only got about just so much money to go on and that moving picture boss has put me off and I do not want to be broke in this mans town. Besides I do not want to get anything cheap for you, as nothing is too good for the only girl in the world for me. To find out who she is all you got to do is look in a glass. Write soon as I am sure getting lonesome. There are millions of people here but nobody seems to know nobody else.

DEAR CARY: Suffring Moses but I was never so lonesome in my life. I had to move on account of cutting down expense and if this is not a two-by-twice place I am camping in now I do not want a cent. My room is about the size of the parlor in a sheep wagon and I got to go out in the hall to change my mind. Only way I can lay down is to put my feet out the window and believe me or not I woke up the other morning with a coal skuttle hanging on my left foot and a set of flannel underclothes on my other. But never you care as I am going to make a go of this thing and ride for the pictures or my name is not Henry J. Beaner. I will come back to you rolling in coin and all will be well. I know you will be true.

I was just thinking that maybe you was working too hard. Just as soon as I make a stake in this moving picture business you will never have to lift another tray nor shoot another biscuit. Say hon I am so danged lonesome to see you I could fight a family of buzz saws to get where you be. I can see you skipping around in the dining room of the Ranch House with your white dress and your black hair and looking so

sweet and clean and being pleasant to everybody. But dont you let none of them traveling men take you out nowhere and specially these traveling men from the stockyards. Most of them are married, Cary, and anyhow I would not trust no traveling man as fur as I could throw a steer by the tail. You cant trust men, Cary, when you look them over—none of them except me and you know you can trust me.

What made me speak of traveling men, hon, was that I was down to the stockyards yesterday and run across Tommy Brinner who travels West for Beller, Skeys & Co., and he said he knowed you and that he was going to take you to a show on his next trip if he never done anything else in his life. I did not let on that you and me was engaged as I had all I could do to keep from spotting him one in the jaw. But I want to tell you that Tommy is married and has a nice wife and if he asks you to go to a show just you let me know and I will take it up with him. If he gets fresh with you just you let me know and I will hunt him up and make him eat it. I would not trust that Tommy Brinner around the corner. He is a smooth gobbler and will feed you lots of taffy if you give him a show and he dresses well because I guess he is knocking down on his expense account and can afford to. So dont you let him take you to no show for a married man has no right to do anything except stay right at home and look at no women but his own wife. I dont believe in a man when he is married taking no woman to a show unless she is his sister, his mother, his grandmother, his aunt or first cousin. That is the way I look at such things and so dont you let that Tommy Brinner feed you no soft soap for he will do it if you give him half a show.

I have not got no job yet but am due to see the moving picture boss in a day or two. I was talking with a gobbler today who has some relation working in a moving picture outfit. He claims they pay well if a man could get a job but jobs were hard to get. He said that every yahoo who could sit on a rocking horse without getting dizzy wanted to be a moving picture cowboy. I cant say that he listened a-tall like he was encouraging me.

I spent a nickle today to see a picture by the outfit I am trying to get a job with. I sure had to laugh at them old ring-tailed livery plugs they used. When a rider would jump one of them old hammerheads the old plug would twist his tail round and round to get into motion. You can always tell one of them old livery stable twist-tails by the way he acts when the steel is shoved into him. I would not want to ride no such coyote bait.

Cary I wish I could see you tonight. Seems the more my luck goes against me the more I realize that you are my only friend. Your dear little letter sure gave me a cramp in both arms and nothing to fill them. But about the ring. Sure I know you are anxious to wear my ring so that all may know that we are engaged but I do not want to get nothing cheap as I am running short now and it may be quite a spell before I get to making money. You say that a fifty-dollar ring would be better than nothing. Well I will go down and look at the $50 ones.

DEAR CARY: Your letter surprised me. You say you are not afraid of no traveling man much less Tommy Brinner or any stockyards man and that you like the stockyards men because none of them are tightwads and when they start out to blow money on a girl they sure blow it. But Cary you want to remember that Tommy Brinner is married and that it is not nice for a single girl to go to a show with a married man unless he is her husband. You say Tommy is so jolly and carefree and

what his wife dont know wont keep her awake nights but I dont see how you can look at it that way. Although I never have met Tommy's wife I hear that she is jealous of him and would start a lot of trouble if she found a girl was flirting with Tommy not that I say you are flirting with him but am just telling you about his wife.

Why, Cary, since you and me been engaged I have not never looked at no woman except the telephone girl, the grass widow that runs this rooming house and a lady barber. A man dont have much chance to get acquainted around a city. You can go out to the White City though and dance with lots of girls without no introduction. I was out there a time or two the last two days. The lady barber said she was from Montana but I did not give her no rope and made her keep her place.

But you dont want to have nothing to do with Tommy Brinner nor no traveling man and no railroad man for them firemen and conductors and brakemen are the worst flirts in the world and have a girl at every station though most of them are married—I mean the firemen, and-so-forth. But a stockyards traveling man is the limit and then some. If I was a girl and saw a stockyards man coming I would call out the militia and the fire department for they are no good. There is not no principle, Cary, to a stockyards man when it comes to jollying a girl. So dont you let that Tommy Brinner hand you no soft talk for he is a smooth gobbler and will bear watching.

I would send the ring in this mail but as I said before I am running short and every day a little bit shorter and I want to be sure and have enough money to stick around till I can get a job riding with the moving picture show and then all will be well. Then you and me will get married as life is nothing to me without you.

I wish you would not be so pleasant and joke with the boys that set at your table, Cary. I know men, Cary, from the cradle to the grave, and there is no good in the sons-of-guns. They always misunderstand a girl who treats them well. Just wait on them but show them that you are spoke for and are all mine and have no interest in no one. I just want to protect you and give you the right talk. You see how I feel. I know you are true, Cary, but you cant be too careful.

What you said in your last letter about having taken care of yourself for twenty-four years is all right but I still claim that a girl cant be jolly with men that she was never introduced to. You say you was never introduced to me but that is diffrent, Cary. I am not like them smooth gobblers that run up and down the road on a big expense account and put in their time jollying girls instead of getting business for their company. Take them stockyards men traveling West and there is not one of them that would stop in no town unless he had a lady friend there and yet they call theirselves business men.

I will send the ring next trip if I can possibly see my way clear to do it.

I will have to close this letter as I have used up all the paper on hands and to write any more will have to go into some hotel and pretend I am stopping there and get paper and envelops as I am pretty short. It is not stealing as everybody does it.

Yours with plenty of U-know-whats,

HENRY.

P. S.—If Tommy Brinner brings you a present again I would give it back to him as it dont look well for no girl to be getting presents from a married man even if he is wearing good clothes and says it is all in the business and that he expects you to boost for his company. What would you think of me if I give the little telephone girl a present? I have as much right to give her a present as Tommy Brinner has you

and more too though I do not know what I would give her as I have not got enough money to buy a half interest in one toot from an automobile horn. You cant afford to say anything but Good Morning to Tommy Brinner for he is the smoothest gobbler on the road and has a girl in Billings, Chadron, Omaha and all points West. I know men, Cary. Be pleasant with them and civil but give them no rope. No use now to think of the ring for I could not buy the price tag on a clothes pin. I now have got just seven dollars and four cents between me and the street. About the job. I hate to tell you how I came out with that though I have not give up hope. The boss of the moving picture outfit said I would not do on account of my face. He said my features were not plain enough. I told him that I supposed they wanted good-looking men in his show and that I never considered myself plain. He laughed kind of sneering like and said I could go and so I went. I had a notion to tell him that I did not calculate to ride one of his old broomtails with my face but he was not the kind of man to see through a joke. Besides I was liable to tap him and a man has to control his temper in this town or get pulled and it would be all off with me if I got pulled. Last words the moving picture boss said was that I could come around again in six months. I told him I had less than seven dollars to my name but he said that figures never interested him nohow and so I left.

I had another talk with the little telephone girl and as she was so much like you I asked her to go out with me to the White City and she wanted to know whether before dinner or after and I told her after dinner and would she go to dinner with me. I never had no idear, Cary, what I was saying when I asked her to dinner. She then told me where to meet her and that we would go to the College and I told her that any place she named was agreeable to me as she looked so much like you.

I cant tell you Cary how I feel about going with that little telephone girl to the place she called the College. When we got there a feller in a band suit grabbed my hat and we sat down near the music. I could have poured a glass of water in the trombone from where I set. There were not no figures on the score card and I got kind of worried for fear she would over-shoot my pile. She begin ordering and I swear I never heard of no girl having such a hunger. I thought the bill would come to at least a dollar and a half but when the waiter give me the ree-sult I near fainted for that little feed set me back six seventy-five and the waiter got the quarter away from me before I could get it. Then the boy who had my hat thought something was coming to him but as I only had four cents I could not give him nothing. There I was on the sidewalk with a girl expecting me to take her out to the White City and with only four cents in my pocket. I could see nothing else to do but tell her about it. She laughed a mean little laugh and told me that she thought I had enough money to buy chewing gum any way and then she left me standing with nothing between me and the world but four cents—not enough to pay car fare to the lake to jump in.

No, I would not think of taking no money from you as you never have mentioned it. I could not ask no woman to send me twenty even if we was going to get married and she knew that soon what was mine would be hern and what was hern would be mine and all in the family.

Yours in the ditch but dying game,

HENRY.

P. S.—If you should happen to send me twenty get a postoffice order as I could not get nothing at no bank unless Tommy Brinner went with me and he is out of town.

MY OWN DARLING CARY: How could you say that there was a fool born every minute and I was one of them to let the telephone girl stick me for six seventy-five. Then it is cruel of you, Cary, to say that I must think you a mutt to set still and let me run around with every skirt that would look at me. Why, Cary, how can you write such things! I never run around with no lady barber. I could not run around with no lady barber if I wanted to for I have not got the price. A lady barber makes big money and what for would she run around with me when I am as clean as a rabbit and only enough money to buy postage to send out this letter? These girls I tell you about are just friends of mine and I have been true to you.

You say that the new manager of the Grand Central store and you have become good friends. Look out for them store men, Cary. One of them rabbit-eared, smooth-talking slickheads will tell a girl anything.

But about the twenty. Was you figuring on sending it? I can stick it out at this place for a week longer but the landlady is beginning to look at me kind of chilly.

There is no use to say anything about buying you a ring now. I could not buy standing room in front of a jewelry store now if it sold for a nickle an acre. Why do you always keep on about that ring, Cary? Cant you love me just as well without no engagement ring as if you had a five hundred dollar rock on your finger? That is the way with a woman. Just as soon as a man gets down on his luck she begins hollering loudest.

Yours as B4, HENRY.

DEAR CARY: I would send you back the twenty you sent as I hate to take money from a woman but I do not see my way clear to do it now. Maybe I was a little too rough in my last letter and if I was I ask to be excused on account of worrying so much about money matters. Your sending me the money shows that your heart is in the right place.

I am still trying for a moving picture job and the twenty will let me try for some time although living is high here and a man cannot stand off nobody.

You say you are going around with the manager of the Grand Central store and that he has a little single-seated automobile. That is the way with you women—if the feller has an auto you always fall for it. You are up there riding around in an auto while I am down here dodging around and trying to get a job so I can marry you and give you a position in life above slinging hash in a hotel. I dont think it no way to treat a man who has been true to you and never looked at no girl only as a friend. Besides I cannot help it if women get friendly with me. When I got some good clothes and a little money they all look at me for I got the winning way if I do say it.

Why, Cary, how could you do such a thing! I just now turned over a page of your letter and read on the other side. So the money you sent was Tommy Brinner's and it was a put-up job on his part to let you send it so I would think you was giving me your money and feel good over it. And now because you think I run around with these Chicago girls you are telling me the truth. You dont need to try to hand me no such stuff as that. What is the matter with you is that you have got stuck on that Grand Central manager and his little buzz-wagon. You can tell Tommy Brinner that I dont thank him for butting into my affairs and that I would send him the twenty in a hurry but I got to eat. And I dont thank you for talking to him about our affairs when you know he is married. It looks like you dont care what people say about you. HENRY.

MISS CARY DUFF: Yours received and contents noted as regards to my being a fool who did not know when he was well off and that you was through. *IS THAT SO?* Well I knowed all along you were flirting with Tommy Brinner and the store manager and you know what I said about them kind of men. You say there is plenty of fish in the sea as ever was caught. *IS THAT SO?* And I say the same thing though they are mostly suckers and that is no joke.

I am sending your letters back as you ask and would ree-quest that you do the same. As for that twenty Tommy Brinner give you to send me I will be in no hurry to hand him back that as he probably knocked it down out of his expense account.

You dont need to be pitying me and calling me no discouraged mutt for I have plenty of lady friends and will soon get a good job and come to the front. I wish you luck with your store clerk and his can of gasolene on four pieces of rubber tied up with binding twine. If he was here in Chicago with the thing they would fine him for frightening the children with it.

Yours Respectfully,

HENRY J. BEANER.

P. S.—I never knowed a woman could be so false till I laid my eyes on your handwriting. I can never trust no woman after this, much less a girl that waits on table. Just as soon as a man is out of their sight they got to be a-flirting around. They would not know the word true if they met it in the road carrying a sign and headed by a band. But if you have got anything to say my address is the same.

DEAR CARY: I am down to hardpan again and as Tommy Brinner is still out West and I have not heard from you I thought I would write and tell you that I was sorry for all the mean things I writ in my last letter. I cannot get no more job than a jackrabbit Cary and I am up against starvation and my clothes are beginning to come to pieces. I guess I am no good in a big town, and I was a fool for ever leaving you and the West.

I dont care what you have did or how you have flirted or what you have said. I just know I love you and would come back to you if I had the shadow of a show. Forgive me, Cary, for being a fool and a knothead and a poor narrow-minded coyote that did not know a smart fine girl like you when he met her.

I see, Cary, where I have been a poor jealous fool who had no right to say anything. What is the odds to me what you say or do as long as I love you. I cannot expect anything from you unless I win it, and it seems I fell down.

Now that I got this off my chest I feel more like a man instead of a yap.

Yours with real love,

HENRY.

P. S.—Tommy Brinner just called up. He said he knew how it was with me and that I could get a job in the pens with his company. So good-by to picture shows and back to the doughies where I belong. If you still believe in me write me a line, girl. I would sure like to hear from you.

MY OWN TRUE LITTLE GIRL: The money for the home ticket and expenses and your dear little letter came just as I was getting ready to go to work at the yards.

You are certainly one great little business woman, hon. I can see now why you made the traveling men your friends and why you made the general manager of the Grand Central Store your friend. All the time you was figuring on leasing that restaurant and starting into business for yourself with me for your partner. I tell you, hon, you are a great little woman and I

feel I am a pretty poor excuse for a man, but if working for you and being as good to you as I know how will help any you can count on me. I would rather wash dishes in a kitchen and be near you than be a millionaire and not have you.

Look sharp and you will see my dust raise in about three days. We will work that restaurant for as long as it pays and then buy in on a ranch. I know what I can do with a ranch. On a ranch I am a man and you would not be ashamed of me. You have stuck to me when I was down and out and I am yours to make or to break. Aw, you little cutie, you never got that twenty dollars you first sent me from Tommy Brinner. It was your own hard-earned money and you lied to me to save my feelings but played it too strong. Tommy told me all about it.

I never expected to wind up working in a restaurant kitchen as I got that range-rider's pride, but to be with you I will do anything.

P. S.—About us gettin married when I get back. If you will have me when you see me I will say I have just called up Tommy Brinner and told him how things was. He said I was getting a woman a thousand times too good for me and I said that I knowed it and would he let me have a hundred dollars to get married on. He said he would if you and me would promise to say a good word to our boarders in the restaurant about his firm. I told him that he could gamble that we would always boost for him and his company. After all is said and done Tommy Brinner is as white a man as ever lived and I do not blame you for liking him.

P. S. 2—Seems like I cannot say enough in this letter I am so full of good feeling. I tell you what, my darling, when a man has been through what I have he sure is willing to get back to his home country and throw his feet under a table with real grub on it and old friends within call and somebody he loves near him. But I must close and pack up what little junk I got and pinch down a little of the expense money you sent me to get my sixshooter out of hock. I was sure ashamed to tell you that I hocked my six. Oh, Cary, I'm coming back to you and God's country, and Lord I'm glad —G-L-A-D, glad.

A SUPERFLUITY OF MASTERPIECES

THE man who claimed that the people of this country do not admire art, particularly art as exemplified in statues, uttered a gross libel on the American people. The citizens of the United States admire statues—if anything, admire them too much, praise too many of them, fall down before them in adoration oftener than anybody knows. If you don't believe it, read this:

In a cemetery just outside the national capital there stands the Adams memorial, the work of Saint-Gaudens, known not only as one of the greatest pieces of sculpture in this country, but also as one of the greatest in the world. Art lovers make pilgrimages to it from all parts of the United States, and stand in awe before it in its circle of surrounding cedars.

One afternoon a wonder-struck group of people was admiring this work of genius when two women, one of them very fat and very puffing, came along the walk and stuck their heads through the cedars. After one glance, the two women proceeded on their way, the fat one remarking:

"Oh, yes; 'tain't nothing extra. I've seen it before. There's one just like it in the cemetery in Brooklyn. I guess the same man cut 'em both."

The Sacrifice Hit

By Allen Sangree

How the war in Europe connected up with the great national game of America. An unusual yarn, with a good deal of pathos and deep feeling, by a writer who knows human nature and how to put it into his stories

CHAPTER I.

ONE sultry day in late summer, about the hour when German siege guns were hurling their first shells into Termonde, a farmer's boy in northern Iowa rested under the shade of an ancient mulberry tree, contemplating from afar the peaceful view. They were harvesting oats, but it was a rock-ribbed field, too rough for a machine, and Mr. Leonard had recourse to the old-time cradle; his son Joe following with a wooden rake, and two hired hands binding, awkwardly and slowly, for they did not relish the task. Their employer, on the contrary, a man well over sixty, yet hale and hearty, rather enjoyed it, his thoughts reverting to an earlier period when, as he pleased to believe, Americans were more robust, more patriotic. A distant, ominous rumble in the heavens gave another turn to his reflections, and with good humor refreshing to the others he joined the sun-baked, perspiring group:

"Boys, that takes me back to Chancellorsville." He mopped his face and muscular neck as the tocsin of an approaching shower reëchoed.

"That must have been some battle," eagerly put in Israel Bachman, with a view to prolonging the recess.

"Kind o' small potatoes, though, compared to this war over in Europe," challenged the younger of the hired help, Eddie Saylor, son of a widow whose small estate lay near by.

Mr. Bachman glowered, continuing to entice the Civil War veteran into narrative, adroitly introducing Antietam, The Wilderness, and finally the gory spot where Artilleryman Leonard won a Legion of Honor medal. "But I guess there won't be anything over there worse than Gettysburg; hey, Mr. Leonard?"

"Well, now, Israel, I don't know but what you're right," said the artilleryman thoughtfully. "Gettysburg——"

"Yes, but that don't make Johnson a greater pitcher. Look how long Matty's been in the league!"

"Oh, shucks! It ain't how long you pitch. Cy Young had Matty beat, if that's the way you're goin' to count."

Artilleryman Leonard, who had fought through from Bull Run to Petersburg, swung upon the boys a blighting glance such as might have cowed one of Pickett's vanguard. He held baseball a silly pastime, akin to horse-racing.

"To work; get to work now!" he blared, his gray eyes fierce under bushy, wrinkled brows. "We'll clean this field off to-day," and, striding away rapidly, the monotonous swish of his cradle soon smote the still air.

The storm held off, and after supper Farmer Leonard sat on his back porch, soberly reminiscent. Red and yellow rays of the setting sun, piercing the murk of black clouds above like a mass of smoke lit by a bursting shell, vaguely disturbed him. Later on a few big

drops of rain splattered down, thunder muttered, a mistral breeze stirred the maple leaves that reached above, and Leonard set about dully to make his habitual tour of the immediate domain. He saw that the ponderous Clydesdales had ample bedding, that the mild-eyed Jerseys were comfortable, that Madam Berkshire had not trampled any of her week-old family. The contented munching of live stock, their snugness, emphasized now that rain forcefully attacked the weather-tight building; even the aroma, acrid and animal, warmed his heart, leavened his moodiness. Essentially a man of action, however, he was not one to permit laxity in discipline.

"You boys get to bed right away, d'you hear me!" Upon returning to the house, a flickering of candle in the garret bedroom had caught his watchful eye.

"Yes, father; jest two minutes. We're—we're—me an' Eddie are readin' about th' war." When the door closed, the two lads, their blistered, strong young hands miserably cramped, their sun-dyed foreheads sweat-tattooed, hastened the affair that to them was so much more vital than Belgium's plight, Joe finishing his letter first.

Dear Mr. Mathewson, I guess you wont never read this for most every kid writes to you I suppose. Only for Eddie Saylor hes 13 I was 11 last June I wouldent had the nerve. He says Walter Johnson is the greatest pitcher in the world I say you are. We had a fist fight and I got a black eye. My father says baseball is wicked he got shot at the battle of Gettysburg. Eddie and me are both pitchers only we dont get time to practiss I guess Johnson will send one of his gloves to Eddie because Johnson comes from out west. I guess you wouldent send me sumpin if it was an old cap with Giants on it Id keep it for ever I would show it round to all the fellows. If you send it send it to Edward Saylor my father don't like baseball then I'll get it. Yours truly,

JOSEPH MEADE LEONARD.

The Johnson missive, less faulty in construction, but no more wheedling, was completed as the farmer's heavy tread again approached, and, quick as might be, out went the candle, and snores reverberated. Vivid sheets of lightning blazed the small room, torrents of rain lashed the stout chestnut shingles, thunder shook the windows. But warm, dry, and secure, those hero worshipers for a long time whispered their boyish hopes and confidences.

CHAPTER II.

Twenty miles from Termonde another lad, wounded, lay unconscious in a German ambulance, bumped hither and yon over roads hub deep in mud. A chill, penetrating rain aggravated the torments of the wounded. The long, ghastly column, escorted by cavalry, was well within the German lines, in no danger from the enemy; nevertheless the same furious urgency prevailed that Jean Bauer witnessed in the morning when the gray hosts first appeared.

Bandages now swathed the Belgian boy's body, which was otherwise covered with a military overcoat, the gift of a German officer whom he would never know, albeit he had saved his life. His homemade wooden sabots, blood and mud-smirched, still clung to his feet. For a long time he gazed at them while he gradually mustered his faculties.

There had been a clear stage for the indentured farm hand to escape, despite that unbelievably swift onrush of Germans, destined to almost reach the gates of Paris. Only the gross credulity of his master, Philip Lanier, thwarted him. "Don't mind them," commanded he of his family when group after group of refugees cried their warnings. "The French will give them what they are looking for; you may be sure the Germans will never get this far. Come along, Jean; we'll finish husking that corn."

He was a black-haired, round-headed,

obstinate man, proud of his French blood; industrious to the point of slavery; unimaginative. For him that morning differed little from any other. But the boy Jean, and the big, shaggy dog, Bevis, were overwrought. The latter did not rummage about hunting field mice as usual, but stayed close by, restive, shivering. At times he would raise his head and moan. Jean kept at his work zealously, skillfully, but he was acutely apprehensive. The crickets had an unearthly sound.

Lanier's truck farm, a considerable one, some four miles from Termonde, lay on the southern slope of a hill, the homestead at its foot, well shaded. Seizing a moment that concealed the farmer behind a corn shock, Jean ran to the hilltop, whence he could view a wide landscape. In every direction the roads teemed with fleeing Belgians. In the east and south he saw, but did not identify, strange, moving masses, much the color of the earth, here and there a gleam, a glitter. The first deep, minatory "boo-oom" conveyed no particular meaning to him, and yet he felt his skin prickle cold as when in swimming too long. Hurrying back, he was amazed to see a party of soldiers operating a three-legged instrument, several of the men arguing sharply with Mr. Lanier. Jean was exercised by the businesslike operations of this heliograph corps. He longed to ask them if they knew his brother Albert, who was, perahps, near at hand. The smart hussar, Jean's only living relative, often visited the farm, where he cut quite a figure, especially with the sparkling Lizette. Always he promised: "Just you wait, Jean. Some day I'll take you to the great Antwerp. You're going to have an education. I, your brother, will see to it."

War then was as remote as it looked now in Mr. Lanier's cornfield. But it came swiftly, certain, as the swing of a pendulum. Like specters, the signal corps vanished, scampering for a motor car that chugged on the highway. Obtuse, combative Lanier continued to stare after them until half a dozen shells, the discharge of a whole battery, with their deafening report, whir of shrapnel, clouds of dust, exploded right in the field.

Aroused at last, yet marveling why any one should attack him and his corn crop, Lanier sped to his house, followed closely by Jean and the dog. He could not believe his own eyes. Though he had traversed a bare eighth of a mile, the farmer found his wife and three daughters, hysterical, panic taken, bundled in a wagon. German cavalry, infantry, artillery, trampled the yard, dug trenches, set up batteries. He was in the very vortex of an impending battle line. His hoarse, maddened shouts for information, for justice, for retribution were heeded no more than the barking of the dog. A shell of huge dimensions, fired by his own countrymen, burst in the doorway, literally wiping out two-thirds of the stone homestead. The Allies were maneuvering from south and west; five German army corps were flanking them on the north and east.

Stunned by the concussion of another shell which had brought down the barn on top of its late owner, Jean revived, unhurt. An hour had passed. Wedged in by sections of the roof, he managed to wriggle out. He was quite alert; a strategist in embryo, for thus does a human being adjust himself to circumstances. The Germans evidently had advanced, but he observed other forces coming on, and he thought of place for refuge, his "robber's den," a sort of cave under the steep bank of the creek. Violent spring freshets had gored an opening there big enough to shelter himself and Bevis, for his playmate had not deserted him.

Peeping out thence, he saw guns and limbers recrossing upon improvised

bridges over the narrow chasm, while a few hundred yards below Belgian dragoons, four squadrons of them, dashed through a ford to attack. The Allies had temporarily turned back the enemy's right, and they aimed now to check the center. Hopeless! The German wedge was already formed, and rapid-fire guns decimated those gallant troopers. Horse and rider piled into the brook so that the water inched up higher and higher.

Jean recognized the uniforms, and he was horror-stricken, but not astonished when his own brother toppled over the bank, the charger stopping at its brink.

"Albert, Albert, this is me—Jean," he cried aloud, embracing and tugging at the inert body. "Don't you see us —me and Bevis, Albert? Albert, look up—it's me and Bevis!"

Babbling affectionate entreaties, he struggled frantically, helped by the intelligent dog, to lift the dying man to the bank above; the creek was fast becoming clogged. A veritable sleet of bullets swept the plain, and from his Taube aerie a German aviator watched concernedly the progress of boy and dog as they dragged their burden several city blocks to the screen of a stone-fence corner.

Though his brother's eyes were now lusterless, his jaws clamped, his flesh chilling, Jean could discover no wound. He had never been in the immediate presence of death; it must be that Albert had fainted; once more the dangerous zone was covered.

So accurately did the German concentrate their artillery fire, so swiftly advance in mass formation that the battle halted abruptly as it began. Even while Jean secured some untainted water in the old can that he used for fishing bait there came a general lull. The Allies were in full retreat; Termonde's knell had tolled. Gray infantry poured over the plain. Some clustered about the stone-fence corner, and, hurrying back, gasping for breath, heartsick, Jean was appalled to see a Bavarian methodically commandeer Albert's boots, which were new. The desecration seemed so monstrous that for a moment he could not speak. And then:

"Don't! Don't! That's my brother —my brother Albert! Stop him! Oh, make him stop!"

They turned upon him sluggish, imperturbed countenances, the marauder not even looking up, and the boy, after one wild, appealing glance at the group, grabbed for his brother's pistol. At the same time, Bevis, the dog, sprang viciously upon the kneeling figure, sinking his huge fangs in the soldier's cheek. In a twinkling it was all over; the boy receiving a bayonet thrust intended for Bevis, a clubbed gun crushing the faithful animal's skull, the sudden arrival of a mounted officer, a staff aid-de-camp, who had witnessed only part of the drama. Swinging from his horse, the latter smote right and left with his gloved fist, uttering a trenchant oath:

"The Germans do not fight children!"

His was the handkerchief that stanched the raw wound, his the overcoat that protected the Belgian boy on his painful journey to the great military hospital at Cologne.

CHAPTER III.

"Freely ye have received, freely give," was the text of Reverend Mr. Elderdice's sermon on the Sabbath morning that culminated in Farmer Leonard's selection for chairman of the Belgian Relief Fund. It was a crowded church, partly for the reason that on the Wednesday following the congregation proposed gathering at its annual harvest-home picnic, there to eat, drink, and be merry in accordance with the community's primitive ideals. Having

long been an established event, no arrangements were necessary for this; all knew what to do, what would transpire. In their mind's eye they saw the tables weighted down with wondrous layer cakes, chocolate, coconut, and jelly; the ball game, the contest at quoits, and finally the evening diversions, illumined by harvest moon, when young folks would march round the "kissing ring" to the lilt of:

The day is far spent, the night's coming on,
So give us your arm and we'll joggle along;
For you will be happy to see your grandpappy
When you grow old.

The nip of expectant pleasure called forth even backsliding members, and Mr. Elderdice took advantage of the occasion. His diplomatic announcement that the sermon would be unusually brief provoked a universal shudder of bliss. The Sunday-school children, marshaled in the front pews, exchanged furtive, gloating glances. A worthy deacon cleared his throat loudly, censurably, as though to say: "If so be, must; but let us not exult." Rousingly the choir led off "Blest be the Tie that Binds"; cordially the congregation joined in.

With the course thus cleared, philanthropy's chariot glided away on greased wheels, again illustrating the truth that many of us are touched by the appeal from a distance rather than by one near at hand.

One group alone were conspicuous for their indifference, namely two benches of half-grown boys, and it was toward them that Reverend Elderdice directed his peroration, not without a note of asperity: "A vital feature of this splendid charity which I neglected to mention is that the children are to take part in it, and take part with their whole soul. Boys, I mean you in particular. The girls, I am sure, will contribute nobly. I can see it by their expressions." He drew a vivid contrast between the Iowa lads, well fed, happy, about to enjoy the harvest home, and the Belgians, starving, unclothed, homeless; he pictured their desolate Christmas. "It may cost you a sacrifice, a grave one, but that is your duty. Each should give, no matter how near and dear the present."

The pastor impaled the shifting, evasive company with stern eye, his voice waxing more and more rasping, but it was as if two powerful magnets hauled at them from diverse poles. Plainly enduring some physical anguish, they wriggled, squirmed, and distorted their faces until the dominie, though mystified and nettled, surrendered.

Verily, he was discreet, for not the eloquence of St. Paul or Demosthenes could have vanquished allurements invincible as the sweaty, tattered glove of Walter Johnson and a frayed baseball cap that once wreathed the caput of Christopher Mathewson.

Services over, and the exhibits shifted to a far corner of the churchyard, where a good part of the male congregation inspected them, "Doc" Neff, sporting oracle, announced as his sublimation of opinion that Mathewson and Johnson must have been "clean hypnotized" to give up such priceless tokens, which was not entirely the truth. Very likely neither would have responded at all had they not happened to meet in Philadelphia when Walter Johnson dropped off there a day as the Nationals journeyed to Boston. Naturally Walter went out to see the Giants, who were still in the championship race, and that evening the two renowned flingers, feet propped on the window railing of a hotel lobby, fanned and smoked, while outside gaped a concourse of admirers, newsies and messenger boys in preponderance.

"By the way," laughed Matty, after the great men had solemnly discussed pennant possibilities, "did you get a funny letter from a kid out in Iowa?"

"I sure did," emphasized the idol of

Washington, "and d'you know all he wants? He wants that glove I wore makin' my shut-out record. Some nerve, eh?"

"Well, this lad's got to have a cap with 'Giants' on it; I'd have to send him the old black one we wore with the 1905 championship uniforms. If you want a good laugh, read this."

McGraw, Wiltse, Doyle, Merkle, and other of the New York club strolled out from dinner, and their torpid brains were prodded to speculation and sentiment by the ingenuous letters.

"Yay, bo, we were all kids once!" breathed Mr. Wiltse in melting mood. "I mind the time——" And he opened the sluice gates of reminiscence that soon engulfed them all.

"One thing sure," epitomized First Baseman Merkle, "they'll be the whole cheese in Iowa when they get that junk. Goin' to give it to him, ain't you, Matty?"

The Giants' pitching luminary stole a sheepish look at his American League rival, who tapped meditatively on the arm of his chair. "I'd kind o' thought of keeping that cap," grudged Mathewson, "but, well, what d'you say, Walter?"

The trifling incident had, willy-nilly, developed into a "sporting proposition," and the American Leaguer reluctantly agreed, impressing: "I'm going to tell you, I bet there's been a hundred and fifty people asked me for that mitt, and one of them was a United States supreme court judge."

Pitcher Johnson laid stress on this point in his letter accompanying the glove, though it was hardly necessary, as Spokesman Neff mentioned a far more extravagant valuation. "They've got something here," pronounced he solemnly, "that John D. Rockefeller couldn't buy with all his millions. No, sir, if John D. would lay down one billion cold in front of Matty and Walter they'd just laugh at him. What got them was Joe and Eddie bein' fond of baseball, an' what I say is, 'f we don't have an A No. 1 ball club here next year somebody ought t' kick us all round the county."

The words died on his lips, and the group, perforce, scattered at the approach of Leonard, senior, whose aversion to athletic frivolities was common knowledge, but Fame had already sounded her trumpet. The *Weekly Courier's* elaborate account nominated Messrs. Leonard and Saylor "foremost sporting citizens," whom their native State would some day be proud to acknowledge as offspring; it predicted immortality for them in the big-league archives. And Joe trembled in his boots. He was fearful of his father.

Eloquent in his silence, uncompromising of countenance, the veteran of Gettysburg during a whole week was a dreaded enigma to his son, who went about with muscles defiantly tightened, eyes mutinous. There were moments when he and his fellow "sporting citizen" all but determined to "run off" and seek the patronage of their eminent benefactors. "I know Johnson'll get me a job all right," said the older youth, more than ever loyal to his hero, "soon as he sees me throw that downshoot; then mebbe I could work you in f'r shortstop. I don't think Joe has th' speed t' ever make good in the box, d'you, fellas?"

The trophies were being displayed to "Skellybones" Wilson and "Synagogue" Barr, latter the Presbyterian minister's son. It was dusk, and they talked in low voices, keeping an alert eye for the elder Leonard. With brutal frankness the guests indorsed Pitcher Saylor's estimate of the host's ability; they were unanimous in advising flight from cruel bondage, and with similar occurrence they vanished when the farmer's call, peremptory, terrifying, smote:

"Joe, come into the house. I want to see you."

Ah, the frailty of friendship! Noiselessly, nimbly, like muskrats, those valiant myrmidons scuttled away, abandoning their quaking comrade in the hour of peril, leaving him alone to bear the brunt of rebuke, perhaps even to relinquish the sacred shred of dry goods so firmly imprisoned in his fist. The injustice of it all, the severity of his father, welled in his throat as though to throttle him. Through blurred eyes he saw his mother in the wide-spaced kitchen peacefully knitting, and with a pang of relish he thought how she would grieve when he had passed forever among strangers in a strange land.

The veteran sat by the parlor table, his strong, honest lineaments detailed under the lamplight. On his knees rested a well-thumbed Bible. "Joe," he said quietly, and the boy's lips trembled, his knees wabbled, and behind his back he clutched Matty's cap until his finger nails cut the palm of his hand, "your mother tells me that you haven't given anything yet to the Belgian Relief Fund, and the box closes to-morrow."

"Father, I was goin' t' give sumpin to th' Belgians, 'deed I was. It's only I just forgot. What should I give them, father? I'll give anything I got." In his transfiguration Mathewson's cap almost slipped from the boy's relaxed grip. Charity, gratitude, forgiveness, his eager face reflected each and every one of the beatitudes.

"That's something for you to decide yourself," advised the other thoughtfully. "It's not that I am chairman of the fund, Joe, and want our family to make a showing. It's not that. But other boys are making sacrifices. I just heard this afternoon that Charley Harnish is sending the stem-winding watch he got last Christmas, and the Walker boy is giving that fine ulster he bought only last spring. The Lord will prompt you to do what is right, Joe; just think what you would enjoy if you were a poor lad without a home, and maybe your father killed in the war. You see, I know what this means. I tell you, Joe, war is an awful thing; there's nothing grand about it at all." He strode nervously, heavily about the room, his thick brows gathered. "Somehow it's on my mind so I can hardly think of anything else." His massive head sank on his chest, then lifted as he asked bitterly: "What does that Gettysburg medal mean to me? Do you know how I got it, Joe?"

The boy stood in open-mouthed attention. He had never seen the honor badge. Seldom had his father mentioned his experiences of 61-65. "Why, they gave it to me for killing six men. I killed them all with the barrel of a musket—clubbed them." He blurted it with a groan. "War! Glory!" He stared out the window in silence.

"You must have been awful strong, father?" The boy's heart beat quickly; for the time he forgot Mathewson's cap.

Mr. Leonard turned slowly, and, despite himself, a lilt of vainglory presently crept into his tones. "I suppose I was, Joe. Some of them used to say I was the strongest man in the Army of the Potomac. I could lift a barrel of cider on a spring wagon when I was eighteen, and I got the best of Abe Stauffer at the county fair in Huntingdon, back in Pennsylvania. They thought nobody could do that. Abe was a powerful man——" Noticing his son's intense admiration, the veteran checked himself abruptly.

"You were a prize fighter, father?"

"Gracious, no!"—vehemently. "Just rasslin', Joe; only fooling. I just happened to be there."

A silence fell, more awkward for father than son. Mr. Leonard cleared his throat several times, and signified that the interview was over, but as the boy started away he was suddenly hugged in a bearlike embrace.

"We weren't professionals, Joe, that's

what I mean. Professional athletes are wicked, Joe; they play pool and gamble, and—and——" Emotion racked his huge body, his voice was husky. "Joe, you won't leave the old place, will you? Listen, my son"—he drew him closer—"your brothers and sisters have all gone and left us. They're settled. And I, we, always thought that you would take the farm. It's not a bad life. It's wholesome and clean, Joe. It's better than baseball. I'd just like to know, Joe, when your mother and I are called home——"

"Father," gasped the lad, "I'll never leave you and mother. I wasn't going to; 'deed I wasn't. It was only—only——"

"Only what, son?"

"Only couldn't I play baseball like you rassled?"

"Why, Joe, of course you can. Maybe now, boy, I have been a little strict about that. I guess I'm getting old and——"

"An' c'n I join the team next year and wear a uniform?"

"Certainly, Joe. I'm going to pay you regularly, and if you want to spend your money that way I have no objections."

"And c'n Eddie an' me have the barn floor to practiss pitching in? Doc Neff says we're to have spring practiss same as perfessionals if we want t' have a champion team?"

Leonard, senior, hesitated not a moment while he turned out the light. The kitchen clock was striking eight. "If I was you," he offered, and the lad's soul wriggled with joy at the casual words, "I'd move that reaper out to th' old hogpen. It'll keep dry there. And then dump them bags of oats in the granary. That'll give you more room, won't it?"

Hastily brushing his wet eyes with Mathewson's cap, Leonard, junior, twisted his wiry young arms about his father's body.

CHAPTER IV.

A rare flutter stirred the Belgian ward of the vast military hospital at Cologne, whose lodgers, since before Christmas, had eagerly looked forward to the oversea relief. Querulously, solicitously, jeeringly, they had asked a multitude of questions, but the answers were vague, unsatisfactory, or merely a shoulder shrug. In the colossal tragedy of a world war this mishap was trivial to the German hospital staff, but the bedridden prisoners, now that the donation had finally arrived, watched its distribution with childish expectancy. Fevered eyes from darkened sockets devoured every move of the orderlies, nurses, internes, and particularly of the American commissioner, a red-haired, red-mustached, athletic man, who plainly stood in no awe of Teuton officialdom.

Far back in the extreme end of the ward, Jean Bauer, the wounded boy of Termonde, was most of all agog, for Hilda, the red-cheeked German nurse, had talked to him much of "that great America," where every one was rich beyond dreams of avarice. "Just you be patient, little Jean," she often cheered him. "Those kind Americans will be here some day, and goodness knows what they will bring you." And, sure enough, here they were, one at least, and a Samaritan, too, as the big wicker hampers proved, but to all appearances callous, in that abode of suffering and death, to any sentiment.

The fact was that Councilman Tom "Ginger" McManus, politician and contractor of Cincinnati, once a newsboy, had reached the limit of his even temper. Handler of men and affairs that he was, nothing could hurry the operations, snagged by red tape. Months had transpired since he last saw the smaller Rhine. Spring was now at hand, and with it—the primary elections. Even at that moment, though tragedy gaped at him from every cot,

his thoughts were tethered in a certain clubhouse of a certain ward in the Ohio metropolis, so that he nearly lost his balance when a strangely familiar voice shrieked his name:

"Chinger! Chinger! Chinger, is it you? Chinger McManus!"

Inside the door that opened from another ward a disheveled figure supporting himself on crutches struggled with two attendants. His hair and beard were long; his cheeks sunken, his body emaciated, but his lungs were lusty as he vociferated: "Chinger! Chinger McManus! Save me! Chinger—ain'd it you?"

"Sure, Mike!" was his response in rich, rolling accents, unintelligible to the five hundred Belgian wounded, who wondered at its effect.

"Say it! Say it again!" cried the man on crutches, great tear gobs glistening on his whiskers as he clung to the American commissioner. "Say 'Sure, Mike!'"

The other repeated and cut short a mirthful laugh to block a corporal's guard which had been summoned to quell the commotion. "Hold on now!" he warned, his blue eyes dancing. "This is an American citizen. I know him." Instinctively he caught the attention of the official in supreme charge. "Why, it's Bieswanger—Adolph Bieswanger, the big brewer of Cincinatti," he proclaimed eloquently. "For the love o' Heaven, Dolph, how d'you get here? I heard y' went abroad last summer; they said you were goin' t' enlist, but——"

"Vait! Vait! Listen, Chinger, I tell you. Ach, Gott, vat I haf suffered!" His verbal mitrailleuse, Teuton in dialect though he had lived forty years in America, splattered the group of officials, but deeply impressed Councilman McManus. Long he had fished for that German vote in Ohio.

After all, it was only an incident. Adolph Bieswanger, creator of "Bieswanger's Brew," proprietor of a chain of cafés in the Middle West, host of the "Home Plate," had been caught between the lines with no papers other than some code messages in French which were harmless enough, since they pertained to the importation of light wines. In his mad flight a trip over barbed wire into a trench had broken his right leg, a fragment of shell had damaged his skull, and, after a long delirium, here was he—Adolph Bieswanger, native of Hanover—not only a prisoner, but a suspect.

"Chinger," he invoked, "can you beat it?"

"No," voiced Councilman McManus rousingly, defiantly, cocking his chin at the group of officials. "You can't even tie it, Adolph. I'll have the ambassador himself here; watch my smoke."

Reënforcing his pledge with a violent grip, the aspiring politician would nave bounded away on his weighty errand, but a nurse girl, buxom, formidable, irate, charged upon him, holding her own against interference, while a torrent of harsh German gushed from her ripe lips:

"Shame on you, you rich Americans!" Her eyes flamed; her bosom heaved. "Oh, it should not be—such a little boy! You must give him something. You should not play this joke."

In her hand she brandished a remnant of leather, criminally out of place in a hospital, a veritable germ Nirvana, blotched and foul smelling, yet Adolph Bieswanger and "Ginger" McManus gazed at it in speechless adoration. The writing on the tag was quite legible:

> I wore this glove making my shut-out record, fifty-six consecutive innings.
>
> WALTER JOHNSON.

In a semistupor they followed the nurse, Bieswanger breathing stertorously through open mouth as he hobbled to where Jean Bauer lay, huddled

up now, his face averted. It was Hilda herself who selected for him that small parcel because it directed: "For some Belgian Boy"; moreover, the extreme minuteness of its investing hinted at valuable contents. Every whit excited as the invalid, Hilda tugged with him at the complicated wrappings, unsheathed the yards of tissue paper, and when the sacrifice from Iowa tumbled out it was she who denounced so bitterly.

A loud laugh went round from cot to cot that brought a flush to the wounded lad's pallid cheeks. His smile was painful through twitching lips. In childhood disappointments burn sharply.

"I suppose," he stammered bravely, "those rich Americans were ju-just having a little joke, Hilda."

Councilman McManus, ex-newsboy, appeared to understand something of the spirit which prompted the grotesque contributions, as, laying aside the letters, he mumbled huskily: "Say, Adolph, when you think what them kids gave up; say, on th' level"—he had recourse to boisterous nose blowing—"say, it gets y'r goat, don't it?"

But the weeping, grateful magnate, transformed now, did not hear him. Like a surly dog with luscious bone he clutched the trophies close to him, his bulging eyes feeding upon them with savage jealousy. "Money, give me money, McManus!" he snarled. "What you got?"

The American commissioner studied him a moment anxiously, and then chuckled: "Oh, I'm on, you old fox! Why, there's about fifty bucks here, I guess, in our money." He took the gold coins from his pocket.

Among other attractions at the Home Plate, transcendant was Bieswanger's baseball cabinet representing years of diligent collecting. Here one might have seen the ball used by Arthur Cummings in pitching the first curve; mementos of Al Spalding, Dicky McBride, Bobby Mathews, Dave Birdsall, Fergy Malone, Bill Craver; the rubber plug that Jim White wore in his mouth before the day of mask or gloves; the bat employed by Pop Anson, the suit case of Ed Delehanty left in the train when he committed suicide at Niagara Falls; bits of uniform, photographs, contracts; in brief, the complete, tangible, legible history of baseball. Along with the United States supreme court justice, Adolph Bieswanger had begged for that Johnson glove; a Mathewson championship cap even he, friend of Garry Herrman, never aspired to.

"McManus," he demanded when the Flemish boy, astounded at more gold than he had ever seen before, did not respond, "can anybody call Dolph Bieswanger a piker, a cheap skate?"

"Not on your life!" agreed the politician firmly. "It ain't that, Adolph. We're 'way over this bunch; they don't savvy." He had noticed one of the surgeons tapping his head significantly. "And I was just thinkin'." He hesitated diffidently. "I was just thinkin'; this kid here, they tell me, has no place to go to, no home, no people. Un'erstand, I'm not butting in——"

"You mean I should take him to America, yes?" Jamming the cap and glove inside his shirt, Mr. Bieswanger shuffled to the head of the cot and put a comradely arm around the farm boy of Termonde. "C'n you fix it, Chinger; you see d' ambassador?"

Councilman McManus dropped one eyelash in a leisurely, Masonic wink, his right palm cut a gesture of certainty. "Leave it to the Irish, Adolph."

For the first time in months the proprietor of the Home Plate laughed sincerely, soulfully, as when Garry Herrman's team scored the winning run with two out. Returning the wink, and with similar gesture: "By chiminy, Mac; you said somethings!"

A Chat With You

SOME one was criticizing the work of Manet, the French painter.

"Why don't you paint what you see?" he said.

"I paint what *I* see," replied Manet, "not what others see."

Any man who does that either in stories or paintings is tolerably sure of an audience. People say that he is "original," whereas the quality they praise may be simply truthfulness and simplicity. This is a world of three, not two, dimensions. Men are more or less like each other—more rather than less. If we were all looking at flat objects, like cardboard figures, all pictures would look much alike, and there would be a great sameness in all the stories. But nothing in nature is flat. Everything has many sides, and this is just as true of the characters of men as of their bodies. From one angle, William Shakespeare was a successful theatrical manager, who saved enough money to make him a rich man in his native town. From another he was the greatest genius that has ever lived. Looked at in one way, Napoleon was a monster who waded in blood to gratify his overreaching ambition. And to another he appears a hero who fought with consummate genius for the cause of human liberty. To a man's mother, the man may appear a gifted saint not half appreciated by the world. To his mother-in-law he may be a demon in human form, and to his wife an amusing person, fatuous but good-hearted. It is all in the individual point of view, and the position of the individual toward the object viewed has a good deal to do with it. Who is to say which view is right? Truth has many sides, and the more sides we see or hear about, the more we know about it.

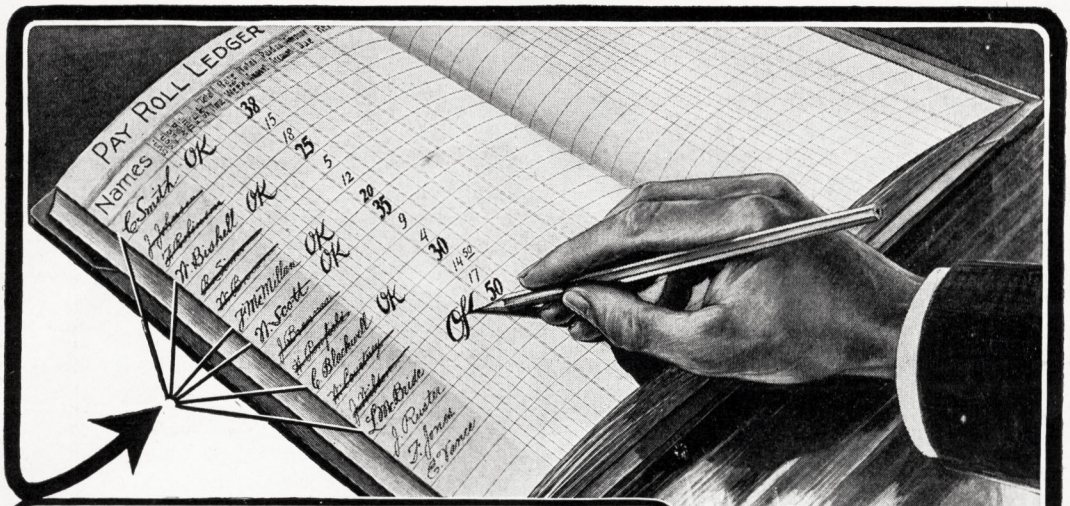
WHEN you read stories it is well to remember all of this. Any tales a man writes, if they are truly imaginative tales, are built by his imagination out of the various fragments of life his memory has stored away for him. We are not speaking of fantastic stories—such as those in the "Arabian Nights," in which a wild fancy and not a creative imagination is the guiding force. If three men write the rescue of a girl from a runaway team, one will make you think of the beauty of the girl, another will be interested in the man, while a third will lead you to believe that the story was all about the horses and that the humans in it were quite subsidiary characters. Two writers with practically the identical plot will evolve two novels, and one will be a moving tale of romantic adventure and the other will be a story of whimsical humor. If you doubt this, we refer you to "Treasure Island," by Robert Louis Stevenson, and "Dialstone Lane," by W. W. Jacobs. It is not plagiarism, either. Shakespeare took the plots for a considerable number of his plays from Boccaccio's "Decameron." How different was the view of life of the Elizabethan dramatist and the Renaissance novelist becomes instantly evident to any one who has read both.

IF you have any of the ambitions of a writer, it is well indeed to remember what Manet said and to try for your own individual viewpoint. No matter

how you try, you can't swell yourself out to greater size than you naturally are. The best course is an unpretentious frankness and candor. No matter what people think of your work in that case, you are sure, anyway, that some vitality and humanness is in it. If you lose yourself in your story and tell it as truthfully and clearly as you know how, your readers will presently come to know your character and individuality better than you know it yourself, what you like and what you don't like, and what you are interested in. We wouldn't advise any one to imitate any writer, not even Sinclair or Lynde or Bower. What we are hoping for always is the man with the new viewpoint, the man who shows things as he sees them and not as others see them.

HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS is a case in point. If you were reading THE POPULAR at that time, you doubtless remember his story, "Sunny Mateel," which we published last spring. His second POPULAR novel will appear complete in the number of the magazine out on the stands two weeks from to-day. It is called "The Amazing Tenderfoot." So far as the plot and setting of the story go, it might have fitted either Sinclair or Lynde. But that is the only resemblance, and even that likeness does not appear on the surface, but is only to be discovered by analysis. Knibbs has his own angle and his own way of looking at things. He has given us something of the charm of that in his verse which has appeared from time to time in THE POPULAR. He gives us a lot more of it in this latest novel. No one in the world could have written that story as Knibbs has written it. It has a charm, a humor, a power to visualize and exalt the reader as individual to the writer as the color of his eyes. The young Harvard man who started West to make his way and seek adventure may have seemed ordinary enough to those who met him on the train, but Knibbs helps us to understand him and shows us what a truly original and daring character he is. The cow-puncher he meets is so human and real that we know that he must be drawn from life; and, best of all, the bad man, "Indigo Pete," is such a philosophical, true-hearted, endearing ruffian that we like him as well as either of the others. It is a story of mining, of thrills, and adventure. A Western story of the sort that has sent more people West than all the literature ever distributed by the railroads. It is illuminated with the play of a delightful and whimsical humor and with a strain of human tenderness so close and intimate that we feel we have lived with the characters for years. It is truly a wonderful story.

THAT same issue, out two weeks from to-day, has plenty of other good things in it. The humorous fight story by Witwer, the tale of the submarine by William Inglis, the "Letters of a Cow-puncher" by Carr are alone worth the price of the magazine. As we said a few moments ago, no two people see things from exactly the same angle, but we are going to describe things just the way they seem to us, without any pretense but with simple truthfulness. And, to be perfectly and entirely candid, we think this next issue of the magazine is the best we ever turned out. Maybe you won't think so, but we have the courage of our convictions and we think you will agree with us. It is always a great mistake, we know, to lead people to expect too much —but we can't help thinking that we are right and that you will vote the next issue the best ever.



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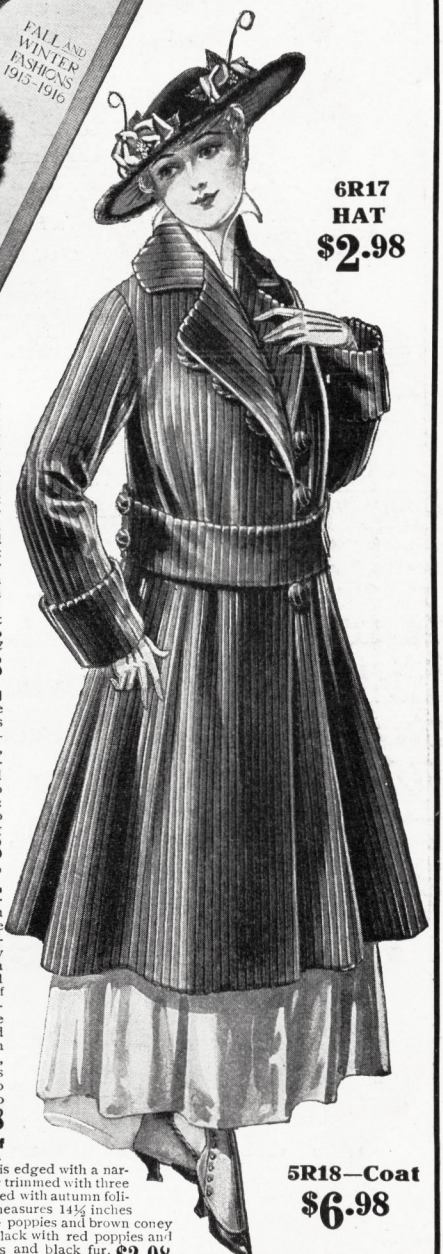

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novel in the next issue of THE POPULAR MAGAZINE, on sale September 20th, is one that no adventure-loving reader can miss without being sorry for it later. And it will be a good plan to reserve your copy ahead, instead of failing to find it when you think it ought to be out. This novel is the latest from the pen of HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS. and it is an

AMAZING

story of the golden West, possessing a savor all its own, and setting forth the deeds and talk of characters that will live and linger in the memory. Those who read "Sunny Mateel" in the POPULAR and enjoyed its vigor and charm will be more than delighted with this new story. Those who are enjoying the author's present success, "Sundown Slim," will hasten to buy the next POPULAR, containing Mr. Knibbs' new novel complete, "THE AMAZING

TENDERFOOT

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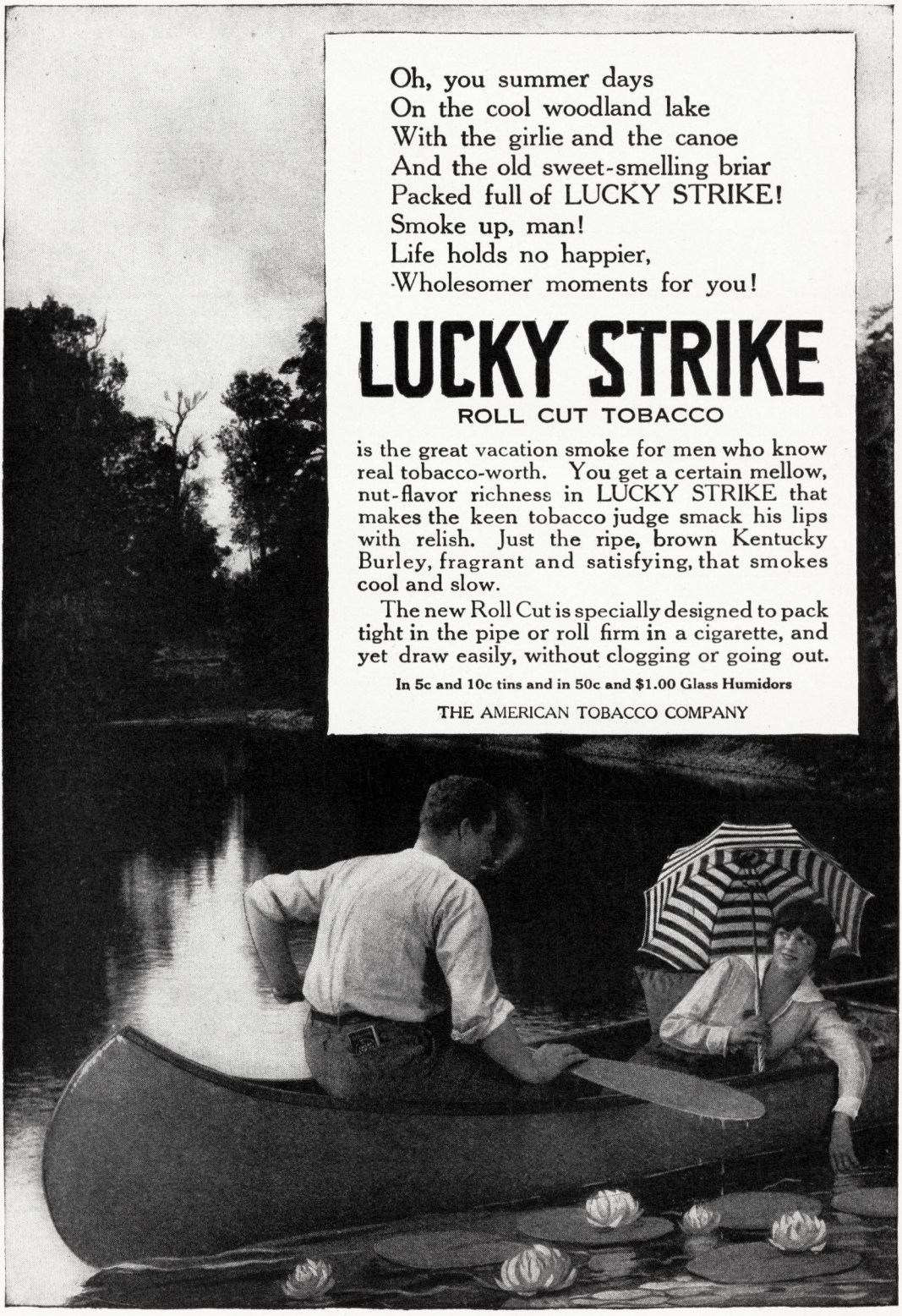

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On the cool woodland lake
With the girlie and the canoe
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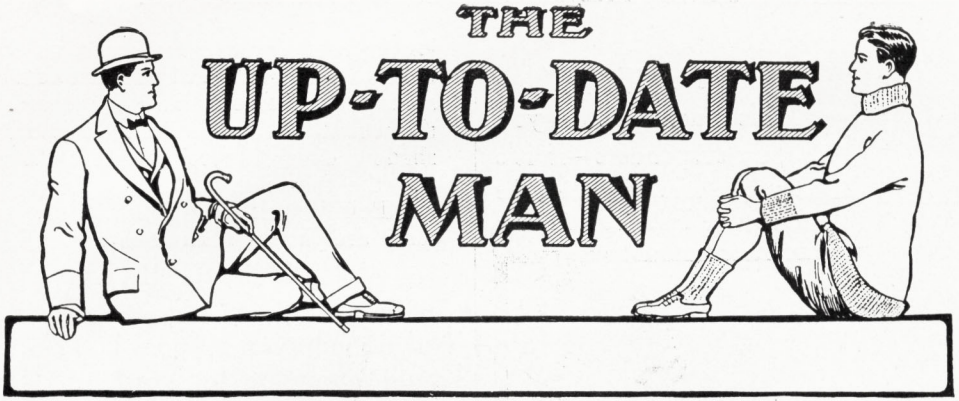


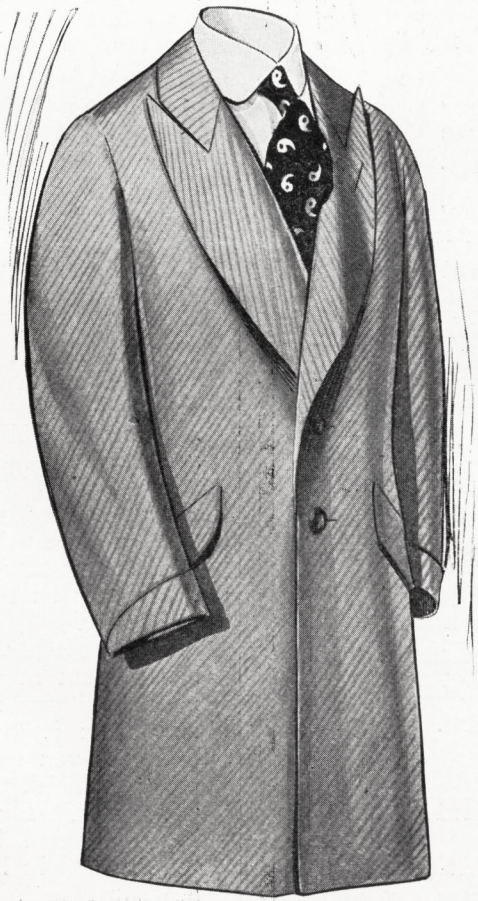
The readers of the magazine may write to this department about any problem of dress. Every question will be promptly answered, provided that a stamped, self-addressed envelope is enclosed.

A YEAR ago the drub of the drum and the clank of the sword overseas found a quick echo in men's dress, which clearly showed martial traces in coat shoulders, waistlines, taped and braided edges, and the like.

Something of this leaning toward the slashingly dashing air of the soldier is preserved for autumn, although confessedly military fashions are waning.

In evening dress, which might be termed the civilian's uniform, the army influence is most noticeable. The slim-and-trim military shoulder and the high waistline, which conduces to make a man seem tallish and long-limbed, are continued for another season.

The swallowtail (full dress) suit is very "waisty," but instead of the coat skirts being tight and scant, they are cut with natural drapery around the bottom, so that they spread gradually and gracefully from the waist downward. Sleeve tops are still puffed or raised to draw a sharp line of demarcation, which gives a close-clipped, clean-shorn military slenderness to the shoulders. Sleeve bottoms are narrowish, tapering, and wrist snug. Waistlines are well arched to "let daylight through the arms," as the tailors say.



Autumn Topcoat.

Coat fronts may be left unbuttoned or may be fastened with the familiar loop. Lapels are silk-faced to the edge, and supple and low rolling, without a particle of stiffening.

The whole aim in the smart evening coat is to make it as soft as a glove, so that it nestles into every hill and hollow of the figure. This is accentuated by choosing much thinner, lighter cloths, instead of the old-fashioned, unyielding fabrics that hung with boardlike straightness.

Perfectly plain materials are no

Look for **SHIRLEY** on this buckle when you buy suspenders—if it's there you're *sure* of getting the kind you've learned to trust

Shirley President Suspenders

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longer used for evening dress, as they look too "dead." All the fashionable suitings this season have a pattern in the weave—bird's-eye, cube, crisscross, shadow check, or cord—which "snaps up" the fabric as the lights play upon it. Being black upon black, these patterns are just as restrained and refined

The Newest Silk Hat.

as unadorned black, but they lend life and dash to the weave.

Evening waistcoats are cut with a front opening midway between the "U" and the "V" shape, with a more marked tendency toward the "U." The collar may be stitched flat or it may roll softly.

Quite often the evening waistcoat has a seam at the bottom, which is meant to "break it in" at the waist, and cause it to crease in a groove.

Unless you have a waistline, natural or artificial, your evening waistcoat is not smart, for in the Dictionary of Fashion, there is no such word as "stomach." It has been (and has to be) suppressed.

Evening trousers are cut narrowish down the calf, and should swing clear

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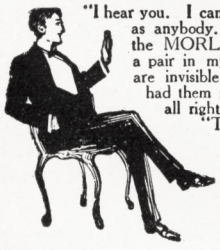

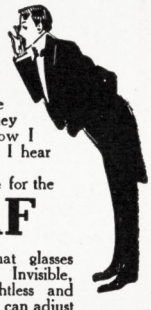

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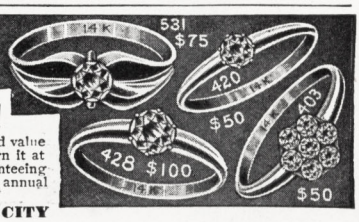

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of the instep, instead of flexing over it. Braid is no longer used on trousers, as it is too thick. Silk tape is lighter and softer. A single broad stripe is usually preferred to two narrow stripes.

Taking up the accessories of evening dress, the newest silk hat is illustrated here. It has the English curled brim and belled crown, instead of the now outmoded French flattish brim and almost straight or tapering crown.

Since silk hats are now made in every conceivable proportion of crown and brim, it is easy to get a style that is becoming to you. Many men, who are below normal size, fall into the error of choosing a silk hat with too high a crown that makes them look overhatted and top-heavy.

While the wing collar is yet correct for the evening, the poke collar, shown this month, is both newer and smarter. It is notably smart when worn with the pointed-end tie illustrated.

In evening boots and shoes, the patent-leather pump is still fashionable, but more fashionable yet with the shoe with a patent-leather vamp and uppers of "satin de laine" cloth adorned with flat, smoked-pearl buttons. This boot has a plain toe (no perforations) and a close-trimmed, beveled sole.

Evening handkerchiefs are always plain white, with wide, hemstitched edges and your monogram, if you like, embroidered in white on the corner.

Walking sticks are now invariably carried with evening dress. The smartest stick is burnished black ebony with a gold cap sunk into the top, so that it is not visible except when one looks downward. The "strap stick," having a strap that you loop over the wrist, is a military style borrowed from abroad.

Evening gloves are soft white, dull or glacé kid for indoor wear (dancing, et cetera), and white buck for the street. Black embroidery on the backs is now omitted, as it renders a glove too "fussy."

The autumn topcoat, illustrated here, shows one of the new style tendencies in its needle-point lapels, slanting pockets, turn-back cuffs, and decided "waisty" effect. Also shown are a smart linen collar with a cutaway open-spaced front and a broad autumn sailor's knot (four-in-hand) scarf.

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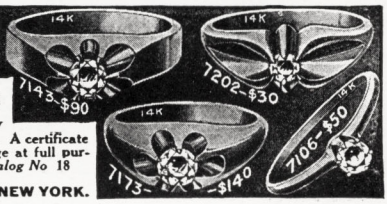

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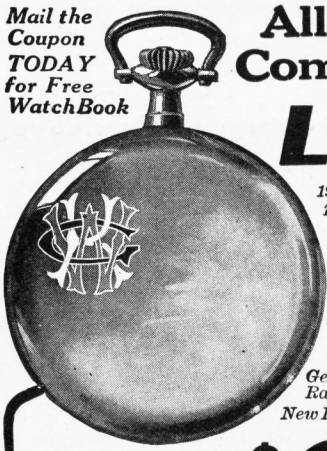

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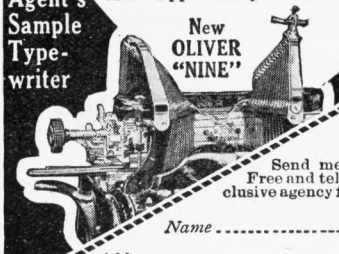

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