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Stories that "GET YOU" In this Number

ROWLAND - COMFORT

GRIMSHAW - KNIBBS

CULLEN - STACPOOLE

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Oranges and a Tight Squeeze

—But He Read THE POPULAR

Fullerton, Cal.
12—3—'17

Editor POPULAR MAGAZINE, *New York.*

DEAR SIR: I have just finished reading your fourteenth anniversary number, and feel that it is incumbent on me to write and thank you for the many enjoyable hours you have given me through the medium of the POPULAR. I was a member of the library committee of Troop H, Fifth Cavalry, in 1903, and subscribed for the POPULAR after reading the advance notices. I am another who "has never missed a number."

I received a broken foot while riding or trying to ride a bucking horse and was discharged for disability in the Spring of 1904 and came to Los Angele I was unable to work for some time and was too stubborn to let my folks know of my plight, and for some months I played them very close indeed. I paid a dollar a week for a den in a cheap rooming house and I lived like the sparrows. I have never really liked oranges since that time. I used to buy a bucketful of culls for a nickel, and more than once I made a meal off them alone.

But I always managed to get the POPULAR, although I remember one number I read in snatches at different bookstands. I would read at one till chased away, then go to the next and pick up the story where I had dropped it. Later I worked on "Lucky" Baldwin's big ranch at Arcadia, and twice I walked five miles to Monrovia to get the POP.

Bower, Sinclair, Chisholm, Coolidge—they all seem like familiar friends.

California has been good to me. I came here practically on my uppers, and it was not long before I was literally on them. I dug ditch with seven Japs in front of me and six behind (ask any Californian if that is not the worst ever), and I fought a husky hobo in the ice tank of a S. P. refrigerator car with a plug chain for a weapon. Got him with a lucky swipe just as he got me down and was kicking my ribs loose.

Now there is a little car in the garage, a small curly-haired youngster in the bedroom (to whom I have carried a drink, a pencil and paper, and the "funny paper"—although he went to bed two hours ago. Spoiled? Oh no!) also a much better wife than I deserve.

I have made money and lost it, had good jobs, lost them, and got better ones, but have managed to get an even break. I suppose that you are amazed at this autobiography, but this letter is not really to you but to the POPULAR MAGAZINE—an old friend. Sincerely yours,

C. S. H

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

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A Fighting Ishmael

By A. C. Allenson

Handicaps help people with the right stuff in them. Ewan Craigie had a bad start in life through no fault of his own, and had to combat cruelty and injustice from the beginning. But from his enemies he drew strength. In the wonderful way life has of transmuting into golden character the iron hardships endured with fortitude and resolution, the boy grows in grace and power, and becomes a leader among those who scorned him. Ewan Craigie is a new sort of hero for our "Popular" gallery, and we rank him pretty high among the hundreds of men we have introduced you to.

(*A Complete Novel*)

CHAPTER I.

THE corner seat in the Settlement church was a pew and yet no pew. The vestibule took part of it away, a pillar another portion. It could not be rented, so there sat the Craigie lad and his mother.

To Geraldine Ainslee, sitting in the transept, it reminded her of a leper window she had seen in a medieval English church, through which the unclean might share remotely in the offering of the mysterious sacrifice. Prayer books, kindling wood, scrubwoman's buckets were there side by side. The pillar obscured the pulpit, but that mattered little. Jane Craigie never looked up. Her eyes—big, timid, blue eyes—were always on her folded hands, the meekest hands one ever saw.

The lad, Ewan Craigie, was fourteen years old, big and strong beyond his age. He did not look like a Settlement lad. His features were finer, his nose straighter. The mouth shut decisively over strong white teeth. His crisp chestnut hair had a stubborn curl. He had the ranginess of a blooded colt that would fill out presently to strong shapeliness.

People who knew said he favored his father, the sailor.

His mother was a slight, girlish woman, with broad forehead, brown hair, sweet oval face tinged with the delicate pink glow that heralds premature twilight. There was over her, visible, but impalpable, the veiling of still, quiet humility. She looked more like the big lad's sister than his mother.

As far as Ewan's memory reached she had always worn on Sundays the same black dress, black hat, black, carefully mended gloves. She was never spoken of but as Jane Craigie, and he the Craigie lad. Once the name had puzzled Ewan, for her parents had been called Craigie. He knew that when a woman married she took her husband's name.

Often, especially at night in the darkness, he wondered. Later—very soon—he understood. Other children told him.

Sometimes Simes, when he was very angry, called him a name that brought the furious blood to his face, the blazing wrath into his eyes. Ewan knew by this time that his mother had never been married and that he was her shame. Simes, farmer, money lender, fisher in troubled waters, had married Jane's sister. They needed a servant who would be docile under any yoke, so they gave her the scraps from their table and an attic whose bare walls in winter were rimed with thick, glistening white frost, open in many a chink and cranny to the furious winds of bitter winters. In return for these mercies the girl gave to them the service of a slave.

Thus they profited, and glorified gain in their souls as charity.

There had been, at first, the chance that the baby would die. In the hill country unwanted children had Spartan testing. Later when the child, mothered by the girl with jealous vigilance, gripped life with tenacious hands, Simes found compensation in its servitude. At an age when happier children were regarded as not much more than babies, Ewan was tending great cattle, stoning the bleak fields in bitter weather, working long days in the hayfield. He learned pitifully early how to toil, and the discipline hardened mental and moral fiber, as well as the muscles of his fine, strong body.

So they labored and endured, the frail girl mother and the barelegged, stormy-eyed lad, she fearing, he hating Simes and the social and religious class to which he belonged, but living, the two of them, a tender inner life of their own. Ewan went to church because he would never let his mother appear publicly alone. She was too gentle and timid in the presence of people. He walked by her side, as though through a world of foes, her defiant, challenging protector.

There were two of the gentler sex who stood in the boy's mind on pedestals of their own—his mother and the girl at the rectory, Geraldine Ainslee. His mother he knew, but the girl was a delicious mystery. He knew her by sight only, for she did not mix much with the country children, having a governess at home.

She had a prettily proud way with her, but he liked it much better than the dumpy, giggling manner of many of the other girls. He was quite sure she disapproved of him. No doubt her father, the parson, whom he had disliked since ever he had known anything, had told her all about him and his mother.

After church one memorable Sunday his mother gave him supper at once that he might have a long evening outside.

"Don't be scared, mother, if I'm late coming back," he said at the gate.

There came a sudden, stabbing fear to her. She knew he was restless. The reticence of recent days came back to her. There was wild, wandering blood in him. His father had gone away, planning to return in a few weeks, when he and Jane were to be married, but he had never come back; his ship went down in the Gulf with all hands. Was she now to lose her lad?

"You don't mean——" Then her voice faltered.

"Of course I don't," he answered indignantly, reading her thought. "You think I'd leave you alone here, mother?"

"No, dear, I know you wouldn't, not for more than a little while maybe." She smiled. "I know it's terrible hard for you, Ewan, but try and be patient, and a way will be found——"

"I thought I'd like to see Mr. Trench and ask him for a job in the pits," he explained.

She watched him as he went along the road, a great pride fighting with a great sorrow in her heart. Life's bitterest cross is in the realization of the cross our misdoings have laid on those we love.

Ewan was a little conscience-stricken as he hastened along. He had not told his mother all. He did want to see Mr. Trench, though, so he made for the big house. When he neared the "Chalet," the New York mine man's summer home among the Quebec foothills, he

wished the garden fence had been taller, that he might have slipped by unnoticed. Mr. Trench was strolling over the smooth lawn with the girl Geraldine, her hand linked in his arm. The veranda and grounds seemed to be full of visitors; pretty ladies in splendid gowns, and gentlemen who must be terribly rich, Ewan was sure, for they smoked cigars.

He hated them to see him, especially the girl. His clothes were shabby, short, tight in arms and legs and chest. He grew so terribly fast that his mother had always to be putting in pieces here and there. He didn't mind Mr. Trench a bit, but that wonderful girl with the slim grace, gray eyes, beautiful, shining hair. She must be, he guessed, about his own age. Sometimes he had vaguely wondered how rich a man would have to be before he could marry a girl like that. He had read somewhere that men used to fight for their women in the old time, and he regretted the advance of civilization. He was half minded to turn back and go round by the woods.

"Hello there, Ewan!"

Bad luck to it, the man had seen him, and was coming to the gate, the girl with him.

Mr. Trench listened to the request, eying the lad, whose history he knew, with manifest approval. Good, deep chest, lean, powerful hips, quick-footed activity, the indubitable game strain in every look.

"I don't know, Ewan," he replied. "But Curwen's just called; I'll ask him. Hi, Curwen!"

The grizzled boss came waddling up. He, too, was a friend of Ewan's.

"Come soon as you like, sonny," he said. "But mind 'ee, Ewan, no fuss with Simes. I ain't 'ticed you away. Ye asked; that's all there's to it. Wages? Same as we pay all kids. Guess ye can rastle a water bucket if 'tain't too full?" There was a broad grin on the mahogany-hued face. "What are ye—'bout fourteen, eh?"

"Fourteen by years," replied Ewan. "But they match me with men in the fields these two years past, and I've not fallen out of step yet."

"Fair 'nough!" grinned Curwen. "Man's pay for man's work, and I guess—— Well, we'll see what stuff ye're made of. Day after to-morrow, eh?"

"Thank you Mr. Trench and Mr. Curwen." The lad's eyes rested a moment on the girl's pretty face. He lifted his cap and turned to leave.

"Good evening, Ewan, and good luck to you!" said Geraldine, not knowing quite why she spoke, but she thought it fine to work with men in the fields at fourteen and not miss step.

"Thank you, Miss Geraldine, and the same to you, miss," he replied, the bright color in his face.

"Do a man's work?" answered Curwen to his employer's question. "I'll have to fence my job round to keep him out in a year or two. There isn't a lad within five years of him in all these hills he can't whip. Gad! I'd give every cent I have or will earn this five years for a lad like that to call me father. But there 'tis; there 'tis!"

Bob was a bachelor, but he had had his dreams of a happier state.

CHAPTER II.

Once away, Ewan struck out at a smart pace. It was dusk when he reached the Wibsey Camp, eight miles from home. His conscience, all the way, had been sticking barbs into him. In Wibsey, Sunday was the day for sports, horrible in the eyes of the Puritans of the Settlement. The club staged boxing contests on Sunday nights, and Ewan's repute as a tough boy fighter had come to Wibsey ears. Ultimately he had been tried out and matched with a youth from a rival camp. If he won twenty-five dollars were to be his, and the dazzling lure had been irresistible.

Deep down in his nature, unaffected by rebellious thoughts, was a root belief in God. His mother had taught it to him. Only the most necessary tasks were done on Sundays in the Simes house. They ate their food cold,

read no worldly papers or books, transacted no business. The day was God's, His merciful gift to toiling man, and to desecrate it appeared outrageous ingratitude. But the Wibsey invitation was a peculiarly insidious temptation. It wasn't as if the fight was to be in church time.

Anyway, perhaps God wouldn't mind it very much. He, Ewan, didn't mean to hurt His feelings or break His laws, but it was a terrible lot of money, and he and his mother could do such fine things with it.

The events of the next two hours were always recalled by Ewan as a blurred dream. There were glimpses of his mother's face, of the girl with the gray eyes and smiling mouth who had wished him "Good luck."

He remembered descending from the clouds slowly. The shoutings of three hundred leather-lunged pitmen came to him on his islet of roped and padded ring, as the crashing of surf on a rocky shore. The furious toe-to-toe rally in the fourth round had ended with the Craigie lad driving his opponent across the ring with irresistible attack before which the other crumpled and fell. Ewan had seemed to himself two personalities, one in the clouds, another fighting like a wild cat, and now they came together again. The slap of the referee's hand, some one throwing a coat over the white, satiny shoulders roused him thoroughly. He dressed and started home with a heart whose strong throb seemed to make the sky pulse. The night was warm and starry. On the ridge a breeze from the sea cooled his hot face.

Twenty-five dollars! He had never owned so much before.

He sat down on a bowlder, at his feet the dark, placid lake, along the slopes the slumbering farms. A great white star hung like a jewel against the sable, velvet sky. Something in the wind went like wine to his head, stirring the sailor's son in him. A great hunger for strange, far lands, to see their wonder, feel their glow, came to him.

Yonder, thirty miles away, great ships went forth daily to visit them, and below lay the Simes place with all its bitter memories and grim, hateful realities. After to-night's draft of victory's wine he could not go back to that. He climbed the hilltop that he might get more richly the scent of the sea. And, standing there under the night skies, there came to him the wander call to leave all, go forth, taste the goodness of life, see, hold, and be satisfied.

Then he turned and walked slowly back to the ridge above the farm. He could see his mother's little window in the attic. He flung himself on the sward. Victory was good, and the smile of his mother and the clear gray eyes of Geraldine, and—it was all good—all but Simes—and—and——

He fell asleep, and slept till the sun's warmth waked him. He went over to the brook, stood for some moments with his head beneath the cascade of ice-cold water, then walked down to the farm.

CHAPTER III.

Simes was in the yard, noisily angry, when Ewan came through the gate. His indignant bellow brought out Mrs. Simes and the anxious mother to behold the returning prodigal.

"Ewan!" said Jane nervously. "You know you shouldn't——" Then she stopped. There was something new in the lad's face. Simes strode forward and grasped his collar.

"I'll teach ye, ye——" And he roared out the evil name that crimsoned Jane's face and roused all the devil within the boy. Swiftly he turned, wrenching loose, his fists clenched, but his mother's hand stayed him.

"That's enough!" he said to Simes. "All that's done with. That name again, and I'll kill you, Simes; I'll kill you sure as you stand there." There was bitter deadliness in the voice before which Simes quailed. "You've had your day, and a long and bitter one it's been. You've been whipping boys, but it's going to be men from this

time on." There was an evil hunger in the young eyes.

"Get off the place!" shouted the farmer, recovering himself. That weapon had never yet failed.

"Tell him, Ewan, dear, you didn't mean it," pleaded the frightened mother. To lose the shelter of the house seemed abandonment to wilderness exposure. Ewan laughed and put his arm round her waist. There was a rough sacking apron wrapping her slim figure, for she had been at the washtub since dawn. It was to him her badge of servitude. He untied it, and it fell to the floor. Ewan had never dreamed the fruit of victory could be so rich and sweet.

"Put on your Sunday clothes, mother," he said. "You are going to a home of your own. You are a slave no more."

She looked at him, wonder in the misty blue eyes; then turned and went indoors. Ten minutes later they went forth, whither she did not know; it mattered nothing, but now and again she stole a glance at the boy who, overnight, had become a man. Near the gate, they met young George Simes coming from the pastures, a great sheep dog at his heels.

"Drive them out, and shut the gate after them!" the farmer roared to his son, a tall, stoutish lad, half a head higher than Ewan. "Set the dog on the woman and her——" But he did not utter the word.

Nothing loath, George awaited them at the gate. As Jane was about to pass out, he laid his hand on her shoulder and pushed her roughly. Like a fury, Ewan leaped at him. The bully had but time to throw up his arm in an attempt to guard. The smashing blow, with all the power of the lusty boy-man behind it, fell on the arm. There was a sharp, sickening snap. The hurt man shrank back, clasping his arm, while Jane caught her tiger cub and held him.

"Set the dog on them!" bawled Simes furiously.

The great beast darted, barking, up the road, not knowing what he was sent after. There were neither tramps nor cattle in sight. He came back to Jane and Ewan, wagging his tail and fawning before his best friends.

"Go home, Don, old chap," said Ewan. The animal turned obediently and trotted toward the house. The two walked up the slope silently. Out of sight of the house, Jane could bear the joy no longer. The bundle dropped from her hand, she flung her arms about Ewan, sobbing as if her heart had broken. He did not seek to check her, for he felt that hearts heal as well as break with weeping. When she dried her eyes a radiance had touched the clouds. At the hilltop they paused, for the climb had tired her. They looked down on the place they had left. George Simes was not in sight. His father stood in the yard calling the dog. It approached him fearfully, slinking back out of reach as he took a threatening step forward. With an angry curse, Simes went into the house. Jane cried aloud as he reappeared with a gun. The dog tried to get away, but the farmer was a sure shot.

"It was murder!" cried Ewan. "Murder, just as much as if done to a man. He killed Don because he wouldn't turn on us. That's another bit to the score he'll settle one of these days."

"Ewan started this morning," said Curwen, reporting to Trench. There was a tennis party at the Chalet. The Ainslees were there. "Furnished a little house, and has his mother there, happy as a queen. Can't say I uphold him, though."

"Bob Curwen!" exclaimed Geraldine indignantly.

"I didn't mean it that way, Miss Geraldine, honey," replied the old fellow. "I'd ha' lent him the money, so I would, and so would anybody, but he goes over to Wibsey Camp Sunday night, whips another young cockerel, and comes home with the five-and-twenty-dollar purse. They say there were mortal ructions up at the Simes place. Anyway, young Simes is nursing a broken arm, and the old man shot his dog because it wouldn't turn on Ewan and

his mother. I glory in the lad, but I don't hold with this fighting on God's holy day. It's sure unlucky, so it is."

"I should think God would be proud of him." Geraldine's speech drew swift rebuke from her father.

"Speak not so of God, child. It was outrageous. Not only the desecration of the Lord's Day, but the gross ingratitude to Mr. Simes."

"If the Lord lets it by, I guess you need worry none 'bout Simes," said Curwen bluntly.

Mr. Ainslee made no reply. He knew it was a sore subject with Curwen. If persuasions could have availed, Jane Craigie would not have been husbandless nor would Ewan have lacked one who would have proudly fathered him.

"I am glad I wished him good luck all the same." Some of the listeners laughed at Geraldine's whole-heartedness, and she went indoors, the bright color in her face.

"There, Ainslee, your house is divided against itself," laughed Trench, strolling away with the clergyman. The mine owner was a man of much kindliness and tolerant common sense. "I wouldn't hold that Sunday fighting escapade too severely against the lad. It was fine, after all, and had the whitest motive. I looked in at the cottage this morning. The mother showed me the bits of furniture Ewan had bought with the fight money. She doesn't know yet how he earned it. I hope she won't learn, for to her it is a holy thing, and I am not sure she's wrong."

"I know he is good to his mother," admitted Ainslee. "It is his lawlessness and morose defiance that baffles one."

"Lawlessness! Why, the lad's only fourteen," laughed Trench. "The wonder to me is that he has not degenerated into a fawning, spirit-broken coward. It is the good in him, the fineness that resents, fights back, and saves him."

"The boy was never baptized," said Ainslee stiffly. "It was desirable that the child born in sin should not be received as if he had been born in wedlock. The rite therefore was postponed. Some years ago I spoke to Ewan regarding his status as that of a practical heathen, but he refused baptism because of what he called the church's unkindness to his mother."

"He has been wronged, then, more deeply than I had imagined," answered Trench.

The following morning Ewan was called out of the pit. Mr. Trench wished to see him in the office. The lad went in, and found Simes there.

"I came to say as I don't think as how you ought to harbor this here boy or his mother, after all the years I've kept them and done for them," said the farmer, glaring at the belligerent youngster.

"Why not?" inquired Trench crisply. "Slavery and peonage are out of date. Ewan applied for a job, and Curwen gave it to him with my full approval."

"And I ain't sure as how I won't take out a warrant for assault on my son," threatened the visitor. "Lads 'round hereabouts have been sent to the reform school for years for doing less than he's done. Disorderly fighting for money on the Lord's Day and breaking a person's arm, so he did."

Ewan's face clouded.

"Rot!" said Trench with refreshing emphasis. "You are as likely to put Ewan in the reform school as you are to put me there. I heard about your son's arm. How did it happen, Ewan?"

"He pushed my mother out of the gate," said Ewan. "Then I let drive and he put up his arm."

"And you are sorry it happened, eh, Ewan?" asked Trench, turning to light a cigarette.

"No, sir, I'd do it again," answered the youngster stoutly.

"You would, eh? Well, get back to your job, and if anybody else lays a rough hand on your mother just break something for him again. When a boy has a good mother like you've got it's up to him to take care of her. You'll never have but one mother."

To Ewan the day was ever hallowed in his memory. He had found some one to stand at the back of him in a pinch, with his enemies about him. Perhaps, of the two, the rich man had afterward the greater reason for gratitude.

The lad threw himself into his work so vigorously that Curwen, going off to lunch, stopped to speak to him.

"Ewan, son," he said, "I ain't made money enough to retire on yet, and good jobs ain't too plenty. Go a bit easy with your pick on that slab o' rock; there's less than two miles of it. Besides, the whistle blew five minutes back."

"Did it now?" grinned the lad. "I never heard it. Gosh, Mr. Curwen, but work's good!"

"So 'tis, and so is love and vittles and lots o' things, but you've got to partake judgmatically," said Bob.

CHAPTER IV.

One may imagine the Settlement as a still mountain tarn held in the deep hollow of the hills' bosom, a brilliant-hued jewel, an inky blot, a dead man's shroud, as the seasons exhibited it; its people as human spindrift, flung into it by the tempests that anciently lashed the ocean of the outer world.

Here and there in the older houses were graphic suggestions of a colorful past, contrasting vividly with the calm, slumberous present, a bit of crested silver, a piece of finely fashioned furniture, a painting, the work of some master hand whose genius still shone through the dust and smoky grime of the generations.

It had picturesque traditions, told on winter nights when the high-piled log fires flung long, fantastic shadows on dark-paneled walls, tales of Irish risings, of recklessly chivalrous men and beautiful women, of broad lands forfeited, of fortunes and titles held by usurpers in the far Green Isle.

These gave brave afterglow to gray skies, for life was hard, and its labors ill rewarded. Its circle was small and monotonous. Intermarriage, generation after generation, had wrought impoverishment of blood and exhausted much of the fire and ambition of the old stock. The littleness of its world made for narrowness and rigidity, and the narrowness had a severity that was more habit of mind than unkindness of heart.

Ewan Craigie, on his mother's side, belonged to the native stock, with its strain of Old World, dreamy romanticism, but his father was an outlander, a handsome, adventurous seaman from the coast, master of his own boat that carried him to his grave in the fog-shrouded waters of the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

It was Peter Trench who roused the sleeping hamlet. He had come up into eastern Quebec from New York to spend a fishing holiday with his friends the Ainslees, and, rambling through the new tree growth of the fire-shorn hills, had discovered indications of their wealth in asbestos fiber, the silky, silvery, indestructible substance that veins the serpentine rock. Following these up, he began to mine with steadily growing success, and the place became his home for the greater part of the year. Ainslee was a college acquaintance, who, while occupying a city curacy, had married Grace Douglas, a distant relative of Trench.

A coldly reticent man, neither bookman to whom the country seclusion would have given leisure for literary pursuits, nor enthusiastic pastor finding in close contact with men, soul by soul, rich opportunity for the exercise of his ministry, Ainslee settled down in the rectory as one who has come to his terminus in life and is quite satisfied that it should be so. A colorless man, lacking enthusiasm and ambition, a passively contented man, resembling a rock on the shores of life's seas rather than a vigorously propelled and guided craft upon them.

Grace Ainslee, a bright, alert-minded, vivacious woman of dreams and high ideals, had married with a lofty conception of the duties and sacrifices of the Christian ministry. Poverty she could have borne, hardship endured, sacrifice gladly made, but the commonplace dinginess of existence, uninspired by lofty idealism, unlighted by the faintest ray of the lamp of sacrifice, wore down her fine spirit.

Some said that Trench had been in love with her at the time she met Ains-

lee, and that her amazing marriage explained his celibacy. Be this as it may, he remained true, steadfast friend to both, and none who looked on could doubt that his unfailing loyalty and chivalrous understanding of the tragedy brought something of sunshine into the disillusioned girl's bleak life. When she lay dying she sent for him and asked him to care for her baby girl, and was made happy by his promise.

Ainslee had gladly acquiesced in the informal guardianship. It relieved him of many obligations and cares. He was not selfish in money matters, but Peter was a business man, a relative, wealthy, and fond of children, and would have been hurt had he not been allowed to buy dainty clothes for the child, and later pay her charges at an expensive school. Thus had developed the pretty relationship that made so greatly for the happiness of guardian and ward.

The year Ewan Craigie entered the pits Geraldine Ainslee went away to school, and, except at the longer holidays, she was lost to the Settlement. Now and again in church or in the country lanes he caught rare glimpses of her during the holiday visits, a slim, graceful girl blossoming into womanhood, a vision from another sphere, spiritual, ethereal, flitting across the hard, rough world in which he lived and labored, bringing a sudden color and radiance at her coming and leaving the world of the hamlet and pits sadly cold and gray when she went out of it.

Trench, who liked the lad and admired his sturdy courage and fighting grit, had been disappointed in him. In the pits Ewan had more than fulfilled expectations. He had sought no favors from either his employer or Curwen, but at twenty he was subordinate only to the old mine boss, and none questioned his fitness for leadership. He rose by sheer all-round merit. Ability as a miner alone would not have sent him so swiftly to the top, favoritism could not have sustained him in his leadership, nor would fighting prowess alone have given him the ascendancy he enjoyed.

Chieftainship in the democracy of the pit floor demands a combination of gifts. Ewan was a clever miner, had a cool head that made swift decisions, a sure foot on the steep, craggy precipices, a courage that never asked another man to dare what he himself would not risk, and, above all, he had the gift of rule over men. He could do more than the best of them, was reasonable in his demands, and while slow to anger could, when the pinch came, demonstrate fitness for mastership after the fashion that alone was convincing among the more turbulent of the gangs.

It was the contrast between Ewan in the pits and out of them that disappointed Trench. He had looked for prosperity to smooth away the asperities of the boy's character. Poverty and failure make for narrowness. But money was plentiful in the Craigie home now. Ewan had built a pretty little house, fronting the river and woods, for his mother. She now dressed well, for he would have it so. The old look of fear had gone out of her eyes, though the humility would never leave them. In the sheltering shadow of her big, masterful, aggressive son she had developed the natural sweetness of her character, and daily expended it in quiet acts of kindness and mercy among the poorer cottages of the mine hamlet.

Beneath the ground, Ewan was friendly and popular, but once back to the surface again the old dourness came upon him as a garment resumed.

On Sundays he and his mother still sat in the little back pew of the church. There were others they might have had. Trench understood the uncompromising spirit that kept him in it; possibly the clergyman and Simes grasped something of the meaning, too.

The lad's first visit to Wibsey had been by no means his last. Ring fighting had become his chief recreation. It furnished an outlet for his restlessly active spirit and gave warmth and color to a life that otherwise would have been duller and more monotonous than it was. There was good money in the game, too, and every earned dollar was

an additional shot in the locker for the bigger fight that was coming. Simes he would reckon with one day. His hatred of the man spurred him on in his quest after money. Money meant power; he would have it, and then when the chance came—and in the narrow life of the Settlement it surely would come—Simes should pay for every pang and tear he had wrung from his mother; he should suffer for every humiliating word and look he had flung at her.

To the gentler, less vigorous spirit of Trench the rugged vindictiveness of Ewan was an ugly scar on an otherwise attractive personality. Perhaps the lad sensed this disapproval and became still less approachable. Then an incident occurred in the pits that changed their relations from those of master and servant to personal friendship.

One afternoon a call to New York came over the telephone to the mine man. He had to leave by the evening train, so he sent for Ewan.

"I have to go to New York to-night," he said. "I wonder if we could get those samples and snapshots from the old Manogue Pit; I should like to take them with me."

The Manogue was a property formerly worked by a company that had gone into liquidation. Trench had bought it at the sale, and proposed to work it shortly.

"I think so," replied Ewan. "The ladders are old, but safe. I went down the other day. There is really no need for you to go; I can get both specimens and shots for you. It isn't the easiest kind of a climb for any one not in practice—a pretty steep three hundred feet."

"Guess I'm still good on the ladders," said Trench, who had the middle-age aversion to being reminded that he was past his prime. "Besides I'd like to see the workings for myself."

The preparations were soon made. Craigie went down first, the tools were lowered; then Trench and the two men they had brought with them followed. The work at the bottom was quickly finished and the ascent started. The pitmen went up first singly, then Trench followed, leaving Ewan to bring up the rear. All went well with Trench until he was two-thirds the way up; then the effort began to tell. He slowed, evidently weak and tired. So long as he had kept going he seemed safe; but, now pausing to rest, the nerve test came suddenly to a badly played-out man.

As he stopped, the swaying of the ladder became more perceptible and brought a horrible, heart-sickening fear. A shower of stones broke away from the crumbly wall. Unconsciously he looked down into the gulf after them, and, under the fascination of space, his head became dizzy, and he almost let go. Desperately he looked up at the sheer height to be climbed before safety could be reached, and in spite of his struggle for self-mastery his nerve went utterly. An uncontrollable trembling seized him. He dared move neither up nor down. He tried to call, but his voice failed him. Ewan, watching from below, was quick to grasp the situation.

"No hurry, Mr. Trench," he called out. "Take it easy and keep a good hold; I am coming up to you." In the even, reassuring voice there came hope to the panic-stricken man. He could not reply, but waited.

"Keep still; the ladder's strong enough for half a dozen," he heard Ewan's voice, and felt the approaching light steps.

Swiftly the nerve-broken man was lashed to the ladder. Shouting instructions to the men at the top, a stout rope was lowered. This Ewan fastened securely under Trench's arms, calling to the men to haul slowly, keeping the line just taut. As it tightened he cut the lashing, and they started up, Ewan setting the powerless feet on each rung and holding them there until ready for the next step. Thus they climbed the nearly perpendicular ascent, the men hauling easily, giving Trench sense of security, and Ewan keeping him from slipping. At last the climb was finished and Trench on solid ground again in safety.

"Shake hands, son," he said to Ewan when able to get to his feet again. "That's a big debt I owe you."

"Time was when you helped me up a stiffer climb than that," answered Craigie. "It's only a bit of your own back."

It is doubtful if the incident was ever referred to again between the two men. It was one of the happenings that occur in the strenuous life of the pits and pass in the day's work, but it marked a great change in the relations of the two men. Where hitherto there had been mutual liking, now was a close personal bond between man and man.

CHAPTER V.

It was a full year since Ewan had seen Geraldine Ainslee. She had remained the child-girl in his thought, the slim, smiling, gracious figure of the Chalet lawn, the night of his Sunday fight at Wibsey. The occasional glimpses of her at holiday times had been but fleeting impressions, but now she had come back, a woman, to take her new place in the little world. Her figure was still slight and supple, the gray eyes, like deep, clear pools of water, had wisdom, truth, and courage in them.

Something of the wild-flower glory of the summer moorlands was in her bearing and spirit. The pretty hair was now coiled about her shapely head. Ewan thought it more charming than before. He liked the decisive firmness of the smiling mouth. Then he looked from the rectory pew to the pulpit, and wondered.

"Mother," he said that evening at supper, after an unusually long, meditative silence, "what was Mrs. Ainslee, Miss Geraldine's mother, like?"

"If you mean the spirit of her, one of the sweetest and best women that ever lived. If you mean what she looked like, Miss Geraldine is the image of her when she first came into the hills. It carried me back twenty years to look over at the pew to-day," replied Jane Craigie.

"It's wonderful the kind of men some women take up with," commented Ewan in his quietly reflective way.

His mother laughed. "But isn't it the lucky thing we don't all see alike? The world would be a more troublesome place than it is if we did," she said.

"But a mummy is a mummy when all's said and done," he observed. "Soul gone and body withered. There doesn't seem to be one live thing about the parson. He's just a voice out of a talking machine, speaking what's been cut on the record. There's no Anno Domini in his calendar; it's all B. C."

"If she had lived—his lady, I mean—it might have been different at the rectory, and Mr. Ainslee, poor man, not so dull and lonesome," said Ewan's mother compassionately. "It was a sweet, homely place once. It was from the rectory came to me, when I needed a friend, the only one I found, and that was Mrs. Ainslee. When I look at the old place it is not his spirit but hers that is about it. I can see her now in my little room, with my baby—you—held to her bosom. Her own little girl was born a few months later, and maybe that made her all the gentler, though she could be no other. Poor, dear lady! She belonged to the city, and the lonesomeness and the long, cold winters and missing the folks of her own class were terrible hard for her."

"Must have been," agreed Ewan. "Like living in a tomb old and moldy with an ill-natured corpse for husband. Little wonder the poor little lady died. They say Mr. Trench was in love with her."

"You couldn't help being in love with her," said his mother, evading the point.

That evening Ewan took a rarely traveled direction for his ramble, past the rectory and church. On the hilltop, he sat down to think of the lonely, gracious woman who had nursed him when he was a thing of evil to the rest of the Settlement. It was the kind of thing, he felt, Geraldine would do. He thought of her eyes—they were true, loyal eyes—and the mouth it was the mouth of a woman who would go her

own way if she believed it to be the right way, though all others opposed. In some way the rectory seemed different to-night. There was a spirit about houses, he mused, personality, some effluence from the spirits of those who had lived in them. Perhaps that was what made some people believe in ghosts, a subtle visualizing of spirit by spirit. In church he had often wondered about the woman in whose memory the beautiful stained-glass window had been placed over the altar.

The window had often preached to him when the pulpit had no message. Mr. Trench, he knew, had put it there. People said it had cost more money than all the rest of the building. He had loved her as a girl, people said, and had wanted to marry her, and had loved her ever after, and for love of her had married no other. It was fine, he thought, on one side of his nature. To some men it was one woman or another, a trade, a bargain, not getting everything one might have sought nor giving all the other perhaps expected, but a giving and taking, a compromise.

If a man didn't care much, or a woman, either, it was not so important. But where two souls had been clearly drawn together by the bonds of a deathless love, should the mistake, the folly of an early wrong choice mar their lives to the end?

He looked down on the rectory; there was a figure in white crossing the lawn. It was Miss Geraldine, he knew, but in the dusk it was the embodiment to him of the gentle spirit of the woman who had gone to his mother in her lonely sorrow and nursed him, the child of shame, at her pure bosom. Long he mused there in the darkness. Love and life and death. The things worth while and things negligible. The losing by winning and the winning by losing. The life gained that is found to be but death. The life laid down that blossoms red and eternal from the grave. The world that tells one to win by grasping; the other world that proclaims victory in the letting go, the renunciation, the Cross. These matters flitted through the busy mind. He felt that the things seen are but temporal, the unseen things eternal.

CHAPTER VI.

The first winter was longer and more depressing to Geraldine than she had ever imagined five months possibly could be. Had Mr. Trench been at home and the Chalet open, matters would have been pleasanter, but he was away on a prolonged European trip. The monotonous white of the deep snows, the shrouded, still lake, the gaunt black trees, the bitter, gripping cold—all had emphasized her loneliness.

After the years in a New York school, with their busy brightness, friendships, amusements, the dark old rectory on the bleak hillside seemed the most cheerless of prisons. She had come home fully resolved to make the place more cheerful. Her father's isolation appealed to her quick sympathies. Little wonder he had worn himself into a narrow groove. Then she discovered that he resented any interference with his manner of living. Habits had become fixed rules. Whether they were good or bad, awkward or convenient for others, made no difference. Everything had to be ordered so that there should be no clashing with his usages. She tried to remedy his pastoral defects, abandoning the house to the old servant, who was as tyrannically hidebound as her master in petty things, calling upon the parishioners and seeking to interest them in little social diversions that would lift the pall from the place.

The people were glad to see her, for a winter visit, when the stocks of gossip on hand have become stale, is appreciated in the hills. She found that winter on the farms was a hibernating season. Strange, new enthusiasms found and left them cold. Apart from the daily chores there was little to do but drowse away the time till sugaring came again over the log fires or the big, double-decker box stoves. In the long evenings there were cards, the weekly newspaper, the mail-order catalogue.

Beyond these delights they neither wished nor intended to be stirred.

Between her father and his parishioners there was much to discourage Geraldine. Jane Craigie she liked more than any woman in the Settlement. Hers was the only house in which she had not to listen to scandal or slander. Mr. Ainslee had sharply objected to the visits, but she was firm, refusing to associate herself with the narrowness and injustice that had been spread over twenty years. Unknowingly she fought the same battle against his severity that her mother had fought when Jane Craigie's trouble was sharpest.

Ewan Craigie, as she observed him and listened to what people had to say of him, had been a great disappointment to her. In some ways he had more than fulfilled anticipations, but she had several grievances against him. His prize fighting shocked her dainty, refined instincts. Its nature and associations, so far as she knew anything of them, were unspeakably vulgar. The plucky lad, fighting to make a home for his mother, was a real hero. The well-to-do man, battling in the ring for money and cheap glory, was another and much inferior person. She understood that fighting at Wibsey meant mingling with the worst people, gambling, drinking, coarseness, and almost every other kind of wickedness. She knew that Ewan never touched drink, and certainly did not in the least look like one who was vicious. Still, the place had a bad name, and he had no business to be mixed up with its affairs.

Then again, he was barely civil to her father. She had been present when a little clash had occurred between them —some trifling matter affecting one of the mine families. Ewan had been courteous enough, and she saw he was right in the contention, but it was not a friendly or a respectful talk. She discerned something of impatient contempt in the younger man's manner that stirred her anger. It was one thing for her to oppose her father's petulant narrowness, but quite another for an outsider to challenge it. Then again she had been involved in disputation with him, not unpleasantly, but the interview emphasized the fact that they were in opposed camps.

In the early part of the winter there had been a parish election in the Settlement. The schools of the place had hitherto been controlled by a board consisting of her father and a few of the leading churchmen, Simes among them. A new election was due, and an opposition party had appeared in the field. The mining vote would decide the issue. Mr. Trench was away, Curwen indifferent, and it was understood that the majority of the pitmen would follow any lead Craigie might give. Geraldine was interested, and found amusement in canvassing mildly in the campaign of her father's party.

One afternoon when Ewan came home he found Miss Ainslee waiting, desirous of obtaining the pledge of his support. She pleaded her cause very persuasively. It was right that education should be in the hands of the church, she said. There could be no true education without a religious basis, and to put the interests of the children into the hands of people who had no real sympathy with church work would manifestly be unjust and quite wrong.

"I don't know that I have any influence," replied Craigie. "And if I had I am not sure I would use it. Mr. Trench has always insisted on noninterference with the men's liberty of thought and action outside the pits."

"I do not mean, of course, that pressure should be put on them," explained Geraldine. "That would be quite wrong. But if it were known that you were friendly to our side, and believed that matters should be as formerly, that would be decisive." She smiled with all the wile and guile of the lady canvasser, ready in political warfare to use her influential arts unscrupulously on the mere male.

"But suppose I believe that existing rules should be disturbed, and that the sooner the present board gets out the better?" he inquired.

"Surely you don't think it would be better to have village education in anti-church hands?" she asked.

"Not 'antichurch,' but 'nonchurch,' I would rather say," he amended. "There ought to be a change, and it cannot come too soon. The union of church and education should be broken up at once in this province."

"I suppose there is much truth in that," she admitted.

"We need a new educational atmosphere," he continued.

"Then you stand with the opposition?" she said with a sigh.

"Yes, I certainly do," he answered. "And you would, too, if you had seen the working of the present system as I have."

"I think you might help Miss Geraldine, Ewan," said his mother, going over to the opposition. "If the folks don't trouble about education, I can't see that you should mind. It is right, too, that children should be brought up by those who respect the church."

"If you wait for the Settlement folk to move of their own accord, you'll take root on the spot," laughed Ewan. "They are just about a century and a half behind the world."

Geraldine rose to go. She had taken her failure in good part.

"I had no idea I was to encounter so fierce an antagonist," she said. "But I am going to do my best to beat your party."

"You'll lose," he laughed. "And really you don't belong to that antiquarian camp. You are a progressive, a bit astray owing to sympathies. There should be a lady on the board, and I will guarantee your nomination and election at the head of the poll, if you will become a candidate."

"The bribe is tremendously tempting," she smiled. "But really I am not a politician."

She was present at the crowded ante-election meeting. Her father spoke of the necessary affiliation of the school and church. Simes followed with a denunciation of newfangled notions some folks would put into children's heads. The next generation would be above themselves. Where would farm laborers and servants come from? They would all be wanting to be fine ladies and gentlemen. Then George Simes, just home from college and about to enter law school, got up and advised the folks to keep to the good old ways, and proved that education tended to make men and women atheists.

The whole thing seemed silly to Geraldine. She was more glad than sorry when Ewan rose to reply. He was courteous in his refutation of her father's contention. The church had controlled education far too long, and the general illiteracy of the province was the best evidence of its unfitness for further control. He ridiculed the "contentment" theory of Simes. Brains were not by any means the monopoly of the rich, and every child had the right to a chance in the world's big lottery. He wondered why Simes did not practice what he preached. If ignorance was good enough for the Settlement boy and girl, why had he sent his own son to college? George Simes he demolished with a few lusty smitings. If knowledge made atheists, and ignorance was the true basis of faith, all the worse for the religion that could not stand in the light without shriveling. The pitmen at the election followed Ewan's lead almost to a man, and the old party went down to overwhelming defeat.

Altogether, when the winter was over, events had conspired to place Ewan in opposition to the rectory, and, as she was loyal to her own folks, it brought him into conflict with her. It was the more disappointing since he was by far the cleverest man in the vicinity, the only one, in the absence of Mr. Trench, whose thought ranged beyond the narrow circle of the hills.

CHAPTER VII.

The whistle blew for the cessation of the day's work as Trench and Curwen were talking in the office. The former was explaining some system of mining he had seen in northern France on his recent trip. Presently he noticed that his manager, who was usually ready for a chat, was restless.

"You're not listening to a word I say, Bob," he laughed. "Never mind, we'll talk some other time. What's afoot to-night?"

"Sure I heard it all, and very interesting it was. I've always had a fancy to see those big English mines," said Curwen.

"I never mentioned England," remarked Trench dryly. "Off you go."

"Fact is," grinned Bob, "I am in a bit of a sweat to get off. Ewan's fighting over at Wibsey to-night."

"What, and you are going?" asked Trench.

"Going? I surely am. There'd be no fight without me there," said the boss. "Got to stand by your own folk. I've seen 'em all except that Sunday go that started Ewan off. To-night makes a baker's dozen, and all straight wins, too. I'm making my fortune out of the kid, though I'm no betting man as a rule."

"All right; don't let me keep you," said Trench, locking up his desk. As he was leaving the office he met Craigie just starting for home. They walked along together.

"Boxing to-night, I hear, Ewan?" he said.

"Yes, I've a date at Wibsey." Craigie was under the impression that Trench did not approve of the club. They had never talked of the matter, but this was probably owing to the fact that most of the boxing had been done during Trench's absence from the Settlement.

"Got to do something for exercise," added Ewan explanatorily.

"Exercise—after ten hours in the pits!" laughed Trench. "You must be a positive glutton for it. I'd pick out something easier—botany or the piano."

"Oh, there's lots of fun in it, and the money counts," answered Ewan.

"But you are pulling down a hundred and fifty a month. That should keep the wolf away," said the other.

"I can use quite a bit more," replied Craigie. "I made over a thousand in a few months out of fighting, and the work's no more than a brisk gymnasium go. I meant to tell you before, but I guess this summer will about finish me here. I'm thinking about striking out."

"That's news to me," said Trench thoughtfully. "I thought you were satisfied and a fixture."

"I am satisfied, and a great deal more," answered Ewan, anxious to remove misapprehension. "But you can do without me. The fact is, Mr. Trench, I'm thinking of going to college."

"That's more news," said the elder man, frankly surprised. "It's a fine move, Ewan, the very best at your time of life you could make. It means a lot to give up for the present, the salary and position, to become a kid again, but you are right; in the end this place would cramp you."

"As I figure it, a man can go just so far without education," continued the youngster. "But he's fast held to a pretty short chain. I could paddle round the lake here all my days, because I can pull a fair oar, but if I want to be a deep-sea captain I've got to understand navigation. I guess, after all, ignorance is only laziness, and if you are willing to hustle and pay there's most any place you can reach. If you don't land where you expect, you are bound to be a better man for the training and trying." There was a meditative air in the lad's philosophy that was always attractive to Trench. It indicated a deep and active mind. Moreover, the judgments were wonderfully true.

"I've got to make mother comfortable the way she's accustomed to, and foot the expense bill, but I can see clear now," Ewan added. "Wibsey has given me a big lift. I guess that some people, Miss Geraldine among them, think it's a poor kind of game, but they don't know. There's two hundred for me to-night if I win; that's near six weeks' pay at pit rates for an hour's good fun. Like enough I'll be matched with bigger stuff after to-night. There's a New York manager coming to talk things over."

"Some people, and Miss Geraldine!" The expression had slipped out quaintly. It set Trench thinking.

There were big and far-away dreams in the lad's mind.

"Has Miss Geraldine been scolding you about Wibsey?" he asked with a smile.

"Oh, no!" he exclaimed hastily. "She wouldn't do that, of course, but she is one of those people whose thought about such things you seem to know without its being spoken. A lady such as she is must think Wibsey, its crowd, and those who go there to fight pretty common stuff. Her father thinks it hell with the lid off, but it really isn't."

Trench had to smile.

"The folks are white to me," Ewan continued. "They know I don't drink or loaf round, and I believe they like me the better for it. I am sure of this—that if I wanted a thousand or two to help me over a bad spot, it's the Wibsey folk I'd go to, not my own people here; that is, barring you, Mr. Trench. Isn't it queer that the best-hearted folk and the kindest to the man who's down are the scalawags you'd scarce call respectable? They don't bother much about what your deserts are; they know you're down and sore, and they give a hand to pull you up."

"I guess you are about right," said Trench. "Would you mind if I came with you to-night? I'd like to see you in action."

"I'd like it, if you'd care to," answered Ewan, looking pleased.

The fight was not particularly interesting, as Ewan's opponent was outclassed, and a rather tame affair ended early. The New York manager was there, and after the fight a ten-round bout was arranged between Craigie and a boxer named Halligan, a man with a good record in the medium ranks of his weight. Halligan was going back, but it was figured he could make the local lad put in all he knew, with more than an even chance of having his clean record spoiled. The club agreed to provide a thousand-dollar purse, three-fourths to go to the winner and the fight to come off in two months' time. After the conference, Trench and Ewan drove home together. They were about to separate when the former said:

"The night's young yet, Ewan. There's the dance at the Settlement Hall I promised to attend. Come along for an hour."

"No, thanks; I think I'll go home," answered Craigie.

"Nonsense!" said Trench. "We'll ring up your mother and explain, so that she won't be anxious. She will be glad enough for you to get among the people. You have got to quit this stand-off business and mix with folks. You can't afford to sour your life with stale village grudges. We have a little world here, but you are as much out of it as if you were an utter stranger. Come along, man! The Chalet folks will be there, and Miss Geraldine and lots of pleasant, sociable neighbors who will be delighted to see you. You are not afraid of George Simes, are you?" he laughed. "He's cutting quite a swath among the girls, I hear, since he came back from college. Get into the field and start competition."

Ewan laughed and hesitated. He did not feel like going home. The fight exhilaration always stirred him out of his dour moods. He turned and went with his companion. His coming created quite a little sensation in the crowded hall. It was the first time he had joined in any of the local festivities. Mr. Ainslee and the Simes group looked as if a particularly unpleasant wolf had entered the fold, but the rest of the company showed frank pleasure. The boys liked Ewan, a touch of village-hero worship in their regard. As for the girls, never yet were good looks and winning prowess regarded by them in men as defects.

There were bright eyes the brighter for his coming. Shrewd, calculating parents with marriageable daughters saw in Ewan a smart, steady, ambitious lad, a money-maker, a friend of Mr. Trench, under manager at twenty, and likely to go far in the big game. Many a man in that country had jumped from the meanest poverty to dazzling riches in a handful of years.

Hands were thrust out to the lad, bright smiles gave eager welcome, buxom farmers' wives had jokes and

cheery words for the strapping, handsome, fighting boss who had dropped reserve and become sociable and friendly. Geraldine Ainslee, dancing with George Simes, nodded smilingly as she flitted by.

When the fiddles dashed into the next number Ewan led out Emma Bancroft, a tall, dark girl from one of the hill farms, and joined the dancers. The girl, in many respects, was the most strikingly attractive personality in the room. As unlike the prevailing type of the Settlement women as Ewan was among the men, there was a distinctiveness in her, plainly discernible, that marked her off as one alone. Gossip said that away back was gypsy blood in her, but all eccentricities in womenkind were attributed either to the vagaries of gypsy or Indian blood. The Bancrofts came of fine stock, had a long, clearly traceable lineage stretching across the waters to the north of Ireland. George Bancroft, Emma's father, was a rather helpless, shiftless man, to whom his daughter's bold, independent spirit was the biggest of puzzles. The girl had an ivory-tinted complexion that the clear, sharp winds that blew over the hills had neither colored nor roughened. Her eyes were dark, soft, provocative, brimming over at times with mischief. The wide, red-lipped mouth had ever upon it the spirit of laughter, not the hoydenish mirth of the country girl, but the suggestion that lay behind the grave, quizzical manner of infinite sweetness and humor. There was music in her feet, in the poise and sway of her slight, pliant figure.

She was not popular with the Settlement women, those severest of critics where their own kind was concerned. Emma knew of the sentiment among the women, and minded it little enough. That she was now proud of her partner was obvious. She had seen Ewan enter the room, and, declining to dance with any of the men who clamored about her, waited as for one of her own kind, and he came straight across to her.

It was no small triumph for the girl, but her grave face did not show it. There came a more brilliant sparkle into her eyes. Ewan was the man of all the countryside she admired. He had fought his way up by the power that was in him. She liked the dour look on him, the frown that often was on his brow, his isolation and resentment. He was a man, a master, virile, successful, a fighter in the ring and out of it.

He had not seen her for some time until this evening. She had been away in some big store in a near-by city, and was reputed to be wonderfully clever with her brains and fingers in designing and making women's headgear. She came and went in her erratic manner, never staying long at home, and seemingly picking up or laying down her situation when the mood dictated.

"I'm afraid I am a clumsy dancer, Emma," he said as they went down the room. "This is my first dance since party days at school."

"You couldn't be clumsy if you tried," and she laughed a little shyly. She was always, in an unaccountable way, oddly nervous when with Ewan. "I'm awfully glad you came, Ewan."

"So am I," he replied. "I didn't know what I was missing."

"Well, now you've found out, you'll come again, and not treat us all as if we were strangers," she said, her dark eyes laughing up at him.

"Of course I shall. This is fine!" he answered, his arm holding her a little more closely.

"Better than fighting?" she whispered.

"It goes pretty well with it," he laughed.

"You were over to Wibsey to-night?" she questioned.

"What do you know about Wibsey?" he rejoined.

"Quite a bit," she smiled. "I know you whipped Dick Jordan in the fifth round to-night and that it was your thirteenth straight win. We had got to think that you cared for nothing but work and fighting, and thought girls and dancing pretty poor things. I was almost scared of you."

"Getting over it?" he inquired.

She laughed and nodded in reply, and to the disappointment of both the dance ended.

If Trench had entertained doubts as to the mood the dance would inspire in the enigmatic lad, they were soon dissipated. He entered into the spirit of the occasion with a zest that contributed not a little to its success. Once he broke through the guard that seemed to encircle Geraldine, the whole room looking on with some curiosity, for the feud existing between the clergyman and Ewan was known to all. Geraldine hesitated a moment. Young Simes appeared to be urging a prior claim, but she smilingly rose and went off with the Craigie lad. When the dance was over, Ewan left her with Trench, to whom she had scarcely spoken all the evening.

"You poor, deserted thing!" she said, seating herself by him.

"Yes, I was beginning to feel the least bit neglected," he answered. "I had about determined to scatter the ring fence about you when Ewan broke through."

"You were so late coming. I was afraid you had shirked," she smiled.

"I had another engagement," he explained. "Tell it not in Gath, but I have been over at the other Philistine place—none other than Wibsey. Ewan and I went together."

"Some one said he had been fighting again. Father knows, and is horribly shocked. Was it very exciting and dreadful?" she asked.

"I have attended much more ribald vestry meetings," he replied.

"Father will lecture me fearfully for dancing with him," and she made a little grimace.

"And as you are now going to dance with the accessory to the offense you'll probably get two lectures instead of one," he said encouragingly.

"Why don't you persuade Ewan to give up fighting?" she asked seriously. "He looks—I know it sounds snobbish, but you know what I mean—he looks like a gentleman."

"And his looks tell no lies," he answered. "You know I have many reasons for thinking well of him, one in particular." He had before told her of Ewan's aid in the Manogue Pit.

"Yes, that was splendid!" she said. "It is because he is so much out of the ordinary that one is disappointed. Why does he keep it up?"

"I asked him that question only to-night," he replied. "He told me it was for fun and money."

"But he has a good position," she said.

"Yes, but he is losing it," he told her. "He is going away to college presently, and that program costs money. You have heard of men working their way through college? Well, Ewan is punching his way. Vulgar and brutal Wibsey is furnishing some of the sinews of war in the shape of prize money. Looking at the crowd to-night, I almost regarded them in a missionary light. The spreaders, you know, of the higher education by the black eye and cauliflower-ear methods."

"I had no idea he had aspirations that way; I mean after college," she said. "He is really capable of a great deal."

"He has big dreams, and they go exceedingly well with fighting," he continued. "Most dreamers can't fight, and most fighters can't dream. It is like boxing. There are clever men who can't punch, and good punchers who know nothing of boxing, but when you get the ideal combination, the man who can dream and fight, box and punch, you have a star of the first magnitude."

"It is rather wonderful considering the handicap and obstacles he has had," she said, looking absently over to the place where he stood chatting. "It has not been the outward opposition that is easiest to meet and overcome, but the hidden, all-permeating influence that poisons one's self-confidence and saps strength at its source."

"They say," went on Trench reflectively, "that when the genius is fashioned, outwardly perfect, inwardly equipped in all respects save one, the Fashioner leans over the crucible and lets fall the drops that mean pain but make soul and give the quality, touch,

note, to which the deepest, truest, commonest in mankind responds. The world of the fighting man has been made by pain and hunger. Men do not live by bread alone, rather by the want of it. But now I claim this dance before this advancing youth rushes in."

"You are glad you went?" asked Trench of Ewan as they walked homeward.

"Yes, it was good," Ewan replied.

"Keep it up, then," advised the other. "Let feeble folk play Eskimo if they want to, but it's a mighty poor game in a live man's world."

CHAPTER VIII.

If the Settlement native saw but one thing at a time, that one thing he beheld intensely. A man of extremes in likes and dislikes, he swung from one extreme to the other with the swift impulsiveness of a child. He painted in vivid colors. Neutral tints made no appeal to him. Men seek instinctively to supply nature's lack.

The tidings of Ewan's coming fight, coming closely on the heels of the dance, seemed to touch a hidden spring in the little community and reveal an altogether unsuspected wealth of clan sporting interest. The folk came of a sporting stock. Their forbears, both men and women, had been willing to venture all in backing whim or judgment, the right to a throne, speed of a horse, turn of a card, skill and courage of a gamecock, prowess of a fistic gladiator. Now came over the hills word of the approaching fight. The weekly newspapers featured the projected combat in their sporting pages with portraits of Craigie and Halligan. With a start the Settlement roused to an astonished sense of its fame and greatness, and pride trod the heels of surprise. The place was no longer the secluded glen in the hills, the buried hamlet, but a real, vital, palpitating part of the big, noisy world.

"Craigie, of the Settlement, versus Halligan, of New York." Thus the flaming headlines ran. "The Settlement versus New York." Sport had brought the huge metropolis and the lakeside community to the same level; rivals, competitors, and the big city would have to put its best foot foremost. The farmers might fight each other, slander, backbite, denounce, abuse one another, but when the fiery cross flamed in the hills the ranks closed, and all made for the trysting place to range beneath the uplifted standard.

Trench went into the fight heart and pocket. He brought up from New York a first-class trainer, one Sam Driscoll, and with him a husky middleweight to act as sparring partner, supplementing local talent. The Wibsey Club hired the skating rink, the town's biggest building, for the event, and the Settlement folk who failed to buy tickets were few and far between. Mr. Ainslee, alarmed at the development of the new madness, preached a vigorous sermon on the evils of worshiping mere physical prowess, taking as his text, "The Lord delighteth not in the legs of a man." His audience was not greatly impressed by his deductions and conclusions. Bob Curwen's interpretation met with the more general acceptance:

"What it means is that the Lord don't take no stock in a man who runs away from a fight. 'The legs of a man,' mind 'ee. He don't say nothing about the arms and fists of him. It's Ewan's arms and the fists on 'em, not his legs, as is going to do up that New York Halligan chap."

Jane Craigie was very silent during these days. She hated the fighting with all the strength of her gentle soul, and longed for Ewan to have done with it. Her only comfort, meantime, was the thought that this would probably be the boy's last fight.

It was a couple of hours before the battle was scheduled to begin. Craigie and Driscoll had come over early to be in readiness and to keep out of the Settlement rush. Sam had stepped over to the rink to see if all was in order. Ewan was in a private sitting room, reading a newspaper, when there came a tap on the door, and a stranger entered.

He was unmistakably a fight man, cropped hair, damaged nose, wrecked ear, but very ornately dressed. He made himself known as Brandreth, in charge of Halligan, taking the place of the man who had attended the conference two months before. Ewan knew him well by name as a middleweight fighter of reputation. The visitor was in amiable mood, and began to chaff Craigie about Halligan's form and achievements. All this led up to business, and he had a friendly proposition to make. Craigie was a youngster with a big local reputation. He was good, no doubt, but Halligan was a tough, experienced fighter. What was there to hinder an understanding? Craigie to take a sufficiently big lead in the early rounds to make the decision on points sure, and the probabilities of a win by a knock-out almost certain, then ease up, make the rest of the way a boxing match, so that his opponent should be on his feet at the finish.

Ewan would get the big end of the purse, with the decision, while Halligan's crowd would be content with the short end and what they might pick up from enthusiastic locals, who, after the early rounds, would be ready to bet on their man winning by his usual route—the knock-out. It was Ewan's first experience of framed-up ring work, and it disgusted him.

"It's plain you are green here," he answered. "We take our sport straight."

"Isn't that straight enough?" laughed Brandreth. "We are fixing things to come pleasant your way. Local man a John L. Sullivan comer, and the rest of the stuff. The folks get what they pay for, a good, brisk boxing match, with their man top dog at the finish. What more do you or they want? Your people will be satisfied that you've trimmed us; they are sure of it round town already. Better come into the party. Halligan'll cut you into ribbons if you try to make a real fight of it."

"That's what he's here for," said Craigie. "We'll have no complaints to make over the way he does the job."

There were steps approaching, so Brandreth went out by the side door. A moment after he had gone Driscoll returned, accompanied by Corcoran, the president of the club.

"Town's jammed with folks, and every ticket gone," said the latter. "Feeling good, Ewan?"

"Rotten!" answered Craigie, and he told them of Brandreth's call.

"Don't look for fancy principles from his kind," laughed Driscoll. "Just forget it and fight as we have planned. Like as not he was just feeling you out and trying to put the fear of Halligan into you. Look out for a rushing start and a try for a quick decision. Anybody seen Halligan yet?"

"No, they've got him under cover somewhere, but at catch weights there's no need for him to show up till ring time," replied Corcoran.

"It isn't like Jim Halligan to do the modest-violet stunt," said Driscoll.

There was a roar of welcome when the Settlement lad climbed through the ropes to his corner. He looked across at his opponent and saw a man who might be any age from twenty to forty, with close-cropped bullet head and lean, foxy face. Ewan's fleeting impression was that a few square meals would do him no harm, but he knew that looks were deceptive, and he meant to take no chances. He had never felt fitter. Driscoll's work had put fine finish on a grandly trained body, and the boxing instruction had given increased ability and confidence.

The gong sounded, a touch of hands as the contestants met in the middle, and the fight was on. Both men were wary, and not till the end of the round was a real blow struck. The next round was a farce. Halligan seemed doped or weak or curiously crafty; Ewan could not make out which of the three. The man dodged about the ring, sparring a little, breaking ground readily, or dropping into frantic clinches, out of which he had to be pried loose by the referee.

Driscoll sat below Ewan's corner, a wide grin on his face. It was a new kind of fighting to Ewan. His local adversaries had usually stuck to their

guns, swapping blows till they were done. Half the house was roaring with laughter at the combination foot-racer and blister opposed to Craigie, the other half angry, shouting to the referee to make the men fight. The taunt nettled Ewan, and he went into the next round more vigorously, carrying the fight to his man and battering him all over the ring without any attempt being made at serious reply by his adversary. The end seemed near, as Ewan's blows crashed home, but Halligan managed to get into a limpetlike clinch.

"Easy, boy; easy!" he mumbled in Ewan's ear. "I was all but gone that time."

Craigie guessed that Brandreth had fooled the man into believing that he would be allowed to stay. There was a whimper in the voice of his opponent that irritated him. How had the man obtained his reputation? He went into the next round savagely, determined to end things quickly.

"For the love of Mike, let up, boy! You're near killing me!" whispered the man brokenly, hanging on to save punishment.

Ewan knew that it was his job to ignore sentiment, and earn his money by smashing the man into unconsciousness. The sobbing heave of the lean body, resting against his in the desperate clinch, made the powerful young pitman afraid of his own strength. It was a brutal degradation to have to hammer the man into helplessness.

"Put him out! Kill him, and let's go home, Ewan!" roared some of the onlookers.

"I won't go on with it, Sam," said Craigie savagely to Driscoll at the end of the round. He would have torn his gloves off, but the trainer stopped him. The gesture was noted by some of Brandreth's friends, and they sent up an exultant shout.

"He's quitting! Craigie's quitting!" they roared. Brandreth fussed with his man hurriedly, and at the bell sent him staggeringly into the ring.

"I can't fight a man in that shape!" shouted Ewan. "He can't stand, let alone fight."

The house was in wild uproar, Halligan's contingent shouting for a decision, Ewan's supporters bewildered by the sudden turn events had taken. Brandreth jumped on a chair by the ringside.

"If Craigie won't fight, the decision's ours," he shouted.

"Not by a darned sight!" interposed Driscoll. "To begin with, the whole thing's a fake. That man in the ring there, ready to jump out if Craigie looks cross at him, is no more Jim Halligan than I am. I know Halligan as well as Brandreth does. You've planted a ringer on the club, the rottenest ringer I ever saw, and robbed a hospital to do it by the look of things."

"My man is ready to go on!" bawled Brandreth. "If he isn't Halligan, he's as good a man as Halligan ever was. He has been fighting to orders, feeling Craigie out, and your man has quit. The decision's ours."

At this juncture Corcoran stepped into the ring.

"I am sorry the match we looked forward to so much has turned out a fake," he said. "Perhaps we ought not to have let it start, but we never doubted that the man brought to meet Craigie was Halligan, even when a proposition was made to Ewan to hold off and let his opponent stay the course. The bid was turned down, and Craigie told us of it squarely. No harm apparently had been done, so we let the battle go on."

"Who says I tried to get at Craigie?" shouted Brandreth.

"Craigie himself says so," replied Corcoran.

"Then besides being a quitter he's a damned liar!" roared the furious man. "A fighting man! He don't begin to know what fighting is! The whole thing's a frame-up between him and the club to freeze us out."

Preposterous as the thing was, some of the mob began to shout with him.

Ewan pushed his friends aside and came to the ropes.

"What Corcoran has told you is true," he declared. "Brandreth says I am a liar and quitter, and that I don't

know what fighting is. I won't fight his man; that's flat. I am not in the game to do any kind of rotten work to earn a dollar. If the referee says I am to go on or lose, I'll lose and be satisfied without either big or small end of the purse. I'd as soon fight a ten-year-old kid as the man over there. But Brandreth's a fighting man with a reputation. I have a proposal to make to him. I'll fight him here and now, gloves or bare knuckles, to a finish, winner take all."

The mob jumped to its feet, roaring huge approval.

"By —— you're on!" cried Brandreth. "And you'll get all that's coming to you."

The man was clever and powerful, better than Halligan had ever been in his palmiest days. He was in the best of condition, being in training for a later encounter. Driscoll by no means liked the turn events had taken, but said little. This was a real fight, a blood battle, no mere contest for money. Half an hour later the new fight began.

It was not long before Ewan discovered that he was faced by the toughest opponent he had ever met. Brandreth was active as a tiger, strong, scientific, maliciously aggressive. He began cautiously, boxing with swift cleverness, and had a puzzling shift that for a time bewildered Craigie. He tried all the tricks he knew, elbow and rasping heel of glove, roughed it in clinches, and had the dirty, sneering gift of the lower-class pugilist in action. Full of confidence, he made no undue haste to finish the fight. He meant to spread out the punishment and show up the local man among his own followers.

With the steadying of himself after the earlier overwhelming, Ewan improved, and the fight went, give-and-take, with the big advantage to Brandreth, till the fifth round. Then the stranger opened up a fast and furious attack, landing body smashes that tested the miner's condition to the limit. Ewan seemed utterly powerless to halt the bewildering fusillade. Near the close of the round Brandreth landed a fierce uppercut that was intended to finish the fight. It narrowly missed its exact mark, but brought Craigie down. The bell sounded before further damage could be done. It was the first time the locals had seen Ewan put to the boards. To them the fight seemed as good as over. They were very silent and glum.

"Finish him, Tom!" roared Brandreth's followers as their man came out of his corner with a bull rush.

"Ewan's done!" whispered Trench gloomily to Curwen.

"Done nothing!" grunted Bob. "Hi, there! Look at that, will ye!" He changed to a roar of delight. Ewan met the rusher with a straight jolt that shook the other to his heels, and followed it up with right and left to the body that sounded through the hall. Brandreth winced and clinched. After that he fought cautiously for a while. It was not going to be as easy as he had fancied. The youngster had a death punch in either fist. In the tenth he made another big effort, and again Ewan was in bad shape.

"Keep away for a while," whispered Driscoll. "Make him move round and work; he can't stand the pace as well as you can."

It was not often the pitmen had seen Craigie giving ground, and there were shouts of delight from the Brandreth crowd as the younger man retreated. He looked in sorry shape; a cut over the right eye had been opened, the face was bruised and puffy, the white body red raw in places. But he was fighting every inch of the way, his jaw set, the old dour, frowning look on his face. No vital damage had been done. In the fourteenth Brandreth made a third spectacular effort, but it did not meet with the earlier success. The youngster seemed to be gaining in strength and confidence. Punishment marked, but did not cripple, him. At the end of the round Driscoll's face wore a look of quiet confidence as he lightly sponged the boy. Ewan was strong as a horse, his breath was easy and regular as a child's, and he was game as a bantam.

"Steady and careful, sonny," whispered Sam. "The worst of the storm's over. Watch for your chance, but give none yourself. There's no hurry for you."

Ewan nodded his understanding.

The end came with dramatic suddenness. Brandreth tore in viciously, landing twice, but his blows had lost much of their former force. Ewan retreated a step or two, the other following, shoulders crouched, moving actively, seeking an opening for a finishing blow. Suddenly he cut loose a terrific swing that failed to find his quick-footed opponent. As the momentum of the blow unbalanced the attacker for a moment, Ewan stepped in, a heavy, sweeping uppercut brought Brandreth up straight, a drive to the body with the left dropped his guard, and in an instant Ewan's right shot out with every ounce of body weight behind it. It caught Brandreth full on the jaw. He stood a moment, hands at his sides helplessly, dazed, his eyes glassy, and then the knees slowly sagged, and he crumpled up, falling forward on his face.

The rally had brought the crowd up roaring, screaming, yelling themselves hoarse. Hats and sticks flew to the roof, pandemonium was let loose round the ring where stood the waiting lad, watching the referee count off the numbers. The uproar redoubled as the pitmens' mob rushed for the ring, but the Settlement farmers and miners were there first.

They swung their man high to their shoulders, and marched to the dressing rooms, a frantic crowd of howling madmen. New York's stock dropped to a low figure in the Settlement and Wibsey that night. The whistles of a score of pit engines crowed victory to a county. A fusillade of dynamite shots in the quarries roared like an earth-shaking salvo of saluting artillery. There would have been a triumphal procession back to the Settlement, but Ewan would have none of it. Just before he was ready to leave his dressing room there came a knock at the door that connected with the other dressing rooms, and Ewan's first opponent entered.

"Will you shake, mister?" he asked Craigie. "I pulled a raw one, but not half so raw as the one pulled on me. No excuses but the regular one; I needed the money bad."

He looked, in his street clothes, an even more miserable scarecrow than he had appeared in the ring. Shabby clothes, seedy derby, muffler about his neck, and "down and out" stamped all over him. Ewan felt heartily ashamed that he, a great, lusty chap, had pounded and smashed so poor a thing. The fellow looked as if T. B. had labeled him.

"Shake? Why, sure," replied Craigie. "Where are you steering for now?"

"Beating it home," replied the man. "Brandreth's lot have shipped me with my ticket; I didn't pull it off for them."

"Half a second!" said Ewan. "There was to be a short end to the go. I guess you can use it all right," and he peeled off two hundred and fifty and thrust it into the other's hand. The man, astonished, looked up at Ewan, then down on the money.

"Do you know, mister, you are one white man in the ring and out of it?" he said with an impressively quiet earnestness.

"Keep it to yourself, and don't let Brandreth's crowd get on to it," laughed Ewan. "So long!"

The crowd was thundering at the door when Ewan was ready to leave, but he had no inclination for further jubilation. His mood changed, as it often did after the excitement of fight. He wanted to be alone.

"I'm going to walk home over the hills," he said to his friends. "I'll slip away by the back window, and if you'll hold the fort for five minutes more I'll be well away."

"Walk?" said Driscoll, laughing. "After the last hour or two you must be fairly pining for exercise."

Trench understood the lad's mood, the desire for solitude, space, quiet. Ewan dropped out of the window, strode away through the deserted lane,

and up the pathless hillside. The sound of the shouting died away. He entered the ancient peace of the hills.

A sheep bleated forlornly on the moor beyond. Overhead a night bird wheeled and darted. Across the lake a dog bayed mournfully at the moon. The Sunday night of his first fight came back to Ewan, the opening chapter of the little volume that had closed tonight. He had only a vague regret for the ending of it. For all that Wibsey had done, for the rough, loyal friends he had made there, he was grateful.

On the hilltop he lingered a moment, looked back on the Wibsey vale, down on the waters at his feet, beyond to the still farmhouses, the Simes place in the distance. All the past of his life came up before him like a swiftly moving panorama. A soft, cool breeze flew from the eastern sea; he could scent and taste the moist saltiness of it. It brought back something of the old hunger, but this time it was the hunger of a man before whom has been spread a bountiful feast. His mother—safe, happy, with the old fears and terrors gone. The people—he thrust Ainslee and Simes for the moment into the background—they had been loyal and fine to him.

Time had been when he thought one could get on without his fellows. It had been a mistake. Defiance, suspicion, selfishness shriveled the heart, cynicism he saw to be the acrid fruit of a stunted, degenerate tree. Money was good, but friendship and love were better. He thought of Geraldine Ainslee, the grace of her, the proud fineness, the sweet tenderness of her. His fancy reached out after her, but no matter how ardent the pursuit of his mind, she flitted away far beyond him, the fair, elusive spirit of supreme victory.

His future, despite his plannings, had always appeared to him as shrouded in mists, an unknown sea, whose voice he could hear, hidden by thick white fog wraiths. As his eyes strained forward in the effort to pierce them, there flashed across the clear sky above them a red-white meteor that blazed and burned and vanished. It was not like the white, diamondlike star he remembered hanging against the velvet of the night that memorable Sunday—steady, constant. This seemed to call him, to bid him follow. Meteors, they said in the hills, were portents of death, the death of kings and heroes. If portents of death, then of life, a richer, fuller, unimagined life.

He turned, and hastened on home. His mother would be anxious. He longed to see her, that he might tell her of the ending of his ring fighting. Then, as he hurried on with swinging stride, he saw on the opposite slope the figure of a woman hastening in the direction in which he was going. The light was uncertain, and the bushes partially hid her. What could have brought a woman out on the lonely hills at such an hour? Perhaps some one sick in one of the remote farms, and this a messenger for the doctor, but why need she walk?

She had heard his hurrying step, for she hastened. He walked the faster, and presently as he was catching up she turned, half afraid, to see who it was overtaking her. Then she stopped and began to laugh, her hand to her panting breast.

"Ewan!" she said. "Is it you? You had me almost scared to death." There was a late moon in the sky, and in its pale light the ivory-tinted face had wonderful, vivacious witchery. The dark eyes seemed larger, softer, a new brilliance in them, the red lips curved in laughter. He had never thought before that Emma Bancroft was so astonishingly pretty; perhaps because he had known her all his life.

"Guess I am always scaring you, Emma," he replied, recalling her words at the dance. "I wondered who could be on the hills, of womankind, at this hour."

"No later for me than you," she said. "Who would have thought of meeting you here this night?"

"Nobody sick at home?" he asked.

"Not that I know of," she laughed. "Why don't you ask me plain where

I've been? You seem wonderfully curious."

"Well, then, where have you been?" he inquired.

"Just minding my own business," she answered.

"That settles it. No more questions," he laughed. They walked on silently for some little distance.

"Suppose I said I had been to Wibsey?" she asked.

"I'd think Wibsey has less manners than it should have to let you come home alone at this hour of night," he replied.

"Maybe it wouldn't, if it had known," she said. "Are you hurt very bad—Ewan?" she inquired hesitatingly.

"Hurt? No. Why?" And he looked down at her.

"You seemed sometimes—there in the ring——" Then she stopped, a low, soft laugh rippling from her lips.

"You were at the rink?" he asked in astonishment. "What a foolish thing to do, Emma. Why, all the Settlement was there. Suppose anybody who knew you had seen you?"

"What would I care?" she answered defiantly. "What has the Settlement to do with me? I meant to see it from the first." Then she began to laugh again, the red lips and white teeth wonderfully attractive. "If it hadn't been for the noise of the men shouting, I'd sure have been heard and seen. Two or three times I forgot and cried out loud. You see, I know the caretaker's wife; she lives at the rink, upstairs, and I sat up there, hid behind a little balcony. I saw it all. Every bit. I thought you were hurt dreadfully sometimes, but I was so happy when you smashed that beast of a man at the finish. Oh, it was wonderful, Ewan! But your face looked all beaten up."

She looked up at him, tender solicitude in her eyes.

"Spoiled my beauty quite a bit," he grinned. "Where is the damage the worst?" And he stopped.

"That's in the shade," she said. "Turn round so that the moon shines on you." He turned with a laugh, and she looked saucily up into his face.

"Your eye is dreadful, Ewan," and she touched the bruised skin lightly. "And your face is all swollen." Her fingers ran over one of the numerous bumps caressingly. "And your mouth!"

"What's the matter with it?" he smiled, his hands on her pretty shoulders. She drew away with a silvery little laugh, and they went on again. Near the rectory gates, their ways divided. Her home was on the hills above.

"I'll walk along with you," he said, as she paused.

"No, never mind, Ewan; I'd rather go alone," she told him. "I can slip in without the dog barking. If a stranger comes near he'll raise the countryside, and dad will be asking questions. Good night, Ewan." She put out her hand, and he clasped it. Settlement folk were not given greatly to handshaking. She looked up as he retained her hand. In the shaft of moonlight that penetrated the copse, she looked very delightful and desirable. His arm went about her and drew her unresistingly. He kissed the warm red lips once, twice, thrice. There was the sound of footsteps on the road below. She drew away from him.

"Good night again, fighting man," she said, and flitted away. For a moment he resolved to follow her, then turned toward home, taking the path through the fields.

Just before he came to the rectory gate, Trench stopped. He was sure it was Ewan he had seen emerging from the wood. As he lingered, the girl came from the lane that wound round the rectory garden and started up the hill. There was no house but the Bancrofts' in that direction, and the free, quick step of the girl was unmistakable. Trench smiled as he thought of Ewan's eagerness to get away from the mob. He walked on. At the rectory gate, a white-clad figure stood. Geraldine had been there, unable to get away without detection while Ewan and Emma were exchanging their tender farewell.

"Why, Geraldine!" exclaimed Trench. "Moonlight musing?"

"I came out for a breath of air be-

fore going to bed," she replied. "What a lot of shouting there has been down in the vallage!"

"The Settlement triumphant," he replied. "Ewan won a Homeric battle to-night." She seemed indifferent and uninterested, he thought.

"Won't you come in for a minute?" she said. "Father has been quite disturbed by the racketing."

Mr. Ainslee was at the door, peering out, as they came up the path.

"Oh, it is you, Peter! I wondered to whom the child was speaking." Geraldine left them discussing a night-cap drink.

"There has been a riotous hubbub on the road this hour past," complained the minister. "That Craigie lad is demoralizing the whole parish."

"Demoralizing! Man, he's waking it up, stirring its patriotism," laughed Trench. "The boy put up a great fight, was beaten half a dozen times, but pulled out with a clean-cut victory. New York to-night should hide its sadly diminished head. I'll be hoarse as a crow to-morrow. I haven't bawled as much since college days, and my hat's a wreck."

"You should discourage the lad," said Ainslee rebukingly.

"He has had an overdose of that," replied the other. "The new treatment —friendliness—is doing finely."

"These tawdry, vulgar triumphs are bad for him," continued Ainslee. "They serve but to stimulate his natural arrogance."

"He has finished with them to-night. In a short time he is to leave for college, so the demoralizing will stop," said Trench.

"To college!" exclaimed the minister. "There will be no plain workingmen presently. This discontent with one's station in life is one of the great evils of the day."

"Are you not pretty hard to please, Ainslee?" asked Trench, irritated by the peevish querulousness. "The lad's fighting is vulgar and tawdry, and when he stops, and sets out to get an education he is evilly ambitious. What you seem to want him to be is a kind of human doormat with a warning upon it, to be kept where it was first put down for the more fortunate folk to wipe their feet on. Hit high or hit low, he cannot satisfy you. You and I went to college because we had well-to-do fathers to jam us through, feeding us money as they fed us milk when we were babies. If we had been forced to earn our college courses, we never would have got to them."

CHAPTER IX.

All the long evening Jane Craigie waited alone eagerly, anxiously, longing not so much for news of victory as to have her lad back. Little, she mourned to herself, was she fitted to mother so militant a son. When he came home from his fights, his face and splendid body cut and bruised, she wept to his laughter.

The darkness fell, but she lighted no lamp. The clock on the wall ticked away, oh, so slowly in the stillness. Eight—nine—ten—then eleven, after a long interval. It must be a terrible fight to last so long. She sat by the open window that fronted the deserted street. The men who usually were to be seen on it were all away at Wibsey. Then, at last, she heard the first rumble of returning vehicles. Soon the hamlet was brought to the doors by triumphant shouts. A crowded wagonette of pitmen went by. She heard one of the men reply to a woman's inquiry:

"Ewan knocked t'other chap out in the fifteenth."

It was all over, thank God!

She rose and went over to light the table lamp, then made up the fire to keep water hot. It was long after midnight when he came at last with Driscoll, whom he had picked up at the lodging house.

Ewan grabbed her up in his arms as he crossed the threshold. He was sorely battered and disfigured, but in the gayest of spirits. Driscoll went upstairs with him, bathed, rubbed, and put him to bed while the mother waited below, fearing that perhaps grievous damage had been done.

"A few bumps, ma'am," said Sam when he came down. "No more than pin pricks to a lad like Ewan. It was a fine fight, ma'am, and a grand win. He'll sleep like a top, and wake feeling fresh as paint in the morning."

When he had gone, she hurried upstairs.

"Come in, little mother," called Ewan, as he heard her step. "Sit here by the bed near me and talk. Then you shall tuck me in like you did when I was a little kiddie up in the old attic. You dear, little, scared mammy! Don't look so frightened. I am not hurt a bit, and I feel better and happier almost than ever before in my life. The Settlement folk were just fine to me to-night, right at my back to a man, and I'm going to meet them a bit more than halfway. I'm through with ring fighting now. I knew it made you feel bad, but we had to have the money, and it was all got clean and honest. We have plenty now to keep you as you've got to be kept, and put me through college. We went up the first ladder when we left Simes. Now we are at the top of the second. From now on we have done with looking back; it's to be all forward."

"I'm terrible glad, Ewan," she said, fondling his hand.

"I've seen some things differently lately, since the night of that dance," he continued, then paused. "Mother, I wish you'd put down the lamplight a bit; it's hard on my eyes after the smoke at the rink."

She smiled as she turned her back to him to carry out his request. Since the night of the dance she had noted a change in him. He had spoken of the dance a dozen times. The mother's intuition had marked the rising of a new influence within him.

"I told you about that dance," he said. He had told her all about it until she knew what had happened as if she had been there. "How sociable the people were. Instead of fancying people mean you ill, the fault's oftenest in yourself, only you don't see it. We've come a long way these late years, mother, haven't we?"

"Yes, dear; how far perhaps I know better than you," she answered. "No woman has ever been more blessed in a son."

"I didn't mean that," he said. "But I can give you as good, or better; no son has been more blessed in his mother."

She bent over and kissed him tenderly.

"It shows how far a man may climb, if he has the will to pay for it," he mused. "I don't mean that I have landed anywhere yet, but I am finding out that it can be done. It is just like ring work; you have to fit yourself, live hard, clean, honest, learn to take punishment and keep at it, and then surely the time comes, like it did to-night at Wibsey, when the chance flashes up and you nail the enemy. Have you seen Miss Geraldine lately?"

She smiled in the darkness. The great, shy lad, with his secret bubbling over! The fighting man sorely beset by the persistent little archer.

"Not to speak to," she answered. "She went by this evening with—some friends to the lake." She did not tell him that her companion in the group had been George Simes.

"They say George Simes is running after her," he said dourly. His mother could have laughed aloud.

"Well, dear, that's no terrible crime, is it?" she teased softly.

"She is not for the like of him," he snapped.

"I guess that is for Miss Geraldine to say," she replied. "She is wonderfully sweet and pretty; no wonder everybody likes her."

He lay for some time without speaking.

"I'm keeping you up, mother," he said presently. "I'd forgotten what hour it is, and I'm getting sleepy, I think. There, tuck me in and say good night. I am just a big, overgrown kid, after all."

It was long before he slept. What right had he to speak or think of Geraldine Ainslee? As he sought vision of her in the darkness, the luring, laughing face of Emma Bancroft came

between them. He felt again the soft yielding of her pliant figure, the fresh, sweet warmth of her lips. What a fool he had been! It had been his pride never to entangle himself with the girls of the Settlement. A man with dreams and big ambitions had no business to involve himself in trifling love affairs. He told himself that a girl who would go to a fight and watch two half-naked men batter each other was not his kind of a woman. The adventure shocked the prim Settlement streak in him—her presence at the fight, her walking over the hills at midnight, the absence of resistance when he kissed her.

Then he despised himself for throwing the blame of it all on her. She had not known he was coming home by the hills. There had been no ill in her. It was a pretty mean thing to kiss a girl and then despise her for being kissed. She was a fine girl, he was sure. Her bright, laughing ways made duller women spiteful, but she was frank and honest as the sunlight. And, after all, what was a kiss? A man and a girl and a moon on a summer night! But there must be no more of it. He might easily have made a much bigger fool of himself, and it was not the square thing to a square girl. It was a mixed-up kind of world. A man must set the one goal, the one ideal before him, or the world would be a pathless swamp instead of an orderly, mapped-out place through which the straight highroad ran to the clearly seen goal.

It angered him that he had been so weak. He had been faithless to the ideal so freshly framed in his mind, and in some way it dimmed the glory of the day. And as he mourned, the sunny face of Emma came and teased him provokingly till he slept.

CHAPTER X.

The tea table had been placed in the shade of the trees on the Chalet lawn. Geraldine Ainslee and Trench had come in from the private golf course ahead of the other players. He now watched her quizzically as she fussed over the spirit lamp, with whose flame the summer airs were having great fun. When, at last, it had been brought to order, she sat back in her chair and resumed the interrupted conversation.

"And so, Uncle Peter, if you don't mind very much, I would rather not come." She spoke very decidedly.

"Then the project ends here and now," he replied. "I thought it would be neighborly and decent. Ewan has filled quite a place in the Settlement. He is much more to me than an ordinary employee. Presently he will belong to the university of your father and myself. My idea was just to bring the folks together, so that he would go away feeling that the old grievances are gone."

"I know it looks hatefully mean," she said. "But I could provide myself with a good excuse. I might arrange to be away."

"No, it wouldn't do." And he shook his head. "Your father made an excuse when I broached the matter to him. If the rectory were unrepresented it would be too conspicuous. We can drop the suggestion. No one but the three of us knows anything of it."

She was silent—vexed with herself. The refusal seemed so petty, but she was fully resolved. It was not because of Emma Bancroft. What had she to do with his love affairs? There were a score of things she could have enumerated as furnishing grounds for her refusal, if she troubled to think of them.

"I wonder if I dare ask what the particular offense is?" he inquired.

"Nothing—and everything," she replied. "He represents, I think, the things I most detest in a man. I dislike the successful prodigy almost as much as I hate the self-constituted martyr who advertises his woes."

"Whew!" he whistled. "Some indictment!"

"I dislike the type," she continued; "the arrogant, successful, self-made man. The big, brutal power that despises everything unlike itself. His grudges are his dearest possessions. He would rather hurt an imagined foe than win a victory. There is father, for in-

stance, to whom he is barely civil. What wrong did the rectory ever do to him?"

"There are heaps of good men, Geraldine, who understand as much about a red-blooded boy as of the mental processes of a dinosaur," he laughed. "On the other hand, there are others, like Bob Curwen, who can grunt or grin six words at a lad and have the savage eating out of his hand."

"Well, I don't want him eating out of my hand," she retorted. "He would probably bite it, and rejoice because he was squaring off some pang father caused him."

"Now, if you had been a boy, Geraldine, perhaps your father might have understood boys better. But I am grateful, even at the cost to him, that you were not, that you are just—you." He rose and accompanied her to the gate.

"With all my nasty spitefulness?" she asked.

"With all the little spice of belligerency that makes you so delightful to differ with," he corrected.

She passed out of his sight at a turn of the leafy lane, and was hastening homeward, when, at the top of the lake path, she came face to face with the man whom she had been criticizing so severely. Their roads lay in the same direction, so she could not well refuse him permission to walk with her. She had an irritating sense that Ewan understood her disapproval and was lightly indifferent to it.

She inquired politely about his intended departure and the college he was joining. Sympathetically, and quite sincerely, she spoke of the loneliness his mother would feel, and promised often to call upon her.

Ewan thought the rector's daughter had never been so agreeable to him. She spoke of the pleasure he must have found in realizing his ambition to enter the wider world, and even alluded to his recent fight. There was a malicious spirit in it all. She deliberately set herself to be almost flatteringly pleasant. Had a self-sufficient or boastful word fallen from his lips she would have rejoiced in the confirmation of her expressed opinion.

"You have written your name imperishably on the Settlement annals," she said. "Everywhere one hears of your triumphs. I wonder if I may congratulate you at this late day?"

"I don't think you mean that, Miss Geraldine," he answered bluntly. "I heard that you considered it vulgar and brutal." The color came into her face, but before she could defend or explain he added:

"And so it is."

"Why do you fight, then?" she asked.

"I don't," he replied with a laugh. "I used to, but I have quit. Why did I do it? Just for money. Of course I liked to win. I like to win whatever I do; don't you?"

"I suppose so," she smiled.

"What is there to any game, sport, or business if it's no matter to you whether you win or lose?" he asked. "Aren't we all prize-fighting men and women all the way through life?"

"I never quite thought of it that way," she answered.

"We either fight or take the gutter," he said. "We get what we are strong or able enough to take. One man stays a laborer, his mate becomes a master, a millionaire. One's a village clergyman, and the other, perhaps really no cleverer or holier, gets to be a bishop. The winner has push, drive; he doesn't take other folks' valuation of himself; if he does, he'll be on the bargain stall, but he fixes his own figure and starts out to prove he's right."

"What of the weak, then, who can't hold their own in the race or fight?" she demanded.

"As I said, the gutter. They are trampled body and soul," he replied unhesitatingly. "The world only respects you when you face and fight it. Those who don't or won't are dumped on the rubbish heap. Who wants anything to do with a failure, no matter how good or unfortunate he may have been? He is out of his class in business; people drop him; he has to go where he belongs, the class lower down. When you think you pity him,

you really despise him. Results are what count. Everybody judges by them, and you do."

"No, I don't," she contradicted. "Or at least it depends on what you mean by results. If it is money, I certainly do not."

"You think you don't," he insisted. "You don't mean to, but you do. Suppose a man came into the Settlement here and it was known that he hadn't a dollar, who would bother with him or his troubles? But let it be known he has a million or two, and all the people would rush up to be friendly with him, because he has no real need of them. It is all right," he laughed. "You have got to have some system, some standard. You cannot turn a man inside out to find out what he really is, so you judge by the results he can show. Those who kick against it are jealous because they have no good results to show. It is the weakling who does the whimpering."

"It isn't the winning, but the way a man bears himself in the fight that counts," she asserted. "Is a hero who goes into battle and gets killed before it is well begun less of a success than the one who comes through unharmed? What a man or woman is is what one is, not has."

"That is the truth," he agreed. "The only little hitch in the practical working of it out is that in the market, where we have to buy, folks have a fancy for seeing the color of our money. The best man in the world is handicapped when he goes into the store and wants to buy on his face instead of his purse. I know all about it; I've been there myself."

She laughed outright at his pleasant candor. There was no sourness or unwholesome brag about it. He had the strong man's view, and suffered from few delusions. She, who had been reared on charming idealisms, found it very materialistic, but very true.

"I suppose that is so," she conceded. "Still, I read the other day of a great banker who said he often lent to a poor man, taking moral values as security when he would not trust his money to a man in whom he had no personal confidence, though he offered the best collateral."

"The man was talking copybook for publication," he replied. "He would hedge his bet some way, I'll warrant. Of course I have seen little yet, but that is how it goes in the small world, and I guess, in the main, all worlds, big and little, are much the same."

"When do you go away?" she asked at the rectory gate.

"On Monday," he replied.

"You are coming, I suppose, to the water picnic on Thursday?" she inquired.

"I hadn't heard of it," he answered.

"We are taking the children from the school to Indian Isle for the afternoon. It will be rather good fun. You should come," she said.

"But I haven't been invited," he smiled.

"Would you come if I gave you an invitation?" she asked.

"With the usual privileges?" There was a dancing light in his eyes.

"You are an impolite bargainer," she laughed. "There will be sandwiches, I suppose, and cakes and picnic tea of sorts, if that is what you mean. What more could you ask for fifty cents?"

"In the Settlement, when a girl invites a man, it means that she is his for the afternoon. She goes in his boat and comes back with him." She liked the flash of his white teeth.

"I didn't know," she answered. "I am afraid, then, I cannot invite you. Several days ago I promised. Still, that need not keep you away."

"Folks would laugh at the lone man in the empty boat," he said. "He'd be neither use nor ornament, and if he spoke to a girl he'd be poaching on some luckier man's preserve. There's little fun peeping through the bars of other men's paradises."

"Make one of your own, then," she laughed. "There are lots of nice girls in the Settlement."

"A girl's girl is one thing; a man's girl quite another, Miss Geraldine. I guess any kind of an Eve wouldn't make much of an Eden," he answered.

"I am sure I don't know about Eden making, and am much more concerned about biscuit making for supper. I will tell George Simes to send you a ticket. Fifty cents for Adam alone, seventy-five if he is sociable enough to bring Eve with him," she said at the gate.

"Please don't trouble about the ticket," he replied. "I guess I shall be just as well off on the mainland; the island's not overroomy."

She understood his meaning. Young Simes' name had slipped out unintentionally. Still, she was not sorry. These petty feuds needed open-air treatment. Their childishness irritated her. With a little nod she passed through the gate. There was nothing so petty on earth, she thought, as a big man with a baby soul. The judgment she had passed on his was true; she did hate priggish prodigies who imagined that the universe took its tones from their moods.

CHAPTER XI.

The last week among his own people was a busy one to Ewan. He had left the mines, but there was much to do. Friends to see at Wibsey and elsewhere, business to clear up, final arrangements for his mother's welfare to complete. Here and there were pet mining prospects he had promised himself should be examined when the time came, and these had to be visited, as a miser might go to his hidden hoards.

Then came a sudden trip to his lawyer at Barford. Jane Craigie did not know what it was about; something important, she was sure. He was unusually silent, and for a time his packing for college stopped. She knew something of the gambling spirit of the prospector in a new country. Fortunes were easily missed or picked up at times, and Ewan had expended not a little money in safeguarding possible finds.

"Mr. Trench was here to see you, Ewan," she said one afternoon when he came in tired and dusty. "He has been twice and missed you." He started off again for the office of his former employer.

"I wondered if you meant to leave without seeing us," said Trench, pushing forward the cigarette box. "Busy time, I suppose?"

"Oh, going the round of the old stamping grounds," Ewan replied.

"Time getting short, eh? You leave on Monday, your mother told me," said Trench. Ewan lit the cigarette, surveying the burning tip before he answered.

"I am not sure of going at all this year," he answered. "The fact is, what I thought was settled came unsettled suddenly. A call that I hadn't expected dipped deeply into my pocket. It had to be met whatever else was switched. I was coming up to see you about it, whether you had called or not."

"You can't scrap big plans like those," said Trench. "How much, Ewan? I guess your friendship reaches to the check book."

"Nothing now; perhaps nothing later," replied Ewan. "I wanted to talk to you, though, to find out whether in case of need I might get a thousand or two. Now I know, it rights things, and I'm greatly obliged to you. Hello! You have got one of the new mining company's dodgers. They bought the seventy-five-acre lot on the north shore, I hear."

"Yes, Simes was here an hour ago," said Trench. "Brisk and bustling as a prospective mine magnate should be. What is it all going to amount to?"

"There's stuff in the ground all right," answered Craigie.

"He's got quite a bit of backing from outside, and some local money; a wad of his own besides," continued Trench. "He offered me a block of the stock, but I have not decided. Probably I'll keep out of it. We are bound to compete to some extent, though there's heaps of room for us all. I had a notion at one time that you fancied that strip. You put in quite a bit of work on it one time and another. I guess that is what started the bee buzzing in Simes' head."

"So I did. The place has a drawback, though. That strip is oddly

shaped, the original section having been sliced into from time to time. As it is now the land is narrow, running east and west, while the veins run north and south. That would not be so bad if they go deep down, but I have a notion the veins taper off there. Once I went down pretty deep with a core drill, and after a hundred feet nothing much showed up. Still, I wouldn't tell anybody else that just now. Considering who the promoters are, I should be accused of prejudice. Quite a list of officials!" And he flicked the paper. "All they seem to lack is some one who has once in his life seen the inside of a pit."

"I wondered, when you spoke of deferring the college project, whether the new lot had offered you the management," laughed Trench.

"I can see them doing it," grinned Ewan. "Just about as plainly as I can fancy myself taking it. So Mr. Ainslee has taken a flyer in it? You can't be Simes' friend for nothing. Let Mr. Ainslee in as a special favor on the ground floor, shares to be put up to triple the price inside of a month, and all the rest of the blarney. Well, with parson and church warden mixed up in it, there should be something doing."

"I wish Ainslee had left it alone," said Trench. "A parson in a mine deal is worse than a woman in a bucket-shop trade. All they understand about the game is that they ought to win, and if they happen to get the wrong side of the deal they'll yell murder. A clergyman has no more business to speculate in mines than on horses, and of the two the latter's the cleaner."

The Ainslees dined at the Chalet that evening. Geraldine and some of the girl visitors had driven over to Barford in the afternoon on a shopping expedition.

"You know the girl from the hill farm, Uncle Peter? I mean that tall, handsome girl who used to live above the rectory," said one of the visitors in a lull of the conversation.

"Emma Bancroft," suggested Geraldine.

"Yes, that's the one. Well, she has set up the smartest little hat shop in Barford," said the girl. "Just hats and nothing more. She will make her fortune, for she is smart and clever, with ideas that don't seem to grow luxuriantly in this part of the country. She is nothing less than a benefactor to local humanity. To look at the womens' hats in church, one would fancy a shape, some ribbon, and a bunch of never-were flowers had met in a whirlwind and the worst had happened."

"Where on earth did Emma Bancroft find the money to start a shop with?" asked Mr. Ainslee. "No Bancroft was ever known to save a dollar."

"Perhaps the men of the locality have financed her on the coöperative principle in the interest of things æsthetic," suggested another of the girls. "With those standardized mail-order hats marring the view something had to be done. A man must love a woman an awful lot to put up with her in an inverted pudding basin trimmed with blue roses, green poppies, and crimson grapes."

Trench had wondered, on his way home from the office, what this sudden money need of Ewan's could be. He had dismissed the matter as none of his business. Now he recalled the night of the dance. The girl had unmistakably attracted Craigie. She was very pretty, alive, bright. Trench paid no attention to the tattle of Settlement women about women. Dullness and virtue to them were inseparable. A woman outside their circle was a creature to suspect, especially if she were pretty and not stodgy. He had always liked the girl, and found no fault at all with Ewan's taste, if it did incline in that direction. Then there had been his meeting with Emma after the big fight. What of it? A pretty, unconventional idyl. The fighting man, turning from the garish triumph of the ring to a tryst on a summer night under the midnight stars. Kisses, woman's soft laughter, love's whispers, after the hour of furious man-to-man battling. It would be just like Ewan to stake the girl of his heart to a chance. He thought none the less of him for it, if it were true.

It was late the following afternoon, when Ewan, back from a trip over the hills, reached his boat on the north shore of the lake. Luckily he had beached it high up on the steep shingle in the morning. After a long spell of dry, sultry weather, a heavy storm with thunder, torrential rains, and high wind had suddenly broken out. The lake, in a wide gully of the steep hills, had become a furious caldron of tempest-lashed waters. Happily, he reflected, the storm had come on late, for the two-mile crossing from the Indian Isle to the south shore, with women and children in light pleasure skiffs, would have been no easy or safe task. The threatening sky would have given them sufficient warning, and doubtless they were all at home by this time. He knew the lake—every eddy and current of it—was a good waterman, and his boat was big and stout.

As he launched out he could see in the fading light the great waves beating heavily on the rocky shore of the low-lying, tiny islet and flinging up clouds of whirling spray that at times hid it completely from view. He got away, heading through the turmoil for the lower side of the islet, where he would have lee protection for a little way and where the shallows fell away into deep water. After a stiff fight he rested a moment in the comparative quiet of the sheltered waters, his eyes scanning the picnic ground. Surely there was some one waving from the little beach! He turned in and ran the boat ashore on the sand spit. With four children clinging to her, Geraldine was standing in the half shelter of the rocks, seeking to protect her charges from the incessant spray showers that were raining upon them.

"They took the others across safely," she explained. "Then the storm grew worse. They tried again and again to get back to us, but failed. I had almost despaired, for the water is rising fast. The poor little tots are half frozen. Do you think we can get over?"

"Oh, yes. It looks worse than it really is," he replied. "You are not afraid?"

"No, I don't think so," she smiled. "I am neither a good nor a courageous sailor, but you seem to have a knack of getting through difficulties."

"I carry my luck with me," he laughed. "Well, now for the lone man with the empty boat to fill it up."

He had with him in the dry bow locker of his bateau-built craft some sacks that he took on his trips for the bigger rock samples, so after bailing he spread them on the floor over an oilskin coat.

"For the kiddies," he said. "Too risky on the seats. You take the stern seat near them, and jolly them along. There's quite a bit of spray flying."

He wrapped her in a big, dry sweater coat, and in a few moments, with the passengers stowed, they were away. There was a short respite in the slack water, then the boat turned shoreward, and the fight began. Again and again the wind-whipped wave crests swept over them. At times the buffetings of the big rollers made the boat halt shudderingly. Through the shallows the great curving waters towered, it seemed impassably, sweeping toward them. At any other time Geraldine would have been terrified. She was no coward, but the lake in its furious angers always had terrors for her. This day, in the worst storm she had ever seen, a sustaining exaltation had come over her; she had no fear whatever. Ewan did, in some extraordinary way, appear to carry his luck with him, and the confidence it gave to him extended to others.

She watched the masterful swing of his body—before his easy calm even the rage of the waters seemed to have something shrewishly weak and hysterical in it—the even, steady stroke of the oars, the powerful drive, feet braced against the footboard, through the onrushing waves. She could hear the steady, even breathing as he bent to his task. Bareheaded, the gray shirt open at the neck, he had never appeared to her so fine or wholesome looking. Now and again he threw a laughing joke at the half-terrified, half-assured children, and they laughed with him

as at some rather terrifying prank of the waters. The two miles across the current seemed terribly long, but at last she could see the lighted lanterns on the beach.

Evidently the anxious throng had seen them in the gathering darkness. Then came a mighty drive through the thundering shallows for the beach. Hands grasped the bow and hauled the boat up to safety. The children were handed out to eager hands. Mr. Ainslee and George Simes came forward to help Geraldine out, but Ewan was before them. As she rose in the swaying boat he picked her up in his arms, stepped over the stern into the white rush of waters, and carried her to the dry upper beach.

"I hope you will thank Ewan, father," she said, as the two of them sat at dinner later. "It was a terrible predicament we were in, and I don't know any one else on the lakeside who could have brought us through that horrible storm."

"Yes," he answered absently, "of course I will. I was really annoyed, though, when he carried you ashore in that unnecessary and spectacular manner."

"It would have been much more unpleasantly spectacular had he let me be knocked into the lake by the swinging boat," she laughed. "After he had brought us through the danger in so gallant a way, it was in keeping with the rest that he should make such a gallant finish of it."

Mr. Ainslee looked up from the newspaper again, and peered across at her. She looked very gay and cheerful in the lamplight.

"Humph!" he commented, and turned to his "Churchman" again to read of some of the latitudinarian lapses of the Broad Church party.

CHAPTER XII.

Ewan's first months at college were all readjustment—the most difficult of his career. No older in years than the average college freshman, he was far beyond him in vital experience. He had fought and won life's opening battles that were still far ahead of them. In some sense he was a tested, proved man, with the self-confidence of the veteran. The world into which he had been ushered was fascinatingly new, a small working model of the real workshop beyond. There were divisions and castes, cliques and factions, littleness and bigness, all the subtle gradations of character and ability, bounded by the extremes of each, that are to be found in the larger world. The education of lectures and books was perhaps the least important of the university's works. Ewan found, to his amazement, that sports and amusements formed more than half of the average man's interests there.

His most intimate acquaintance at college was a man the opposite of himself in almost every way. Philip Sherwell belonged, on both sides of his parentage, to an old, distinguished family. His father was a bishop, nationally eminent within and without the church. He was one of the men who had roused Ewan's curiosity and interest from the time he began to read of the outer world.

Sherwell, the son, was a slight, delicate young man, a year Ewan's junior, who had come up from one of the fashionable preparatory schools with a reputation for scholarship of exceptional promise. To Ewan, who met him casually in the library, his knowledge seemed encyclopedic, his breadth of view invigorating and stimulating. The two men drew closely together at once, Craigie's reserve yielding to the other's frank friendliness. Sherwell opened to the country lad the wonderful world of books—that vast ocean, in comparison with which the literature of a college course is but a tiny tributary. The broad, pleasant fields of English literature, the imperishable classics of the wide world, the glowing splendors of poetry and fiction. Problems that Ewan had puzzled over in his survey of social and political life as things new and baffling, perhaps insoluble, bore a different aspect when discussed with one who had been reared in an atmos-

phere of culture and social service. Phil knew these things, and the best thought about them, as Ewan understood the run of fiber in the rock of an asbestos mine. It was from Sherwell Ewan learned the well-nigh incredible truth that there were worth-while men who regarded success not from the standpoint of the acquisition of wealth, but that of social ministry. Quite as astonishing it was to find an intelligent man, keen, alive, neither prig nor weakling, who cherished religious faith, not that of musty dogma or of creed framed in the half lights of the ancient world, but fresh, modern, vital, an energetic optimism, a belief in the ability of humanity to work out its own salvation, not with fear and trembling, but with firm courage and resolute confidence.

Greatest of all surprises it was to learn that Sherwell purposed to enter the ministry of the church as a career that offered a man the greatest scope for public usefulness.

"For a time I hesitated between the church and the Salvation Army," said Phil very seriously one evening as they talked personal affairs with unusual freedom.

Ewan burst into shouts of laughter. The spectacle of the refined young aristocrat, arrayed in a "Blood and Fire" jersey, tub-thumping on a cracker barrel at a street corner, was irresistible.

"I didn't think a whole lot of the Salvationist theology," explained Phil. "It had two excellent features—simplicity and scantiness. What attracted me was the fact that on the fighting line, where principles are expressed in action, the red jersey and poke bonnet deliver the goods."

"I always figured you as a college professor or banker or swell lawyer," said Craigie.

"Nothing so dismal," laughed Sherwell. "Just a parson, the kind you'd like to throw a brick at. One of these days, when you're rolling in mine millions, you'll find out. I'll step along and tithe them for you."

It was one of young Sherwell's greatest grievances against fate that his physical weakness barred him from the athletic world, so far as active participation in sport was concerned. He was interested, heart and soul, in all the sporting side of university life. To sit on sun-baked bleachers, watching an exciting baseball match, yelling, howling, hat and stick waving frantically in enthusiastic moments, was one of the supreme joys of life to him, and nothing short of ridiculous to Craigie, who had not been trained to perceive the subtle charms of bat and ball. The sight of grown men playing all afternoon with a ball and stick and making such a furiously serious business of it seemed the extreme of foolishness to the Settlement lad, the frenzy of the watching mob more childish still. Football was more to his taste, the battering charge, the fierce tackle, the smashing plunge, body against body—that was something more like his idea of sport. Still, he could not fathom the enthusiasm of his friend that made him sit, delicate as he was, through the cold hours of a winter afternoon, watching two sets of husky men struggle round a pigskin ball.

"Haven't you a drop of red blood in all that big body of yours?" Sherwell demanded as he listened to the good-natured, grumpy criticism of an exceptionally dull game. "The plan—the strategy of it all—the physical power seeking to carry out the mental plan—the alliance of brain and brawn—the individual finding his completeness in combination—the teamwork in which the unit is subordinated to the whole, and his success to its."

"Now, if it were man against man, as in a race, a duel, a boxing match," said Ewan critically.

"There spoke the primitive man," retorted Phil. "The man who sought to be on top of the pile, awing men and bringing women adoringly to his feet, the strong man—the chief—the king! My son, the great games are essentially democratic, republican, sinking the individual in the common weal. Tennis, golf are egoistic to a great extent; baseball and football, particularly football, are altruistic, the man sunk in the team

triumphing only as his college triumphs, its defeat his, no matter how brilliant his personal feats may have been."

Ewan laughed at the enthusiastic deliverance. He had been brought up in a world where there was little time or space for elaborated play. Sherwell lifted a thin hand and punched the big fellow's chest.

"How I envy you, you great gladiator-built man!" he said. "When I was a kiddie I always wanted to be tall, broad-shouldered, a hero on diamond and gridiron. To bring home the winning run in the last half of the ninth, to smash over the line for victory's points in the closing minutes of the hard game were my dreams, and look what came of them!" He stood up to exhibit the better his frail figure.

"Like Byron's clubfoot that soured life's happiness," he commented.

"But it hasn't soured yours," said Craigie.

"No, I have had compensations," smiled Phil. "But you——" His hand passed lightly over the other's powerful arms and shoulders. "You have all I wanted and could do what I dreamed of doing, yet it means little or nothing to you."

So often did Phil lament the other's indifference to athletics that unwittingly it drew attention. Men, acquaintances of both, came to look askance on the athletic figure that seemed to be always bent over books. Sherwell innocently enough urged Ewan to get out with the football squad or take up rowing when the season came round, but found, rather to his disgust, that the big man had no interest in either. His work, he urged, was exacting and absorbing; he had no time for play. Gradually the light, bantering joke of a friend became the gibes of others among Sherwell's athletic set. Then Phil, perceiving this, was angry with himself for having meddled in Ewan's affairs.

The scoffing did not go very far, for men instinctively felt that Craigie would be a dangerous man to bait, but Sherwell could see and hear what other men's opinions of his friend were. He felt they were utterly untrue, that Ewan was not doing himself justice, and on that account they hurt still more.

CHAPTER XIII.

Halfway through the year, Bishop Sherwell came to the university to preach in the college chapel. Ewan had almost abandoned churchgoing since he left home. Now and again he would go to witness some elaborate service or hear a preacher of eminence, but apart from such visits he had no interest in the churches. Phil made no reference to his father's coming visit. He did not want Ewan to feel that he had to attend the service for politeness' sake. The country lad at this time was in a state of intellectual and spiritual revolt. Everything in the creed to which he had yielded a sort of half allegiance had collapsed, save the belief in the historic Christ of the Gospels, who stood forth amid the wreckage of the systems men had built about Him with divine imperishableness.

Ewan went to hear Bishop Sherwell partly out of regard for Phil, partly to find out what a man who held Phil's views could have to say in the proclamation of his faith. He found him a bigger, older Phil, aristocrat, scholar, man of the world, democratic molder of public opinion, wide-visioned humanitarian. His sermon to a crowded congregation, mostly young men, marked an epoch in Craigie's life.

The message swept through the narrow, long-closed chambers of Craigie's mind like the sun-warmed salt breezes of the home hills. The Gospel of the great essentials, "To do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God," the noblest creed ever put into words.

"If that is the truth—and it is, you can no more deny it than deny the sun shining in His heaven," said Ewan later to his friend. "Why don't the parsons preach it, in season and out of season, instead of their ridiculously petty tag ends of something the books of Dryasdusts have taught them they ought to believe and preach? Why don't they bring the living water to the thirsty

instead of the stagnant stuff that only nauseates?"

It was too big a question for Phil to answer, the "Why" that is responsible for the dry rot in that which should be the grand, vitalizing, energizing influence of the world.

A few weeks later came a short vacation. Ewan had planned an orgy of study, but Sherwell upset the project.

"I'd like you to come home with me, Ewan," he said. "You are due for a lay-off from work. I think we can give you a pleasant time."

Craigie's face flushed with pleasure, but he did not reply at once.

"Look here, Phil!" he blurted out presently. "We are friends here, and it has been mighty pleasant for me, but I am not fool enough not to know that your class and mine are different things. You don't know much about me, though I dare say you've guessed at the outline. There are just mother and myself at home. Not so long ago we were poor—poor as perhaps you cannot imagine. I started in as a common pit kid, and when I got the job it was a mighty lift from what I had been before. Luck was with me, the mine owner was wonderfully good to me, and I got ahead enough to make things right at home, keep my mother in comfort, and put me through here. Because a man is friendly here in college, and has been a good fellow to me, that don't give me any right to go where I don't belong."

"You must think me pretty poor stuff, Ewan," answered Sherwell. "I'd give a lot to have done what you have done. I don't ask any man to my home because he happens to be rich, and I don't refrain from asking a man because he doesn't happen to be well off. As far as I can manage it, I pick my friends for what they are, not what they have. Father knows about you, and wants you to come, and I'd like you to know my mother."

The few days spent at Sherwell's home were the pleasantest Ewan had ever known. He saw for the first time the beauty of true American home life of the highest, most refined, and cultured type. He found a perfect hospitality, cordial, unostentatious. He met intellectual people to whom culture was an atmosphere, not a pose. There was not a trace of the religious professional about the bishop. He was gay, high-spirited, in full touch with every phase of the world around him, yet bearing himself with a dignity that was impressively influential.

For a long time there was harassing doubt in Craigie's mind as to whether it was right for him to accept the hospitality of the Sherwells when they had not been enlightened as to his history. Social conventions, he knew, were very strict in many quarters. He resolved to speak of his secret to the bishop, and presently he did so.

He came away from the interview with an inexpressible sense of peace and gratitude; it had been a tremendously difficult ordeal, one that he would have evaded had he been able to do so with a clear conscience. From that time onward the relations between the bishop and Ewan were more affectionately cordial on the part of the elder man, more reverently worshipful on the boy's. There remained still one secret that clouded the very direct mind of the Settlement lad. Often he wondered very uneasily what they would think of him, especially Mrs. Sherwell, who to him was the embodiment of everything dainty, refined, beautiful, if they knew he had been a common ring fighter for money.

It had been hard to conceal this part of his past from Phil, especially when their talk on matters athletic touched boxing. Then quite suddenly the truth burst forth. Ewan one evening was seeking his friend to give him an urgent message. After hunting for him high and low, he heard that he could be found in the gymnasium, and thither he went. It was a place Ewan had hitherto studiously avoided, as a reforming toper might shun the saloon. There were times when his fingers itched for the feel of gloves, the sense of stripped fitness, the smell of the powdered resin of the ring floor. As he now entered the building he came

face to face with Sam Driscoll. They stood staring at each other for a moment.

"Ewan!" exclaimed Sam. "Well, I'm glad to see you, but what on earth are you doing round this place?"

"Attending college," laughed Craigie. "What about you?"

"Got a job looking after the boxing and wrestling preparations," replied Sam. "Just started in to get ready for the intercollegiate matches. And so you are a real rah, rah college man? Gad, if I only could use you!"

"But you can't; I'm a sure and safe professional," grinned Craigie. "And look here, Sam, nothing's known here of my boxing, so you've got to keep quiet."

"Studying books!" groaned Sam. "When you might be in the running for middleweight honors, and close up, too." The neglect of talent seemed to appall the trainer.

"Come and see me, Sam. If I can't get into the game, I'd like to talk about it sometimes, but don't you blab." After a few minutes' chat they parted, Ewan entered the gymnasium, Sam following a few minutes later.

Boxing was going on in the middle of the floor, a ring of men, Phil among them, looking on. Ewan gave his message, and stopped a moment, tempted to watch. A big fellow whom Craigie disliked for his impertinent bantering was administering heavy punishment to a plucky youngster much smaller and lighter. The man was a fair boxer, rough, something of braggart and bully, proud of his moderate abilities in the ring, and avoided pretty much by the better class of men.

His unnecessary vigor was now being viewed with manifest disfavor and some protests by the onlookers. The bout presently terminated, the smaller man being sent flying and out. Flushed with his rather brutal achievement, the victor swaggered over to the knot of men near Craigie, inviting other adversaries. His eye fell on Ewan.

"Come on, Craigie," he said, tapping Ewan on the chest with his gloved hand. "You are big enough; let's see what you can do beside stew over books."

Phil looked eagerly at his friend. There was silence in the group. Long there had been doubt about Craigie, but now he was called on to make a showing or back water unpleasantly.

"I guess not. Not to-night," replied Ewan, turning away.

The challenger laughed sneeringly. A grin of contempt ran round the group. Sherwell felt sick. Ewan was big enough and capable looking. He had been a pitman, and was hard as nails. What matter if he did get licked by a cleverer man? He was tough enough to stand that and make some kind of a showing.

Ewan sensed the general opinion. Outside the door, he paused. What matter if it did come out that he had been a prize fighter? He half turned to go back into the room, the fight hunger coming over him. Just five minutes with that big, awkward, swaggering four-flusher! Then the old, dogged will asserted itself. He would not be forced against inclination and judgment by the ignorant sneers of a few boys. It would be hard, though, to make Phil understand.

"You can't judge 'em by their looks," sneered Horsted, the victor. "The little yellow streak gives them away every time in the pinches. Eh, Sam?" And he turned to Driscoll, who had seen and heard all.

"No, it doesn't do to go by looks," agreed Sam. "When you do you are liable to make the mistake you are making now." He could not endure the traducing of his pet pupil.

"What do you mean?" asked Horsted.

"Do you ever figure that a man may have reasons for not wanting to fight, and yet have no yellow streak in him?" said Sam.

"I'd like to know the reasons," sneered Horsted.

"Well, for one, you might not be in his class as a fighter," laughed Sam. Phil Sherwell listened, all eager excitement.

"You know Mr. Craigie, Sam?" he asked.

"Yes, sir, and I'm going to give him away, whether he's mad about it or not," said Driscoll. "He has a record of some fourteen fights in the ring this last year or so, without one blot on it, three-fourths of them clean knock-outs. I trained him last summer over the line, and I was in his corner when he knocked Tom Brandreth out after fifteen rounds of as wicked fighting as I have ever seen. If Mr. Craigie had kept to the business he'd have been near the middleweight championship of this or any other country before long. It's no slight on you, Mr. Horsted, to say you could last with him in the ring about two minutes if he didn't want you round. Yellow streak!" And Sam laughed. "He's a wild cat, a bear, that would sooner fight than eat or sleep or make money. When you rapped him on the chest I was afraid for you, Mr. Horsted." And he went on to tell of the Wibsey fight, the fake contest, Ewan's refusal to go on, and the bout with Brandreth. The story lost nothing in the telling.

"What on earth is he so darned modest about?" asked Francis, Horsted's late opponent.

"Just built that way," replied Sam. "You'd think knocking Tom Brandreth out was something like robbing a widow the way Ewan acts. He don't figure ring honors worth talking about, and he's plum crazy about books and things like that."

"Well, can you beat it?" exclaimed Francis. "Why, any kind of a poor crock can stuff up Greek and philosophy and that kind of stuff, but to put Brandreth out and be modest about it! Gosh, if it was me I'd be walking with my hat cocked the rest of my life! Fetch him back, Phil. No more of this 'blushing unseen' business. He's coming here to belt you, Horsted, for that wipe you gave me; then we'll put him in the front window for the good and glory of the college."

Ewan could not be found. He had gone out to walk off the grouch and settle his perturbed mind. It was late when he got in, but Sherwell was waiting for him.

"You great, big, bluffing fraud!" shouted Phil in greeting. "I felt tonight in the gymnasium so disappointed with you that I could have knocked your block off in sheer vexation, and now I'd like to knock it off for hiding your light under a bushel, only I am not Brandreth, and he couldn't do it."

"That Sam Driscoll's been blatting!" said Ewan grouchily.

"Of course he has. He thinks too much about you to let a whole college think you're yellow," answered Phil. "You are a bigger man to the fellows now than if you were the most learned bookworm of the crowd. How could you stand Horsted's impertinence?"

"Don't!" replied the other. "I've walked ten miles to-night to work it off my mind. It's like this, Phil; I'm not proud of this fighting business. I went into it for dollars when I hadn't many of them, and it helped me to get here. I don't know now that I am sorry Sam talked. Sometimes I've felt uneasy at your home, wondering what your mother and father would think of me if they knew I had been just a prize fighter."

"Think!" shouted Phil. "They are two of the sportiest sports the country holds. Now I'll tell you what you are going to do, Ewan. In college no man lives or dies to himself. Matriculating is like getting married; you can't do as you want or like afterward, there's somebody else to be considered, two have become, as it were, one flesh. You belong to this commonwealth, and you are going to get down into the gym and help boost the old place along by putting the boys through their paces. We are going after intercoll honors, and you have to help us get them."

So night after night Ewan stripped to the new job, and when two of the championships came to the varsity, Craigie got as much praise for them as the actual winners. He was no longer a mere student, a man of books, but a college man, getting an education and helping others to get one in the broad

college spirit that responds to everything touching Alma Mater's fame and honor.

CHAPTER XIV.

During these busy years the Settlement saw little of Craigie. He came often to see his mother, but the visits were short. In the long summer vacations he turned from books to practical work, visiting the big mining centers, working in the most modern establishments, seeking to supplement his knowledge with wider working experience. Now and again he appeared in the little back pew, and Geraldine Ainslee had begun to mark these days in red in the calendar of her life.

College had changed him. The old frowning look was rarely seen; his strength seemed finer, his spirit broader. He never called at the rectory, but sometimes she met him at the Chalet. Outwardly they were the merest of acquaintances, but she was conscious of something unspoken, undeveloped, scarce understood in their relations that made them much more. She would have called it "interest" in him; he was unusual, did unexpected things, and in the Settlement's prosaic life that was sufficient to focus one's attention. He sought her out, was evidently glad to meet her; she knew she had high place in his regard, and it made her glad.

George Simes was now home again, a fully fledged lawyer with an office in Barford. Place had been made for him in the new mining company's staff as secretary. Mr. Ainslee had developed surprising interest in the mines in which his savings had been invested. Business had roused him to activities that his profession had not stimulated. It surprised Geraldine to find how important a place the five thousand dollars invested held in his life. There was something of the speculator's eager greed in it. Day after day he visited the offices and pits. Little was talked of by him at the rectory table but output, cost per ton, market prices, and dividend probabilities. Simes encouraged his absorption, calling at the house almost daily, remaining to meals, and establishing himself on a familiar footing in the household. The Settlement looked on and made rough jokes about it. The parson was dreaming himself a millionaire; folks were all alike under their skins; pious men liked money the same as common people.

And young Simes often dropped in. He found the daughter of the rectory very attractive. She had beauty and refinement—not much money yet, but it was common knowledge that when Trench died she would have a large part of his wealth. He himself was an only child, and his father had accumulated quite a neat fortune. He was a lawyer, and, belonging to one of the learned professions, a ranking gentleman. The old division between a profession and a trade still survived in the hills. With money at his disposal he was not like the poor, unfortunate devils of his profession who were forced to kick their heels in dingy offices, worrying about the next month's rent, until they could break into paying practice. Money would send him off with a flying start on the course he had mapped out. The mines promised well. The broad field of politics was open.

Presently it became common gossip through the Settlement that the parson's girl and the young lawyer were likely to make a match of it. If she was a bit proud and backward, her father was all for it. It was the general opinion that Simes had done a smart bit of diplomatic work in getting Mr. Ainslee into the mine deal. The girl and the chance of Trench's money, and perhaps the New York man's mining interests, were worth going after, to say nothing of the five thousand invested.

There had been some doubt whether Ewan would be able to spend the last Christmas of his college career at home. A short business trip had wedged itself into his arrangements when the vacation began, and it had seemed unlikely that he would get to the Settlement in time for Christmas, its biggest day of the year. However, he arrived unexpectedly on Christmas Eve.

A dance had been arranged for at one of the larger farms, and an invitation sent to Ewan in case he should turn up in time. At his mother's insistence he went up late in the evening for an hour or two. None knew he was in the Settlement until he appeared in the dancing room. He brought with him a new atmosphere, at least to Geraldine Ainslee. She found the routine of farmhouse gayety rather monotonous and wearisome, but his coming infused a new spirit into the occasion.

Dance after dance she gave to him with lavishness and recklessness that made the other guests nudge each other and whisper after the hill fashion of communicating secrets that everybody shares. The parson's girl, so proud and careful, and Jane Craigie's lad!

Everybody could see it, and it looked as if he meant that they should, and she apparently was just as well satisfied. The menfolk made no attempt to hide their appreciation at the turn of affairs. George put on too many professional airs to be popular, and to see Ewan Craigie step in and whip away the girl he was supposed to have made sure of was a delight to them. And the quiet, reserved girl had taken on a fresh beauty, vivacious, sparkling. There was a fresh tenderness in the sensitive mouth, a new light in the gray eyes; she had the charm of the woman loved and loving. Just before breaking-up time, shortly after midnight, he came again to her.

"I am going to drive you home," he said.

"No." She shook her head. "Father arranged for the Simes to take me."

"Never mind the Simes; you must come with me," he laughed with more than persuasive eagerness. "What have they to do with us?"

"Us!" she repeated, challenge in her eyes she could not withhold. "Father promised," she said.

"You will come?" he asked. It was more command than request.

"I don't think so. Yes, I really mean it. Wait and see," she laughed back at him.

Simes and his wife were waiting for their sleigh. George was bustling about the stables for his horse and cutter. The old folks would go home, leaving him to take Geraldine to the rectory. The drive would counterbalance the dominance of Craigie during the evening.

Geraldine stood in the road, furs and wraps about her, waiting, wondering what Ewan's challenge would come to. Then she saw him weaving his way through the crowd of vehicles. He drove to the place where she stood.

"No, Ewan, I really can't," she said.

"Yes, you can. I think you will. Come!" He laid his hand lightly on her arm. There seemed to be compelling power in it. She glanced up, smiling rebelliously, her face bewitchingly pretty in its framing of soft furs. Then with a sigh and laugh she stepped into the sleigh. He wrapped her up snugly, and took his place at her side. The journey was short. She was a little nervous and apprehensive at his impulsive, masterful ways, but very contented and happy. At the gate, he helped her out.

"Good night, Geraldine. It has been the happiest Christmas Eve I have ever known," he said, extending his hand. "We are friends?"

She nodded her head smilingly as she gave her hand. They had never been real enemies, but everything was different now. He held the hand. There came back to her recollection of his parting in the near-by wood with Emma Bancroft. She wished she had not been so reckless at the dance. Her heart beat fast, and she withdrew her hand.

"Good night, Ewan—friend." She laughed again and went swiftly through the gate. He watched her till she reached the house. She turned to wave her hand; the door opened and she passed into the light. Ewan drove home, a great happiness infolding him.

When Geraldine entered the sitting room she found her father and Uncle Peter hobnobbing over a Christmas-morning drink.

"Has George gone?" Mr. Ainslee asked.

"He did not come. Ewan Craigie drove me home," she replied.

"You promised to drive with George," he said rebukingly.

"No, dear, you promised, I think; I only listened," she replied smilingly. Trench chuckled silently, glancing at the mischievous face.

"I won't have it!" exclaimed Ainslee, striking the table angrily after she had gone upstairs. "The fellow does it only to annoy me."

"I have a much higher opinion of Geraldine's attractiveness," replied Trench. "Really, Ainslee, I don't think either of them took you greatly into their calculations. And remember, Ewan will not always be just Jane Craigie's lad, with the bar sinister so prominently across his escutcheon that you can't see what lies behind it. He will be a man of mark among big people when George Simes is just a peddling country attorney. You can't really blame Geraldine for preferring a real live man to a lump of tolerable putty; that is, of course, if she has ever taken the trouble to institute the comparison."

"You don't think——" Then Ainslee stopped. "No, it would be impossible, outrageous. The child would never dream of entangling herself with people of that class."

"I fancy Geraldine will do her own thinking," said Trench. "She has a very wise little head. You may trust her fully to do what is the sensible and proper thing."

"I am immensely relieved to hear you say so, Peter," replied the clergyman, eliciting comfort from the rather casuistical remark of his friend. "That Craigie lad has been my thorn in the flesh practically ever since he was born. It was he who brought about the only disagreement I ever had with dear Grace. She was sentimental, tender-hearted; too much so for the soundness of her judgment. The lad has grown up bitter, revengeful, like all those Ishmaelites. He is capable of any extremes of revenge."

The matter was not worth discussing, so Trench finished his drink, and with hearty Christmas wishes took leave of his host.

CHAPTER XV.

On Easter Eve, Ewan again appeared at home quite unexpectedly. In the afternoon he called at the rectory. Geraldine was away for the day, the clergyman alone in the house. It was the first time the Settlement lad had ever been inside the Ainslee home.

"I should like to speak to you, Mr. Ainslee," he said when the latter opened the door to him. The clergyman stiffly bade him enter, and led the way to the study, wondering what could have brought the man.

"You know I was not baptized as a child," said Ewan, plunging at once into the purpose of his visit. "It has always been a great grief to my mother. Perhaps you recollect speaking of it to me when I was a boy. I had my own views at the time, and declined the offer. Since I went away I have looked at things differently. I met Bishop Sherwell, whom, of course, you know. He has been a good friend to me, and when I came to know him well enough I told him everything about my mother and myself. He was the kindest and most helpful of men. The result was I was baptized and later confirmed, joining the church." He laid a communication from the bishop on the table.

"My mother has never been to communion since I was born," he continued. "It would be one of the greatest happinesses of her life, I know, though we have never spoken of it, to come with me to-morrow to the Easter celebration. For that purpose I have come down from college. It would seem to be what Easter symbolizes, the death of the old life and birth of the new and better one." Ewan spoke very earnestly. It was the resolve of one content to let the dead past bury its dead.

Mr. Ainslee sat for some moments without speaking, a frown on his face, his lips pursed, his finger tips joined together.

"You, of course, have the right to come," he replied. "I am glad you have reconsidered your quite unjustifiable position. As for your mother, she was baptized and confirmed in the church here, and was long in communion. Those are bidden to the altar who truly repent of their sins past, are in love and charity with their neighbors, and intend to live a new life. In extreme cases it is usual to have evidence of repentance and sorrow. I have had as yet no such avowal from your mother."

Ewan rose, his brows black with anger, his eyes ablaze.

"I did not come to discuss my mother with you," he said with restrained passion. "She has lived here for nearly a quarter of a century since I was born, a beautiful, faithful life. Would you have her stand forth in church, as in the old time, advertising penitence and exalting your ecclesiastical authority? Has there been a day in all these years that you have not pointed your righteous finger at her? When I entered the church the hardest thing I found I had to do was to bury the anger I felt against you for your hard Pharisaism."

"I have no desire to discuss the matter, which is as unpleasant to me as it must be to you," replied the clergyman frigidly. "If she herself came, gave assurance of penitence and sorrow, I should have a Christian answer to give to those who have been faithful communicants all these years and might be offended."

"You mean Simes and his clique?" asked Ewan bitterly.

"I mentioned no names," said the minister.

"Mr. Ainslee," and Ewan turned to go, "if that is your idea of religion, it is a bitter, empty, vindictive farce. That was what I believed it to be as a boy. You neither entered the heaven of the gospels yourself nor suffered those who would have entered to go in. I saw its senseless, soulless cruelty in this parish, but found it otherwise elsewhere. Bishop Sherwell's answer to me when I told him all was that it was the mission and ministry of the church to bind up broken hearts. You —you would crush them, pour poison into them in the holy name of God."

He went away. At the foot of the hill, he met Trench. His old friend was startled by the change in him.

"What's the matter, Ewan?" he asked as Craigie, half blinded by passion, would have gone by.

"Hell's the matter," answered the other roughly.

"I wanted to see you; your mother said you were home," said Trench.

"Later then, please. I want to be alone, Mr. Trench," replied Ewan shortly.

"That looks like poor company," said the elder man. "Come along, Ewan, son; I'll walk with you. We won't talk till you feel like it."

They went into the hills, walking rapidly and speaking no word. After a few miles, Craigie suddenly stopped and told of the interview with Ainslee.

"It cannot be straightened out," he said. "Happily mother knows nothing of it, but it means that the old feud is not ready to die just yet, and if they want fight they shall have all of it they can handle."

Trench left him sick and depressed. There was nothing to be said or done that would mend matters, but he went up to the rectory, and that evening Ainslee listened to the truth concerning himself and his ministry as it had never been spoken to him before. He thought himself a sorely wronged man, misunderstood by those who were lax in their views of church discipline, a martyr to duty.

The next morning Ewan sat with his mother in the little back pew that was no pew. It would have caused her to wonder and question had he stayed away. The edifice was crowded with people in their new finery. The altar was adorned with white lilies. Geraldine, her heart filled with the mystic Easter gladness, looked across the church to the pew that once had seemed to her like the Old World leper window. Then fear, doubt, darkness came upon her. The old evil seemed to have

fallen again on Ewan. He was not the man she had latterly known, but the desert man, Ishmael, his hand against every man and every man's against him. Anger, bitterness, a great contempt were in his face. As the congregation sang the great Easter triumph song:

"Love's redeeming work is done,
Fought the fight, the battle won,"

Ewan saw his mother's eyes rest upon the altar. The Eucharistic elements—the memorial bread and wine—were there under the white covering. Above the altar the sun's rays streamed gloriously through the stained-glass window, flooding the chancel with rich color. The figure of the Crucified, risen and triumphant, held out arms to a world in sorrow and weariness, "Come unto Me—and I will give you rest."

As the communion service began Ewan rose, his mother following with a chastened sadness that stabbed him to the heart.

When they reached home she went at once to her room. Later he went up to call her to luncheon. The door was slightly ajar. He saw her kneeling before a little table set against the wall. Upon the wall was an ivory-and-ebony crucifix he had given her. There was a morsel of bread in her fingers, and he heard the whisper: "I take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for me, and feed on Him in my heart, by faith, with thanksgiving." Then she placed the bread within her lips and bowed her head in prayer.

"Unblessed bread!"

To Ewan it seemed that the Great High Priest Himself was present, sanctifying the feast. He crept in silently and knelt by her side, his arm about her shoulders.

Early next morning Craigie returned to college. Geraldine did not think it strange he had gone without meeting her. His visit was short, and she had been away on Saturday. Her father had not spoken of his call. She would have liked to see Ewan, if only to know what the clouds meant. Trench dropped in during the afternoon, and spoke of the Easter service.

"What was the matter with Ewan Craigie?" she asked. "He looked in church as if all the burdens of the world had fallen on him."

"I am afraid the Settlement church does not stir the most worshipful emotions in him," said Trench evasively. "There is always the back of Simes' red-fringed, bald head between him and the pulpit, and it mars, I fancy, the spirit of the sanctuary."

"Ewan has been very successful at college, I hear," she continued. "I saw the Barford vicarage people on Saturday, and Mr. Ellison had wonderful accounts of Ewan from the Sherwells."

"Do you mean that against him?" he laughed. "What was it you said about hating these successful men and having a predilection for mollycoddles and tailenders?"

"Woman's judgments are always subject to her own revision," she replied. "Old-time antagonists sometimes become the best of friends."

"And successful men are not always swaggering, domineering bullies any more than chronic failures are invariably the salt of the earth grown savorless?" he persisted.

She laughed again, and bent over her needlework.

"Hello! Here comes your father; not in the gayest humor, to judge by appearances," he said, watching Ainslee come slowly up the path.

"He has been to a meeting of the officials of that wretched mining company," she answered. "I wish he had never touched business. He knows nothing whatever about it, and distresses himself endlessly about the chances of losing what he invested."

The minister looked tired and harassed. He was urgent in his invitation to Peter to stay for dinner.

"I want your advice, Peter," he said, taking a seat near the window. "Matters are not going at all well with us at the mines. We have spent a great deal of money on mill and pit equipment, but all we seem to have acquired is the fag end or fag beginning of a real mine. You have the mineral on this side of the water, then the chasm

of the lake breaks the run, which resumes on our holding, but seemingly not soon enough to do us much good."

"I was afraid so from what I learned some time ago," replied Trench. "Your people pinched on the essential thing—land. No one knows that country better than Ewan Craigie, and when your project was launched that was his criticism. Your land runs east and west, a long strip, but very narrow; the mineral works north to south. He did not care to be quoted, naturally considering his relations with Simes. Besides, he had no incentive to advise his enemy for his good. What you have to do seems obvious to me; get after that Breckenridge hundred acres north of you. It may be harder to buy after you have boosted values by your work. Seventy-five hundred would have secured it as farm land before you started work, but you'll have to go deeper into your pockets now."

"Simes was opposed to the purchase in those days," said Ainslee. "He claimed it would be useless expense, and the land could be picked up later should we want it, which did not seem at all likely. You are a friend and adviser of Craigie, Peter; it is not possible you do not know that he is the owner of the old Breckenridge property?"

"Ewan the owner? I had not the least inkling of it," replied Trench, genuinely amazed. "It did not appear on the records, I am sure, or the knowledge would have come to me."

"He bought it just before he went away to college, and did not record his deed," explained Ainslee. "At that time we were beginning operations. It can only be interpreted as a sly, malicious effort to cripple us. He has us, we are advised, hemmed in north, east, and west, while the lake borders us to the south. It was a mean, vindictive act, plotted to injure us."

"There I have to part company with you," laughed Trench. "It was shrewd, clever business. He had prospected those lands, and when you were slow he jumped in and bought. You don't expect him to feel philanthropic toward Simes? He has you in the trap, and you have to quit or come to time."

"He refuses to sell a foot, but offers to buy us out at a price absolutely ruinous and humiliating," said Ainslee angrily. "He told us he was in no hurry, but could wait till we were tired of watching the rust deepen on our machinery."

"Perhaps you will acknowledge one of these days that you are up against a man-sized proposition in Ewan," and Trench smiled at Geraldine. "Can you blame him for hitting back? The first day he worked for me Simes followed him to my place and wanted me, as a neighborly act, to cast him and his mother adrift. I have no patience with this disposition that is always ready to strike, but objects to be hit in return. Remember you are up against a fighting man, and when the challenge is put up to him it means that at the finish only one man inside the ring is to be on his feet. Simes did all the heavy pounding in the early rounds, and need look for no mercy from the lad."

"But why should I suffer?" grieved Ainslee.

"Should keep better company," answered his friend unsympathetically.

"All my savings are there. Everything I could leave Geraldine in case of my death," he lamented.

"I don't think Geraldine is in any danger of going to the workhouse," smiled Trench. "You just put your money on the wrong horse, and have got to grin and bear it like the rest of us when our gambles go wrong."

"One would suppose you rejoiced over our calamity," complained the clergyman.

"Not altogether," laughed Trench. "Anyway there's little use in complaining. Things in the long run may not turn out as badly as you suppose. There's a silver lining—you know."

CHAPTER XVI.

Contrary to expectation, Ewan did not return home as soon as his university career closed. The summer was more than half gone before he came back. He had been in New York, busy

with some mining men who were interested in his project. The day after his arrival he went up to see Mr. Trench.

"Of course," he said, "you have heard of my ownership of the Breckenridge place? Perhaps I ought to have told you when I bought, for it was this that dipped into my resources. The reason I kept quiet was because I meant to keep the deed off record until I was ready to have the fact known, and the knowledge might have been embarrassing to you in your relations with some of the new company's people."

"I am glad you didn't," replied Trench. "It did set me guessing for a moment to understand what was in the wind, and when the news leaked out the other day it took me aback."

"I had long planned to get it. Lack of money to go round all my projects alone stopped me. The news that the new company was in the field forced me to move. As it was, I was almost caught napping," said Ewan.

"You don't mean to sell, then?" asked Trench.

"I guess not," laughed Craigie. "I can handle it just as well as Simes could. In New York I can get all the backing I want. I looked in there and made a few inquiries. Just now I am waiting to see which way the Simes cat is going to jump."

"You've got them badly trapped," said Trench.

"I am not sorrowing a whole lot about their misfortunes," replied Craigie. "They had me boxed long enough, and it's a poor rule that does not work both ways."

They talked far into the afternoon, after a visit to the Breckenridge place, and Craigie stayed to dinner. He left shortly afterward, taking the path that ran past the rectory. The house seemed deserted as he went by. He had hoped to see Geraldine in her garden, and was disappointed, but on the knoll above the fringe of woods he saw her coming up from the little mining colony.

"I heard you had returned," she said, giving him her hand. "I may congratulate you?"

"It is good to be back," he replied.

"I never expected to hear you say that of the Settlement," she smiled.

"I came by the rectory, hoping I might see you," he said. "I wondered if you would come with me across the lake and up the river? The boat is ready." There was a fresh, cool breeze blowing, ruffling the face of the placid lake.

"I'd love to," she answered.

Together they went down the slope, across the little, shingly beach to the well-scrubbed boat, for in the morning he had prepared. There were cushions and a comfortable back rest in the stern seat.

"This is delightful!" she said as they drew away from the shore. She was hot and tired after an evening's round of stuffy cottages. "And all new fittings?"

"I hoped you would come," he replied.

Across the lake they went into the winding river, overhung by the low branches of leafy trees. Past the water meadows, the cattle knee-deep in the water holes. Here they scattered a family of wild duck that scuttered furiously through the water, there startled bittern and solemn cranes from their statuesque fishing operations. Musk-rats were swimming back and forth in tremendous haste. Over in the big ponds the frogs were beginning to boom their nightly chorus on their platforms of lily-pads.

They came to a white sand beach at the foot of a lawnlike meadow, and here Ewan drove the boat ashore. He took her hand, and did not relinquish it after she stepped upon the meadow. Deer, browsing at the wood's edge across the field, looked up, waited a moment doubtingly, then leaped into the bush. Geraldine had never seen the place before. It seemed some remote, entrancing paradise. To Ewan the visit was the realization of a long-cherished, ardent dream. The fineness of her appealed to him more than her beauty. It was charm beyond the

merely physical, the charm that had drawn him to her away in the far-off boyhood's days. She was still to him the dream girl of the Chalet lawn, the quickener of the new life and ambition. There still remained the sense of distance between them; time and intimacy alone would bridge that. A great pride swept over him that in this, his greatest ambition, what he had hoped for had come to pass. Halfway up the slope, they paused.

"There is a seat here, one of my own discovery," he said. "I don't know that any one has ever rambled this way before." It was a grassy shelf, with moss-cushioned back and lichened rock for the feet. A cleft in the woods beneath gave a glimpse of the smooth, shining river. Beyond were peeps of the blue lake, and over the treetops a glorious range of wooded hill crests fringed the sky line.

"I used to come here when things were dark and troublesome," he said. "Sometimes I talked with you here, wondering if ever I might bring you. They were beautiful dreams, Geraldine; the kind of dreams men live by. I scarcely dared to believe they would ever come true. Since Christmas morning I have felt that the wonderful hope might become a reality. To have you with me always, to guard you, cherish you, love you, to spend my days finding happiness in making you happy; that is the fullness of my desire."

She put out her hand again and laid it in his. Their eyes met, soft with love's tenderness. His arms went about her; the goal of the long desire had been reached.

In the scented dusk they went down the river again and over the darkening waters of the lake and up through the whispering woods to the rectory gate, knowing the sweetness and exceeding goodness of life.

Mr. Ainslee was at his study table, busy in the shaded lamplight with calculations he was figuring on a sheet of paper. He peered out of the narrow circle of the light.

"You are late, child!" he said peevishly, turning again to his figures. She came forward to the table. He looked up with an impatient sigh.

"Good night, my dear," he said.

"I have not come to say good night," she answered, her hand on his shoulder. "I want you to lay aside and forget those horrible figures."

"Forget! How can I forget them?" he snapped. "Nearly all I have laid aside all these years by thrift—gone—gone!"

"If the money is lost, why trouble more?" she replied. "It is not as if we were dependent on your savings."

"I know we are not paupers literally," he retorted. "The next meal is fairly sure, and we have shelter. If the money had been lost in the ordinary hazards of business, I should not have minded so much. We should have prospered but for the malice of that——" Utterance was stopped by a hand laid gently on his mouth.

"You must not say one word more till you have heard me," she said in smiling rebuke. "I have just left Ewan. I know it is not as you have wished—but that I could not help, dear. I have promised to marry him."

He did not speak at once; the surprise on his face became an angry frown. He shook off her arm and turned to look at her.

"You are going to marry Jane Craigie's lad?" he said bitterly. "I should have thought pride would have saved you, even though you counted disloyalty a small matter."

"Pride! Yes, I have pride," she answered quietly. "What is there to shame my pride in him? What ignoble thing has he ever done? Those who speak ill of him do so out of fear or jealousy. You have misunderstood him; perhaps he has misunderstood you."

"It was deliberate malice that caused the loss of my money," he said doggedly.

"Uncle Peter did not so judge it," she replied.

"Peter! He has long been infatuated with the boy, and I attribute this

latest and sharpest blow in no small measure to him," he retorted.

"Not the least bit of it," she laughed. "I think I have been in love, more or less, with Ewan ever since the day he went to Wibsey for that wicked, splendid fight."

"No good will ever come of it. Nothing but evil. I shall be the laughing-stock of the whole Settlement. How to hold up my head among my brethren of the clergy under this humiliation I shall not know."

CHAPTER XVII.

The weeks went by without witnessing any change in the relations between the new company and Ewan. There had been suggestions of compromise thrown out, but Ewan's engagement to Geraldine Ainslee induced the company's lawyers to attempt practical negotiations. Ewan was invited to attend a meeting of representatives of the new company to be held in the offices of Simes' lawyers at Barford.

Both Simes were present, and, to Craigie's surprise, they brought with them Mr. Ainslee. The strategy that prompted this move was false, and made Ewan more, rather than less, rigid. Relationship was one thing, business another, and he resented the attempt to employ Geraldine in order to minimize Simes' loss. The lawyer, Mitchell, was the partner of young Simes, one of the cordial, glad-hand kind of diplomats, who, as a local political boss, fancied he had statesman-like gifts.

"As I see it," he said, "there are three ways out of the difficulty: Simes buys Craigie, Craigie buys Simes, or the two come together and make a real worth-while company, the last perhaps the best plan of the three. There might possibly come out of it a still bigger thing, a deal that would bring Trench into a consolidation that would control the market. Such a plan, of course, is outside our range this morning, but it should not be lost sight of in our discussion.

"We freely admit, Mr. Craigie, that your eyes were a bit wider open than ours, that what you secured we should have had. The question is: Can we come together on any one of the three alternatives?"

"I think so," replied Ewan. "I'll either buy, sell, or merge."

"Come! That's a pretty fair starter," said Mitchell. Simes thrust his thumbs into his waistcoat armholes and tilted his chair back.

"I'll buy you out at fifty thousand, sell my holding at half a million, or merge on the same relative basis," continued Craigie.

"Excellent!" And Mitchell slapped his leg smartly. "I'm fond of a joke myself. Now suppose you tell us what you expect to get?"

"Nothing," replied Ewan. "And I am satisfied to let it go at that. I have offered you more than your place is worth to any one but myself. As adjoining owner I can use it."

"Isn't your figure rather tall for the Breckenridge? You gave less than ten thousand for it, I believe," said young Simes.

"Matter of opinion," answered Craigie. "My figure's my opinion."

"Of course," said Mitchell. "In case we might consider merging arrangements—on serious terms, you know—you would be in a position to furnish good title? I mention this, having in mind the country gossip that the title to part of your tract—forty acres of it, to be exact—has always been regarded as fishy. What was it? Breckenridge acquired it in the old days, before asbestos was heard of in this part of the world, from a squatter, price a horse and a case of gin, and the squatter got it for nothing from nobody; something like that."

"No compulsion to take unless the deeds satisfy you," said Craigie dryly. "But now you have my terms, what's the answer?"

"Those aren't terms," interposed Simes; "they are thuggery."

"Fifty thousand dollars!" exclaimed Ainslee. "The mills have cost us more than that, to say nothing of the land."

"Value isn't what has been put into a thing, Mr. Ainslee," said Ewan.

"Money spent bubble blowing does not make the bubbles any more valuable. You have a mill worth perhaps a third of what you paid for it, a mine of low-grade stuff, with little to raise the average quality of output."

"You are sure of the facts on which you are figuring?" resumed the lawyer. "If that forty-acre strip never belonged to the Breckenridge folks or the squatter they took from, I guess it comes pretty near being the property of the Archers, from whom we bought our land. They were the original grantees from the government of three thousand acres across the lake—our land, that claimed by you, and a dozen other farms. I don't mind telling you that, as a result of our investigations, we have gone to the expense of taking a quitclaim deed from the Archers' representatives of that strip."

Ewan rose to go.

"Wait a minute, Craigie," said Mitchell quickly. "We don't want any trouble, if we can help it. A fight over the old slack-drawn or never-drawn deeds and deals, squatting rights, prescriptive titles, and all the rest of it is apt to be long-winded and costly, to say nothing of the bad feeling caused. We'll come in fifty-fifty, or make it even better than that—fifty-one-forty-nine, with you on top."

"I wouldn't let you in on any terms now," said Ewan. "Get busy with your litigation. I know how much it's worth, and so do you."

"We'll fight you with every dollar we can call up," threatened Simes, rising from his chair. "By the time we've matched purses in the courts maybe you'll be more ready to talk than we'll be to listen. You see how it is, Mr. Ainslee? If trouble comes of this, it is no fault of ours."

"Fight!" Ewan turned sharply on him. "You never fought any one or anything in your life; it's too hard work, and you might get hurt. Your mark is some one you are sure won't hit back. I'll hold what I've got in spite of fake claims and bluff deeds, make no mistake about that."

He left the office, and sauntered along the street, hands deep in his pockets, his mind busy. There would be trouble with the Simes crowd before the matter was finally settled. He was sorry that Ainslee was mixed up in it, and revolved a plan for getting Trench to take over his stock, so that he, Ewan, might eliminate that personal element in the scrap. The worst of it was that Ainslee had dreamed of riches coming out of the investment. If he could only see properly, he would be able to discern that his interests ran with the man who was to be his daughter's husband, not with a batch of baffled, disgruntled tricksters who were using him for their own ends. No matter how it was accomplished, Ewan was determined, for Geraldine's sake, to clear the field so that, in case of fight, the battle would be a straight one between himself and the Simes business interests.

He was turning a corner of the street, still deeply abstracted, when he brushed against a girl who was walking quickly in the opposite direction. Lifting his hat and uttering a hasty apology, without looking up, he was going on his way when she spoke:

"Good morning, Mr. Rip van Winkle!" And glancing up, he saw Emma Bancroft. She looked very trim and charming. Even as a schoolgirl from one of the poorer hill farms she had always a distinctive neatness of her own. In his present mood there were few persons he would rather have met. She was always a delightful antidote to dullness or grumpy temper, her frank good humor being irresistible. It was a long time since he had seen her. The night of the big fight seemed a lifetime away, the moment in the moonshot copse a far-away, tender little memory that a man might recall, linger over a thought's space, without disloyalty to a later, permanent love. She was amazingly pretty in her unusual way, with a fresh charm that did not exhaust itself in a first impression, but grew, a constant revelation of delight. There was the same suggestion of recklessness, good-fellowship, of a spirit genuine, generous, honest.

"Why, Emma! Talk about bumping

into good luck!" he exclaimed, manifest pleasure chasing the soberness from his face. "I was wondering only the other day whether you ever meant to come back to the Settlement again."

"The Settlement!" She gave a little shrug. "I like it about as much as it likes me."

"But we get over that," he laughed. "We go out and away, thinking we have done with it, but we come back again. And you don't count us all in the same crowd, I hope."

"Come back when the luck turns," she replied. "Mine has not got to the corner yet."

"How's the bonnet trade?" he asked, thinking perhaps business was not overbright.

"Pretty good," she laughed. "And how is the asbestos trade? If it is half as gloomy as you looked just now, you must be next door to bankruptcy."

"Getting ready to hum," he replied. "Just came from a shindy with some folks who stroked me the wrong way of the fur, but all's serene now. Now be good, Emma, and come along and have lunch with me."

"I'd like to, Ewan, but I really can't," she said. "There's the shop to look after, and the girl I have will be waiting now to go to dinner."

"Well, there's no hurry; we'll go after she comes back," he suggested.

"Oh, I've work this afternoon that won't give me a minute of time. Some other day, Ewan," she replied.

"Lock the old shop up. People don't go hat buying in the dinner hour," he urged.

"A lot you know about it," she said. "By the way, I saw Mr. Ainslee and Mr. Simes just now. They looked almost as cheerful as you did."

"I met them, too," he answered. "Simes was the man I had the racket with. The way we love each other is nothing short of touching."

"I heard you and the new company were not pulling together," she said. "Father told me, when he was in the other day, that they are hatching out trouble for you, and would stop at nothing to get a piece of your land from you. He said they would try to get possession and put it up to you to get them out."

He turned, and walked with her down the street.

"I guess I can hold them if it comes to a scrap," he said after some thought. "Good things have to be fought for," he laughed.

At the door of the little shop they lingered a moment.

"I want to congratulate you, Ewan." She spoke a little shyly. "Miss Geraldine is a fine, sweet girl, one of the best I ever knew. I hope you will both be very, very happy." She was graver than usual; then the pleasant light came back into her face. "You will be sure to persuade her to buy her hats from me, won't you? I'm all for business these days."

"You bet I will!" he laughed. "Thank you very much, Emma. I guess, though, the bonnet shop will not hold you long. There must be some other fellow round about due for a bit of good luck."

"Better do some more guessing while the guessing's good," she answered lightly. "Well, I must really go in; the girl's at the window looking like a thundercloud." With a nod and a smile she went indoors.

She watched him from the window, through the hats, go down the street, a grave, wistful look on her face. There was a curious little trembling of the lip for just an instant; then she shook her head with a gesture peculiarly her own, as though casting off something that bothered her, and with resolute air busied herself with work.

Ewan snatched a hasty meal and drove off home. What Emma had told him put a new idea into his mind. He had expected formal litigation, long drawn out and costly, but it came upon him that their procedure might be entirely different. Land titles in that country were apt to be cloudy in spots. When acreage was abundant and settlers few, men were careless about the legal forms of transfer, as one hesitates to spend much money over the trading of things comparatively value-

less. He had no doubt that his title, plus possession, was unassailable in the courts. Suppose, however, they decided that the best course of action was to knock him out of the saddle and leave it to him to mount again?

As one result of his cogitations on the homeward drive, a wire fence stretched between the two properties before night came. As another, a watchman was on duty for the first time when the workmen who were erecting buildings left for the day. Ralston, the man on guard, was a hard, gritty, old frontiersman, prospector, and hunter, entirely devoted to Ewan. It was said that he had rifle and shotgun lying handy in the shack, and that it was neither bear nor fish poachers after a stick or two of dynamite whose visits he was on the lookout for.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The gladness of the days that followed Geraldine's engagement to Craigie were far from unclouded. She had believed that after the first outburst of disappointment her father would gradually become reconciled to Ewan, and, with more intimate knowledge of him, the last of the old trouble would disappear. She was bitterly disappointed to find that time wrought no change. When Ewan called at the rectory, Mr. Ainslee always found some excuse for absence or shut himself up in his study. Geraldine's distress was keen, more for Ewan's sake than her own, although he did all in his power to make her feel that the discourtesies were unnoticed by him.

The failure of Mitchell to compromise the difficulties between the rival businesses had increased Ainslee's wrath. Geraldine vetoed at once the suggestion broached by Trench that Ewan would buy out her father's interest. The obvious remedy to Ewan seemed a speedy marriage. She listened, half persuaded, to his importunities, but there were considerations that made her seek delay. Craigie's resources, until the flotation of his company was completed, would be taxed to the utmost, he had his mother to support, and to marry at this juncture seemed the height of unwisdom. Moreover, she clung to the hope that yet, despite all unfavoring signs, she would win her father over.

In the midst of all the perplexities and threatenings, the Sherwells, father and son, came down for a few weeks. Their coming—rarely distinguished visitors to the out-of-the-way hamlet—seemed to establish a tacitly agreed upon truce between the warring elements. They were really Ewan's visitors, but accepted the hospitality of the Chalet. Trench knew the bishop, and the bachelor home of the mine man was an ideal headquarters for the kind of holiday they sought.

Mr. Ainslee, as a churchman, was no admirer of the school to which Bishop Sherwell belonged. To him the church was a divine, historic institution.

He saw no barbarous inhumanity in refusing "consecrated" ground to dead, unbaptized children or "dissenters." Unhallowed soil was fit burial place for them. To Sherwell religion was an evolution, ever unfolding and developing, its kingdom increasing in glory and might, an infinitely sublimer thing in the twentieth than in the first century. God had not spoken once to a few peasant folk two thousand years ago and thereafter shut Himself up within His heaven. He was still among men, no matter what their name or sign, a living, inspiring power to those who wrought their works in His spirit.

This to Ainslee was latitudinarianism, and breadth to him in matters religious was one of the deadliest of deadly sins. Still, despite of his dislike of the bishop's views, the rector found it impossible to resist the big brotherliness of the man who came into his study, not as the distinguished ecclesiastic, but the brother minister who understood and sympathized with the isolation of the village clergyman. Phil, more impulsive in his judgments, was outspoken in his opinions.

"The man who should be broadest in the whole parish is the narrowest,"

he once said, discussing the place and people with his father.

Once during the visit the bishop preached in the little church.

Ewan had never expected to hear again a sermon that could rival in power that which he had listened to in the college chapel, but the message delivered to the simple folk of the hillsides reached the same exalted height.

"Thou ailest here—and here—and here," and with the touch giving healing.

To none did the visit bring greater pleasure than to Geraldine. Both Sherwells succumbed to her charm. They saw the difficulties attending her engagement to Ewan, and by their tactful sympathy sought to remove them as far as possible.

Mrs. Sherwell joined her husband and son for the latter portion of their stay, and supplied the influence that they lacked. The isolation of the motherless girl in a world of men appealed powerfully to her sympathetic soul. She spoke more directly and plainly to Mr. Ainslee than any of the men could have done of the engagement between Geraldine and Ewan, and so far triumphed that the clergyman accorded a belated acknowledgment to it, receiving Ewan at the rectory and meeting him at some of the mild festivities at the Chalet. Geraldine's gratitude to the Sherwells was boundless.

She and Phil adopted each other as sister and brother to Ewan's great delight, related to each other through him.

When the holiday was ending, Mrs. Sherwell announced her intention of taking Geraldine away for a quite long visit. It was now arranged that the marriage would not take place until matters of business had become more settled, so there was no difficulty in the way. Mr. Ainslee quite approved of the change, and Ewan was glad that she should be away from the Settlement during the days—possibly strenuous ones—that witnessed the adjustment of the strife with the Simes company.

Simes, ever a braggart, dropped hints here and there that his company would get its "rights" when it was ready to strike. Ewan listened silently, and night after night old Ralston kept guard near the border line. After Geraldine had gone, Ewan saw Mr. Ainslee rarely, but it was evident that with him the truce was over. He and Simes were on closer terms than ever, and the promise of lasting friendly relations between Ewan and the rectory had already faded. Ainslee had evidently expected that his acceptance of the engagement would lead to Craigie's yielding, and when he discovered that Simes was not to slip out of the noose because Geraldine and Craigie were to marry, the storm signals were set again.

CHAPTER XIX.

The crimson and gold of the fall blazed on the hills and died away. Winds and rain stripped the foliage from the trees and strewed it over the land like the cast-away trappings of some brilliant pageant. The first filmy coverlet of ice had spread over the lake, sharp night frosts whitened the hills—winter's skirmishers, driven in by the still powerful noon suns of the briefly splendid St. Martin's summer, only to return again in greater strength on the morrow. Ewan began to make preparations for the coming spring. There was a mill to erect, machinery to assemble, ground-stripping contracts to assign, and a host of detail work that would keep him busy planning during the bleak months. One brilliant November morning he left the Settlement to look over a mill and machinery that were for sale at a shut-down camp some twenty miles beyond Wibsey. He had expected to be away a couple of days, but finished his inspection late the same afternoon, and started back to catch the evening train at a branch railway eight miles away.

Rough trails and a breakdown in the shantyman's team delayed him on the drive, and he reached the station to find the train gone and the place locked up for the night. There were no houses near the station, it being merely a freight convenience for the outlying farming country.

In his predicament, Ewan remembered that a few miles down the road was an inn of the road-house type, a place with gardens and dance hall. It was a popular resort for Wibseyites during the summer and fall months, and had a free-and-easy reputation. In the hope that he might be able to hire a vehicle there, Ewan set off to find the place. The landlord knew him by sight, for the Wibsey Club fights had made the young miner a popular figure throughout the locality. He thought he could furnish a team, and went out to see about it. While he was away an automobile came out of the yard at the back of the house. Thinking he might be able to get a lift back to Wibsey, Ewan ran to the door, but the car was already speeding along the road. In a few minutes Miller, the landlord, came back with the news that there was no team in just at the moment, but one that was out would probably be back soon. Ewan ordered supper, and was following up an excellent meal with a cigar when Miller came in to say that the man who had the team had telephoned his intention to keep it overnight.

"Surely there is some place where I can get a rig?" said Ewan.

"There's no house within four miles," replied Miller. "I doubt if you could get any farmer to turn out at this hour for the long drive to the Settlement. What's the matter with staying here overnight? I can give you a good room and bed, and in the morning the accommodation goes by at seven-thirty."

"That sounds pretty good; I guess we can't better it," said Ewan. The house was a rambling old place, an old-time seignorial mansion to which additions had been made at various epochs in its history. It was too early for bed, so after Miller had shown him a comfortably appointed room, Ewan went downstairs to smoke another cigar and look over the paper.

Just before eleven, feeling drowsy, he went upstairs again to go to bed. The house was very still; he doubted if there was another guest in it. The tramp of his feet, heavily booted, made a great noise on the bare floor of the long, dim corridor. All the rooms seemed unoccupied until he came to that which adjoined his own. There a light showed beneath the door. He was passing when the door was opened softly, and in the light of the room stood Emma Bancroft.

She seemed frightened, embarrassed, yet retained the air of defiant mischievousness that never wholly deserted her. Ewan's liking for the girl roused the anger within him. It was none of his business whether she went to road houses or not, but he was sharply disappointed; he would have staked all he had on her integrity. He regarded her as if she had been a relative, or one very near to him, whom he had detected in a vulgar, compromising adventure. She was dressed for the street, very becomingly as usual, and her attractiveness angered Ewan the more.

"What on earth brings you here, Emma?" he demanded roughly.

"Silly foolishness," she answered with an angry glint in her eyes. "I wouldn't have let you see me, but I can't stay here; the place frightens me. I don't know why I was fool enough to come. It was all meant harmlessly enough, Ewan. A friend who had business out this way asked me to drive in his car. We were to have supper and get back long before this."

"What's become of your friend?" asked Ewan grimly.

"I don't know, but you are to blame for it," she answered sharply, for his tone of rebuke annoyed her. "We heard you come in, and neither of us wanted to meet you. I didn't want to be seen here, so I hid away, and he went off to make another call farther up the road. He was to have been back long before this, but I guess he got to know you were still here."

"Must have been the chap I saw flashing out in his car. Why couldn't you let me know before, so that I might clear out and leave the coast clear?" he said.

The color flooded her face, and her eyes flashed upon him.

"I wish you'd go away and never let

me see you again. You are hateful, Ewan Craigie; mean and hateful!" she stormed furiously. "What right have you to doubt me or speak in that way? It is no business of yours where I go or with whom I go or what places I enter."

"You just bet it is!" he contradicted sharply, and a softer look came into her face. "It is so much my business that if I knew the man who left you stranded in this place I'd wring his neck before morning. Now come along out of it. You used to be a pretty good walker."

"I don't believe I can, Ewan," she replied. "I twisted my ankle jumping out of the car. The woman was bandaging it when you came up to your room the first time. See!" She thrust forward a little foot with white bandaging round the ankle.

"That's too bad," he said. "You got into an all-round mix-up. Guess it hurts quite a lot? Sit down till I hunt up a rig from somewhere. I'll get one if I have to send off to Wibsey for it."

She was clearly grateful that he had accepted her story without further doubt or questioning. After all, she liked his masterful, guardianly way with her that made him angry. It would have hurt much more had he been indifferent. In a short time he returned.

"It looks like the morning train, Emma," he told her. "I can't get through on the phone; there is no night service at the local exchange. You will be all right here, though; nobody will molest you, and I shall be round till morning. Had supper?"

"Never mind about supper," she said, shaking her head.

"No need to send you supperless to bed, even if you have been silly," he laughed. "Ring the bell there and have supper sent up. I'll bet you came without a cent." She colored without replying. He laid a bill on the table. "There'll be the room and meals to pay for."

"I'll borrow it till I get home again," she said. In the next room he heard the woman come up with the ordered meal and go away again.

"Everything all right?" he inquired on his way downstairs.

"Yes, fine," she replied. "I was hungry as a bear. Won't you have some?"

"No, thanks; you wouldn't lunch with me the other day, and besides I had supper an hour ago. Now get busy; everything will be cold," he said.

He remained a few minutes, amused with her chatter. There was not the least bit of coquetry about her. In her apparent forgetfulness of the badly compromising situation her innocence was made manifest.

"Well, I'll be off," he said. "Be ready round half past six, and we'll get you back to the Settlement all right. Good night."

"Good night, Ewan," she replied. "I'm glad you are not mad with me any more."

"Mad! I never was half as mad with anybody in my life!" he growled.

"Fibber! Fibber!" She made a little grimace at him, closed and locked the door.

She came down early in the morning. Ewan had played pool and talked fight with Miller till daylight. The landlord was not half a bad chap. He had apparently sized up the situation decently, and was a great fight admirer of Ewan's.

"I built my dining room for summer crowds on my winnings when you whipped Brandreth," he laughed. "The house therefore owes you a bit, Mr. Craigie."

Breakfast was over and Emma at the desk paying her bill when Ewan heard a car drive into the yard. He went to the door in time to see George Bancroft, Emma's father, and Mr. Ainslee step down. Ewan was angry at the silly situation, but he could have laughed. Bancroft, an undersized wisp of a man, came hurrying forward.

"Where's my girl? Where's Emma?" he asked of Craigie.

"She was in the dining room there a minute ago," Ewan replied. The man thereupon began to shower not over-

refined abuse on the supposed Lothario and to demand what he proposed to do.

"I'm going to shake the teeth out of your head in about half a second, if you don't shut off that bawling." And Ewan gripped him by the collar. Bancroft calmed down at once. He was not at all disturbed by the turn events had taken. The parson was hot about the affair, and if the rectory match was broken off and Emma could land the young mine man, so much the better. The girl was a puzzle to him, but she was wise. Many a man had been trapped in that country in the same way and the match had turned out all right.

Emma came out on the veranda, ready for the journey to the station. She did not mind for herself, but foresaw the trouble the adventure might make for Ewan. Her father began a tirade of paternal reproaches, but was cut short in the flow of his eloquence.

"That's enough, dad!" she said sharply. "Ewan went out of his way to help me out of a fix my foolishness got me into. I am old enough to look after myself without you and the minister running all over the country after me. There's no need to make a scene here, and the sooner you go back home the better. I am taking the train to Wibsey."

Her brisk attack seemed to clear the air better than any amount of argument could have done. She got into the trap that Miller had managed to secure, and with a pleasant regretful word to Ewan was driven off to the station.

"Darters these days do beat all!" grumbled Bancroft. "But if she stands up and faces me like that, saying 'tis all right—well, then, 'tis all right. You couldn't flog that girl to tell a lie."

So far the clergyman had not spoken during the interview. He now walked over to Craigie.

"You will have, I hope, sufficient sense of decency left to discontinue your calls at the rectory. I shall deem it my duty to write and explain my discovery to my daughter," he said.

"If you will take the trouble to inquire of the hotel people you will understand the situation better," replied Ewan. "I shall explain it all to Geraldine when she comes home at the week-end. What her decision will be I do not in the least doubt."

Nothing more was said. The two men presently entered the car and drove away. Ewan was waiting for the team that had taken Emma to the station when Miller came out to him.

"I'd like a word with you, Mr. Craigie," he said. "It is right you should understand the ins and outs of this affair. I guess young Simes fancied that because he is a lawyer and his father has a mortgage on this place he could use it as he liked. He had some business to do with me about the mortgage payments last evening. In the afternoon he phoned that he would be out at eight, and ordered dinner for two. Everything was ready when he arrived, but he made one or another excuse for putting the meal back, though the lady was in a big hurry to get away. The end of it was he put up a proposition to the wife and myself that we wouldn't stand for; I can tell you this much, it meant no good to the lady. Then, while Simes and I were having it hot and heavy—the wife being upstairs with the young lady, who had hurt her foot—you dropped in. Simes was half scared to death, and ran upstairs to tell the lady. Then he went off, saying he would return after you had gone. Later he telephoned from the exchange to find out whether you had left. The wife was angry, and told him you were staying the night, and the lady wasn't worrying much about him.

"When I heard of that later I was angry with her, but the mischief was done. You can figure it up that it was young Simes who got the news of your being here to the old farmer and the parson."

"Much obliged to you for telling me," said Ewan. "I can see how it all happened. Tell your folks to keep it quiet. Least said soonest mended. I'd like to step across to Barford and wring Simes' neck, but you can't do as you like in this world."

The news spread like wildfire. It was precisely the kind of scandal everybody likes. No proof or explanation could have stilled it. People did not want to disbelieve it; the thing was much too racy to scrap. Every old maid, every reputable matron, all the sinners, and all the pious folk had it.

Ewan Craigie and Emma Bancroft, two of the most picturesque, out-of-the-common folks in the vicinity—Miller's road house. Goodness gracious, who didn't know what goings-on there were at Miller's! Those who didn't know imagined, and fiction is ever ahead of fact. Caught by old man Bancroft and the parson, to whose daughter Craigie was engaged—and people paid good money to see less exciting things in the movies!

The girl—it was quite enough that she was at such a place. At their church guilds and sewing circles the Settlement women whispered the horrible details. They had always been sure of it; they had always said something like that would happen. The way that girl dressed—not a bit like the good, substantial girls of the hills. Her light, heedless ways; her hatred of good advice; her quick, quipful tongue. There was something in the way she dressed her hair that reminded them of Jezebel in the Bible "tiring her hair" and painting her face to allure men. True, Emma didn't paint her face, but it amounted to the same thing. Settlement women just slicked their towy hair down, right and left, and twisted it up into a little bun at the back of their heads. And the trim, alluring figure—men-enticing, the Settlement women, slack and blowsy, termed its smartness.

Nobody blamed Ewan. It is always the woman who plucks the apple and offers it to the poor, tempted man. Man has always been the quarry, despite the foolish legends of him as pursuer. The successful Diana in the big chase is ever the envied of the luckless huntress.

The parson's daughter! She ought to stay at home and watch her capture. Out of sight is out of mind, especially when the view is obstructed by so pretty an obstacle as Emma Bancroft.

Trench heard the story, scoffed openly, but had moments of doubt. Many a wiser man than Samson had, he knew, been shorn and made mock of by Delilah. The news came to Jane Craigie even before Ewan returned, and she shrank back into the deeper privacies of her home. Then he came, full of indignant anger. She saw the truth in his eyes, and, believing, was comforted.

A few days later came the tidings that the little hat shop in Barford had changed hands. Emma had sold out to her assistant, and was leaving the neighborhood.

"Best thing could happen to her," said the womenfolk. For their part they would never have put foot in the shop again as long as she remained there. Even the hats she sold—gay, little things—seemed to have some of the devil's eerie charm about them. Gracious! What good woman could ever put such things on her head? They were not crowns of glory, but the wreaths of Bacchanals, and the Settlement women trusted they could read their titles clear.

George Simes walked warily during these days. Miller had told him that Ewan knew everything, and for a time the young lawyer went in fear. Then he understood that Emma Bancroft's name was his refuge, and thereafter he took on fresh courage.

CHAPTER XX.

Geraldine returned home a day before she had been expected. Contrary to his threat, her father had withheld his story until she should be back. She reached Barford late in the evening, and drove home from there. Her father's manner told her at once that something was newly amiss. Home, after the pleasant atmosphere of the Sherwell house, seemed like a damp, gloomy cell to one who has been living in the clear sunshine. After supper her father told his story, sparing her nothing. There was a triumphant note

in it. His every doubt had been confirmed and justified. Like father, like son. Men do not gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles. Ishmael is unalterable, the lawless, free-lance egotist of all times and ages, whose nature can no more be changed than the skin of the Ethiop.

"It is not as you think, father," she said. "I am very sorry you went with Bancroft. It was unjust to Ewan and made what I am sure is capable of a complete explanation the subject of malicious gossip. From whom did the information come that induced you to go out there?"

"I don't know. It came over the telephone to Bancroft. Naturally the informant would not care to be known. It is sufficient that the statement was shown to be true," he replied sharply.

"An anonymous informant!" she said contemptuously. "Had Ewan no denial to make?"

"Of course. He said I misunderstood the situation, and referred me to the landlord. What I saw was quite sufficient. The word of a road-house keeper would not have strengthened my opinion, nor changed it. If your self-respect has not vanished completely, there is but one course you can adopt. The whole countryside is laughing at our humiliation; not mine merely, but yours. I warned you from the first that nothing but ill could come of the unfortunate affair."

She slept little that night. The following day was the longest she had ever known and the weariest. Ewan came up the hill at nightfall. She sat alone at her window, watching for him, and went out to meet him. Standing in the copse, she listened as he told her everything. She knew he spoke the truth. What had happened was just as he explained it. He did not say, and she did not ask, who the other man was. The whole thing to her was ridiculously silly—the adventure itself, Ewan's entanglement in it, her father's absurd rushing over and intervention. She needed no assurances, and yet she could not have felt more depressed had she doubted. It irritated her that Ewan should have suffered himself to be placed in so ridiculous a situation. There must have been a better way out of it. It was worse than wicked; it was downright stupid. What claim had the Bancroft girl to that utmost chivalry?

The portrait of the girl in her strikingly attractive beauty of face and form rose before her. It was on the very spot where they now stood that Ewan had swept the girl into his arms, held, and kissed her.

"Please don't say any more about it," she begged him at last. "It was unfortunate. It makes one think of a cheap, theatrical love wreck, to be laughed at rather than wept over. It is typical of the place and the life here. I have only just returned, but I want to go away again; I want it, I think, more than I ever wanted anything before. The place is a close, stuffy, crowded room in which every little whisper has a hundred loud echoes. I want to get away from it all, from the Settlement, from father; yes, from you, Ewan. You once felt the same, and can understand me."

"Yes, I think I understand," he replied. "I know what it must be to have to come back to things as they are."

"I am tired of it all, of idleness and the small, deadly dull round of existence," she went on hurriedly. "What it meant to mother, I now can realize. I want you to give me back my promise and my liberty, Ewan. It is not that I don't believe. Perhaps later everything will become clear again, like the air becomes sweet and clean after the sultry day's heavy storm. I am dissatisfied, not with you, Ewan, so much as with myself. It has become a disease that must be cured."

"I would sell out and take you away, wherever you wish to go," he said.

"No, that would not be the cure," she answered. "Let us be as we were—just friends. I am going to join the nursing staff of a New York hospital; many a time I have had the desire, but it has always been pushed aside. You must not try to hinder or dissuade me.

I feel that in one way what I am doing is unjust to you, for I believe you to be loyal and true, but in another way it is the justest thing I can do, both for you and myself."

At the gate, they parted; there was neither kiss nor handclasp. She hurried away, as if she feared that the touch of lip or hand would break down her resolution. He heard the half-stifled sob, and stood till she reached the house. She did not look back. The door opened and closed upon her. He turned and walked down the slope. Hope whispered of a brighter day to come, but the old dream had faded. Something had been lost irretrievably; something had broken. A thick, white, icy fog rolled up to meet him from the valley, swathing him about, through which he groped his way, as through a hidden world, home.

CHAPTER XXI.

There was rest for Craigie alone in work, and work brought none of the old-time gladness. It had a new aimlessness. Before there had been the dream of the woman, the home, the children. Success, money winning, was for their enrichment and happiness. The big incentive had gone, but he toiled harder than in his most strenuous pitman's days, toiled physically with pick and shovel and bar. His mother knew what had happened without being told of it. Geraldine, who was yet at home, had spoken of the break to no one, not even her father or Trench. The sense of injustice to Ewan kept her from adding to the burdens he was bearing, so she prepared silently for departure.

The short November day was drawing to a close. Ever since morning a steady, misty rain had been falling. Low masses of cloud, like white smoke billows, swept across the hillsides, hiding the tops. The bad weather had stopped work in the pits both sides of the dividing line.

The Simes people had quit at noon for the day; their place was deserted. Ewan's gang boss had gone away, leaving him alone with a long night stretching before him. There was a wedding on in the Ralston home, and the watchman had taken a night off. He had half promised to turn up at midnight, but Ewan knew he wouldn't, and Ralston knew that Ewan knew. When Ralston worked he worked, and when he relaxed it was with the same earnest whole-heartedness. Next to a wake, a wedding was occasion for supreme celebration, with whisky and high wines and gin to chase dull care. Ralston, Ewan knew, would not show up till next night, when he would appear with a bad head and a quickened craving for the discussion of the more abstruse points in theology.

To-night Craigie himself would do the watching. He had plenty of work to keep him busy, so after cooking and eating his supper he settled down at his desk. As the night wore on, the rain stopped. At eleven, going out for a breath of air, he found the mists gone, a clear, starlit sky overhead, and the soggy ground crisping under the sharp, frosty air. The lake, as usual, had closed and opened again before the final sealing for the winter, and its black water to-night had the heavy motionlessness that is its spirit's torpor, preluding the long five months' sleep.

As he looked, he saw the instantaneous flash of a tiny speck of light on the lake, like the glint of a diamond in the darkness, that has caught and flung back a star's greeting. Then he heard the creak and plash of oars. It was not possible that it could be Ralston, for the liquid refreshment provided on such occasions was too ample to have vanished by this time, and to make half a night of it would be to the old Scot-Canadian nothing short of ridiculous, work spoiled and play wasted—the botched job of an incompetent in either sphere. The boat pulled heavily, with short, hurried strokes. No waterman; certainly a boy more likely or—a woman.

Closing the door behind him, Ewan walked over to the beach toward which the boat was heading. A wild thought flashed through his mind. Geraldine!

Then he knew that could not be; she hated the water and darkness. Had she wished to see him, she would have sent word.

There was only one girl he knew who had the spirit to cross the ghostly lake, with its legends of dead men, drowned men, walking on the element that once slew them but had no longer mastery over them. He thought of the girl of the rink fight, the midnight moorland, and the road-house adventure. He had heard that she had closed the little shop and had gone or was going away. Before the boat came to the beach he knew it was she.

She did not take the hand he extended to help her out, but sprang lightly to the sand.

"I had to come, Ewan," she said, almost breathless from the hurried rowing. "I heard a few hours ago, over in Barford, that the Simes people mean to rush you to-night. They know that Ralston and your best men are at the wedding, and there is to be a raid on the strip you both claim, your houses and machinery are to be destroyed, and possession taken and held by the Simes company. They say that once they hold it, there is no law you can find to get them out of it, something that can't be proved about the title."

"Where did you hear all about this?" he asked quickly.

"From my own father, talking to somebody else when he didn't know I was within hearing," she said. "He's hand and glove with the other folks now. They've brought in some strangers used to ugly work, men that'll hold back from nothing. You have no time to lose, Ewan, and I guess you are all alone."

"You're a mighty white kind of a pal, Emma," he said gratefully.

"Oh, never mind about that!" she interposed hurriedly. "They'll be here after midnight; I guess they are on the way now. You've got a telephone?"

"No, they haven't got the wires this side of the lake yet," he replied. "I wonder if you could pull over to the point yonder, where Ralston's house is. Tell him to get two or three of the right sort and come over at once."

"Of course I can," she said, jumping into the boat. "But will he be fit?"

"Fit! A fight would sober him if he was head over in a whisky jar," laughed Ewan.

He shoved the boat off, and watched it till it vanished.

"A mighty white kind of a pal," he repeated. "The tougher the trouble the closer she sticks."

He went back to the office and shuttered the side windows. There were a couple of automatic pistols, ready for business, in his desk. He took them out, examined them, then put them back. The gun was for hysterical or desperate folk, and to-night he was neither one nor the other.

If he and Ralston, with Johnny Dauville, the little fighting French Canadian, couldn't whip half a dozen hired thugs, with Simes at their head, it was time they went out of business. He put out the lights and waited. The sound of pit blastings at Wibsey presently announced midnight, and ten minutes later Ewan could hear the tramp of feet and the sound of men's voices. The party had avoided the Settlement, worked round from the Barford Road by the head of the lake, thus doing away with the long water approach and making surprise easier. The men were clearly under the impression that the place was unguarded, or they would have been quieter.

"Nobody round!" he could hear George Simes' voice. "This is the time we catch the weasel asleep. Some one was here an hour ago; I saw the light from across the lake, and when I came round it had gone and a boat was working over the water, going south."

At the rail fence bounding the upper part of the land, they stopped.

"Take the gate! Take the gate! Damage nothing here!" Ewan heard old Simes say in his most sanctimonious voice. "We ain't no thieves or destroyers of other men's lawful property. But the engine house and the buildings and derricks, they are on our land, and we've come for our just rights; no

more, no less. Engine house first, and you needn't be overcareful with that fine new motor he's got. It cost piles of money, they say. A delicate thing for sledge hammers and axes to play with, eh?" He laughed loudly at his joke. "This way, boys! Sooner 'tis over, sooner your money's earned."

"Hello there!" The party stopped in its tracks. Ewan took a step out of the shadows. "Missed your way, I guess. The road's beyond the line fence yonder." There were half a dozen men in the gang besides the two Simes.

"No, we are where we belong," said the elder man. "We've come to take possession of our property on which you have set up buildings and out of which you are digging our fiber."

"Queer hour and way of getting it," answered Craigie temperately. "The courts are open to you. No need for midnight raids."

"Let them go to the courts as want to. When a burglar gets into my house and is stealing my goods there's no need for me to stand by and wait for the courts to throw him out," explained Simes.

"The point is this," interposed George Simes. "We have come to demand and see that we get our rights. If you withdraw peaceably, we are willing to let you take away your belongings unharmed."

"And suppose I don't?" asked Craigie.

"Then responsibility for anything that may happen falls on you," was the answer.

"And this bunch, I suppose, is to help you into your infringed rights?" laughed Ewan, indicating the men behind the principals.

"Waste no more time on him, George; he's stalling," shouted the elder man.

"Well, but wait a minute. Tell me what you want, all of it, or only a part?" said Ewan. His quick ear had caught the swift, almost silent dip, of a canoe paddle. There was no faster canoeman on the lakes than the Canuck, Dauville. Ralston would not be far behind. Every minute of delay counted heavily.

"Get busy, men!" shouted old Simes, rendered suspicious by Ewan's temperate restraint. "The engine house first. Shove him out of the way, and put the axes to the door. Time for talking's gone."

"Stand back!" Craigie commanded sharply, backing to the broad step before the door of the house containing his great, compact motor. The leader of the gang—a big, whiskered fellow—rushed forward, to be met with a crashing, straight drive that sent him sprawling among his men. The others held back.

"Six of you to one! Are you going to let him stop you?" yelled the old man.

"Ask him why he and his son don't take seats in the front row of the show," laughed Craigie.

"Rush him! Rush him! Take him all together. Don't let him get you singly!" shouted George Simes from the rear.

There was a wild charge, and for a few minutes a terrific mêlée ensued, the attackers having no easy job with the whirlwind fighting man who hit with the force of a pile driver. There were two of his adversaries temporarily out of commission, but the odds were too great. The end apparently had come when one of the men, creeping up in the shadows on all fours, succeeded in locking his arms about Ewan's legs. Bracing himself against the door in the effort to free himself, the end seemed near when Dauville burst through the ring like an irresistible wedge driving it apart.

The Canuck fought river rules, all in, nothing barred, fists, feet, thumbs. A drive to the ribs with a shrewdly powerful toe released Ewan, the human shackle dropping off with a heavy grunt. The tide of battle at once turned. The hired fighters had no stomach for the kind of battle put on by the hardest pair of scrappers in the county. Ralston's coming completed the rout. Five of the men managed to get away up the hill to the place

where they had left their team, George Simes following them, anathematizing their cowardice. The elder Simes had disappeared. Ewan stepped down to examine the man who had been laid out by Dauville's boot. The moon, by this time, was rimming the hills, throwing a shadowy light over the broken ground of the pit top. Suddenly, as Craigie bent over the man, there was a sharp cry from Ralston:

"Look out, Ewan!"

Ducking at the warning saved him. A shot whistled over his head, shattering the window behind. Across the yard, half hid by a pile of stones, was the elder Simes, the moonlight shining on the barrel of the pointed revolver.

Before he could fire again a woman darted forward and grasped his wrist with both her hands. He struck at her savagely with his free left. Ewan and Ralston were upon him instantly, and the revolver was wrenched from the would-be murderer's hand. At that moment Dauville returned with young Simes, whom he had chased and captured.

"Take them both into the office," said Ewan. "I'll be in directly."

"Did that old devil hurt you, Emma?" he asked, turning solicitously to the girl. "Why, your face is bleeding. Come into the office and let me fix it up."

"No, never mind; it's nothing. Only a cut lip," she replied. "I don't want to go in there among all those men. I'll step down to the lake and wash up there."

"I'll go with you," he said. "Let the others wait. I can never be grateful enough to you, Emma, for to-night. They'd have got my place, and all I've spent on it would have gone up, and old Simes would have put me out for keeps if it hadn't been for you."

"We'll talk about that later," she laughed. "I just hated old Simes myself. Now off you go and leave me alone till I wash. I must look a sight, and hurt vanity stings more than Simes' fist."

He obeyed reluctantly the little gesture of dismissal, his eyes following her as she walked down to the beach; then he turned and went into the office. Old Simes sat there, venomous and defiant, his son by his side, evidently overcome by the turn events had taken.

It was arranged that Dauville should stay on guard till the day shift came to work, though there was no likelihood of the attack being renewed, while Ralston and Ewan took the two captives over and delivered them to the authorities. Before they started, Ewan went out to find Emma. She was nowhere within sight. Her boat had gone from the beach. Three parts of the way across the lake, he could see a boat making for the far shore. He hastened into the office.

"Take them over and turn them loose, Ralston," he directed.

"What? Let 'em go!" asked the surprised guard.

"Yes, I'll see about them later. I want to borrow your canoe, Johnny." And he was away before answer could be made.

He made his best speed over the water, but she had too great a start. When he was halfway across he saw a team traveling swiftly along the upper lake road. Thinking she must have gone to Barford, he drove thither, but his errand was fruitless. At her father's house, no news was to be had. It was a month later he heard that she had taken the train at a wayside station, and thereafter all trace of her was lost. A letter, posted on a westbound train, reached her father. He was not to be anxious about her, as she was going to take up a new situation.

CHAPTER XXII.

It was late in the afternoon that Ewan returned from his vain quest. The thought that Emma had gone away, injured perhaps more seriously than he had known, and without giving him the opportunity of speaking his gratitude more fully, harassed him intolerably. When he reached home he learned that Geraldine had gone away the evening before, Trench driving her to the station. Crossing to the mine,

he found everything in order; there had been no further trouble, and the Simes place was closed down. The men had come to work as usual in the morning, but had been paid off and discharged.

Ewan was looking over the scene of the night's battle when he saw Trench coming across the water.

"I only heard of the trouble an hour ago, when I returned from Winchmore," said the newcomer. "You were not damaged?"

"Property, no; and for myself nothing worse than skinned knuckles," Craigie laughed, showing his hands.

"An idiotic, dastardly business," the other exclaimed. "I had a call from young Simes and Mitchell, their attorney, just now. I think I conveyed to them my own sentiment and that of the county pretty definitely. Their hands are up, and you will have no more trouble."

"I guess not," answered Ewan. "They nearly brought off the double event, though." And he took his visitor to the shattered window, and then showed him the bullet imbedded in the splintered wood across the room.

"Old Simes' shot; a miss for once. We got him, gun in hand, before he could try again," said Ewan. "He'd have had me but for some one grabbing him. Emma Bancroft came over from Barford near midnight to warn me I was to be rushed, and she blocked Simes' second shot."

"Where is she, Ewan? Was she hurt?" the other asked anxiously.

"She went as she came," he replied. "I was in the office, arranging about the Simes, and when I came out again she had gone. I went over to Barford, seeking her, but she had slipped away. Old Simes struck her in the face when she was holding his gun hand. I'd sooner he had smashed the place down or had his shot at me."

"What are you going to do with him?" asked Trench sharply.

"Nothing; that's the worst of it," answered Craigie. "Last night I could have ground his face under my boot into the earth; he looked like an old, crafty, deadly snake, but I found this note pinned to the side of the boat by which Emma crossed:

"The old man isn't likely to do you any more harm. I wish you'd let him go.'

"Those are the orders that stand," continued Ewan, putting the scrap of paper away carefully. "She is right. The shot missed, and for the rest of the mischief he tried to hatch against the property let him go to hell his own way. What did they want to see you about?"

"Likely enough to find out how much I knew," replied Trench. "Professedly to explain about some fiber they had contracted to sell me, but can't deliver. They made an assignment this morning. Last night was clearly a desperate attempt to retrieve their position, and as it failed they decided to quit. I believe Simes is heavily hit; he lost his head for once over the mining mirage and risked his own money. That accounts for the blood fight he made of it."

"That sounds good," grinned Ewan. "I guessed they were all in when I found they paid off this morning. It will hurt the old man more to go up and down the Settlement licked and just a farmer again than it would were he stuck behind the bars. Anyway, all the damage he could do me has been done already; the rest is just pin pricking."

"Geraldine told me last night about your troubles, Ewan. I don't know how to convey to you the sorrow I feel about them," said Trench. "She feels it bitterly, too, but I believe things will come out right and clear in the end."

"Yes, it had been terribly hard for her," answered Craigie after a long pause. "Everything was against her. They used me to hurt her, and her to hurt me. She was made for sunshine and peace and pleasant things, and I seem to be a sort of stormy petrel. I think, though, she knows I was square and straight first and last."

"Yes, and that, I believe, will bring her back to you," said the other. "From this time on the atmosphere will clear."

"I think it is clearer already," said

Ewan. "You see, Mr. Trench, I had no right to expect it of her. She is fine and sweet and proud, and there would always have been the marring thought of what I was. It is no use saying it should not be there or that it is unjust; the fact stands that it is there. Her father kept it to the fore; her friends would talk about it. The ugly features are those they dwell on; by and by her children would have known. There always would have been the scar, the unsightly thing, and it would have reached to her and hers. It was brave of her to take me; her heart was all with me. If I had been like other men, born to a clean record, I could hold her against the world. It was a braver thing still of her to tell me when she found her strength unequal to the burden, braver because all her instincts of squareness and loyalty were on my side in her fight with herself. I'd sooner have lost her than discovered too late that her life had been clouded. A man, used to fighting and roughing it, can live and flourish in the bruising battle, but a tender and sensitive woman cannot everlastingly be warring against her instincts."

Trench had no reply to make. The straight, steadfast way in which the other looked facts in the face and paid without complaint the penalty exacted from the son for the father's fault moved and silenced him.

The liquidation of the Simes company proceeded rapidly. A few days before the property came under the hammer Trench and Ewan had the last of a long series of consultations. The result was that Ewan stood aside at the sale, and the tract of land was purchased by the Chalet man. A week later the Settlement was stirred by the news that the Trench and Craigie interests had been merged. It was from her father that Geraldine received the tidings. He wrote:

A noble surprise came to me among my Christmas gifts. Nothing less than a package containing fifty one-hundred-dollar shares in the Trench and Craigie Company. I suspect, from Peter's manner, that the shares come from Craigie, and are to be regarded in the light of a conscience offering. It is excellent to know that the young man shows so clear a sense of justice. The liquidation proceedings of the defunct company yielded absolutely nothing to the stockholders. It is satisfactory to know that the new company is certain to pay not less than ten per cent.

Geraldine replied at once, indignantly protesting against her father's acceptance and the motives he attributed to the gift. Again he wrote:

You are quixotic. There is no reason why I should not accept, as I invested five thousand dollars in the property Trench and Craigie now own. Why should you complain when I succeed in replacing a worthless investment so satisfactorily? Since the outrageous attack made by the Simes on Craigie's property, I have been led to reconsider my position in the old controversy. I am prepared to concede that, in some respects, we may have misjudged the young man. This I have intimated to Ewan Craigie. It will gratify you, I am sure, to know that I have accorded to Jane Craigie a cordial invitation to return within the membership of the church. Your projects dissatisfy me. The nursing profession is an admirable one for a woman with few intimate personal ties, or domestic or social prospects. The highest ideal her sex can cherish centers in home, husband, children. Craigie is now in a position to give to his wife secured station, that will become more prominent as the years go by. If any misunderstanding arose between you out of the most unfortunate incident of the road house, I trust that my assurance that we were all grievously mistaken will effectively dispel it. It is in keeping with the fitness of things that reconciliation should coincide with the season that commemorates the establishment of "Peace On Earth, Good Will Toward Men."

CHAPTER XXIII.

Winter and spring wore away swiftly, faster than Ewan had ever known them go. By the time midsummer came the new mine was in full, smooth operation, and the consolidated business driving ahead prosperously. Then came the tragic days of August, when the cloud that arose over the far-away little Bosnian town spread across the world and darkened the blue summer skies of Canada. There came a new throb into the northern air, the glorious, maddening, terrible throb of the war drums and the tramp of the feet of marching men hurrying to the unfurled standard. From the lone

fringes of the arctic circle, from forest and camp, from wide, lone prairies, from great cities and remote villages, freemen under no compulsion save that of high duty were coming in their tens of thousands to join the great crusade.

Within Craigie the blood of Ishmael was stirring. The old hunger had returned, a consuming desire to leave the peaceful, fat life and enter the world of big, vital things. Sometimes in the long, silent evenings Jane Craigie surprised his glance resting on her. A great dread swept over her. Fear drove her to prayer, and prayer to sacrifice.

"There's something on your mind you fear to speak of," she said one evening.

"If it had to be, God would help me as He is helping women everywhere."

"I heard to-day that Geraldine is going over with one of the nursing staffs, and Phil Sherwell sails this week with a squad of old college men to take up ambulance driving at the front," he remarked, after a time.

When Geraldine came home on a flying farewell visit to her father, Ewan was away in camp, and spring found him overseas.

A summer and a long, bitter winter he went in and out of the trenches, learned to live with death as his next neighbor, saw hell and something of heaven, the worst and much of the best there is to know of and in men, was taught to regard the issues of life in truer perspective. There were battles, in retrospect like hellish nightmares, wherein men armed only with rifles were matched against heavy artillery, high explosives, poison gas; heroisms, endurances that mock the impotence of words.

Through the hard, dark days he went, miraculously unscathed, one of a gallant company that feared nothing, dared everything, went "over the top" like lads to a football rush, and fared forth raiding as if it had been a poaching expedition "of a shiny night."

He called to see Geraldine at the London hospital soon after his arrival in England. She seemed graver, finer, older than in the former days. They took up their friendship as it had been in the time prior to their engagement, but there was in it a new depth, frankness, cordiality, made possible by the tacit understanding that this would be their permanent relationship. It surprised and shocked him to find how calmly he could regard the change. He sought to analyze his feelings, explain his mind to himself. She had all the charm he had admired and loved, but something was lacking, more in himself than in her, and the lack reconciled him to the inevitable. There came, during the fighting time, a short furlough in London. Phil Sherwell was there in hospital, recovering from a slight wound. Geraldine and Ewan went together to see him, and during the long, pleasant call enlightenment came to Craigie. There was a light in his companion's eyes he had never seen there before, not even in their gladdest days, and he understood what before had puzzled him. A swift pang of jealousy swept over him, smoldered an instant, then died away, and with it the last of his dreams.

"Ewan," said Phil when they were alone the day of Craigie's return to France, "I've been thinking a lot about you and Geraldine. I never ventured to speak of the trouble. Trench told me all about it. We all believed in you, of course, and knew it to be what afterward was proved, a wretched pack of lies. Is there not something due to her, and to you also, before you go back?"

"I don't think so," answered Ewan. "You see, Phil, we have come to an understanding."

"I am glad," and Phil put out his hand. "You are my two dearest friends. Congratulations again, old man!"

"No, it isn't as you imagine," said Ewan. "You see, Phil, Geraldine and I made a great mistake, but saw it in time. We liked each other immensely, and I guess mistook liking for something else. Now we are friends, the best of friends, and always shall be. Some day, I hope, she will meet a man who is worthy of her, and I'll be the first to wish them good luck."

"She'll never meet one half so worthy," answered Phil, after a long pause, his glance resting on Ewan with searching wistfulness.

Geraldine went to the station to see Ewan off. He was unusually gay and cheery.

"Phil was asking me if we had come to an understanding, Geraldine," he said suddenly. The color swept over her face, then vanished, leaving it pale and distressed.

"I am not going to bother you, dear," he continued. "I told him we had agreed to be the best of friends always. That was the truth, was it not?" She lifted her head after a long pause, and nodded her reply.

"I want to thank you for all you have been to me, all that you have meant in my life, all you are going to be to me," he said.

"I have been cruel and mean and unjust," she replied. "I hate and despise myself at every thought of it. You are the only one, Ewan, who does understand me, I think. I'd like to know you have forgiven me."

"You never wronged me; there was nothing to forgive," he answered gently. "Now I must be off. Take good care of Phil. Good-by, little sister mine!" She raised her face, wet with tears; he kissed her on the forehead, and passed on through the barrier.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"Coming along finely, Craigie, old chap," said a brisk voice. It was Radford, the bustling surgeon, an old friend.

"Hello, Radford! Given you a job to play with?"

"Kind of one," replied the doctor. "The worst of you big chaps is there's so damned much for shrapnel to toy with. Give me bantams every time."

"Is all of me here? Not had time to inventory yet?" asked the patient.

"All and then some," laughed the doctor. "We've picked most of the extra scrap iron out; the rest they can play with over the water or you can keep as souvenirs. Be as good as new after a bit. Now keep quiet and think some more about those pretty girls you've been hailing in your rambles."

"There's one thing more," said Ewan. "Who is the nurse looking after me? I've the queerest sort of idea that I know her. Tag end of a dream likely enough."

"Nurse Bancroft," replied the doctor. "She said she used to know you. One of the finest, tempered steel throughout. All the lame and halt and blind, and seven-eighths dead would hop out of their little beds this minute and storm hell for her. She belongs to a western staff. You'll see her after six; she's off duty now."

She came over to see him as soon as she entered the room. Her figure was slighter than of old, the ivory tint of the face whiter. The eyes retained something of the dark, soft provocativeness of the night of the first dance—lifetimes away. The spirit of laughter still hovered upon the wide, red-lipped mouth, but it was chastened, sweeter, infinitely tender. There was the suggestion of smiles and tears in her face. The hallowing touch of sympathy with the infinite sufferings of men had bestowed on her a new nobility. The spirit of consecration had given something of divinity to all that was fine, brave, and delightsome in her.

"Emma—I mean nurse—it is mighty good to see you," he said.

"Ewan—I mean Captain Craigie—it is much better to know you are getting well," she smiled, bending over him.

"I wonder why you ran away that night?" he asked abruptly, after satisfying himself that she was not part of the long, queer dream.

"Hush, you silly man!" she replied, laughing. "We have forgotten all that happened before the flood. Now you must not talk, and I can't. There's heaps to do, far too much to let me stop to bother over just one man. Remember, you are in my care, and everybody will tell you I am a tyrant. If you are good I may talk to you for just a minute later."

He watched her flit swiftly, softly

about the ward. She walked as she used to dance—music in her feet, in the poise and sway of the supple form; here easing a galling bandage, there turning a pillow, grave or smiling, a merry quip, a smart rebuke, a word or touch of healing tenderness. What blind fools men and women were, he thought; himself the blindest of them all.

"I have written every day to Miss Geraldine in London," she said when she returned. "I cabled your mother, too, telling her you were getting well. There are letters for you; perhaps I should not let you have them, but they may help the recovery."

During the days that followed he often tried to speak of the past, the Settlement, the little hat shop in Barford, but she invariably changed the subject or found some pretext for leaving him. The days dragged wearily when she was away, the pain was severe, the sights and sounds of suffering still harder to bear. The men grew irritable, argued with each other like quarrelsome children, squabbled outrageously, made the lives of nurses and attendants often enough burdens to them. When she came into the room the big, hurt babies began to behave, tempers sweetened, the old, jaded feeling vanished, and the ward yielded to the strong, genial authority.

At last came the word that he was to cross to England, and the tidings brought him little pleasure. Then Radford, sitting with him a few farewell minutes, told him that Emma was going over by the same boat, and he longed to be away.

"I am terribly sorry to lose her," said the doctor, "but she must have a long rest. Eighteen months to a nurse, here at the base, means more than twice eighteen to you men in the trenches. She has carried on on sheer nerve and pluck for months past."

CHAPTER XXV.

The old west-country farmhouse appeared to be deserted. Ewan rapped on the wide-open door several times without obtaining any response to his summons. He stepped inside. Through the open back door at the end of the long, stone-flagged passage was framed a glorious glimpse of sunny lawn and gayly flowered garden. A hammock hung in the shade of the trees, and in it was a sleeping girl. The book she had been reading had fallen to the ground. Ewan walked across the lawn and stood by the sleeper's side. She looked white, tired, frailer than ever he had thought so gloriously alive a girl could be. The hand that hung over the hammock side was thin, worn with incessant, heroic service. It was with an effort he restrained himself from taking it to his lips. Released from the sustaining round of duty, she had broken down under the long, accumulating strain, and had been sent into the drowsy west country, within sight of the silvern Severn, to regain her health.

Quietly he took one of the chairs near the hammock, and picked up the book. A great bee, its velvet coat dust sprinkled with gold, boomed about the hammock inquisitively, as if a little puzzled by the flower it contained. Ewan rose and waved it off, and it departed with what seemed to be a grouchy grumble that the man creature wanted so fair a thing all to himself. Presently she moved, and with a little sigh opened her eyes. They rested on him a full minute before she spoke.

"Ewan!" she whispered rather than called, as one not sure where the dream world ends and that of material realities begins.

"I kept awfully quiet," he said. "No one answered my hammering on the door, so I just walked in, came through, and found you here. I have repelled one large drum major of a bumblebee, three butterflies, and a red-jacketed ladybird."

"Why didn't you wake me?" she asked, slipping from the hammock.

"You looked so tired and comfortable. I had never seen you still before," he laughed. "You have always been busy making other folks happy and comfortable. I almost began to rock you and sing a lullaby. Getting

stronger again? You don't look very fit. Let me arrange those cushions for you. It is high time some one came along to take care of you." His eyes searched her face, and he shook his head with professional gravity.

"Oh, I am nearly well again; most of it now is laziness, I guess, but they won't believe I am fit to go back. Doctor Radford is the worst of them all. He says I must rest a long, long while," she complained.

"If I were king, I'd make Radford a duke or something like that," he commented approvingly.

"So they shipped me off here, where a mouse in the walls sounds like a machine gun in action and the cat's mew seems a screech," she laughed. "And you, Ewan?"

"Down and out, I guess," he answered. "Lamed for keeps and about to be canned. Nothing for it but to go back to the Settlement and pound rock."

"I am glad you came to see me before you went," she smiled.

"Came to see you!" he exclaimed. "Haven't I been hunting the world over to find you ever since you ran away from me that night? Where are all the folks, or do you live here all alone?"

"All busy harvesting. I am the only idler, so they leave me to look after the house," she explained.

"Some watchman!" he laughed.

"Sleep! I am the drowsiest creature that ever was," she said, smoothing back a stray tendril of hair. "But tell me the news. How is Miss Geraldine?"

"I haven't seen her for two weeks. She has gone home. Phil Sherwell has left, too, on long leave. London seemed the emptiest place, so I just packed up some books and candies and stuff you might not be able to get here and came to see if there was a job vacant as nurse or porter or handy man or any old job that would keep me round," he said.

"You can have your pick of them," she laughed.

"I'll name my choice presently," he added.

"When do you expect to sail?" she asked.

"I don't know yet; it all depends." But he did not tell her on what it depended.

"And the wedding? Or may I not ask about that?" she inquired hesitatingly.

"The wedding! Oh, it took place, I expect, a few days ago. They were to be married soon after their arrival on the other side. Both she and Phil wanted me to be there, but it couldn't be managed," he told her.

"She and Phil!" The color came into her face, then slowly died away. She leaned back against the cushions a moment; then, with an effort, recovered herself. "I didn't know, Ewan. I never suspected or I wouldn't have asked. How could she——"

"I guess you misunderstood things," he said, leaning forward and playing with the fringe of the shawl over her knees. "Geraldine and I woke up one day, months and months ago, to find we had made a mistake; so, like the sensible folk we are, we corrected it at once. You see, Emma, there was another man; that was one thing. And then I made a discovery. There was another woman who in some way had slipped past the barriers straight into my heart. What was I to do? Whenever I looked inside there she was, and I loved to have her there, so much so that if she had been out of it the place would have seemed deserted."

He dropped the fringe, and took caressingly the hand that rested nervously on the arm of the chair. There was a shy, sweet wondering in her eyes.

"There are women you like, Emma, but there is just the one woman, the queen woman, you love, as I love you.

"You wonderful girl with heart of gold, bravest, finest, dearest! My own woman! My dear, dear love!" he whispered in her ear. "You are not angry that I was blind and slow of heart so long?"

She drew a little away from him, her hands on his shoulders, love and wonder in her eyes. Then her arms slipped about his neck and drew his head down.

The Substitute

By Clarence L. Cullen

Author of "A Smokeless Watch Astern," Etc.

One of Spud McGlone's latest yarns, of an old shellback of a sea soldier who tries to hypnotize the first luff into believing that he is a skittish young scamp, fit candidate to conduct a mess of marines Over There

I'M straightening a starboard ventilator abaft the mizzen stack when this top sergeant of sea soldiers has his talk with the first luff. So, what with having a talented ear geared to me head for any ship's news astir, I can't help hearing what passes between them.

The ship, dropping through the Gate and away from the Farralons a month before, has slipped over to this side by way of the Ditch, and now we're just after pitching our mudhook in the harbor of a little Atlantic port that ye've never heard of, just as ye've never heard of the Bowery or Broadway, which are lanes or turnpikes, as ye might say, in a tiny, insignificant place.

Now a man-o'-war, maybe ye've heard, has been known to be at anchor in a fresh port for as weary and nagging a period of time as seventeen seconds before rumors of doings ashore begins to zip over the side like radio calls from a Hun-clubbed ship. That record is equaled easy this time by a bumboatman who climbs on board over our jury gangway.

Among the rumors that the bumboatman breaks out of his basket is this one: Pershing is off for France in a few days with several transport loads of hand-picked regular-army men and marines—the lucky swabs!

This ventilator needs only the touch of a finger to straighten it. But it's a job that costs me arduous efforts when, out of the tail of me eye, I sees Tommy Coburn, the marine top sergeant, stalking aft like a drum major on dress parade. Tommy, it's plain from his being on the quarter-deck, has asked the officer of the deck's permission to speak with the executive officer. The first luff steps out of his office cabin to meet him, and the two come to a stop for the confab about eight feet from where I'm having a terrible time squaring to the breeze a ventilator that's already squared.

It requires sharp mental exertion on me part to figure out what this top sergeant of sea soldiers wants with the first luff. Of course Tommy hasn't heard a word about Pershing's taking a batch of marines to France with him. Tommy wouldn't accompany Pershing to France if the general was to come off to the ship personal and beg him on his knees to go as his orderly sergeant. It's easy to see that Tommy has dolled himself up in his mustering uniform, with the five service stripes on his sleeve and his foreign-campaign medals on his breast, merely for the purpose of coming aft to ask the first luff if the shaving lather dried on his face this morning and does he think next Tuesday afternoon will be fine enough for a game of tiddledywinks.

Tommy, who is fifty, if he's a minute, has got his old shoulders squared like a teak altar in a Nikko temple. I happen to know that there's a rheumatic crick in those shoulders from Tommy's quarter of a century's corking off on

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men-o'-war decks in all weathers from the Aleutians to the Azores. But he stands, heels touching, on the quarter-deck before the first luff with the ramrod stiffness of a rookie marine that imagines he's winning in an orderly-bucking ordeal with old-timers.

The old shellback of a sea soldier, in fact, is trying to hypnotize the first luff into believing that T. Coburn, a marine who has had the diamond of a top sergeant nesting in his chevrons for four enlistments, is nothing but a skittish young scamp who took on with the corps about a month before. Any child could tell that Tommy hasn't heard even a murmur about this business of Pershing's taking a mess of marines Over There with him.

The first luff eyes Tommy's flawless make-up with a smile flickering over his face. They're a pair of big men in more ways than one, and old shipmates.

"Well, sergeant, what is it?" the first luff asks Tommy.

"I got permission to see ye, Mr. Ransom," says Tommy, blushing like a girl under his bronze, "to volunteer for France."

"France, eh?" says the first luff, with this far-away smile that's a habit of his. "What makes you think American sea soldiers are going to France, sergeant?"

"The word is just over the side, sir, that General Pershing will take a detachment of the corps to France along with the army regulars," says Tommy. Then, with a gulp, he adds: "And I want to go with that outfit of the corps, sir—I want to go bad!"

The first luff gives a short laugh.

"I don't blame you for wanting that, sergeant," says he. "I'd like nothing better in life—or death, either, for that matter—than to be Over There with Pershing. For once," he goes on, "a ship's rumor is right. Men of your uniform are going with General Pershing. But it's a brisk lot of marines he'll be taking—the younger men."

Tommy pulls his broad old shoulders back so far that ye can almost hear the blades creak.

"Me service stripes mean nothing, sir," says he. "It's not a man's age, but his condition that counts. I'm still in me prime. And I've smelled a good many different kinds of powder. I don't have to tell ye that, sir, seeing that I fought alongside of ye in some of the fracases."

"Fracases—yes, they were that, and some of them were a little worse than that," says the first luff, gazing ten thousand miles away over the rail. "But they weren't the trenches, sergeant."

"We were intrenched in Haiti, sir," is Tommy's answer to that. "Begging your pardon, I've see ye all black mud from your eyebrows to your shoetops down there, sir."

"Black mud, yes; but there was no black cold in the Haiti trenches, sergeant," says the first luff. "And that's the thing that gets the oldsters in those French trenches—the bitter, biting cold."

From the corner of me eye I can see a little quiver run through Tommy's frame at that word "oldsters."

"Barring me looks, whatever they may be, I don't feel like an old man yet, sir," says he out of a throat that sounds dry.

"No more do I, Coburn," says the first luff, handing the sea soldier a swift look that has the sparkle of kindness in it. "But figures are hard to twist, and men-o'-war records have disconcerting memories. Do you happen to remember the name of the first ship on which you served with me? I do."

Tommy's eyes go dreamy as he blinks over the side, and I can feel his mind roving back over the old years.

"Yes, sir, I remember," says he after the pause. "It was me own first ship, and yours, too, sir, I believe. Ye were a middy and I was a private on board the *Olympia* on her first China cruise, before she dreamed of being Admiral Dewey's flagship at Manila."

"Right," says the first luff. "Well, how long ago was that?"

"I hate to think of how long ago it was, sir," blurts Tommy, his eyes batting hard. "But it's not the years that make a man old before his time so

much as the——" He stopped there, not being a ready man with words.

"So much as the way he lives his years, you were going to say," the first luff helps him out. "Well, Coburn," he goes on in his man-to-man way that makes so many of us want always to be shipmates with him, "you and I are about of an age. We're not fledglings any more, I'm sorry to say. In fact, we're pretty full-feathered birds, if indeed we haven't begun to molt just a little. We've lived our years hard—you harder than I, serving for'ard aboard so many ships. We may not like to acknowledge it, but we've reached the time when men slow up a bit. You've done your young man's trick, and a fast and hard trick it has been, as I well know. So now why not let the youngsters of your uniform pick up their kits for that bleak work in France?"

Ye'll stand many a watch in This Man's Navy before ye'll hear a gentleman of the quarter-deck speak fairer than that even to an old shipmate. But Tommy, with his sea soldier's lust for action everlasting, to say nothing of battle and carnage, crumbles under the first luff's words like a leaky hot-water bottle.

"I am to take it, then, sir, that me application for immediate service in France would not be put through if I sent it in in writing?" he asks, his pipes gone husky.

"I'm afraid that's the situation, Coburn," says the executive officer. "Other orders are already aboard for you. I may say that your way has been made easy," he goes on with his smile that warms a man. "It has been taken into consideration that, as first sergeant, you've been in charge of the marine guard on board the smaller cruisers for so long a time that you'd feel uneasy now with an officer of marines over you aboard ship. Well, there's an officer of marines coming aboard here to-morrow to take command of this ship's marine guard, the members of which are to go to France with him very soon. You are ordered ashore to the navy yard, where you'll render valuable service in drilling your share of these raw new marines for service abroad."

Tommy's shoulders has slumped forward without his being aware of it, and somehow he now looks his age, which he has never looked before by eight or ten years. Seeing this, the first luff, who is a human being first and an officer afterward, reaches out a big hand and gives Tommy a couple of pats on the back like you'd give your brother if he was feeling low in his mind.

"Sorry, old shipmate," says he. "Buck up. It might be worse. The next best thing to going to France is not going there," and he steps into his office cabin.

Tommy, no longer the drum major, slouches for'ard with his chin aground, and, this old sea soldier being a three-cruise matey of mine, I go looking for him. I find him below in the marines' deserted berth-deck locker alcove, squatting on a ditty-box and staring vacant at the toes of his shoes.

"Eyes front, Tommy, and forget it," says I. "Ye'd be a long time in a French trench before we'd find a ship's soft deck to cork off on."

"Ye heard him, then?" says he, his voice as hollow as if he's mumbling into an empty barrel.

"I heard him," says I, "and I never heard a man-o'-war officer speak decenter. So if ye don't abide by his words, it's yourself that's the loser."

"But—'old!'" he breaks out, hoarse. "Me too old for foreign service! Man, it's a divil's jest; it's grotesque—me too far gone in years to do me bit of wading in chilly trench water! Why, blast me teeth and eyes, do I *look* old, says you?"

"Well, Tommy," says I, "I've seen older ones smoking their pipes on the lawn of a Seamen's Snug Harbor. Ye're a bit haggard now, and your standing lights is sunk a little from disappointment. Like all inconsequent sea soldiers, ye've a way of taking small matters to heart like a pampered young one."

"'Small matters' me stepsister!" he rumbles at me. "D'ye call it a small

matter that I'm missing me whack altogether at this war? Here, all the time that I've been getting me five stripes, this big rumpus has been brewing and I've been biding me time, waiting for it like a dog on a string. The only fun I get so far out of me service is in the dozen and odd jitney fights here and there that I've had me chance at. But what is a little May Day picnic scrap with Boxers, where the best I get is a dent from a round bullet fired from a Chinee-made blunderbuss two hundred years old, or an afternoon's bayonet exercise with stampeding shrimps of saddle-colored monkey soldiers running away from ye in their bare feet over half of Nicaragua, to the all-hands-around, die-ye-divil rough stuff that's scarring up the world now? Tell me that, ye spineless flatfoot!"

I'm willing to let me old sea soldier matey rave and to be the goat for it, for the easing of his mind.

"Wheeze on, ye unfortunate pipe clayer," says I. "Ye're the only man in the navy, I suppose, to say nothing of this ship, that has a right to a grouch over missing his crack at the big game?"

"Well, ye've still got your chance, anyhow, Spud," says the old white-belter, blinking envious at me. "Ye'll be catching a destroyer now for a rap at the undersea hookers, or a battleship to wait for the day of the heavy-gun fight. But me own chance is gone. I'm told official that I'm a back number. I'm an old jack swab at the bottom of a pail. I'm set on the beach to give setting-up drill to a gang of sway-backed, round-shouldered, pop-eyed rube rookies that it'll take a year or more to teach the difference between a cathead and a poop deck, and all the time I'm doing it I'll have in me ears the hell-roaring chant of the men of me corps going over the top yonder there with Jack Pershing. If that's what ye call a small matter, ye clumsy deck hand, then I wish ye'd throw me a searchlight on a big one."

Just then the marine mail orderly, a rosy-cheeked gossoon with only one cruise in, comes down the berth-deck alley, with all of the men of the marine guard trailing after and hanging onto him. He's fresh from the skipper's cabin, where he has taken the mail he's brought off from the beach, and, on pretense of getting out the crew for'ard's mail, he has lingered around the cabin to rubber on the talk between the captain and the first luff. So he has the news from the skipper's cabin, which explains why his sea-soldier mates have followed him below, clinging to him.

"Rummies, where d'ye suppose we go from here?" the upstanding pup of a mail orderly bawls at the top of his lungs to the marines, who, waiting, don't even breathe.

Old Tommy, the sergeant, who already knows where he's going from there, still squats on his ditty-box, staring at the mail orderly's gleaming eyes and excited young face, while the silent, pawing bunch of sea soldiers wait for the big word. None of them answers the question. They're all too deep sunk in just waiting.

"To France with Pershing!" roars the mail orderly, with a voice like a pitchforked bull's.

There's a pause of just a second while they take a long breath and suck it in. Then——

"France—Pershing!" they howl all together, the eyes of them red and molten, the veins cording out on their foreheads, and the voices of them raging with murder and sudden death, as if they're breaking over the top at that very minute.

I sneak a look at their old, side-tracked top sergeant. Tommy's face is as wan and lined as a woman's at the mouth of a caved-in coal mine, but all the same his features is twitching with pride. He plucks me by the sleeve of me shirt, and I lean me ear down to him.

"They're *there,* ain't they?" says he with a clutch in his throat. "Ye see how I've trained me pack of whelps, don't ye? I've made them into as hot a gang of fighting blisters as ever went to sea, by blazes, even if I am a played-out old jack swab!"

The mail orderly, catching sight of his top sergeant, suddenly remembers something.

"Oh, I forgot," says he, standing before Tommy. "You're slated for the beach, sergeant. I hears the first luff say something to the skipper about your going to the yard. There's a lieutenant —he's one of them new officers that breaks in through the hawse pipe—coming aboard to-morrow to take over the guard. He's the man we go Over There with."

"Old news, me son," says Tommy, twisting his face into a grin that deceives nobody. "I heard all that from the first luff hours ago."

But the men of the guard has cocked up their ears over this word that their Old Man is to be left behind. He's liked and a little more than that, is Tommy. If ever a gunboat's outfit of sea soldiers is for their top sergeant from cracker hash to cutlasses, this gang is for Top Sergeant Coburn. A murmuring begins among them about how sorry they are that he's not to go along, and the corporal, speaking to Tommy, puts it into words.

"It would be a better landing party for us in France, Tom, if ye were to be along," says the corporal. "The whole mob, ye see, is as sorry as I am that ye're not going."

Tommy rises slow from his ditty-box and stretches his big arms above his head as yawny and indifferent as if his heart is not sliced through into two sections.

"Ye needn't be pitying me, ye poor fish," says the plucky old liar—which all of them, grinning, well know him to be—as he starts out of the alcove. "I've had me share of cold grub and chilblains," says he, blinking over his shoulder at them, "afloat and ashore since I shipped for this line of packets, and ye'll have your bellyful of them things yet. So don't none of ye be telling me how sorry ye are for me, barring ye wants your heads broke. All I asks of ye, when ye get over there," he winds up as he starts down the alley, "is to give 'em hell and repeat, just as ye would as if I was moving for'ard there alongside of ye—ye lucky pups!"

An hour later Tommy is summoned to the mast, where he gets his orders. He is to leave the ship at once, and at the end of a three-day beach liberty he is to report to the navy-yard commandant of marines for shore duty. Me own name is on the list for a whirl on the beach, and it happens that we go ashore in the same cutter with a load of liberty men late in the afternoon.

"If ye think ye can restrain for a few hours your deck-hand cravings for the depravity of the beach," says me old sea-soldier matey to me when we step ashore from the cutter, "come with me across the bridge and meet the missis again."

Seeing that I'm off the stuff, being unable to get it any more on account of me uniform, this is agreeable to me. I've met Mrs. Tommy two or three times before when on this side on former cruises, and I've a keen memory of a chicken potpie of her making that she has for supper the last time I sees her. Years before, to give her something to employ her mind and time while he's prowling the world on his long cruises, Tommy has set her up in business. It's a tidy little toy and lollipop shop up the street from the navy yard, where she has made and saved money and bought property with it against their old age. She's as fine and smiling a South of Ireland woman, with the black-fringed blue eyes of a mavourneen still shining with wonder out of her rosy, middle-aged face, as ye'd meet at a dozen Clonmel fairs on end, is Mrs. Sergeant Tommy, and it may be that I takes the same cutter with me sea-soldier matey on the chance that he'll ask me to go over the bridge for supper back of the lollipop shop.

Tommy himself, after these three years of never clapping an eye on her, has been on edge to see the missis from the hour the word is passed in San Francisco Bay that we're coming through the Ditch. But now, I notices, when we're on his home strip of beach and only half an hour's car ride away from her, the homeward-bound

pennant that he's been flying for weeks is sagging in the wind and the eagerness is all gone out of him.

"Ye're the lagging, sulky spouse for a home beach," says I to him as we make poor weather of it through the crazy, elbowing mobs that's always rushing nowheres as if they're bound for a fire in this Atlantic port of wild men, with Tommy never opening his face to let out a word of cheer.

"Ye'd lag a bit yourself, ye thick-necked belaying pin," he growls back at me, "if ye'd been told in so many words that ye were no better than an old grease brush only fit to be stowed in a bilge."

"Yes," says I, "them was the first luff's identical words. But it's remarkable how ye can memorize these things without ever missing a syllable."

"If he didn't put it in just them words," says me sea-soldier matey with the stone-bruised mind, "it's what he meant straight enough, good man that he is, which I'm never denying. But I'm too old a bird on this line of frigates, McGlone, to be blarneyed even by a square man aft that's only trying to let me down easy. He gave me me number, and I'm wearing it. But ye'll not be expecting me to kick up me heels over what I've heard about meself this day, I hope."

"Your heels don't show under the front of your cap," says I, "and that's where ye might be expected to show a set of chops that don't look like a Chinee war mask on the day when ye're about to see your missis for the first time in three years."

That one, I can see, lands in a soft spot, and Tommy gives a gulp.

"Well," says he, after he gets his breath, "that's just it. That's why I'm lagging, as ye name it. When ye've been married to a woman for near thirty years, and have bunked your way into her good opinion, ye've small stomach for the job of telling her that ye've been pronounced, official, a leading candidate for the basin of dismantled hulks. Here I am, after dreaming, such is the foolishness of me, that I might wind up me expeditionary service by doing me bit yonder under Jack Pershing—here I am, on me way to tell the woman that to all intents and purposes I've been beached. Ye'd never ask a man to have the gizzard to go waltzing to such a piece of work as that. The next thing," he goes on with a kind of a groan, "they'll be forcing me to retire, not because I'm not still up to me work, but on account of the number of service stripes I'm wearing on me arm. Then I suppose ye'll be expecting me to grin like Coogan's cat while I sit around me wife's lollipop shop, taking watch and watch with her serving out gumdrops to the tikes that teeters in with their pennies in their hands."

The picture of Top Sergeant T. Coburn doing anything like that wrings such a laugh out of me that a cop looks me over as if he's wondering where I got the stuff with me bluejacket's uniform on, and Tommy strings along with a heavy-hearted grin of his own.

He says nothing about grabbing a car that'll take us over the bridge to his wife's place, and so, giving him the right of convoy, I trudge along with him for a stroll through the town.

Far and near, anywhere ye look, is khaki. The boys with the canvas leggings and the puttees owns the streets. Tommy's eye is all for the set of their shoulders and the thrust of their chins, him being an expert in making stanchions of slouches. But the bitterness is still bubbling in him, especially when his old sea soldier's gaze falls on the springy, young, rosy-gilled officers that's just getting the feel of their shoulder straps.

"Some of them'll do in time," says he as we walk into a cigar store in the hotel section to get a smoke, "but the silly youngness and the self-conscious cockiness of these pups of new officers beats me. Ye'd think every man jack of them was a major general by the level who-the-divil-are-ye look he hands ye out of his eyes. Not," he picks himself up hasty, "that that ain't the kind of a look that an officer, young or old, ought to give ye and be damned to ye, but I'm thinking about how all this

youthful beauty and fashion will look in the trenches. The first luff tells me to-day that I'd be a misfit in the trenches by reason of the cold of them —me, that was on the *Thetis* in Alaska water when these babies was at the nipple. If I, with me years of seasoning on ships' deck frozen over with the ice of green seas, couldn't take me trick in the trenches alongside some of these here booby-raised, soft-hided young whelps with shoulder straps that looks as if they're posing for the movies somewhere down near Tampa, then I ——"

"Lay off that bilge chatter," I whispers in his ear. "There's one of them close behind ye getting a light, and a marine officer at that."

Tommy, whose back has been to the cigar counter, whirls and comes to attention with the force of a habit that's as strong as winking his eyes. The young lieutenant of marines straightens, from bending over the cigar lighter, at the same time. He's been listening as he lights his smoke to the ravings of this sergeant of his cloth, and there's a broad grin on his smooth-shaved cheeks. So they face each other, Tommy's face ironed out with the on-duty look, the younger man's smiling, for the salute. They're a picture to take the eye, this officer and man standing six paces apart, and the people in the hotel lobby stop in their tracks to look at them exchanging the greeting of the hand and cap peak. They're of a size, which means that they're six foot two, and the pair of them, man for'ard and man aft, are as trim-trunked, clean-legged men of their age in perfect condition—Tommy, of course, a little the heavier—as ye'll ever come upon in a corps that ain't hospitable to shrimps.

The lieutenant eyes the five service stripes on Tommy's sleeve with a thoughtful look, then steps over to him.

"What ship, sergeant?" he asks him in an easy tone.

"*Kankakee,* cruiser, third rate, sir; but I'm sent ashore to-day for yard duty," says Tommy, still at attention.

The lieutenant gives a little start of surprise.

"Oh, the *Kankakee,* eh?" says he. "You've been the making and the mainstay of a fine marine guard on board that ship, I'm told, Sergeant Coburn."

It's Tommy's turn to start at this mention of his name, but he's too old a timer to break his at-attention pose. His eyes tell how he's pleased and flattered all the same.

"It's the finest lot of well-disciplined fighting rascals I've seen in me quarter of a century with the corps, sir," says he, still standing stiff as a stanchion, but his sea-bronzed jowls reddening worse than ever with the pride that's in him. "They've orders for France, sir, with the detachment that goes with General Pershing's troops. They'll give an account of themselves under that command. It'll be the lucky officer that takes them Over There."

I can see a hot, eager flush passing over the young officer's face.

"Lucky, indeed, sergeant, you may well say," says he with his hand at the peak of his cap again for the parting salute. "That's why I've been congratulating myself ever since that piece of luck came my way. For," he adds over his shoulder as he turns to go, "I am going to take over your finely trained lot of men on board the *Kankakee* to-morrow, sergeant, and after that I am going to take them Over There," and he's gone through the swinging doors with his astonishing words still hanging in mid-air.

Tommy stares after him as if he's the Spook of Skibbereen.

"Well, can ye beat that for a world that's only the size of a gourd!" I hear him muttering to himself. Then he turns to me. "Did ye note the head-up, shoulders-back set of the whelp, and the general cut of his jib?" he asks me, his keen old eyes agleam. "He's one that'll stand by at the front of them when me rogues go over the top. Well," he goes on, "they can set me on the beach with me ditty-bag and box if they like, but, praise be, they've had to search for a man, and not a monkey, to take me place! And of course it's

just me lunk-headed leatherneck's luck," his voice falling mournful, "to have him overhear me shooting off me mouth about cub officers like any yammering sea lawyer astride of a scuttle butt!"

"Forget it," says I. "He'll soon find out, if he doesn't know already, how little sense is to be expected of a sea soldier for'ard." Then, me mind grappling with other matters, such as a cozy room to sit down in and maybe a home-fixed supper, I goes on: "Ye'll be taking in a few of the cabarets, I presume, and the fag end of a burlesque-show matinée and perhaps the tea dance at the Plaza, before ye goes over the bridge to leave your card and inquire about the health of the missis that, lucky for her, ain't seen hide nor hair of ye for three years?"

That starts him, and soon we're in a car bound over the river from our little Atlantic port for this squalid, thinly populated navy-yard town of two or three million people, where the missis waits in the lollipop shop for her wanderer.

In the car, Tommy, who's looking over the shoulder of the man alongside of him and reading the headlines of his newspaper, sudden turns on me a face that's once again drawn with trouble.

"I'm having me fill of coal heaver's luck at the end of this cruise," says he. "Now I see by the date of this newspaper," he goes on, "that to-day's me son's birthday. The missis dedicates that day to sitting in the back room with her apron over her head, crying her eyes out, ever since the boy runs away, fourteen years ago, at the age of fourteen, and that's how we'll find her."

"Ye'll be there to comfort her, then, says I, "provided ye don't stop to play marbles or spin a top when we leaves the car."

Years before, on a forgotten cruise, Tommy had let the word fall, in the course of a night smoke we had at the gangway, that he had a son. But he never mentioned the son again. I'd never seen any son on me few visits at the lollipop shop, so I took it that the boy was dead, and laid off asking questions.

"She'd be crying now, anyhow, about him being drafted, I suppose, if he was was with her," Tommy goes on, his face twitching. "Drafting, it's meself that hates to say it, is the only way this boy of mine, if he's alive, could be dragged into a uniform. He'd headpiece enough on him, but no spunk for the service. That's how he comes to run away from home. When he's fourteen I'm for having him take on in the corps as a windjammer, where he can either learn to be a bandsman or, when he's through his music 'prenticeship, reenlist in the line of the corps. But would he do this? The cub laughs in me face when I suggests it to him, which is as good as sneering at me own uniform. Then we have it out, and the independent young beach clinger packs up a bundle of his duds in the night, and that's the last that we ever sees or hears of him. There's been times when I've been low in me mind in me hammock of nights, that I've wished that I'd allowed the rogue, as much for his mother's sake as his own, to have his own way about taking on or not taking on with the corps. The missis has never got over his dropping out of the world as if an earthquake swallows him. But," he winds up with a sigh like the pompano wind off Montevideo, "it's of a piece with me bilge swabber's luck that, on the day when I'm chucked on the beach like a ship's dog with the mange, I'll go home to find the missis with her eyes streaming and never a word out of her till the flood has run dry."

"Ye don't know your luck to have a home to go to and a woman waiting for ye, crying or laughing, ye thankless drumfish," says I, and then we leaves the car close to the navy-yard gate.

Darkness has come on, and the lights shines in the windows, when Tommy and I reaches the door of the trig, neat-painted little lollipop shop, with the living quarters back of it. Tommy, shading his eyes with a hand to bar out the overhead lights, peers through the window to catch, if he can, a first

view of the missis sitting knitting behind her counter, as usual, waiting for the shavers of the neighborhood to come in for their candy and the like.

But she's not behind the counter. The shop is all lit up, but there's nobody in it.

"What did I tell ye?" says Tommy, husky-throated. "She's sitting at the back of the place, of course, wondering if that boy, after fourteen years, has learned to keep his feet dry and to change his underwear with the weather, and sobbing her shoulder blades loose."

So he pushes open the door. It's one of them doors with a bell at the top, and the bell clangs fit to wake the last sleeper. But nobody answers this call of a bell.

Tommy, his face gone gray, beckons me with a nod to follow after him. There's a curtain screening a doorway, with no door, at the back of the shop. Tommy pushes this curtain back, and the pair of us steps into a scene that ye'll wait a long time to see duplicated at the movies.

Tommy's wife stands in the middle of the room, under the light, hard held in the arms of a big bruiser of a man in uniform. She's crying all right—crying soft and enjoyably all over the front of the blouse of this man that's got her gripped around the waist and shoulders in the lumberjack clasp of his long arms.

Tommy takes in this picture with his head down like a ring bull setting himself to make for a matador. But them two lovers in the middle of the room don't even see him. They hear his snort, though, when he's ready to make his leap. The missis looks up sudden from where she's got her face snuggled in this uniformed man's breast, and sees her old wanderer. She gives a little scream of happiness, untangles herself from the man that's holding her, and reaches her old man at a bound.

"Tom," she sings out to him, throttling her sobs, "he's our Tommy come back!"

Then the lieutenant of marines turns his face to us, with the light falling on it.

"Hello, dad," says he, coming forward with his big hand outstretched. "Welcome home!"

Then I sees by the smile of him, if by nothing else, that he's the lieutenant of marines who's going aboard the *Kankakee* to-morrow to take command of a ship's guard trained by his father, an old-timer for'ard, and later to take them Over There.

It's no place for a clergyman's son, much less for Spud McGlone, bos'n's mate. I'm willing to lose me chance of a supper there on them terms, and I slip away.

A week or so later Tommy and his missis and meself are at a certain spot in that Atlantic port—never mind what spot—watching a great ship, the biggest steamer I've ever seen in me life, slipping down the stream for the open sea, the destroyers banked around her like terriers. It's the first troopship to go, loaded to the gun'ls with Pershing's mastiffs, army regulars, and sea soldiers. Snatches of music come from the ship—the lucky mob bawling "Over There" and "Where Do We Go From Here?" and the like. And once in a while there comes a deeper roar that ain't singing at all, but just a couple of words out of the tight throats of them hard-as-nails timber wolves:

"France—Pershing!"

When the stern of this great steamer disappears around the bend of an island, and the sounds from her has all died away, Tommy, who seems to have a bad cold in the head, judging by the way he's been blowing his nose, turns his gleamy gray eyes on me.

"Spud," says he to me quietlike, "ye remember me grouch the day I was beached?" and I hands him the yes nod, being a little hard put, for talking, around me own neckband. "Well," me old sea-soldier matey goes on, "forget it, ye old dishpan of a deck hand. I may have wanted to go then, but it's different now. Me whelps have got another Tom Coburn over them, and, by the glory of the Eternal, me son is me substitute with Jack Pershing!"

The Arbiters

By Henry C. Rowland

Author of "Over There," "The Rubber Man," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

Paul de Bernay, an American of French ancestry, has an experimental laboratory on an island in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. He invents a process of destroying explosives within a radius of many miles, the destruction being wrought by vibratory waves of ether which he easily controls. Soon after the Great War begins he disappears, and it is feared that German plotters have had something to do with the fact. John Mills, a philanthropic American of wealth, finances an agent, Peter Castle, to go in search of him. Castle meets Cécile Bell, De Bernay's fiancée, on board a transatlantic liner. She is on the way to Austria, to which the whereabouts of De Bernay have been traced, but where the trail has been lost. It is believed that Austrian officials have the inventor in their power, but he is not likely to divulge to them his secret, as his sympathies are pro-Ally, nor would he have used the invention for the Allied cause before he had discovered a way of neutralizing its effects in the event of its discovery and use by the enemy. Teutonic spies attempt the life of Castle on board the ship, but he and Miss Bell reach Paris in safety. There the fiancée receives a letter from an American opera singer in Austria, who is known to the public as Carina, which tells about "a wizard who could stop the war," but who is unfriendly to the officials.

(*A Four-Part Story—Part Two*)

CHAPTER VII.

THERE did not appear to be much chance of getting on De Bernay's trail in Paris, but I wanted to see Monsieur Delancray, believing that he was sufficiently patriotic to help me in my quest if it lay within his power, even though he may have cherished ambitions to produce De Bernay himself. So I went immediately to see him, and the visit amounted to something, after all, when I had taken him into my entire confidence—for I was convinced that even if unwilling to help he would not hinder me.

"The war broke the day of my arrival at Havre," said he, "and I naturally reported immediately to our intelligence department what I had seen on the island. This information was at first received with skepticism, but in October Professor Simon was sent to corroborate my statements, and when he arrived De Bernay had already left. Not long afterward he came over here, and I interviewed him myself, but with no result. He stated merely that he was not yet prepared to act; that he would not act until he had discovered a corrective force which would enable him to control that which he had already evolved. There was really nothing to do about it, and a few days later he left for Switzerland. There we no longer tried to keep track of him, realizing that his sympathies were entirely with the Allies, but that he could not possibly be coerced into striking until he desired."

"Why do you think he went to Switzerland?" I asked.

"This is my theory," Delancray answered, "and you will see that it has some justification: I think that he desired to stop the war with as little sacrifice of human life as possible and that his idea was to strike a crippling blow at Germany by depriving her of the support of Austria-Hungary. He knew that this country had been dragged unwillingly into such a conflict as this, and he hoped to induce her to retire by a demonstration of his power.

To do this he installed his apparatus somewhere in Switzerland near the Austrian frontier, and invited certain Austrian savants to a demonstration. Now I will tell you something which is not known to the public." Monsieur Delancray leaned forward and laid his finger beside his nose. "Just about the time that he might have been doing this three small munition depots near Innsbruck, Bosen, and Trent were blown up on the same day.

"Now suppose that De Bernay had been operating up in some remote recess of the mountains not far from St. Moritz? These three places which I have mentioned"—he rose, and, picking up a pointer, stepped to a European travel map on the wall—"you see—here and here and here—and De Bernay, let us say, about here. That puts them in nearly the same radius. The chances are that he did not intend to blow them up, did not know of their existence, but underestimated the range of his vibrators at that elevation and through that rare atmosphere, which one might naturally expect to offer less resistance than that at sea level. At any rate," the editor chuckled, "there was nothing the matter with the demonstration. *Sapristi,* but they must have sat up and taken notice, as you say in the States! But," he grew suddenly grave, "do you know what I am afraid of? You can easily guess after your own recent experience."

"That he has been assassinated?" I asked.

"Either that or abducted—carried off to some remote fortress, where, if he will not do them any good he can at least do them no harm. I do not believe that he has been killed. One does not throw a great treasure into the sea for fear that somebody else may get it. One hides it or locks it up securely in the hope of being able to profit by it some way or other at a future date. It must have been immediately obvious to them that no power on earth could induce De Bernay to employ his discovery for the benefit of Germanic supremacy."

To this I answered that I could not imagine a man of De Bernay's intelligence not taking due measures to assure his safety. Delancray shrugged. "Ah, these scientists! They get oblivious to everything else in their work. Perhaps we should have kept closer watch of him. But what were we to do? We could not retain him by force. We are not Germans in our methods, and besides we were convinced of his sympathy and friendship to our cause, which is indeed America's cause and humanity's cause. It seemed better to let him work out the salvation of us all in his own way. At his own request we did not even commend him to the watchful protection of the Swiss government. It is probable that he had friends at Bern who put themselves at his disposition in helping him to carry on his investigations. But if he was, as I think, in the Engadine, he was in a dangerous locality, as there are many German sympathizers there."

I then told Monsieur Delancray of the significant passages in Carina's letters to Cécile, and he groaned, then sprang to his feet.

"That settles it!" he cried. "He has been kidnaped and carried into Austria, where he is locked up in some fortress. *Quel malheur!* But I do not believe that he went to Vienna. Surely he would not have ventured to put his head in the lion's mouth like that. It is more likely that he bought a ticket for Vienna and left the train at night before reaching the Austrian frontier. I wonder who this Count X—— can be? When you discover that you will be considerably advanced in your search. But at the best, even if you were to find De Bernay, I do not believe that you could influence him one iota.

"Do you know, I have a peculiar feeling about that man? As though he were rather more than human; something above mere mortal clay like the rest of us. It was difficult for me to argue with him. I felt embarrassed, confused, importunate—as though I were trying to advise *le bon Dieu* how to regulate his affairs—and *ma foi,* I have sometimes felt like it! But in presence of De Bernay I seemed to

lose my assurance, and I am a hardened old journalist who would not balk at writing up an 'at home' in hell—and perhaps I may some day——"

There was nothing more to be got out of Delancray, beyond his kind and fervent assurance of all the assistance that warm friendship, backed by a leading newspaper could give, so I left him presently and walked back down the boulevard to a certain so-called "American bar" near the Grand Hotel. Although not yet four o'clock, I found a fair sprinkling of North, South, and German Americans, two or three Englishmen, and my old friend, Ord Stillman, who appeared to be the center of interest and was expatiating belligerently on America's duty to the world in the present crisis. Any hour of the day or night was Ord's *heure d'apéritif*, and, catching sight of me as I entered, he cut short his harangue, gulped down his whisky and water, and, leading me to a corner table, ordered two more.

I have heard it asked why such bars as this have been permitted to carry on during the war, and can answer that query with no difficulty. They are bureaus of gratuitous information, and a secret-service agent may hear at the social hours a great deal of spirituous gossip, some of which is true. They are places where the astute observer has a chance to discriminate between the garrulous, half-drunken fool and the spy of different dimensions, from him who practices petty espionage as a side line to odd jobs of rummy graft, to the more serious searcher for truth. They are sifting pans run by the combustion of alcohol, and no doubt save the police a certain amount of trouble and expense. A German spy would not be apt to get any information in one of these bars unless from some man just back from the front, and if such an individual is fool enough to get drunk and talk, the sooner his failing is known to the authorities the better.

There was nothing dangerous about Ord Stillman's garrulity, however, and he must have been getting a little tired of it himself, because he seemed to welcome the opportunity to choke it off and sit down with me for a quiet little talk. Ord was a rich American idler who preferred Europe to America as a playground because in America most of his friends worked between drinks. He asked about my doings, and without waiting for an answer proceeded to describe his own.

Any war work? Yes, he had driven an ambulance for three months, then got full of rheumatism and had to quit and go to Vichy for a cure. To recuperate from the cure he had run up to St. Moritz, and, feeling quite fit again, had decided to dash over to Vienna to see his sister, who was married to a Count von Thörl and lived there. Were her sympathies pro-German? Not very, and then only in Austria. Had to throw a bluff in Vienna, of course, and spent most of her time making "abominable belts" to keep the tummies of the Austrian soldiers warm as they cavorted around the mountain peaks waiting for the Italian Alpini. If America got into the war it wouldn't take her long to show 'em. Met an American prima donna at his sister's, and went to hear her several times at the opera. Carina, she called herself; real name Priscilla Cary, of Boston, Massachusetts. Bully looker and a good pal, but nothing wonderful as to voice according to his judgment. Still, she managed to get it across, which was no doubt partly because she had a good Austrian accent, which counted for a lot, and a good Austrian friend, which counted for more. Count Michel von Schütt—good name for an officer, what? Met him, too. Used to see him at Nice before the war. Great sportsman and horse fancier. Mother was Hungarian, and he inherited from her a big, old, half-ruined castle on the Danube not far from Pressburg, or rather on a tributary of the Danube that flowed into it there. Motored down from Vienna to see it one day with Carina. Guess she could have the job of chatelaine if she wanted it, and she might have taken it if it hadn't been for the war and if Von Schütt's senior male relatives would have let

him marry her, which they wouldn't. They have that law in Austria, ye know; man's father and brothers can get together and put the kibosh on his marryin' a woman without his rank.

Here indeed was some valuable information offered on the free-lunch counter, as one might say. I ordered more whisky and encouraged Ord to talk, telling him that Carina was an intimate friend of a friend of mine. What sort of a man was Von Schütt? Oh, an awfully decent chap to meet, but, like all that outfit with a strain of Hungarian noble blood, he no doubt had a wild streak in him. You know what those Magyars are; get stuck on a girl and deed her over the ancestral castle for her favors, then hang themselves from the ramparts the next morning. Not that Von Schütt was giving away any castles, though. Didn't seem to care much about having any one visit it. Ashamed of its half-ruined condition maybe.

Needless to say, I questioned him closely about the castle without appearing to do so, though, knowing me to be an architect, he would have thought nothing of my interest.

"Oh, looks like any other of those old heaps you see going down the Danube from Vienna to Pest. No architectural beauty to it like the historic monuments of France and England and on the Rhine. Can't tell which is castle and which is rock from a little distance. Just a big square stone box with a smaller square stone box stuck up in the middle or on one end of it. Only good for defense, and no good for that nowadays. One might as well think of living in Cheops. No, there wasn't any difficulty about motoring around. They liked Americans in Austria-Hungary, especially in Hungary. Ought to, by gad, with so many thousands of the beggars gettin' fat in America and shipping money home. Austria didn't believe that America would get in the war, anyhow." And suddenly remembering his indignation of half an hour before, he launched off on this topic again. But it did not matter, as we were interrupted a moment later by a mutual acquaintance.

I left the place soon afterward, feeling that my day had not been wasted. There was, however, nothing surprising to me either in what I had learned or my way of learning it. Delancray had kept as close watch on De Bernay's movements and their possible results as was possible for the managing editor of one of the most important European newspapers, which is saying a good deal. He had been anxiously awaiting to hear of just such simultaneous explosions as those minor ones near Innsbruck, Bosen, and Trent, and was in a position to associate the cause with the effect. He had told me that it had been decided to keep all reference to De Bernay and his discovery out of the press for fear of raising false hopes which might be detrimental to the vigor with which the war was being waged, as well as to shield the inventor from danger and interference whether friendly or hostile.

Neither was what I had learned from Ord Stillman in any way wonderful. I knew that he had a sister married to an Austrian count and living in Vienna. In fact, I had a number of women friends and acquaintances married to Austrians, and it would not have been difficult to find out a good deal about so prominent a man as Count von Schütt, whose name Carina had probably kept out of her letters owing to the censor.

But what might be really called a coincidence was shortly to occur. Cécile was stopping at a quiet but excellent hotel just off the Étoile on the Avenue MacMahon, which, oddly enough, bore her name—the Hotel Cécilia. She had agreed to dine with me at the Café de Paris that night, and when I called for her the door of my taxi was opened by a boy in livery whose face as he ushered me in struck me immediately as being familiar. As I was constantly running into *garçons d'hôtel* by whom I had been served variously elsewhere, I thought nothing of it. But when I had brought Cécile back to the hotel after dinner, and was pre-

paring to leave, the boy spoke to me as I was about to risk my life going back down the Champs Elysées and across the lightless Place de la Concorde in a dilapidated taxi driven by a vinous, deaf-blind octogenarian who knew as little about Paris as he did about a motor car.

"Monsieur does not remember me?" he asked in halting French, with a foreign accent. I answered that I remembered his face, but not where I had seen him before.

"In Canada, monsieur," he answered. "I am the servant of Monsieur de Bernay."

I hauled him under the glare of the gas street lamp with its aëroplane shield.

"You are?" I said. "Yes, I remember you now. You were there when we went ashore from the yacht. What are you doing here, and where is Monsieur de Bernay?"

"I do not know, monsieur," he answered, "but I am afraid that the Austrians have taken him. We came here the second month of the war, but remained only three days; then went to Switzerland—first to Bern, where we remained a week, then to a châlet which had been a cheese farm, high up in the mountains. There were only the master and the Chinaman and myself. The master had brought with him some of his apparatus, and bought more in Bern. The Swiss provided men to help us set it up, making a laboratory of the cow barns and buildings where the cheese had been made. The master had a dynamo, which was run by a swift stream. The place was guarded by soldiers, but they did not come very near the buildings, and they were always very polite. It was not long before the master had installed a plant similar to that on the island.

"Then one day when we had been there about three months there came some gentlemen in a big motor car, six of them in all. The master showed them how he could make explosions at a distance. They went away, but two weeks later returned again, bringing with them some powder of their own. This did not at first explode, but the master increased the force until we all felt very sick, even Li and myself, who were used to it. Two of the visitors fainted. The master had first warned the soldiers to lay aside their ammunition, but one of them remained too near his cartridge belt and was slightly wounded in several places when it exploded.

"After that they went into the living châlet and talked for a long time. It was plain to me that these men were officers, although they were in civilian clothes. Now I am sure they must have been Austrians."

I interrupted at this point to ask if he remembered hearing the names of any of them, but he did not. Had not heard them, in fact.

"They were very polite," he continued, "but when they went away they did not seem to be pleased. This last visit was in September; eight months ago. Two weeks later the master broke up our establishment. Some of the beautiful apparatus was destroyed, the chemicals were carted out and dumped over the edge of the cliff, and a Swiss who was the proprietor of a big hotel came and bought the turbine and dynamo and wiring and carted them away. There was nothing left at all when we had finished. The place was stripped bare like the island. The soldiers departed, and we went to Tarasp, or rather to Schulz, where we put up at the little auberge.

"Did Monsieur de Bernay have any visitors there?" I asked.

"Not for two weeks. Then there came two gentlemen to see him. One had come with the others the last time."

"What did they look like?" I interrupted.

"The one who had come before was short and thick, with a red face and a blond mustache brushed up like that in the portraits of the German kaiser. The other was a tall, slender man with dark hair and very black eyebrows. His eyes were greenish-gray and his nose long and slightly hooked. But he was a handsome man, and carried himself like a great noble. His skin was very

fine, but tanned. He looked like an American gentleman sportsman. These two stopped at the Waldhaus up at Vulpera. They talked a long time with the master, and when they had gone the master called in Li and me. 'I am going to Vienna,' he said, 'and expect to return in about two weeks. If, however, I should not return in a month's time you are to go to Paris and wait for me there.' He then gave us money for our wages and living for two months and an order on his bank at Paris to pay us our wages every month. The next day he took the train for Vienna, and that is the last we have heard from him. This was, as I have said, eight months ago."

"How long have you been here?" I asked.

"For about two months at this hotel. When the master did not return we came to Paris, where Li found a position as cook in an American family and I as *garçon d'hôtel* in the Hotel de Russe. Do you know anything about the master, monsieur?" The boy's voice trembled, and I saw his eyes fill with tears.

"No," I answered. "What is your name?"

"Nikolai Androvitch, monsieur. The master brought me with him from Russia."

I questioned Nikolai a little further, but there was nothing more to be learned from him, so I went back to my hotel. The next day I called on Delancray to tell him what I had learned from both Ord Stillman and De Bernay's valet. He looked very grave, and sat for a moment tugging at his mustache.

"*Sapristi!*" he exclaimed suddenly. "It is as I had feared. They have got him."

"It all seems to point that way," I answered. "Have you ever seen this Count von Schütt?"

"Many times," he answered. "Both here in Paris and at Trouville and Tremblay. He was a keen racing man and raised both running and trotting horses, which he brought to race at these two places. There is no question but that he was the tall man the boy described as having come the last time to see De Bernay. But how our friend could have been so foolish as to walk into their *guet-apens* is more than I can understand."

"They probably convinced him of their good faith, and promised him safe-conduct," I answered. "Very likely they expressed themselves as thoroughly prepared to testify on the demonstrations which he had given them, but persuaded him that before peace negotiations could be commenced it would be necessary for him to interview some high personage who could not come to him; the Emperor of Austria, perhaps, or even Wilhelm himself. De Bernay may have trusted to their good faith or felt that the great ends to be gained fully justified the risk. No doubt he felt that there *was* a certain amount of risk or he would not have given his two servants the orders he did."

Delancray nodded. "Perhaps you are right," he growled. "Oh, the pigs! He may have reasoned it this way: 'Unless I comply with their demands there is nothing to do until I complete my discovery by finding its controlling force. That may take months or years, and in the meantime the world will be deluged in blood and anguish. These appear to be honorable men, though partisans of a mistaken cause. It is my duty to humanity to assume this risk.'" Delancray smote his desk. "Do you know what I believe, Monsieur Castle? I believe that De Bernay is at this moment shut up in that castle your friend told you about, and that this Von Schütt is his custodian. It is possible that the Austrians really intended to keep their faith, but that pressure which they could not resist was brought to bear upon them by the *sacré Prussiens.*"

"You have expressed my opinion," I said. "The question now is: What are we going to do about it? Without actual proof our ambassador at Vienna could scarcely order a search of the castle."

"And even if he did," Delancray in-

terrupted, "they would find time to drop him into an oubliette or strangle him or something of the sort. One thing is certain, and that is that you will find no trace of him by pursuing your inquiries inside the Austrian frontier. The mere mention of De Bernay's name would probably result in your immediate and final disappearance."

We talked a little longer, when I left him and strolled out into the warm spring sunshine with the feeling that I had better make the most of it, as the chances were very much against my being able to enjoy its atmosphere a great deal longer. For during the last half hour a partly formed resolution had crystallized, and I must admit that the chill of the reaction congealed me about the feet.

From this point on I had decided to play my part alone. Access to Paul de Bernay was nothing which could be accomplished through any governmental diplomatic agency. All knowledge of him would be denied by the Austrian authorities, and any effort to locate him easily frustrated. I did not believe that actual proof of his place of incarceration, such as my word, backed by his own written statement, would prove of any avail. There was too much at stake; his potentialities, if free, too appallingly tremendous. This man at liberty would have the immediate world destiny in the hollow of his hand. He could decide the fate of great powers as he willed. A declaration of war by America would be a triviality compared to what De Bernay could do. Great Krupp guns and submarines and superdreadnaughts and air craft were futile toys beside the outrageous puissance of his unformidable-looking vibrators.

And to think that this Jupiter Tonans, gripping a sheaf of such thunderbolts as no human power had ever previously evolved, should be cooped up in a tumble-down castle on the Danube and guarded by an Austrian bandit whose elevating occupation up to this time had been loafing about race tracks and squandering his substance on trying to breed horses which could run a few furlongs a second or two faster than other horses. The idea was maddening, and perhaps it did make me a little crazy as I turned it in my mind, as otherwise I could scarcely have considered the undertaking to get De Bernay out of his shameful durance alone and unassisted. Yet that is precisely what I now purposed to attempt.

It is always a tremendous stride ahead for one to determine what he is going to try to do. I was now faced by the equally important problem of how I intended to go about it, and of this I had not the slightest idea in the world. Whatever it might be, however, I decided to tackle the business entirely alone and without recourse even to the many documents with which John had furnished me. It occurred to my mind that I might have need at any moment to play some different rôle, such as that of artist or idler or courier or valet de chambre or chauffeur—it was impossible to say what, and that if subjected to a search my letters and other papers might be of more harm than good to me. So I decided to take a safe-deposit box at the bank and to leave therein everything except my passport and enough money to see me through. As there seemed no longer any reason for lingering in Paris, I determined to leave for Switzerland the following night.

One thing was certain. Cécile must be persuaded to give up all idea of going to Vienna. Aside from the danger to herself, her presence might ruin everything. The agents aboard the ship had ceased to count as factors in the problem from the moment of their capture, and as they had not seen us together until after the steamer had sailed, there was no danger of the authorities being on the lookout for me, wireless dispatches not having been accepted *en voyage*. But it was possible that they might have been warned of Cécile's proposed visit to Vienna and of her previous relations with De Bernay, and we had already received proof of what they had in store for anybody supposed to be interesting themselves in what had happened to De Bernay.

I had an appointment to walk with

Cécile on the Avenue du Bois at eleven, and as it was now almost that time I jumped into a taxi and went up to her hotel. While waiting I saw Nicolai, and called him over to where I was sitting.

"I should like to talk to Li," said I. "Can you send him to me at my hotel? Let him bring a parcel or something, as if executing a commission."

"That can be easily arranged, monsieur," said Nikolai.

"Then have him come at about half past four to the Crillon and ask for Monsieur Castle," I said, and wrote down the name and address.

A few minutes later Cécile appeared, and we went out. It was then the first week in May and very warm. When we had strolled a little way I told her of my decision, and explained how inadvisable it would be for her to think of going to Vienna just then. She listened without interruption, but, seeing the noncommittal expression of her face, I said finally:

"I have not the least idea in the world as to how I may go about the business. It is possible that I may see fit to pass myself off as anything from a millionaire idler to an impoverished artist. A cable to John would make the former credible and a color box the latter, as I do paint a little, as every architect should. But I am going to have a look at that old pile of Von Schütt's at very close range and from every possible angle, and I may even find some way of getting inside it. The more I study over the business, the more I become sure that De Bernay is confined there."

I had already told her of what I had learned from Ord Stillman and Delancray, and now I delivered a raking shot in telling her about Nikolai. This last information took her breath away, and we sat down on one of the benches until she had heard all that I had to say. "So you can't help but see," I concluded, "how greatly your going to Vienna might increase the difficulty and danger of my task. You have told me that Carina knew about the attachment between De Bernay and yourself, so that if Von Schütt has ever asked her if she knew De Bernay her answer may easily have been: 'No, but my friend, Cécile Bell,' et cetera. You may be sure that he would have taken pains to learn all that she could tell him. The mere fact of your being in Vienna might lead them to take extra precautions in guarding him for fear that you might have some inkling of his whereabouts."

Cécile could not help but agree to this reasoning, and I finally left her much relieved in my mind. We did not stay out very long, as I think she was in a hurry to get back and talk to Nikolai.

Li Cheng, De Bernay's Chinese, reported at my hotel at the hour I had fixed, and I saw at first glance that the man was no ordinary coolie, but an individual of more caste and intelligence. In his broken English he informed me that he was a Manchu and had been for many years a soldier, a trooper in the Chinese Tartar cavalry. He had bolted after the fall of Peking and worked his way down to Hang Kow, and afterward to Hongkong, where he had got a position as groom with an English officer who had a string of polo ponies. Later he had gone to England in the service of the same master, and thence to Canada. De Bernay had got him at St. John's, Newfoundland, and he had been with the inventor for five years.

"I hope stay along marster 'til I die," Li declared. "He no man. He all samee miss'nally God A'mighty. He no dlink, no smoke, no talk bad, no chasee gals, no mind if he no eat an' sleep none 'tall heap many days. Marster he talk in clouds, unne (under) water, allee same him. He makee thunde' shakee men's bones. Blow up powde'—pouff! Dutchman catchee him one day. They flaid—I know."

"How do you know?" I asked.

"I guess. They allee same flaid he blow 'em topside longside allee same powde'. They come see. I watch 'em long him—look thloo clack. They mighty mad. S'ppose one fella Dutchman tly catch him me close by—I lip

um belly open." He made a ferocious sweeping gesture with his brown fist.

"I'm afraid you're right, Li," I said. "They set a trap for him and he walked into it. I think I know where he is."

Li's beady eyes glittered. "S'ppose you take me long you, sar," said he. "Me speak 'im German pletty good. Me help."

I looked at him thoughtfully. Here was an aid who might possibly prove of value. There was no question of his devotion. His fierce face fairly exuded it. The Manchu was past middle age, and did not look like a Chinaman. He was swarthy rather than yellow, bald over his crown, with a short, bristling mustache which suggested the face mask of Japanese armor, and his eyes were set at scarcely the hint of a slant. In fact, he rather resembled a northeastern Magyar. He had the same low forehead, high cheek bones, and a short nose which was slightly hooked, but with spread nostrils. In build he was small, lean, and wiry, and his legs were slightly bowed. He could not have weighed over one hundred and twenty pounds.

Now, as I looked at him, it struck me that for such an errand as mine this intelligent and experienced Tartar soldier might be no mean ally. One could see at a glance that such a man would be astute, resourceful, and utterly indifferent to danger. As my servant and properly dressed he would not be conspicuous, especially being such a small man.

"Listen, Li," said I. "There is no doubt but that the Austrians have got your master locked up. I do not believe that they have killed him, but it is possible that they may do so if he refuses to obey them and they find that they cannot win this war without his help. Now I think that I know where he is, and I am going to try to get to him. It is very possible that I may not come back alive, and that if I take you with me *you* may not come back alive."

Li nodded. "Allee same me, sar," he answered in his guttural voice. "Li die longside the marster mos' any time." He grinned. "Kill um plenty Austlians first."

"Are your papers in order?" I asked.

"Yes, sar. Me got um Chinese pape'. Marster he fix um. S'ppose you say: 'This boy he my se'vant, got um Chinese passport.' They look say: 'All lite; he jus' dam' Chinaman no 'count.'"

"Very well," I answered. "If you really want to risk getting yourself killed to help your master come here to the hotel to-morrow morning at nine and we will go to the Swiss consul's. I shall pay you double what Mr. de Bernay paid you for the danger of the service."

When Li had gone I laid aside my passport, which I had carried in my pocket since leaving the ship, and proceeded to bale up all of my other papers and letters in a package which I decided to leave with Delancray. In Paris I had not applied at the commissariat for a *permit de séjour*, having planned to remain not longer than the three days allowed the *voyageur de passage*.

Cécile and I dined together again that night, and when later I said good night at the door of her hotel I said: "I am not sure that I am altogether wise to take Li Cheng with me. If ever that Tartar gets within reach of his master any loose Austrians standing between are apt to feel the point of his knife. I don't believe the old heathen knows what fear is."

"No more do you," Cécile answered softly, and slipped inside.

CHAPTER VIII.

We left Paris the next night, and arrived at Bern without incident. This was just before the law required the traveler to announce his departure, business, and destination a week in advance, and a friend in the American embassy facilitated my departure.

In Bern we remained three days, for I was anxious to discover any official news of De Bernay, if this were possible. All that I could elicit, however, was that he had been given permission to make some experiments of a scien-

tific character in the Upper Engadine and that the Swiss government had assisted him in the matter of transportation, workmen, and an armed guard, his investigations being of a character which might prove of military value. No word was said of his visitors, nor was the military character of his work further specified. For reasons known to himself, he did not remain long in the locality, but removed his sphere of activities to parts unknown.

There being apparently nothing more to learn from the cautious Swiss, who seemed, I thought, rather relieved to be rid of me, we continued our journey and reached Vienna unchallenged except by the existing formalities. It was a good many years since I had been in this city, but I remembered it fairly well, and particularly a certain modest and comfortable little inn down by the Danau Canal. I had stopped there once when on a bicycling tour in my school days and found it most excellent. So thither we went and were most hospitably received, the landlord apparently rather pleased than otherwise to entertain an American gentleman and his Oriental valet. He sighed as he told me of the Americans who had formerly stopped there, wondered if he could ever hope to have them again, and delivered himself on the topic of the war in a manner to have got him arrested if overheard.

And here, the following morning, I made a most astounding and startling discovery; not about De Bernay, but about myself. This was the fact that I had traveled from Bordeaux to Vienna via Paris and Bern on the passport supposed to have been stolen from Mr. Lemuel Fraser, of Bowling Green, Kentucky, and that this document, now rather worn and much viséed, was the only one I had in my possession by which to establish an identity.

Li, who was unpacking some of my things, happened to look up, and saw me staring in blank dismay at the parchment in my hand. He asked what was the matter. As soon as I was able to speak I told him as best I could. He grunted.

"Nev' you mind, sar," said he. "That all humbug, anyhow. What you care? My pape' long me I take off dead Chinese stable lad Hongkong. I use 'em long time."

As soon as I could get my wits together I began to understand how it had come about. The night that I had changed rooms with Fraser aboard the ship I had taken a lot of loose, unimportant papers, letters to be answered and the like, which I had thrown carelessly into the drawer of a locker and thrown them as carelessly into the corresponding drawer of my new room. This had been swelled from the dampness and open only a few inches, and I had not noticed the fact that his passport had been left in it, he having forgot it when he moved. Then, on arriving at Bordeaux, I had taken out the letters and thrown them on the bunk, and I remember being rather surprised to find my passport, which I had thought to have put in my portfolio among them. I had slipped it into my pocket, and it was this which I had been using ever since, no official who had handled it having noticed any discrepancy between the photograph of myself which it bore, first because, as I have already mentioned, Fraser and myself much resembled each other, and second because passport photographs never look like the orginal, anyhow. I have three such now in my possession, and they would pass for the portraits of a father, son, and distant relative.

Well, here was a pretty mess. I immediately overhauled my pocketbooks, but with no result. My own passport, quite innocent of any European visé, was safely reposing in the portfolio which I had left with my many credentials in the hands of Monsieur Delancray.

With a prickling sensation I examined the spurious thing. The photograph might easily pass for myself, with its regular features and dark, heavy eyebrows, which were the dominating trait. Bathed in a cold perspiration, I read the description: Age, 32; stature, 5 ft. 11 inches Eng.; forehead, wide; eyes, gray; nose, straight; mouth,

wide; chin, square; hair, dark brown; complexion, dark; face, normal." And Fraser's schoolboy signature beneath! In the upper right-hand corner was inscribed:

The person to whom this passport is issued has declared under oath that he desires it for use in visiting the countries hereinafter named for the following objects: France, Switzerland, Italy, Austria. To pursue his business of buying and selling horses.

"Good Lord!" I groaned, my first thought being how under the sun I was going to work to rectify an error so grave at such a time. Prison doors seemed to yawn before me. Then, realizing that I had got along all right so far, and that Fraser would be in hospital at least another three weeks, and might even then decide to conduct his business through his agent, I began to breathe more freely again. But I could not cable, could not get any money, and might at any time be recognized by somebody who knew Fraser, whose name I must henceforth use. Fortunately I had not yet had occasion to sign my own.

Making sure that there was no danger of being overheard, I explained the situation in detail to Li Cheng, and the old Tartar's eyes glittered at my account of the spy business on the ship and how they had been caught. But he seemed to consider the whole occurrence as rather a bit of luck than otherwise.

"That look mighty good long o' me," said he. "You say this man count Dutchman likee horses heap. You say Fraze' got stling horses comin' long here on transport. What matte' you go long this fella count Dutchman you say: 'Look here, sar, I got plenty horses comin' bimeby; maybe you like buy some allee same race horse.' You say: 'I my blothe' he sick no can do so I come long you.' He say: 'S'ppose you come allee same longside castle b'long me you bling horses so can see.' You say: 'Can do, sar, Mist' Count.' Plitty soon you go long castle, look all 'lound. You take me long you. You say: 'This my racin' jock I bling tly 'em horses see all lite.' Me know horses same you know club. Me lide plenty pony laces long Happy Valley, Hongkong. Me blake plenty horses long officers' ladies. That good stoly go hop."

I stared at the old rascal with admiration and awe. Why not, now that I was in for it? Count von Schütt was a racing man who had devoted most of his time and money to the turf before the war. Very likely he knew Fraser personally, in which case I could easily pose for his brother. As I began to grasp the idea it seemed as though the accident were almost providential—a trick of fate in my favor. I decided not to linger at all in Vienna, but go immediately to Pressburg and thence visit the castle boldly and ask to see the count.

This plan we put into immediate execution to the lamentation of our host. But I could not afford to linger, both owing to the possibility of Fraser's appearing unexpectedly and because I had only about the equivalent of five hundred dollars in Swiss and Austrian money. So we proceeded to Pressburg the next morning and put up at the hotel near the landing. Fraser had told me that for several seasons he had raced horses on the Pressburg track, which is an important one, so I was prepared to meet with recognition.

Our host at the hotel, a fat and placid old chap, was the first to welcome me as an old acquaintance. "Of course, of course," said he, glancing at the slip which I had filled out in accordance with police regulations. "I knew that you had been here before." I interrupted him to say that it was my first visit, but that he no doubt remembered my brother. "Ach, yes," he answered; "you are stouter and older, but you are much alike. And now I suppose you are bringing horses to win us iron crosses instead of medals." He twisted his mouth with an expression of distaste. I began to perceive that in this part of Austria, at least, the war was not popular. As a matter of fact, I was now in Hungary, of which Pozsony or Pressburg was the ancient capital, and I was yet to discover right

there plenty of folk who had no love at all for the Germans and very little for the Austrians themselves.

Dolnje-Tor, as Schütt's castle was called, could not be seen from Pressburg, being, as I had learned from Ord, on the other side of the Danube, and built upon a sort of rocky butte which rose in the middle of a large plain, which was partly flooded and became a morass when the river was in flood. The country about Pressburg is level or slightly rolling with hills in the distance and given over to grazing and pastoral pursuits. One would have thought it the last place to sell horses brought all the way from America, but as a matter of fact the best market for a commodity is often where that very thing exists in greatest amount. Vienna has always boasted the best cab horses of any big city in the world, and anybody who has driven behind these trim, fleet, long-haired, long-tailed trotters that so much resemble our own Vermont stock must admit the truth of this. Yet Fraser had told me that he never failed to get good prices for his wares in that city, the reason probably being that the Austrians and Hungarians have always been born lovers of horseflesh.

I was soon to learn that my supposed brother had been a very popular visitor to Pressburg as the news of my arrival quickly got about, and several of his acquaintances dropped in to pay their respects, one of them being a Hungarian who had worked upon the stock farm of a trade rival in Westchester County, New York. All were intensely interested to know how America felt about the war and what action she might be expected to take. This, it must be remembered, was only the ninth month of the conflict when we still retained a certain amount of confidence in German pledges and the belief that she would certainly make every effort to keep us from taking up the cause of the Allies.

One old chap with large, horn-rimmed spectacles and a white beard, who told me that he was the leading veterinary surgeon of the place, did not hesitate to express himself with a force and fluency which impressed me as most indiscreet, to say the least. "Ach," said he, "such a foolish business! Why should we have let ourselves be led into such a silly trap? Anybody with sense might have known that England would fight in spite of the assurances of that fool of a German ambassador." And a good deal more in the same strain. Needless to say, I was reticent in the face of these confidences, not knowing but what their purport might be to draw me out. They were also curious about Li, but appeared satisfied with my statement that he had been a celebrated jockey and was my best horse breaker.

All of this was very well and good, but I quite realized that any slightest slip of mine might arouse suspicion, which, if once awakened, might easily lead to my ruin, so as soon as could be managed I hired a horse and light, two-wheeled cart, and, taking Li, crossed the river on the cable ferryboat and took the road which led to Dolnje-Tor. Skirting a bit of woods, we soon came in sight of the ancient, semiruined castle which rose from a sort of spur of rock which put out from the higher ground on the other side and was surrounded on three sides by an open marsh, now flooded by a sheet of water which must have been three or four feet deep. One could easily see why the site had been chosen for a stronghold, being, as it was, practically impregnable from assault except at the end of a very dry summer.

Coming on what seemed to be an unused lane leading through a grove of willows which skirted the edge of the marsh opposite the castle, we drove in and made our way to a point on the rim of the morass directly opposite the huge pile of masonry which was distant not more than a quarter of a mile. Here we came upon a dilapidated landing to which was moored one of the long, narrow, flat-bottomed river skiffs half full of water. I imagine that it had been used for shooting marsh fowl in the autumn, as there were a number of empty shells in its bottom.

Screened by the willows, I took out

my binoculars and examined the semi-ruin closely. The rock upon which it was built rose perpendicularly, but with a rough face, for about fifty feet, when the masonwork began. This appeared to be composed of big, fitted stones laid so evenly that the washing out of the cement or mortar between them did not appear to have affected their stability and alignment. In general shape the castle was nearly square, so far as I could judge, probably with an inner keep, and at its corners there were rectangular towers which jutted out at an angle of about ninety degrees to the walls. The northeastern tower of these had fallen at one corner, which gave a ruinous aspect to the whole. Rising from the very center of the mass was a larger square tower with a battlemented top, this structure appearing to be of more recent origin.

My heart sank as I stared at this grim, forbidding mass, and it struck me that if De Bernay was indeed within those walls his captors must feel that they could laugh at any thought of rescue. Yet there was a certain meager advantage to be got from this very reflection. It was not likely that any great amount of vigilance was being exercised in the matter of a guard. In fact, a sentinel could not very well have been stationed on our side of the fortress unless they put him out in a boat. I much doubted, however, that any guard was kept at all.

The embrasures in the solid façade were few and limited to the towers, but in the wall between were some square windows fitted with iron bars, the lowest of these about forty feet above the rock itself. Twenty feet higher than this, and a little to the right, was another, and from this one, as I studied it through the glasses, I caught a slight reflection from its inner, perpendicular half. This in itself was an important discovery, as it might indicate that the chamber within was habitable, its window being fitted with glass. This fact I mentioned to Li, who was himself examining the place with a fierce and steadfast gaze.

"Me see um, too," answered the old Tartar. "S'ppose marster 'long him old fort? The Dutchmen shut him up this side plenty safe and nobody see. Sun other side and fella people in fort live 'long there."

Here was perfectly sound reason. I turned my attention again to the wall, and although at that distance it presented, even as seen through the binoculars, a flat, even surface it was still possible that it might be scalable, offering finger and toe holds in the crevices where the mortar had been washed out between the rough stones. I handed the glasses to Li.

"Take a look at that wall and see if you think it would be possible to climb up and look in that top window," I said.

He made a gesture with his hand, declining the binoculars. "I see plitty good," said he. "Can do."

I dropped the glasses into my pocket, and at the same instant Li touched my arm. Somebody was coming through the woods. Back on the edge of the willow fringe which bordered the lagoon our horse, which was old and sedate, stood quietly enough, and the growth was so thick that we might have avoided being seen if we had chosen to hide. But the person was approaching us directly, and already very close, for although still invisible we could hear something he carried swishing against the underbrush. Apparently he was close to the water's edge, for his footsteps made a sucking noise in the marshy ground. Occasionally he paused for an instant, then moved forward again. But one thing was certain; he was coming straight in our direction.

I glanced quickly about. Discovery seemed certain, as this prowler was so close to where we stood that it would have been impossible for us to move away in that thick place without being heard, when curiosity would certainly have prompted the man to see who and what we might be, and there was no plausible explanation to make for our presence there. Realizing that the suspicion which would necessarily be roused must be not only fatal to our plans, but very dangerous besides, it

seemed best to me to make the effort to hide. Just behind us there was a little hollow, where the willows grew thickly, their green shoots forming a partial screen. I motioned to Li, and we stepped softly back and sank down flat on our faces in the oozy turf.

The moment that we had done so I saw my mistake, for a second later the intruder became visible, and we discovered him to be apparently a Bohemian gypsy engaged in collecting willow withes for basketwork. He was a short, thickset fellow, very ragged and dirty, with coarse black hair and a thin, straggling beard. It was certain that he would be attracted to our copse by its dense growth of fresh, green sprouts, which were precisely what he was after, and I was about to get up and demand roughly what he was doing there, hoping to frighten him off under the impression that I was the proprietor of the place, when a startling thing occurred.

For at the same moment the man spied us. For an instant he stood motionless as an image, and I caught the frightened gleam of his wild eyes under their fringe of coarse, matted hair. Then, like some furtive little beast, he turned and scuttled into the thicket. Or at least he tried to scuttle into the thicket, for at that infinitesimal pause between volition and motion Li had sprung from his feral crouch like a jungle cat. I saw his knife flash up, then down. There was a strangled, inarticulate cry, a choke, and I sprang up, shocked and horrified, to see Li throttling his victim that not a scream escape.

"Good God!" I cried, though instinctively stifling back my voice. "What have you done?"

The Tartar glared back at me over his shoulder, the blood lust still bathing his savage face. Then, convincing himself that his victim would never draw another breath, he turned the body on its back, first drawing out his long, curved knife, which he coolly wiped on the filthy coat.

"Damn you!" I hissed. "I didn't bring you to murder helpless folk."

He rose on his knees, and looked at me with a grin. "No get cross, sar," said he. "Him no gypsy; him spy. S'ppose he go 'way live? We get shot 'long him. We no find marster. Him no gypsy man go make basket; him spy. I fix him chop. You look, sar."

His sinewy hand, with its long-nailed fingers, which were like the talons of a bird of prey, fell on the dead man's mat of hair. A quick jerk and off it came to expose the short, stiff, black tonsure beneath. Another twitch and away came a false beard. And then, as I bent over the denuded face, my heart's beating seemed to pause for an instant as I recognized the well-known features of John's former Japanese steward, Hiwasa.

I stepped back, feeling decidedly sick. Li leered up at me triumphantly. "You see?" he grunted. "Him Jap'nese man. Him no gypsy."

"You are right," I answered. "I know that man. He was the steward on my cousin's yacht when we went to the island."

Li nodded violently. "That lite," said he. "I no see him fella Jap'nese boy stewa'd, but I guess. I see him no gypsy. I see him fake hair."

"Then why kill him?" I asked hotly. "Don't you know that the Japanese are at war with Austria?"

Li shrugged. "My word, what odds that make long this fella Jap'nese boy?" he asked. "What difflunce that make long Japan, sar? This fella boy no come fo' help Allies. He come allee same help himself themself. He no come get him flee, master. He come allee same climb up cut um thloat master take um one piecy pape' got um lite how he makee powde' blow up chop-chop. Me know all 'bout um fella Jap'nese man. Me watch 'em Peking, all ove'."

I reflected for an instant on this reasoning. It was possible, of course. At any rate, the deed was done; there was no longer anything to do but make the best of it. I had never particularly esteemed Hiwasa, who, although a good enough steward, had been at times a cheeky servant and subject to fits of

ill humor which John put up with because too lazy to make a change. But I was sorry for him now.

His presence there, however, removed the doubt as to De Bernay's being in the castle and in all probability lodged on that side. By what means Hiwasa had managed to locate him, and then get there in the guise of a Bohemian nomad, I could not imagine, but Li, going deftly through the recesses of his dirty rags, produced the identification papers of a Hungarian Chingheni, or gypsy, and his permit to travel over the roads.

Well, the tragedy had occurred, so we proceeded as best we might to efface its signs by scooping out a hole in the muck, placing the body therein, and covering the place with damp, dead leaves. It was not probable that any trouble would be taken to trace a vanished gypsy, especially as Hiwasa no doubt traveled alone. We then retraced our steps, got into the cart, and drove away, Li clucking cheerfully to the horse, and I plunged in a dark gulf of foreboding. It seemed to me that we had started ill, but there was that presently to happen which quickly drew my thoughts from the unhappy Hiwasa.

CHAPTER IX.

As we sped along at a smart gait, for the old horse had been a good roadster in his day, I reflected that I had spoken truth in telling Cécile that anybody so unfortunate as to get between Li and his beloved master would be apt to feel the point of the old heathen's knife. But I had referred to Austrians, and it was now shown that a little thing like mere nationality, even that of an ally, was not going to matter particularly. In fact, there was slight doubt in my mind that he would be quite ready to serve me in the same way if he were to know that failing to accomplish De Bernay's escape, it was my intention, if possible, to pilfer the specimen of uralite which he might carry somewhere on his person.

But at this moment there were other and more pressing considerations than the simple ethics of Li Cheng as compared to my own sense of what was owed to humanity. So, at the end of about a mile, I said: "We must come back here again to-night."

Li nodded with an emphatic grunt of assent. But there was a cautious wisdom as well as ferocity in the man, for he asked: "What he t'ink one fella Dutchman s'ppose we no stay 'long him?"

The same question had been bothering me. I could think of no reasonable excuse to give for remaining out all night. Also, it might arouse suspicion or at the least a dangerous curiosity in anybody we should happen to meet in our nocturnal prowling, and I had no desire to have Li's simple and efficient method of quieting this applied to any of these harmless Pressburgers.

"I don't know," I answered. "We can't very well take that old boat and paddle over to the castle and climb up the wall in the broad light of day."

"S'ppose we wait to-mollow aft'noon, take um piecy horse wagon say you go see um fella Dutchman, buy maybe plenty horse," Li suggested. "Say um fella live way up topside hills long way off you stay 'long him all night."

This sounded like fairly good counsel. Nobody would be apt to ask me to whom I proposed trying to sell some stock, and even if anybody was so meddlesome I could give an evasive answer. At any rate, it was better than to risk setting tongues wagging, so I decided to act upon it. Li was indeed proving his efficiency not only in action, but in words.

So we returned to the hotel, where I told the landlord that I had got on the trail of a possible customer for some of the officers' mounts which my agent should soon be sending on, transportation always permitting, and that I desired to hire the same horse and trap for the following afternoon, and might possibly be gone all night. He asked no questions, nor did anybody else, and for the rest of that day and the next forenoon I kept mostly to my room, writing letters to fictitious friends for the sake of the censor, while Li lounged

about in the warm sunshine, smoking his little pipe and spinning yarns of the turf in the broken German he had picked up here and there about the world, for the sake of any one who might care to listen. Li was, in fact, a much traveled man, and had spent some years of his life as a sea cook aboard various steam and sailing vessels in the China trade.

We left the hotel at about two, crossing the ferry, then taking the road in the opposite direction from our destination. After jogging along slowly for about three miles, we sighted a church steeple some distance ahead and knew that we must be coming to a village. Li produced from under the seat a pair of huge iron nippers.

"S'ppose I pull um shoe off piecy horse," said he; "then have good leason go plenty slow. Stop 'long village, let um fella blacksmith make piecy shoe. No hully. No good lide long way off wait for night. Tell smith no hully, you takee dlink long pub—one, two, tlee dlink bee' me smoke piecy pipe. Bimeby we come by plenty tlees we wait till glow dark we go back."

This appearing to be an ingenious plan for saving the horse and not getting too far from our destination we put it immediately into execution. Li was indeed proving himself more invaluable every minute. So far every move we had made was the result of his crafty Oriental strategy. He now got down, and with his huge pincers twisted off a perfectly well-attached hind shoe with an ease which showed the fiber of his lean, wiry muscles. As he tossed the shoe into the ditch, I asked him where he had got the pliers.

"I steal 'em long blacksmith shop back yonde'," said he with his fearsome grin. "Got um hand drill and hack saw, too. Me workee fi'loom (fireroom) long big ship Pacific Mail. S'ppose we climb up cut um lion ba's? Can do chop."

"You are certainly the man for this job, Li," I said. "What else have you got?"

"Le's see." He appeared to reflect. "Got um 'lectlic to'ch, got um stout fish cord, got um lope, got um stlong dope ——"

"What?" I interrupted.

He reached in an inner pocket and produced a vial filled with a yellowish fluid. "Stlong dope," said he; "allee same opium. Me find how get um dope Palis. No sell mos' people; sell Chinaman. S'ppose we need put um fella Dutchman soun' sleep? You savvy, sar?"

"Yes," I answered, "go on. What else?"

"Got um li'l' bottle nitloglycelin——"

"Nitroglycerin—where?" I gasped.

"Longside outside pocket, no gettee hot," he answered composedly. "Me steal um master lablatoly keep um handy p'laps Dutchmen make bad talk. Me bling um long same leason maybe come handy——"

"Good Lord!" I groaned. "Well, for Heaven's sake be careful and mind your step. What else?"

"That's all. Got um glub for horse unne' seat? Steal him stable. S'ppose we stop long time fort. No wantee horse holla'."

Was there ever the like? I decided that all I need do was to fold my hands and let Li trundle us all along to our destruction. He certainly had the material at hand. Under different circumstances I would have been afraid to sit beside him, would have trembled at every jolt of the high-wheeled cart. But when one's life hangs upon a hair in the very nature of one's occupation these little attendant details lose their terrors.

As a matter of fact, it was hard to realize the presence of any danger at all as we ambled along the sunny road in the bright May sunshine with the birds warbling in the hedges, cattle grazing peacefully in the lush pastures, and from the tilled field bright flashes of color from the kerchiefs of the peasant women working there. Most of the men, both young and old, were mobilized and away, but as we were not on the big state route from Budapest to Vienna, which passes through Gran, Neuhäusel, and Pressburg, we saw no signs at all of war. This road which

we were following was on the south side of the river, and led through a charming pastoral country which was the exemplar of contented peace. To the right flowed the broad Danube, swift and silent and of that opaque, pale-bluish color which comes of its clay held in suspension and gives it the descriptive adjective. As the sun sank lower it became a flat band of silver gold. To the southward rose high hills, blue with distance, and overhead a cloudless, azure sky, heavy in atmosphere. There was not a breath of wind, and high in the heavens hung what might prove to us a little later the clean-cut half of a very useful moon.

Walking our horse, we presently reached the village and found the smithy, and here our delay was facilitated, the smith having been mobilized and his trade carried on by his aged father and twelve-year-old son. Between them they managed to shoe the horse after a fashion, while I sat in the tavern over a bottle of strong, fruity Hungarian red wine and wrote a letter to Cécile, which I addressed in care of the American consul at Bern. "The customer I want to see lives near here," I wrote, "but I doubt that I shall be able to do any business with him just now, the conditions of transport are so difficult." I signed myself "Lemuel Fraser," knowing that she would understand that I had seen fit to impersonate the horse dealer.

The sun was getting low when the shock-headed boy came to report triumphantly that the horse had been shod, when to delay further our departure from this sleepy hamlet we decided to eat our supper there. While waiting for this simple meal to be served I consulted a dingy road map on the wall, and discovered that a little farther on there was a road leading off to the south by following which we might work around to the ferry without retracing our steps.

This would take us about ten miles, and as there was plenty of time it seemed preferable to loitering on our way or returning through the village. So we left the place about an hour before dark, and had no trouble in finding our way. The weary peasant population, which consisted only of the women, old men, and young boys, had been working in the fields since dawn, and there was the hush of utter exhaustion over such little communities as we passed through. Traveling slowly, it was nearly nine o'clock when we got back on the road which we had taken the day before, and, aided by the hazy moonlight, we turned into the willow swamp and reached the scene of the tragedy.

And here we discovered something which set my heart to pounding, though I doubt if it had much effect on the hardened pulses of Li. That old Boxer had passed through too many sinister adventures to be agitated over anything. But what we saw was a dim light in the glassed window and a faint, flickering glow in another almost on the same level, but close to the corner in the walls of the main wall and the northeastern tower.

Li showed not the faintest trace of concern, and I envied his fatalistic composure. He unharnessed the horse, led him to the water's edge to drink, then tethered him to a tree and gave him his feed of oats and bran. Meanwhile I had started to bale out the water-logged scow with a wooden scoop which was inside it, and, Li presently giving me a hand, we soon had it empty. Li had his tools in his pocket, and the light rope, which was quite strong enough to take the weight of a man, wound round his lean waist. I insisted, however, that he leave the nitroglycerin behind.

There were two long poles in the boat, and with these we shoved our way through the shallow water toward the castle. Close to the rock it deepened suddenly, so that we were unable to touch bottom. Apparently the rock was more strongly fortified by a natural or artificial moat when the marsh was dry.

We paddled up to the rocky wall, which was in shadow but not very dark because of the reflection from the moonlit water. Centuries before its

ragged surface had been hewn smooth enough to prevent scaling in massed attack, perhaps before the castle had gained its present formidable dimensions, but the first glance showed that it would offer no great difficulties to a skilled and careful climber, while a misstep would result in nothing worse than a plunge into the water from a height of at most not more than fifty feet, the face being quite perpendicular. Li wedged the painter, and up we went. But the castle wall, which was built about three feet back from the edge of the rock, looked quite a different problem.

To begin with, it appeared, if anything, to overhang, though this may have been mere illusion. Nor was there any lack of foot and toe holds to sustain the weight. The trouble was that like many such very ancient Hungarian strongholds, which were no doubt often erected hurriedly, the massive stones used in building the wall had not been trimmed to a smooth façade, but roughly laid, their irregular interstices faced out afterward with smaller and better fitted ones set in mortar. The freezing rains of countless winters had loosened these and eroded the mortar, so that in many places they had already fallen and in others the slightest force was sufficient to dislodge them.

As a rock climber of some experience I was quick to realize the danger of such an ascent. The slightest crevice between blocks of solid stone into which one could squeeze toes or fingers enough to get a grip would have been preferable to these rotten, crumbling cavities, usually rounded within and often the size of one's head. There was the danger of slipping in the powdery stuff or loosening the stone one gripped so that it came away. Had a wall as eroded as that been of solid stone, as good a climber as myself could have gone up it like a fly, but composed as it was the mere look and feel of it was enough to send cold chills down my spine.

The actual height to both windows where we had seen the glow of light was not more than about sixty feet above the shelf on which we stood, and which was, as I have said, about fifty feet above the water. But a person falling from the wall would be first dashed upon this ledge, then bounce off to fall into the water and drown, if not already killed. For purposes of scaling it was far worse than if the whole side of the fortress had been sheer to the hidden moat, which from this point on offered no promise of safety in case of a slip.

I ran my hand into one of these crumbling pockets, pulled out a loose stone or two, and looked at Li, who was similarly inspecting the wall. He spat over the edge and shrugged.

"Him pletty bad—too dam' muchee loose lock," said Li in his guttural whisper. "You savvy swim?"

"I can swim like a duck," I answered, "but a man wouldn't do much swimming after he hit this ledge."

"S'ppose you losee glip, feel you fallee chop. Give one hell shove maybe no hittee lock."

There was some slight hope of this. If it were the handhold which gave, one might in falling possibly be able to give a thrust against the wall with the legs sufficient to clear the ledge. But if the foothold failed I did not believe that a push with the arms would be enough to get the same result. I looked up at the forbidding wall which reared its grim height overhead, then down at the black water beneath, and felt my diaphragm waver unsteadily. Li stared at me for a second, then shook his head.

"You too muchee flaid," said he. not reproachfully, but merely as one stating a fact. "S'ppose you stop 'long here. Long time 'go me mountain man. Can do."

A rush of shame rose to the rescue of my nerve. Here was I, an experienced mountaineer, who had won medals and always taken pride in my tough muscles and steady head, balking at what this old Boxer who had been a trooper for the most of his hazardous life proposed to tackle without another

word. I took a deep breath and got myself together again.

"No," I answered, "I can manage it if you can. But first let's see if we can get around the corners. You go that way and I'll go this."

Li grunted, and we made our way to the opposite ends of the ledge, only to discover that there was no getting around the square towers. These must have been added later, for their structure was slightly different, being of neatly fitted blocks with no crevices to which one could cling, and being carried straight down to the water's edge, the ledge being merely at the foot of the wall between them. In both corners there were what had once been small sally ports, but these had been subsequently walled in. Evidently no egress or ingress on this side had been considered desirable by the more recent chatelains of the place.

There was nothing for it but to undertake the climb, nor, if we were going to tackle it, was there any time to lose, as at any moment the lights might be extinguished and the sickeningly dangerous business attempted in vain. Laterally the two lighted windows were about thirty feet apart, and I decided first to climb myself to the more central one, and then, if nothing of importance was discovered, to let Li try for the other. So far as we could see there was no choice in the danger of the two ascents. The crumbling old wall appeared to be uniformly time-worn.

So I pocketed the tools with which Li had provided himself and wound the rope about my waist—for we estimated that one length of it would be quite enough to reach from the window to the ledge, and might be absolutely indispensable to the descent—then tightened the lacings of my heavy walking boots and started up.

CHAPTER X.

For the first forty feet I met with no great difficulty, and was soon on a level with the lower unlighted window, though several yards to the left of it. But a little higher than its top, I struck the danger zone, as here the face of the wall, bad enough before, became frightfully insecure. In fact, the whole structure of the wall on this level underwent a change for the worse, which made me think that it must have been added at a much later epoch and by masons who trusted entirely to the cohesive force of very inferior mortar.

No doubt there was building graft in those days as now, and clay had been substituted for lime, or something of the sort, for the mortar was almost entirely washed out from between the stones. As I fumbled desperately for my holds, taking infinite pains not to dislodge a big fragment and so cause an alarm, I understood why the northeast tower had crumbled. It would not have surprised me to have felt the whole mass giving way to bury me under tons of masonry. Twice my foot slipped slowly as the fine particles slid under it, but I was able to cling with both sets of fingers and the other toe until my groping was rewarded by a hold which stood the weight gradually put upon it.

Every inch of progress became a ghastly nightmare, and the only wonder is that in sheer anguish of soul the strength did not ooze out of me so that I fell limp and nerveless, to be dashed to pieces on the ledge. My hands felt into dark recesses to grasp nothing to which they might cling, or, if clinging, did not work treacherously in their grasp. Each upward step brought a spasm of suspense as to whether the next second might not bring a sudden loosening of the meager support. I had never before suffered from height fear, as no matter how dangerous the climb I had at least been sure that such purchase as the rock afforded was sound. But here one's grip and balance appeared to count for nothing. There was the constant feeling that at any moment the whole face of the wall might slither away.

And then, as if this were not enough, about ten feet below my goal further ascent in the perpendicular became impossible, for in a wide zone around the window itself the mortar had been re-

enforced, leaving no cranny into which one might wedge so much as a finger. I could have screamed aloud at this discovery. I wanted to scream to whomever might be in that room to lean out and lower me a rope, a portière, a twisted bed sheet, anything, and haul me up and in to a firm footing, and thereafter shoot me or hang me or do any mortal thing they wanted to me if only for a moment I might grasp something strong and solid.

But with the agony of despair I set my teeth and rallied my reason and told myself that I might as well die one way as another and that I would stick it out until the inevitable end. There was now but one of two things for me to do. Descent was utterly impossible, and I could only take my choice between springing violently out from the wall to clear the ledge and strike the water nearly a hundred feet below, or try to crawl on upward in the hope of reaching the top. I decided upon the latter alternative.

How I managed those last remaining terrible yards I cannot remember. It was like one of those fearful dreams where one is cold with the dread of falling while being yet hopelessly deadened to the horrible certainty. But I think that the erosions must have been deeper and more closely set, for it does not seem to have been very long before I found myself gripping the edge of the rampart; then, chest high against it, staring wildly at the flagged roof beyond.

And right there I had the narrowest escape of all, for the coping to which I clung slanted downward, and as I worked my way across, it began to slide, then stopped. There for a second I lay, not daring to breathe, face inside, legs hanging over the abyss. Sheer desperation saved me. Holding my breath, I worked my left arm slowly to the next big, flat stone which was barely within reach, hooked my fingers over its edge; then, with a sudden, violent effort and praying that this might stand the strain, I hove myself over, and pitched headfirst on the flagging of the roof.

For several moments I lay there, breathing in shallow gasps and bathed in a clammy sweat. Then pulling myself together in some fashion, I got up and looked around. The rampart was about forty feet in width, and, walking to the other side, I looked down into the open keep, which was surrounded on its four sides by the same structure, the castle being merely a great square, hollow box, its only architectural features being the corner towers.

So there I was on the top of this unfriendly edifice, with no way of getting down except through the inside, as the rope would not have reached more than halfway to the foot of the castle wall, and besides I had no desire to leave it hanging to betray our visit. For another thing, now that I had got my courage back again, I wanted very much to get inside, and I discovered immediately that there would be no difficulty about doing this. The northwest tower, like all the others, had a door opening onto the parapet; a small, low door of oak and iron nearly gone from age, so that I was able to slip my hand through a crevice between the weather-worn planks and lift the heavy latch within. It opened on a narrow, circular staircase of worn stone steps, and as I stole softly down I saw a mellow light shining up from beneath. And here at the foot of this ancient stairway which had clanked beneath the feet of generations of men-at-arms a surprise awaited me, for as I peered around the corner of the wall worn smooth from the contact of hands laid there through the centuries, I looked down what might have been the upper hallway of a modern, palatial home.

It was amazing, and struck me as entirely wrong. Was I dreaming that I had just scaled the rocky pedestal and swarmed like a spider up the moldering wall of this semiruined fortress, while a savage Tartar henchman still waited for me at its foot? Had I gained the parapet by the skin of my teeth and crept down the low stairway to peer out on this hall with its marble floor strewn with wonderful rugs, Aubusson, Rhodes, and Bokhara, hand-

somely paneled walls hung with priceless tapestries, and a groin-vaulted ceiling of modern stucco with its scrolls and arabesques?

Directly opposite me, and at the farther end of this sumptuous corridor, were high chests of drawers, richly carved, Italian renaissance on which stood oil lamps set in buhl vases. On either side, their backs against the tapestries, were high prelates' chairs upholstered in Cordovan leather, Spanish pieces, and in the center was a long and wonderfully ornate French mirror with a heavily gilded *bois sculpté* frame, and beneath it a consol with an onyx top. The doors which led into the chambers on either side were set deeply in the walls, of Flemish oak, highly polished, and although old themselves looked as though they had been newly placed there.

But this was not all. Part way down the corridor, and just to the side of one of these doors, was a narrow Empire table, with its heavy brass ball and talon and sphinx busts, and set thereon was a huge silver tray covered with a profusion of solid gold and silver plate; chased flagons and goblets and cut-glass decanters and dishes still containing the remains of a repast. There was even a magnum of French champagne.

"My word!" I said to myself. "If all that is for De Bernay, they are certainly trying to make his captivity endurable." And even as I was reflecting with astonishment on this—for I had pictured him in a damp and gloomy cell with a litter of straw, a water jug, and loaf of coarse bread—there came a slithering on the stone steps beneath me, and before I had time to draw back two aged lackeys in full livery passed silently almost within my reach, and going to the table picked up the tray between them and returned the way they had come. Though partly exposed, the shadow must have hid me, and no doubt their eyesight was not of the best, for they showed no sign of having seen me. I could hear them cautioning each other in undertones as they went down. This stairway alone could not be modernized. It remained as it had always been.

For a moment there was nothing to be heard when their footsteps had died away. Then it seemed to me that I caught the muffled murmur of voices. I slipped down the corridor and put my ear against the door beside which the tray had been. Somebody was talking inside, but no doubt there were heavy portières over the massive door, as I could catch only the deep-toned rumble of a man's voice. I noticed that the knob was of old, hammered iron and there was a great iron key in the lock under it.

Upon my soul, as I stood there straining my ears in a vain effort to hear what was being said, with my clothes ground full of mortar, hands soiled and torn, and Li's tools clinking in my pocket, I felt more like a burglar than a heroic instrument for the world's salvation. And then, as I took fresh stock of the surrounding objects, which, despite their magnificence, impressed me as having an air of protest at being there, I suddenly realized that the chatelain of this place, not I, was the actual burglar. For these priceless things were unquestionably loot. Plunder purchased from the titled and possible royal thieves who had pillaged the churches and palaces and lordly estates of Flanders and France and Servia. Priceless articles bought perhaps from drunken, looting soldiers who had been carters and plowmen and scullions. I looked at a superb vernis Martin clock on the top of a marble column. "Your owner was paid for you in gas or burning liquid or shrapnel," I said to myself.

The rumbling voice grew suddenly louder, and I heard a scraping noise as of a chair being pushed back as one rose, and, thinking that the speaker might be coming out, I darted back to the shelter of the shadowed stair. Several minutes passed; then the door opened suddenly and silently, and, stooping low and peering around the curve of the wall, I caught a glimpse of a tall man in a resplendent uniform as he turned and closed and locked the

door. Then he brushed past within a yard of me, and I heard his spurs jingling as he went down the lower flight.

As soon as it grew silent I stole down again, and I remember thinking that if Li had been in my place he would probably by this time have been in possession of the great key to that room and on his way up the tower stairs to throw the corpse of the chatelain down the way he had come or into the débris of the ruined tower. And then, as I looked at the door, my heart gave a sudden throb. For there was the key which I had seen him turn still in the lock!

So the person within was a prisoner, and I scarcely dared to think who it might be. And here was I with the tools and the rope and in the room wherewith to piece out the rope, and down below Li waiting, and the boat and the horse and cart——

My head was spinning like a top as I stepped quickly to the door and laid my hand on the great iron key.

CHAPTER XI.

The bolt, which had been recently oiled, slipped noiselessly, and the heavy door swung as silently open. The heavy portières inside it were half drawn, and I looked through them into an apartment not very large, but which in the richness of its furnishings quite matched the corridor outside.

But I scarcely noticed the room itself, for, at the sound of the closing door and the noise made as I turned to lock it on the inside, a woman who had been sitting in front of the open fire sprang to her feet and cried in English: "What are you doing here? You said you were going back to town!"

Here was another shock. Her voice, which was startled, both frightened and angry in tone, had an unmistakable American accent; a Boston accent, and as I turned and looked at her I recognized her instantly, although it was the first time we had ever met. It was the American prima donna, Carina; Miss Priscilla Cary, of Boston, Massachusetts, and as she stood there staring at me and trying to hide the fright which she must have felt, first at the return of her captor and then at the sight of a grimy and disheveled stranger, I saw that Cécile was right in saying that she was far lovelier than her portraits.

I drew the portières across the door, and stepped over to where she stood. "Don't be afraid," I said in a low voice. "Is anybody apt to come?"

"Not unless I ring," she answered. "If they do, I can send them away. Who are you, and how did you get in here?"

"I am an American named Peter Castle," I said, "and I got in by climbing up the wall to the roof and then coming down the stairs. The key was in the door."

"Oh, so you are Cécile's friend!" she interrupted, with a note of relief in her voice, which was rather husky as if from a cold. "She wrote me about you. How did you know that I was here?"

"I didn't," I answered. "In fact, I am astonished to find you here."

She stared at me in amazement. "Then why did you come, if it wasn't to get me out?" she asked.

"I came to get somebody else out," said I. "It was that person that I expected to find in this room."

The color rushed into her face, which up to that moment had been very pale. "Do you mean to say," she cried, "that the brute has got some other woman shut up here?"

"For all I know he may have a dozen," I answered. "But I did not come to look for a woman. I came to rescue a man."

"What man? Sit down. You are white as a sheet." She motioned to a chair in front of the fire. "Tell me all about it. I suppose you know who I am?"

"Yes," I said, "you are Carina. Well, you remember writing Cécile some weeks ago about Von Schütt having told you that there was an American scientist who had it in his power to stop the war? That is the man that I have come to find, and I have good

reason to think that he is locked up somewhere in this castle. Do you know anything about him?"

She shook her head. "Only what I wrote Cécile," she answered. "But I believe you are right. And that may be one reason why I happen to be locked up here myself. I guessed who that man must be. It's Paul de Bernay, isn't it? The inventor that Cécile was so desperately in love with?"

"Yes."

"Then that explains what's happened to me. Or, at least, it explains part of it. The other day I asked Von Schütt jokingly if he didn't have the man who could stop the war locked up in his old castle, and if it wasn't Paul de Bernay. When I saw the look that came into his face I realized that I'd been a fool. And to-night I was an even worse fool, letting him take me for a little blow in his car. But I had a headache, and thought that the air would do me good. I never dreamed that he would ever dare do such a thing as this."

"Oh, you American girls!" I sighed. "Singers or shopgirls, you're always alike. Willing to take a chance and try anything once. And usually that's just once too often. Here you are in the heart of a foreign country with which your own is tottering on the brink of war, and yet because you have been pampered and petted and found the Austrians such courtly and delightful gentlemen, you joke one of them on a subject so tremendously grave that the fate of the whole world is hanging on it, and then trust yourself in the car of this noble bandit and assassin. And now look at the fix you are in."

"I know it," she murmured, and glanced about her with a little shiver, then looked appealingly at me. "But you'll get me out, won't you?" Her eyes fastened on the gleaming strands of the rope wound round my waist, for the buttons had been ripped from my norfolk jacket in my climb, and the front hung open. "You've come prepared to rescue De Bernay; can't you get me out first? Can't we get out the way you came?"

"My rope is not long enough," I answered, "but besides that my first duty is to find De Bernay, and if I succeed to get him out and in a place of safety."

She looked at me in astonishment, disbelief, as though she thought I must be trying to torment her; to see what she would say. For the moment I do not believe that this spoiled and petted and courted prima donna realized that I could be serious in preferring the rescue of a mere man, no matter what his world value, to a beauty of such genius as herself. But as her eyes rested on my face she saw that I meant literally what I said, and a hot flush spread over her own.

"Do you mean to say that you are going to leave me here to the mercy of that man while you poke around this horrible old ruin looking for De Bernay?" she demanded. "He may not be here at all. Or perhaps they have put him in a dungeon or something of the sort."

"All the more reason for my losing no time in trying to find him, or running any unnecessary risk," I answered. "If you were gone to-morrow morning they would certainly rush him off to some other place where we could never hope to get any trace of him. They might even murder him—drop him into an oubliette."

She grew whiter still, but her eyes sparkled with rising anger. "I always thought that in moments of danger women were given the first chance," she said.

"Stop a moment and think," I retorted, "and I am sure you will see the situation in its true light. Here is De Bernay, able to put a stop to the slaughter and misery and anguish of millions of men and women and children, and to insure a lasting peace for the world. And here are you, one single individual, in the other scale. Besides, your life is in no danger."

Her lips trembled. "But my—my ——"

"Never mind. I understand. But even then, are you not willing to risk the sacrifice? Think of the starving, homeless, helpless women and children.

Think of the armies of splendid men being mowed down every day——"

She raised her hand. I could see from the look in her eyes that she was beginning to understand; that my plea was not in vain. For a moment I thought that she was going to break down. Then the strong soul in her swept away her selfish fears and she sprang to her feet and stood facing me, a splendid, heroic figure pulsating with passion and high resolve. The wonder of her beauty struck me then for the first time because it shone through its glorious vehicle. I could see why her audiences had gone crazy over her, even though it was admitted that her voice alone would never have taken her to the first ranks of the great vocalists, being a rather husky mezzo soprano, of which there are thousands, and lacking in pure perfection. But it thrilled me now as it could never have thrilled any of her listeners, the more so as it was free of all hint of dramatic effort. She spoke out strongly and simply from the soul of a brave, intelligent, true-hearted American girl, who realized her folly and was ready to pay the highest price for it if by so doing she might lessen the burden of groaning humanity.

"You are right," she said. "I understand now. If Von Schütt's idea is to keep me here on De Bernay's account he may do so as long as he likes, and I shall not complain. It's my own fault for talking like a fool, and then, like a worse fool, putting myself in his power. I shall tell him so. But if he so much as tries to lay a hand on me" —she swept past me to a center table strewn with books and magazines and picked up a toy hunting knife with a thin, steel blade and chamois horn handle—"he shall have a dead body to dispose of." She looked at me intently, her sapphire eyes quite black. "Do you believe me, Mr. Castle?"

"Yes," I answered, "I believe you. But I am going to ask of you an even greater sacrifice."

"What?"

"Don't do that. Put him off if you can, even if you have to lie to him. Do anything else, but don't make away with yourself. I am almost sure to need you to help me free De Bernay. Think what that means. Any personal sacrifice is worth making to stop this war. And De Bernay can do it. I have seen his demonstrations myself. I have seen him—and others saw the same thing with me—blow up different explosives such as they are using at the front from a distance by the projection of his vibrations. With a plant of sufficient size he could blow up arsenals, magazines, factories, ammunition depots, cartridges in the very belts of the soldiers in the trenches. Von Schütt, with other officers and scientific experts, have seen what he can do. He demonstrated his discovery for them in the Engadine, near the Swiss-Austrian frontier, and without intending to do so blew up ammunition depots at Innsbruck and Bosen and Trent, about one hundred miles away. No doubt there were other explosions in Switzerland which nobody heard anything about, though perhaps he can control the direction of his rays to some extent. So you can imagine what it means to them to have him in their power."

"How long have they had him prisoner?" Carine asked.

I told her hurriedly the story of my search, describing what had happened since my sailing from New York; told her about the attempts on our lives, of my present masquerade, the killing of Hiwasa the day before, my climb up the wall while Li waited for me down below. Although every minute of delay was dangerous, I appreciated the tremendous importance of securing her full coöperation at no matter what cost. I wanted to convince her that no personal sacrifice was too great with such tremendous issues at stake, and in the end I felt that I had succeeded. As long as she remained a prisoner in that room we could gain access to the castle, as she could lower us a cord with which to haul up and make fast our rope. The rusted iron bars of the window could be quickly sawn through and the bolt sawn from the lock of the door so that it could be turned without shooting into the socket.

This work I set about immediately, first tackling the window bar, which was half eaten away with the rust of years, the soft iron offering little resistance to the well-tempered saw. As the bar slanted outward slightly at the top, I cut it there with a slanting incision outward and downward, muffling the iron with my coat and keeping it moistened with oil from a lamp. Close to the sill I cut it in a V shape so that when I had finished the job it held its place securely enough from its own weight. Meanwhile, Carina listened at the crack of the door.

The removal of this one bar gave space enough for the passage of a medium-sized person, and, laying it aside, I looked down and saw Li squatting at the foot of the wall, smoking his little pipe. Securing the end of the rope, I dropped it down, when he sprang to his feet and looked up. I beckoned, and he came swarming up like an ape and slipped into the room.

"You find him marster?" he began, then caught sight of Carina crouching by the door. He gave a grunt and made a little duck of his head. "Where you catchee one piecey gal?" he whispered.

I hurriedly explained the situation, and he nodded. "All lite," said he. "You climbee all same bug. Me tly climb window 'longside topside. No can do. Wall too lotten no gettee hold. High up wall new, no gettee hold. Come down. Hear um noise. Come topside long window. Piecey Dutchman make plenty talk. Pletty soon he stop. 'Nother man makee talk. Him marster."

"What!" I interrupted. "Are you sure?"

"Plenty sure. He talk 'long window. Hear um voice, no catchee what he say."

"Sh-h-h!" came a low whisper from the door, and I looked around to see Carina's hand raised warningly. We listened. A heavy step sounded on the marble floor of the corridor, to be muffled again as the person approaching walked upon a rug. The key was in the lock on the outside door as Von Schütt had left it, but I had shot the bolt on the inside, the transient prisoners of the apartment being allowed this privilege. The dragging steps shuffled up to the door, and there came a knock.

"Who is there?" Carina demanded.

"It is old Kathe, fräulein, to make you comfortable for the night," came the answer, and from the very tone of the voice and the lagging step I could easily visualize the fat, old peasant woman who might have been Von Schütt's nurse and was now his chief factotum in such amorous escapades as she imagined this to be. I understood now why Von Schütt had left the key in the door. He knew that such ancient servants as he kept in the castle would be as impervious to bribes as the stone and iron of the place itself, and that even if one of his no doubt many fair guests managed to slip from her gilded prison apartment, she would never be able to find egress from its containing walls.

Carina's quick wit was equal to the emergency. "I am not quite ready for you yet," she answered, and I was surprised at the purity of her accent, which was excellent Austrian, and as the inhabitants of this country rightly claim, the only unsullied German spoken. "You may come back in about twenty minutes."

The sleepy old person made some grumbling assent, and shuffled away. Carina turned to me with a very white face.

"You will have to go," she said. "There is a bedroom and boudoir behind those portières, but no place to hide which that old woman may not poke into. Besides, Van Schütt may return. He said that he was going back to Vienna, but perhaps he lied." She stared at me with wide eyes, and I could see the terror in them. "Do you think that your man is right about De Bernay's being here?"

Li answered for himself. "Me know um marster voice," said he. "No fea', missy. Marster he live 'long loom pletty close by. Maybe me go gettum light off. Gettum marster safe 'long 'Melican embassy, come back getty you

same way. Maybe cut um thloat Dutchman teach him be'ave pletty good."

"Don't be afraid," I said. "We haven't got this far to be blocked now. If Li really heard De Bernay's voice, he is in one of the rooms of this tier at the far end of the corridor next the ruined tower. We'll manage somehow. Meanwhile put Von Schütt off. Promise him anything you like. Make a bargain for your liberty, and then leave the country. He'll let you go once we get De Bernay."

"Very well," she interrupted, "but you had better go. That old woman is sleepy and wants to get to bed. She may be waiting outside."

The same thing had occurred to me. We had been talking in whispers, so there was no danger of being overheard. But I did not want to go by the window, as that would necessitate our return later by the same route, there being no access to De Bernay's prison from without, and it was always possible that old Kathe might lock the door and take the key with her on retiring. If we were interrupted while cutting the bolt from the lock, there would be but one thing to do, and, not being German, I shrank with horror from the mere thought of this.

No, a life or two could not be let to interfere with the liberation of a man whose captivity was daily costing thousands, including those of innocent women and children. The doing to death of Hiwasa had sickened me, and I was determined in future to avoid such work if it were humanly possible.

Besides, in order to avoid all suspicion, it was necessary to lock the door on the outside. Later we could return and saw the bolt. So I said to Carina: "Call softly and see if the old woman is waiting outside. If she is, tell her to get you a glass of hot, spiced wine."

Carina went to the door and did as I said. There was no answer. I slid the bolt softly, opened the door a crack, and looked out. There was nobody in the corridor, the farther end of which was plunged in gloom; Kathe, with true peasant economy, had extinguished the lamp which was there. I beckoned to Li, then turned to Carina. "Keep your courage," I whispered; "we may come back later. If we do not, be on the lookout for us at nine o'clock to-morrow night." I told Li to give her the fishline, which she was to drop down to haul up our rope. "If you are not alone," I said, "of course we shall have to wait."

We slipped out of the room, closed and locked the door, then stole down to the darkened end of the corridor, where there was another stair in the half-ruined northeast tower corresponding to the one by which I had come down from the parapet. But here a surprise awaited us, for where we had expected to find the door of the room in which De Bernay was confined, the wall was smooth and unbroken. I pushed aside a long tapestry underneath which the wall had been freshly stuccoed above the paneled wainscoting, and ran my hands along without encountering so much as a crevice in its surface. It was evident that all access to this room must be either from below or possibly from the tower stair.

But a rapid examination of this latter brought no result. As there was only the parapet above, the room must evidently be reached from a chamber beneath, so we followed the winding stair to the bottom, groping our way carefully, as the faint light from above dwindled into utter darkness. I flashed the pocket torch about, and saw that we were in a big, vaulted chamber which was utterly bare, stone-flagged, and with two high windows which had been boarded up. At one time it might have been a storeroom for grain, fodder, and the like to withstand a siege. There were two doors, or three, counting that to the stair, which, however, had no portal. One of the others was at the far end from us at the inner corner, while the third, at the outer corner of the same wall, was set against a rounded prominence which undoubtedly inclosed a stair. This door appeared to have been recently repaired, for while its heavy iron bindings were

of ancient origin, two of the oak panels were new and presumably very thick.

We crossed the room and proceeded to examine it. The first brief scrutiny showed that here was no light task. The huge lock was secured with great sunken bolts, and its key must have been a formidable weapon in itself. Moreover, the fitting was close, and gave no opportunity to insert a tool. But this door was unquestionably that to De Bernay's prison, for there were traces of oil in the lock, and, on flashing the torch on the flags, we saw the traces of many footsteps and a splash where the water from some vessel had been recently spilled.

Li was the first to suggest the easiest means of cutting this Gordian knot.

"S'ppose we waitee here," he whispered. "Bimeby fella Dutchman come 'long fetchee food and wate'. We catchee him cut 'im allesame thloat chop-chop. Gettee key, gettee marster, clea' out pletty quick."

"That's no good," I answered. "The jailer's been here, and won't come back again to-night." I pointed to the spilled water. "We can't get him away from here in the daytime, and we don't want to wait until to-morrow night. We're in here now, and we must do our job."

Li nodded. "All lite," said he. "No can blake um door, too plenty stlong. S'ppose we go topside 'long loof. Get over window, slide down lope. Cut um lion bar, gettee marster, go back down b'low same we come."

This was more like it. To crack open that great door would mean more than one night's work, and that was out of the question, as any tampering with it must surely be observed. So back up the tower stairs we went, and thus to the parapet, the upper stair not having been involved in the falling of the outer corner of the tower. Going to the rampart, I told Li to crawl out over the coping, which, as I have said, slanted downward, and to see if he could locate the window to which he had tried to climb. This he did, I holding him by the ankles and having first made sure that the slab of stone was secure. At a motion of his hand, I hauled him back, he jerking his head after his manner when pleased or inwardly excited.

"All lite," he whispered. "He lite unne'neat' ten foot, twenty foot down. S'ppose we makee knot lope, plenty knot all way you twist um end lound body, I slide down. I takee saw, cut lion bar, then climb up, we two allee same haul 'im up marster."

I was more than willing to cede him the glory of the first interview with De Bernay. Not only had he earned it, for without his forethought we could never have accomplished anything at all, but because merely to glance over the edge of the rampart gave me a squeamish feeling about the diaphragm. In fact, I have never since cared for climbing, even in thought. But we found a better way to manage than my holding the rope, as at intervals of about ten feet the whole length of the rampart, big iron eyebolts had been leaded into its junction with the wall, these probably used for lashings to take the recoil of culverin.

Li deftly tied a bowline in the rope's end, while I took a turn in the ringbolt, and as soon as he was ready I lowered him gently until a slight vibration of the rope warned me to hold fast, when I passed the bight through another bolt and secured it. Knowing that he would be some time about his task, as the bars were the thickness of one's wrist, I was about to make a reconnaissance of the whole quadrangle when I was startled by a low hiss, and saw his round head sticking up over the lower edge of the coping. I gave him my hand, when he wriggled over like a lizard and stood mowing and jerking like a furious monkey, which animal he actually resembled. In the pale moonlight I could see that his simian features were the incarnation of futile rage and chagrin.

"What's the matter?" I whispered. "Did you see him?"

For a moment he was inarticulate, then snarled in his low, guttural voice: "Sure we see 'im, marster. S'ppose you gimme li'l' 'matic pistol you carry 'long you."

"What for?" I asked, wondering if

it could be possible that they could be subjecting De Bernay to some maltreatment or indignity. But Li's rage was purely due to disappointment and baffled purpose.

"Kill um fella Dutchman," he hissed. "Him fella Dutchman allee same Austlian office', maybe colonel got um plenty gold lace. He sittee one side table, marster he sittee othe' side table, play 'em chess. Thlee loom. Big loom allee same hotel, plenty chair, table, fi'place, dlessing table, lugs all pletty good. 'Longside one side little loom, dark, no can see. 'Longside othe' side nothe' tower loom, little light, can see. Office' he sleep big loom 'longside big door, see um sword hangee by bedpost. Somebody stay 'longside marster day and night. He neve' lone."

Here was indeed a blow. For some stupid reason I had counted on De Bernay's being in solitary confinement; why I do not know. It certainly should have occurred to me that a prisoner of his incalculable importance would naturally be not only closely guarded, but also carefully and scrupulously attended, every possible care being bestowed upon his physical and mental health. A brain which contained such a secret as his could not be allowed to corrode, and, besides, nobody who had come within the spell of his magnetic personality could cherish enmity for him or wish him any ill.

And yet, for some stupid reason, I had taken it for granted that his durance must be vile, in the hope perhaps of breaking down his spirit, as though such a spirit as his could be broken by any human agency. No doubt Li's Oriental mind had pictured the same thing, especially after listening to such stories of atrocity perpetrated by the Germans on their prisoners, the proofs of which were being then published in Paris.

Instead of this, I now gathered from Li's despairing account that the inventor was not only comfortably but luxuriously lodged in spacious quarters, which commanded a truly magnificent view of a superbly beautiful river valley, faring upon the best food which could be procured and the choicest wines—for Li had mentioned a buffet well garnished with fruits and flagons, no doubt supplied with such reading as he might express the desire for, and with a constant companion, who was probably selected for his charm of manner and intellectuality.

I think that the old Tartar saw in all this merely a mockery, and that his rage was not only due to the disappointment of being unable to so much as communicate his efforts to the master, whom he so worshiped in his pagan way, but was due also to the fact that he was being deprived of the added satisfaction of relieving his physical distress, and doubtless seeking sanguinary recompense from his oppressors. Whatever his reasoning, it certainly gave me an insight as to the devotion he cherished for De Bernay, and of what might happen to one whom he considered an unfriend of this exalted one. It was the only time during our singular association that I knew him to lose his head. For he now insisted on my giving him my automatic pistol, and looked decidedly ugly at my refusal, though I pointed out to him that while he might kill one Austrian, who was, by the way, trying to make the master's captivity as little irksome as possible, to do this would be the funeral salute to our hopes. I told him with considerable warmth that one might as well fire a .75 fieldpiece from the ramparts as my pistol at that time and in that breathlessly silent night.

It proved to be only a temporary aberration on his part; the sudden, murderous madness to be expected at times of a primitive nature which has witnessed and assisted at many scenes of sanguinary violence. A blood madness of which I fear that we are destined to see many examples after the conclusion of this war in which peaceful peasants have been dragged from the mowing of grain to the mowing of men. Li's senses returned to him in a moment, and after staring out across the distant river for a bit he turned with his wrinkled face still working, and said:

"You lite, sar. Me dam' fool. See marster sittin' there plison, him pletty white and Dutchman 'longside, me gettee plenty mad. Blood go topside by head chop-chop. Chinaman gettee angly no hab sense. No care gettee killed so can kill um othe' fella, too. 'Melican man gottee more sense, talkee-talkee, gettee leddy allee same plesident. Bimeby he swat um Dutchman heap plenty topside bottomside 'longside chop. What we do now?"

This was precisely what I was asking myself. But while I was trying to think there came from the front of the great pile the sound of a high-powered motor in rapid motion, and as we looked in that direction the brilliant rays of two powerful searchlights swept down from the rising ground beyond. Through the utter stillness we heard the whine of brakes; then the front parapet hid the blazing eyes which had flashed intermittently through the trees on the roadside. The castle was the evident destination of the big car, and it behooved us to discover if it was returning with the count, although if this were the fact he could not have gone to Vienna, which was fifty miles away.

At any rate, I wanted to discover, if possible, what its errand might be, so we hurried to the front of the fortress, from the ramparts of which we could command a view of the approach, as well as looking down into the keep. But we were too late. The car had already glided up the causeway, over the drawbridge, and under the portcullis, to stop under the great central tower. And it seemed to me high time that we were thinking about our retreat, as the faintest glimmer of dawn was beginning to pale the purple zenith.

TO BE CONTINUED.

IN THE WINTER LEAGUE

THEY say the season ended when the Giants tumbled down
Before the chaps with pallid hose from big Chicago town;
But—bless your heart!—that's nonsense; if you step into the store
You'll hear the battle waging as it never did before.

'Midst the groceries and barrels they're all seated round the fire,
Perhaps ten or twenty youngsters, and their talk is full of ire,
As they rave o'er Felsch's home run or of Jackson's shoe-string catch,
On that ne'er forgotten day on which the Giants met their match.

And so it goes each evening in our little corner store,
The graybeards chiming in with tales of ancient baseball lore;
Of Charlie Radbourne's pitching feat, the Orioles, and such;
They don't think to-day's big leaguers can amount to very much.

But young men are not persuaded by these tales of long ago;
They have seen the White Sox twirlers who struck terror in the foe;
And though some among the party will their arguments oppose,
There's a big battalion shouting for the knights with pallid hose.

Then from this reminiscent talk they'll turn to next year's hope
And start their prophesying on last season's baseball dope.
Who says the season's ended? Yes, the curtain may be rung;
But the greatest baseball battles are the ones fought with the tongue.

ARTHUR E. SCOTT.

White Savage Simon

By Beatrice Grimshaw

Author of "The World and an Oyster," Etc.

III.—ON HONEYMOON ISLAND

I SHALL never grow old—not so long as grass smells sweet after rain and the stars are my friends and melodies that one can only see, not hear, play for my eyes when the wind blows in the forests—my living forests, whom I love.

When you cease to love you die, whether your grave be made then or in thirty years. My love is the Earth, and I shall never fail her, nor will she fail me. I shall die, perhaps to-morrow, perhaps in many, many years, but I shall die young.

In those days when Rothery, the poet, and I went wandering through Pacific seas, I had a new love almost every week. But I don't think any one of them was fairer or more certainly my love at first sight than the little South Sea paradise known to sailors as Pedro Island, and more gracefully to its Spanish owners as Isla San Pedro de la Pinatar.

We came to it, Rothery and I, in a small trading brigantine early on a southeast morning. San Pedro de la Pinatar is pretty far down, though within the tropics, and about July or August you get in those parts fair, bright, cool weather that ought to put life into a dead army mule. How dead an army mule can be most men nowadays know by experience.

There was one passenger on the brigantine besides Willis Rothery and myself—an Englishman, owner of the chief trading store of Pueblo Nuevo del Mar, the beach town of San Pedro. He was coming home from Auckland, where he had been buying trade goods. He had not been very sociable on the trip, and I had not tried to alter that state of affairs because, in the days of the Great War, men who had done their little bit and paid for it did not altogether love the wandering Englishman who seemed well and fit and who kept carefully out of reach of trouble, frequenting only countries that were owned by neutral nations. Thank God, there were not many such.

But Bradley Collins was one of them, so I guessed, and it was not altogether without intent that I made the remark about the army mule as we beat in to port beneath the amethyst heights of Monte de la Madre de Dios, that very fair cool-season day.

"Mph!" was his only reply, coupled with a glance at my worn white shirt and trousers. He took up a field glass, and began looking at the town, his back half turned. He was excellently dressed; well he might be, for he had made money out of the war away in primitive San Pedro de la Pinatar, where nobody but himself had capital. And, of course, war taxes could not be levied there. Oh, a wise little coward was Bradley Collins for certain!

I forgot him in another moment, because Willis Rothery plucked me by the sleeve and begged me not to look at anything but the island.

"Man, man," he said, "it's the loveliest thing in the whole South Seas! It's fairyland. I'll never go away from here again."

"You said that," I reminded him, "about Raratonga, about Apia, about Easter Island—and Norfolk—and how many more?"

"I don't care," said the small poet, his curious, feathery, gold hair standing erect in the following breeze, his

short, champagne-bottle-necked figure tiptoeing as if it meant to take wing and fly. "San Pedro what-is-it is the gem of them all. There can be nothing lovelier."

Now as we looked at its pink, pointed mountain, with the rainbow rays of the sun coming up behind like an Aurora, and valleys running down to green lawns that touched the water, and cataracts, white as foam, falling to the foam below, the mate of the brigantine came behind us, and, laughing, said:

"Wait till you see Honeymoon Island."

"It can't be better," said Willis.

"It is. The proper name is Isla de Las Palmas, but most of us call it Honeymoon Island because all the brides and bridegrooms of the place go there. He"—with a thumb jerked over his shoulder at Mr. Bradley Collins—"will be going there the day after to-morrow. I suppose they're about the hundredth couple. The air must be thick with kisses by this time."

"Whom does he go with?" asked Willis.

"The prettiest girl in the South Pacific, damn him!" said the mate.

"Why should he be damned?"

"Mostly," said the big mate, sticking out his chin, "on general principles. Partly because we're all rather in love with Miss Almeria—Almeria de Chulillo y Rosas is her name—and some of us," said the big mate with a sailor's frank sigh, "rather hoped that we might have had the honor of escorting her to the Isla de las Palmas ourselves. She's got an English mother, you see, and there was some chance she might have been allowed to do her own choosing. But Don Alfonso de Chulillo y Rosas is the two ends and bight of a dashed old beast of a Spanish papa of the worst kind, and he did the choosing for Miss Almeria, and of course Collins could buy and sell any one in the island; so he's bought the old man, and he—Collins, I mean—and Ria are bound for the island on Monday." The mate said what he thought of Don Alfonso at some length in a simple, sailorly way that made me think of the rapping of a Maxim gun.

"And there it is," he said triumphantly, as if he thought the sight of the island as we swung round the headlands toward Pueblo Nuevo del Mar proved what he had been saying beyond dispute. "There it is; prettier than Pedro, too, ain't it? Just as much as she's prettier than—— Yes, sir!" He was gone.

We had come to Pueblo Nuevo, of all the ports in the South Seas, because Willis Rothery—excellent reason—liked the look of it upon the map.

"It looks so small and cool, out away in the nice flat blue sea," he had said as we leaned together over the huge Phillips atlas in the steamer library. I felt bound to remind him that pin specks on the map were often big enough to have railways of their own in reality, and that the cool blue coloring was not guaranteed "after nature." But Rothery swept me aside.

"Since I've sold 'The West Beyond the West' for sixty pounds," he said, "I feel a millionaire, and I've got to be wasteful."

"Which is just what millionaires are not, else they would not be millionaires," I observed.

"That proves what I say, because they are always coming down with a smack," he said triumphantly. There was a hole in his logic, but I did not care to point it out. And, anyway, I wanted to go to San Pedro de la Pinatar as much as to any place. And it turned out that the map was right, after all. There is only one prettier place than Pedro in the island world, and that place, as the mate justly said, is Honeymoon Island—where the man whom we all disliked and despised was to go the day after to-morrow with the prettiest girl in the Pacific.

It was none of our business, I reminded Rothery when we had landed and found our way to the cottage on the beach that we were to live in for a few careless weeks; I could do a good deal for Rothery, but I draw the line at living in island hotels, if there is any sort of a roof to be had elsewhere.

Not that I need a roof, anyhow. But that's not in the tale just now.

Rothery was all worked up about the girl. He was sure she was marrying Collins against her will; he wanted to go and talk to the British consul; he wanted to make the mother's acquaintance next day and remonstrate with her; he wanted——

"Look here," I said as we squatted on the floor together, cooking bacon on a Primus stove—I forgot to say that the house was not furnished—"you can't do these things, and they would do no good if you could. Remember that Miss Almeria probably likes the man well enough. Women love money; I dare say she's pleased with the match. The mate was jealous, that's all."

"What you say would be excellent," observed Willis, "if you believed a word of it, but you don't. Cut more bacon."

I cut some.

"Perhaps I don't believe it," I said presently, "but it makes no odds. This isn't any funeral of ours. And, believe me, Willis, Spanish colonies are no place for playing the giddy goat with other people's affairs."

Willis put another piece of bacon in the pan, and looked up at me with his huge blue eyes. He didn't say a word. Usually he talked about seven times as much as I did. The bacon sputtered; the Primus snored. Outside, beneath the night, Pacific waters, led by an unseen moon, drew resistlessly in to shore.

Willis was letting the bacon burn.

"Here, King Alfred," I said, "mind your work."

"There is no use your trying to deny it," he said. He was listening to the march of the waters, enormous, inevitable. "Love is the only thing in the world."

"*We* look like it, don't we?" I answered him.

"As for me," said Willis Rothery, "a man who isn't likely to see middle age stands outside things. As for you, you're a close-mouthed sort of shark, but you don't shun women for nothing. Some day—— But what I want is to see Miss Almeria marry the man she loves. If you tell me it's that rat of a Collins——"

"It ought not to be," I agreed. "Almeria, Almeria! The very name suggests romance."

"Almeria!" It was not an echo. It came from the open doorway, and in the doorway a tall man's figure, which neither of us had observed, was blocking out the stars.

A Primus doesn't give any light to speak of unless you spill a cupful of liquid bacon grease into the flame by getting up suddenly and upsetting things. Then it gives, if anything, a bit too much.

"You didn't descend from any monkey ancestor," I told Willis after we had saved the house by throwing coral sand over the floor. "Yours was a horse, and it bolted and shied. Especially shied. And now," I said, looking at the newcomer in the light of the electric torch he had snapped on, "will you tell us, Sam, how you happened to get out of your grave and turn up here?"

His name, by the way, wasn't Sam except by baptism of fire. He was Clinton Ward Ranger at his home in Pennsylvania. He was seven and twenty years of age now, six and twenty when I had met him on the Aisne, and, I think, was almost the first, or, at any rate, in the first hundred or so of the Americans who volunteered into the British forces at the outbreak of war. They called him Uncle Sam, shortened to Sam afterward, as he became popular. I do not know of any one who was more regretted than Clinton Ranger Sam when he, with a few hundred other good fellows, on the day of a famous charge, "went West."

"I got out of my grave," he answered calmly, "after they had dropped me into it by mistake because, luckily for me, the Boches came along and stopped their filling it in. My left arm wasn't any particular use any more, so I am out of the row for good. And as we're asking questions, perhaps you'll tell me why you, just landed from the boat,

are sitting here taking Almeria's name in vain."

"Why are you, for the matter of that?" I said.

The bacon wasn't spoiled. By the light of the torch, Willis had dished it, put the biscuits on our second tin plate, and set the billy of tea on a box.

I won't give Sam's reply. It was an excellent specimen of "the language of our army in Flanders." It seemed to suggest, through a certain amount of incoherency, that he held an unfavorable opinion of the Rosas father and mother, and a still more unfavorable one of Bradley Collins.

"Sit down and dine?" I asked him. "You can have a biscuit for a plate, and feel like old times. You sound as if you took a friendly interest in Miss Almeria, who, by the way, seems to have a pretty knack of setting the island by the ears."

"They thought," he said gloomily, "that all Americans were rich." He bit into a piece of bacon. "When the old people"—he paused to say what he thought of the old people—"found out that I had under four thousand dollars a year they shut her up and wouldn't let me near the house. And Bradley, the beast, came along. Do you know what he is?"

"General merchant and trader, I believe."

"Yes. And a skunk from Skunkville. Know what he did?"

"Got out of England in time?"

"That wasn't all. There's a lot of people who believe he sold information before he cleared. It can't be proved out here, but I guess he'd be slow to show his face in Europe. Or in America—nowadays. I will say this, we have shorter and better ways with skunks than you have. Let him even get as far as Tutuila, with the American flag above, and I wouldn't reckon much on his escaping. a lynching party."

"And he's marrying Miss Almeria?" asked Willis Rothery, with interest. "Why don't you stop it?"

"What can a man do in a Spanish colony?" He described the Spanish colony for our ears only.

The poet wiped a splash of bacon grease off his golden beard.

"Can't a man run away with her?" he asked in a small, sweet voice, picking out another slice with the eye of an epicure.

"She—she won't," said Ranger, his voice not quite steady. "I've tried, though it's been hard to find an opportunity. Almeria isn't a strong character; she's just a human—a human—rose. You might as well expect a rose to fly away from its stem. That isn't its job. It smells sweet, and looks like the loveliest thing on earth, and when the right man comes he carries it away. But the rose does nothing. As for Almeria, she just cries herself sick, and says—well, no matter what she says—it's mighty sweet, like herself, and it's enough to drive a man mad when he thinks she's going to be for some one else, after all. But when I beg and pray her just to slip away from the house at night—escape, anyhow, and come to me before it's too late—she puts her hands before her eyes and says: 'My father—my father, he would kill me! It is not fated I should marry you. Have patience,' she says, 'and in a very little time I shall die, and then I am past my purgatory. I will pray as hard for you,' she says, 'that Our Lady will open the gates and bring you home to me,' she says. Which is all mighty well, but I don't see the fun of it myself somehow."

"One wouldn't," said Willis.

I had introduced the poet before this, and had found out also why Ranger had looked us up on our arrival. It seems he had heard from the officers of the brigantine that there was a mad fellow on board, who ran in about the masts like a cat or the devil, and who could lift a barrel weighing a quarter of a ton. This appeared to suggest to him that his old mate of the Aisne might be somewhere about, and he had looked me up at once—I think with some vague idea that I might be able to help him. He would have caught at the idea of help from anything and everything above ground at that time. The near approach of Almeria's wedding day,

and, still worse, the actual arrival of the bridegroom had almost broken him down. I remembered Ranger in France as a handsome if rather beefy-looking fellow of the type known as "Gibson;" he had the big eye, the clear-cut mouth and chin, and the strong, oval face of that famous model, and the wide shoulders, too. In short, a figure attractive to most eyes.

Now, in the glare of the electric torch, I saw a face yellow-white and shiny, with sagging lips; eyes stained dark blue beneath the lower lids; body wasted to something near thinness; shoulders stooped as stoops the frame of the man who has bidden good-by to hope.

We were boiling water for tea. The Primus, relighted, kept up its snoring. The sea outside tramped resistlessly in and in. All the air was full of its wide, low sounding; of its gathering insistence; of the thing it asked, with ever loud and louder voice. There has risen no interpreter among the poets of men for that asking of the sea. But it is certain that each man's heart hears in it the cry of the want that has been to him denied.

I think it was driving Ranger near to madness. He sat with his food uneaten on his knee, staring at the blue flame of the Primus and listening. He did not speak for a long time, and then he said:

"One day more. Two nights more."

He sprang to his feet; it seemed that he could sit still no longer with that thought knifing his mind.

"And she loves *me!*" he cried in a voice that rang over the wind and the trampling of the sea.

Then Willis Rothery, the little poet, got up to his feet also and pulled me by the arm.

"Simon, you must do something," he said.

I was eating, and I did not want to be disturbed. When I am hungry I am hungry. And things can always wait longer than most people seem to think. But——

"What do you want me to do?" I said a bit sulkily, with a quid of food in my cheek. I might or mightn't have thought of something myself before anybody spoke at all. But I didn't suppose Willis would get under way very quickly; he needed plenty of sea room when it came to talking, as a rule.

Instead of which he went to the point as straight as a fish hawk dropping on a fish.

"You must carry her off," he said.

"There's only one objection to that," I answered, "which is that I don't want to marry the lady, and shouldn't know what to do with her."

"You would know," persisted Willis. "You would give her to your friend."

"You talk," I said, dropping a handful of tea into the bubbling billy can, "as if Miss Almeria were a parcel to be delivered when called for."

"To be delivered to the right owner," corrected Willis. "That's all you'll do."

There was silence in the little wooden house for a minute while I took the billy can off the Primus, let the latter go out with a "whiff," and dipped my pannikin in the tea.

"And I did want," I said after a swallow or two, "to stay in San Pedro for a few weeks. I've taken a liking to the place. And I'm being asked to go right off and make it too hot to hold us both."

"Pooh!" said Willis. "We can go anywhere. My poem 'The West Beyond the West' brought——"

"Yes, I know, and I've some of the Floréal money yet. But I hate being hustled, and you ought to know that." I took out my knife and speared a sweet potato on it.

"If one might ask," said Ranger, suddenly waking from a sort of trance, "what on earth are you two talking about?"

"I judge about your marriage to Miss Almeria," I said.

"Say that again!" he cried, catching my hand with such sudden force that the potato went into the pool of spilled kerosene upon the floor.

"I wish ye'd let a man finish his food," I complained.

"Damn food!" said Ranger. "Don't you see I'm half mad?"

"He's a white savage," said Willis. "You'll get nothing out of him till he's fed. He's like the *Colonel*—'we seldom eat, but when we do!' "

Ranger went out of the doorway as if a wild pig were behind him or a German before.

"I'll give you ten minutes," he shouted as he fled down the beach.

If there had been more bacon, he would have had to wait, but Rothery had been thoughtless in his buying, and Ranger himself had had or spoiled a bit of it. I ate what there was, a half pound, and finished the biscuits and tea. As I was wiping my fingers, Ranger came back. There was a light in his eyes that had not been in them when we met.

"Now, you brute, will you talk?" he said.

There wasn't anything left to eat in sight. I cleaned up my plate with a wedge biscuit, and wished there had been a bit more bacon fat. After that I lit a cob pipe, and sat back with my shoulders against the wall. Ranger and Rothery sat against the opposite wall. They watched me with so much anxiety that I could not enjoy my smoke.

"Well," I said, with a sigh, putting down the pipe, "I suppose it has to be done, Ranger; you had better shift all the fandanglements you can't do without over to the Isla de Las Palmas to-morrow after dark. I understand there's a decent little bungalow there."

"But why—how——" began the young American.

"If you put in too many whys and hows, the thing won't come off. Leave it to me, and don't know more than you have to. I promise nothing—nothing at all. But you had better be off on the Isla de Las Palmas to-morrow. And by the way, how many priests are there in Pedro?"

"Priests? There's Padre José, who's to marry them if I don't murder some one first. And the young father who's chaplain to the governor. And there's a silenced priest who lives away in the hills and sees no one."

"What's a silenced priest?" asked Rothery with interest.

"A priest who has been put out of the church more or less. He can still administer the sacraments because once a priest always a priest, but he doesn't. Padre Gonzalez did something or other, but I don't know what it was."

"You seem pretty well up in these things for a heretic," I observed.

"Heretic nothing, you black Protestant. I'm as good a son of the church as there is."

"You are, are you? It didn't stick out much in France. But I dare say Miss Almeria's been gathering you in to the flock again. Well, that's lucky, because it removes a difficulty; the padre may be on your side. I suppose Collins isn't a holy Roman."

"Not much. I don't think he has any more religion than a yellow dog."

"Well," I said, "you've got to be on the island to-morrow—any time after dark—and you've got to see that Padre Gonzalez is there, too. I don't suppose he'll be nasty particular about anything, if he has been chucked out. That's all."

"All? How are you—where is she ——"

"If there are any more whys and hows, I'm out of this," I said, and turned my back. I heard Willis whisper: "Let him be; he has the temper of a fiend at times, and you can't meddle when he gets like this." I did not hear much more, for it was time for me to sleep. I always sleep when I have fed well. My head was down on the floor, and the sound of the waters grew faint in my ears, fainter—vanished.

The next day was rather a long one. I had not much to do, and it was soon done. There was the whole day until sunset before me; I left the town—built, like all South Sea towns, in a line along the beach—and struck for the bay that lay opposite to the wonderful, beautiful Isla de Las Palmas.

I suppose there is not, in all the world, such a paradise for lovers. In the first place, it is very solitary. Pueblo Nuevo is four miles off in a direct line, and far out of sight. The island lies two miles from shore, just within the barrier reef, so that it is

at all times surrounded by calm water. As if that were not enough, it is further surrounded by a reef and a lagoon of its own perfectly circular. Outside this tiny lagoon the water is deep and as blue as the stuff that people put on clothes in the wash. The reef does not show at all unless on a stormy day. You just see the blue, blue sea and on it a perfect circle of pale-green water, in the middle of which rises an island rimmed with sand white as summer dust.

The island is high and green and covered with palms—coconuts, betel nuts, with their slim white masts and crowning ruffle of crimped leaves; fan palms, traveler's palms, with sunrise-shaped rays of leaf springing from stems crossed like clasping fingers; sturdy sage palms, leaved like coconuts, but standing on vast columnar trunks with diamond-shaped scales outside, and store of white, rich food within.

Buginvillæa, beloved of the Spanish race, has been planted freely about the shores, and its vivid purple clusters spring everywhere in masses of color that take away the breath. There is a walk on the island—only one—leading from the beach to the bungalow. It is a walk of diamonds. To make it boatloads of broken spar were brought from caves some miles away and spread out there in the sun, where every crystal point twinkles like a double-cut brilliant. On each side thick rose hedges blossom and fall, and blossom and fall again, through year after sunny year, with never pause nor rest; for these are isles where summer never ends.

Once, a long time ago, Honeymoon Island was owned by a Spanish merchant who had a young and lovely wife. There is a history, but I have not space to tell it here. They are dead; the island has passed into the hands of the town of Pueblo Nuevo, and is kept up as a holiday resort. Sometimes a caretaker lives there in a little tin hut by the beach; oftener, in the easy Spanish fashion, he lets his duties mind themselves and stays in the town. He was not there when I took a canoe and paddled over that clear, hot morning. Some one else was; I caught a glimpse of a black alpaca coat whisking round the corner of the hut as I landed, but I took no notice. I was not supposed to know anything.

I had a good look at the island, and thought it extremely pretty. The walk of diamonds and roses leads up to a bungalow like a big, fancy basket built by immigrant Chinese of split and woven bamboo. It has a very high and very pointed roof, like something on the stage, and there are lattices to the windows. You almost expect to see painted scenery about it and a row of footlights in front.

Instead there are orange trees covered with fruit and flower, and paw-paw trees, heavy with long chains of blossom, and the lavish, imperial trumpet flower, shaking a thousand ivory cornucopias of perfume almost too sweet to bear about the low posts of the verandas. It would be a fairy spot, I thought, when the moon dropped down toward morning and the sea was low and silent on the coral shore and the scent of the orange flowers breathed in through the windows into the lovers' home.

The southeast wind blew up from the reef wide and free, with just a hint of chill. I shook my shoulders and laughed. I'm not much on quotations, as a rule, but there's one that comes to me in hours like those:

> And out at sea, behold the watch lights die,
> And met my mate—the wind that tramps the world.

"Now let's see," I said aloud, "what provision the skulker has made for himself and his bride."

It was very good provision. There was a case of champagne and another of mixed Spanish wines almost beyond price—the kind that never comes into foreign markets, as a rule. There was a mass of fine fruit—mangoes, granadillas, pineapples, mangosteens, cherry-moyas, I don't know what. There were tins and tins of pâté de foie gras, caviare, asparagus, cream, cakes, sweets, bonbons, dainties of every kind. I heard the babble of fowls and turkeys

in coops outside, and there was even a specially imported cow, looking very unhappy in the yard. The kitchen apparatus suggested that Collins was bringing half a dozen "boys" with him. Clearly he was a man who liked to do himself well.

Across my mind for a moment flitted a vision of the bloodstained fields of France; of brave men in mud-soaked rags, enduring hard fare and wretched lodging with the unquenchable courage and gayety of our troops. And Collins, who had skulked and sold his country, was preparing for himself all this, not forgetting Almeria, "the prettiest girl in the Pacific."

The humorous side of it suddenly struck me, and even while my heart was hot with rage I roared out laughing.

"In the language of Whitechapel, it'll do Clinton Ranger a treat," I said to myself. "They say nothing's too good for the defenders of their country. Well, this defender is going to get a bit of what is owing to him all right." And, looking at the case of champagne, I roared again. "They'll find him in a day or two," I thought, "but the Rosas will be glad to make the best of it then."

Afterward I went out and inspected the roads of the island. And then I went back to the mainland and ran lightly over some of the tracks leading to the town. It seemed to me that I was in pretty good condition, considering all things.

Earlier in the day I had seen the captain of the brigantine. I must say he was a good fellow. He caught on at once to the fact that it was better not to ask questions or to know too much, and he readily promised, without asking why, though he may have guessed something, to have the ship ready to sail that night and get her out of harbor with plenty of noise and shouting as soon as he saw a light in the window of the house on the beach occupied by Rothery and myself.

All this being done, I went home and slept away the day. If overcivilized people only knew how convenient is that savage accomplishment of being able to sleep anywhere and anyhow at a moment's notice, there'd be much less mind-rotting printed stuff sold than there is, especially at railway stations.

Night came. I took off shoes and socks, dressed myself as lightly as possible in grayish stuff that would not show in the dark, threw a woman's cloak over my arm, and trotted to the cathedral. I love the dark. I can go my own pace then without fools staring at me; I can smell and feel all the wild things that are out and about like myself; I know the stir, the laughing, of the hunter's heart awake.

Not a soul could have seen me, even if it had been moonlight, as I hid in the lee of a great buttress. Hunters of the wild have their ways. It was eight o'clock and very dark; the moon was past the full and not due to rise till late. By the time she was up I should be ready for her.

I did not move for hours. The night mind I once owned in savage Roro and Kuni had left me; I could not watch without thinking, without knowing that I had a body or a mind as in the old days.

Thought came; I could not help it. There is not much use in telling what my thoughts were. Perhaps they did not do me credit. Man is a selfish animal at best. I will allow that I asked myself more than once if I were a fool or no and what good to a man it was to fill another's mouth.

She came at last. I had known she would; a Catholic girl is sure to go to confession the night before her marriage. She was with another woman older and taller; her mother, I guessed. Behind the two walked a native, carrying a cushion and a prayer book. How did I know it was she? Even if I had not been able to see in the dark almost as well as a wild boar or a dog, I should have known, from the very outline of her shadow, that it was Almeria. Beauty such as hers shows in the slightest movement of hand or foot, in the flutter of a curl of hair, in the bend of the neck; above all, in the walk—the royal step of one who, knowingly

or not, holds in her hand the scepter of the world.

Now I had seen many beauties, and Almeria I did not really see at all, but I knew at once, from the very way her tiny Castilian feet brushed the ground, that here was something above all that I had ever known. "Queen, queen!" I thought. "And they were going to give you to a traitor!"

She was not long at her confession. I waited, bracing myself up, drawing a deep breath now and then, and tightening my mind for that which was to come. For even to me the task was likely to be hard.

The padded door swung again silently, letting out a gush of candlelight and incense. Then, with a spring like that of the Yela folk when they leap on an enemy in the dark, I reached Almeria, flung the cloak about her head and face, and tossed her over my shoulder. If you mean to travel fast there is only one way of carrying a woman —even as the Romans in statues carried their Sabine prey, flung over one shoulder with the little ankles clasped tight in a man's right hand and the head and hair streaming down. They don't like it, but it does not do them any harm.

The woman who was with her did not even see what had happened till I was away. Then she uttered a shriek that was enough to wake the dead at the bottom of the sea. If she had contented herself with shrieking, I might have been hard put to it, for she would have raised the town, but luckily she tried to pursue—the native, nativelike, having fled—and her age and fat winded her inside of fifty yards, so that she had to stop and gasp and cry, and could not scream again till I was down to the waterside.

I had no business at the waterside, but I desired it should be thought I had, as even at that lonely hour of evening people might still be about. As it turned out, I was seen, and the raising of the brigantine's anchor just after— Willis was faithful with the light— made every one suppose just what I wanted. Anyhow, the very audacity of the idea I really had conceived would probably have prevented any one from guessing the truth. I heard afterward that the Rosas got a launch and chased the ship ten miles out to sea. They overhauled her at last. I wish I had been there to hear old Rosas talk.

From the waterside there was a short turn into the bush. I followed it, secure now that I was not pursued, and ran a mile before I paused to breathe, and, more important, to let Almeria breathe. It was very dark where I halted, under the inky shadow of a banyan tree that spread its pillared corridors over half an acre of ground. I set her on a high root, took the cloak off her face, and said at once, before she had time to cry out, the word that I knew would act as a charm:

"Clinton!"

She was half insensible with the rush of blood to her head, yet she was already fighting me feebly with her tiny hands. God knows what she thought. But Clinton's name struck her motionless.

For a moment she sat still, and then —I shall remember it—well, longer than I wish to do—she flung her arms round my neck and cried: "My darling!"

I have often wondered, since then, would I have told her? And how soon?

But she did not need to be told. I suppose she knew what it felt like to kiss Clinton Ranger. I dare say he wasn't as teaklike about the face as myself. Anyhow, she drew back with a cry at the second kiss, and said, gasping:

"*Madre de Dios!* Who are you?"

It was very dark. I could only see the whitish blur of a small face in the middle of an incredible cloud of hair. "So it was that," I thought with amazement, "that was swinging against my knees as I ran." She had some very delicate, very sweet perfume about her; I don't know what it was, but it set one's heart beating. Or perhaps it was her voice—honey of gold; every tone a love note. The love note was not for me; she would have spoken so to

a blind beggar in the street. But I know now why Almeria, whose face I had not seen, was princess of hearts in Pinatar.

I did not answer her at once. I let a second or two pass. The breeze that stirs before moonrise waked in the trees and sighed as that night wind of all night winds does sigh for the things that have never been. A woodchopper bird struck sharply far away—once—twice. I felt that I must speak quickly, or I might never speak at all.

"I am Clinton's old fighting mate and friend," I said. "Since you would not come I'm bringing you to him."

She caught her breath.

"I am afraid," she said. "Take me back." But I knew she did not mean it.

"You will go," I said, "where I choose to take you. I'm not quite like other men."

"My soul, you are not!" she said.

In the moment of stillness that followed, the woodchopper bird struck once again; a flying fox swept past with drumming wings, so close that we —Almeria and I—felt the wind of its going.

"Why did not he do his own work?" she said in a very low, sweet tone. A thought came into my brain that made me wonder if I were going mad. Then, swift as light, leaped the remembrance of what Clinton Ranger had been to me in the thunderous days of war—Clinton—"Sam"—my friend.

I laughed, and spoke out in a commonplace, careless tone.

"Clinton can do as much as most men," I said. "But he could no more do what I have done than he could walk from here to that island on the bottom of the sea. Are you rested, Miss Rosas?"

She did not answer for a moment; she seemed to be very busy twisting up her hair. Then, in a dreamy voice: "Take me, señor, where you will," she said.

There's not much left to tell. I carried her—not head downward now—to the beach where the canoe was waiting. I paddled her over to Honeymoon Island. Ranger was on the shore; he ran into the water to meet her, and lifted the tips of her fingers to his lips with the reverence of a slave saluting his queen. There was a figure in the background—an aged figure in black. I saw two shadowy forms of natives waiting, and wondered what they were for till I remembered that there would have to be witnesses.

In the cottage by the diamond pathway, among the orange flowers, lights were burning.

Willis began to ask questions when I got back. I silenced him. For a day or more I did not talk. Willis is accustomed to that kind of thing from me. He did not trouble me till the brigantine, which was conveniently due to leave for Tahiti, had cleared the harbor and the wind of the open sea was beating in our faces. Then he broke out.

"Simon," he said, "you've simply got to tell me what she was like."

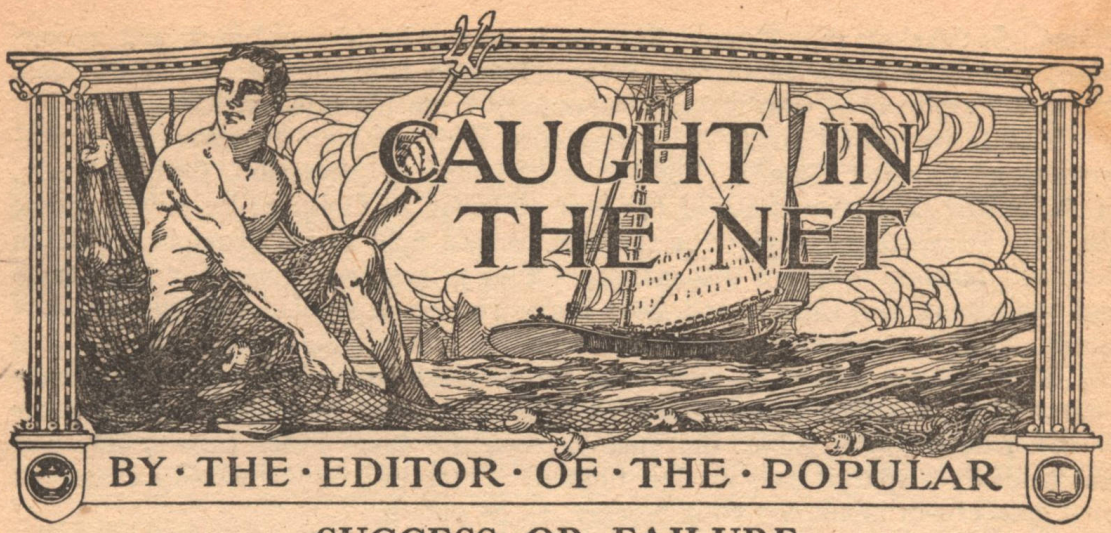
I looked at him. The wind was fresh, and, as on the day when I had wandered over the island, it had a hint of cold. I felt the chill of it in my voice as I answered him:

"I do not know."

The next story in this series, "The House in the Clearing," will appear in the March 20th issue of POPULAR.

TWO MEN NAMED OUSE

THE railway mail service of the United States boasts what is a real biological exhibit. It has on its pay roll two men named Ouse. One of them always signs his name M. Ouse, and the other L. Ouse.



BY · THE · EDITOR · OF · THE · POPULAR

SUCCESS OR FAILURE

YOU see a man past middle life, shabby, bent, and worried. His strength is gone, and his enthusiasm, and you know that he lacks the only practical substitute for strength and enthusiasm—money in the bank. And if you are young and sensitive you have shuddered, for you have just looked upon a failure.

There are many failures who can lay the blame to neither dissipation nor inefficiency. You know at least one man who is a failure because he is a victim of a bad habit that the reformers and preachers seldom mention—the habit of not saving money. James J. Hill went on record as saying that the one essential of the man who would succeed was his ability to save. The time to save is now—not next week or next month or to-morrow. The way to save is to put your money in safe-keeping, where it will work for you. The safest custodian in the world for your money, safer than any bank, is Uncle Sam. He is giving you every inducement to save now and to put your money in his keeping. He will pay you more interest than a savings bank, and give you better security than has ever been offered before to any investor. The whole wealth and power and strength of the United States are behind his guarantee.

The Rothschilds made a fortune buying British bonds during the Napoleonic wars. During our own Civil War more than one great fortune was piled up by men who had the foresight and self-denial to help finance the United States. The system adopted by the government at present is fairer to the small investor. You can save something, and the time is now. We are saying nothing at all about patriotism—all good Americans have the habit of patriotism. What we are urging is the habit of saving, which is not as strong among us as it might be. Buy some sort of a Liberty Bond, somehow. The money will all be spent here, anyhow, and will come back to us in some form or another.

THE NEW FARMER

NOTHING bodes better for the farmer's increasing his crop yield than the sporting rivalry that has arisen among the farmers themselves. The introduction of a sporting element will turn the trick where columns of print will fail.

In an obscure country paper we learn that one Waldo Thomas, a farmer near Aurora, Illinois, is still the unbeaten champion plowman of the United

States. It develops that Farmer Thomas is known in field and barnyard nation-wide; that he recently came out of retirement to take the starch out of some enterprising plowman who claimed supremacy from his Eastern farm.

The farmers of Canada have developed their plowing contests to the proportions of Olympic Games. For the second time in succession, Bert Kennedy, of Agincourt, has been declared the best plowman in Ontario; he carried home the 1917 sweepstakes trophy for the best plowed field in his province. Fifteen thousand farmers attended this match. Other prizes were given for best teams and equipment, first class in sod, boys under sixteen in stubble, two-furrow plow in sod, contest for Indians only, and so on.

That farmer you whiz past in a car probably doesn't know an efficiency expert from a scientific salesman, he probably never heard of Tris Speaker or the Yale-Harvard game; but just mention the name Peter Lux to him and watch his eyes sparkle and his lips tighten. Peter Lux is the world's champion corn grower—or champion corn *breeder,* as he puts it.

There is the case of twelve-year-old Eugene Durand, who made a world's record growing fourteen bushels of potatoes from one potato with fourteen eyes. Durand's home is on a farm near Albany, New York. He grew the prize potatoes in a State contest and continually uprooted and transplanted the sprouts.

All this is making the farm interesting, and farm work a sport—the real and only food problem, after all. When we can get fifteen thousand farmers out to a plowing match, the food problem will soon cease to be a problem.

SOCIALISM AND THE WAR

WITH the pendulum of world government swinging downward or upward, according to your personal opinion, toward socialism, the socialists of America have split into two factions.

It is one of the most remarkable political phenomena of our history that at a time when the socialistic movement of many years seemed nearest fruition, the socialists should fall out among themselves and occupy hostile camps more irreconcilable than Republicans and Democrats on the night before presidential election.

The dissenters, headed by Charles Edward Russell, contend that the socialists' anti-war campaign is anti-American and pro-German. Whereupon the other faction reads Charles Edward Russell and his followers out of the socialist party.

The patriotism issue among the socialists is merely a battle cry for the mob.

The real cause of the party split is the belief of the rebels that the war is a good thing for the socialists; that the government, as a war measure, is being compelled to do what the socialists have for years been agitating—take over the big basic industries; that it will work so well in war time the people will never permit reversion to the old order.

The stand-pat socialists continue with the propaganda that all wars are capitalistic and against the interests of the masses.

Both sides are undoubtedly sincere.

From Murphy to Food Controller Hoover, the best politicians predict the advent of socialism in our government as a powerful factor shortly to be reckoned with.

It isn't so much a question whether the voters will want to drop socialistic measures after the war. They may not be able to. To compete with socialistic

efficiency abroad, when peace comes, we may have to fight it with its own weapons. The indications are for more, rather than less, socialism in America after the war—whether we like it or not.

ELIMINATING UNNECESSARY LETTERS

THE National Association of Credit Men is one of our most important institutions for business good, with the exception that it needs a press agent to herald its findings to the soldiers of the industrial army. At present it is in contact only with the captains and general staffs of industry. Many of our strikes and much of the class hatred arising from fool dreams of the economic impossible would be eliminated if we all knew more about this credit outfit's investigations of such things as the cost of hiring and firing men, relation of wage apportionment to dividends, and safety funds for fighting price-cutting concerns which in their ignorance of costs drive others to bankruptcy with them.

The latest activity of the National Association of Credit Men comes from its war committee on office and credit economics. It is a movement to eliminate millions of unnecessary letters and other business details.

The purpose is stated to be "so that seven persons—girls, boys, or men over military age—can do the work of ten men." The better argument would be efficiency to help the whole country by holding down prices, for a famine in soldier material is more imagined than imminent.

Thousands of rubber stamps that bear the word "unnecessary" have been distributed; department heads will scrutinize outgoing mail and use the stamp on letters to be returned to the correspondence men who dictated them.

It would seem that this plan of J. H. Tregoe, secretary of the association, would cost more in executives' time devoted to reading the letters than it would save; but the work will be educational and it will not take long to show the correspondence men what is necessary and what is not.

And while cutting down the number of letters, it would be an excellent idea to cut down the contents of the letters.

The story of the Crucifixion was told in three hundred and twelve words. That would make a good sign to hang up in every office.

Business letters are nearly always loaded down with unnecessary phrases like "yours of the 28th ult. read and in reply will say," "the contents of your esteemed communication of the seventeenth of August have been duly received and carefully considered and in reply will say," et cetera.

All this is useless camouflage.

It becomes a formidable item in costs when we reflect that large businesses answer nearly all correspondence with form letters. "Send him Number Eighty-three!" orders the correspondence man, tossing an inquiry or complaint to his stenographer. We recall a fellow who, sending a railroad his vituperative protest about finding creepers in his berth, was delighted with a lengthy and courteous reply until he found a memo inclosed with the letter by mistake: "Send this fool our bedbug letter."

Say the average form letter contains only ten unnecessary words. Stenographers copy these useless words unendingly and the total counts up—probably ten to eighty per cent of their time totally wasted.

Some efficiency experts even advocate the elimination of "Dear Sir" and "Very truly yours" as totally understood and unnecessary.

Business houses should hire or borrow expert newspaper men to "copy read" their form letters—cut out all unnecessary words and condense them for clarity. That would mean a real saving. Most business letters have to be read twice to get the exact meaning. Writing is a trade, and every big newspaper has several men on its staff who do nothing but rewrite and blue pencil unnecessary words. All writing needs to be cut. Even this editorial might have been cut in half, we suppose.

"THE NOBLE GAME"

OF all the games man has invented in which the ball is the principal item of play, billiards is the one demanding the most exact and delicate manipulation. Hand and eye must be skillful and accurate, the nerves steady, to achieve success. Philosophers and kings have been devotees of the game, and fair ladies have found in it one of the few indoor sports at which they might win distinction. We recall that Shakespeare makes Cleopatra an addict of the game when the ennuied queen summons Charmian to billiards. And Mary Queen of Scots, on the eve of her execution, complained to the Archbishop of Glasgow that her "billiard table had just been taken away from her, as a preliminary step to her punishment."

History fails to record the origin of the game, but likely enough it goes back to ancient days. One highly interesting bit of evidence as to its antiquity is contained in the will of Cathire More, one of the lesser kings of Ireland, who died in A. D. 148. His majesty bequeathed: "To Drimoth . . . fifty billiard balls of brass, with the pools and cues of the same material."

Our curiosity is piqued as to how this historic game was conducted with implements of brass. If we have a billiard fan among our readers, perhaps he may enlighten us.

But our interest is mainly centered on the present-day mode of playing the game and its recent revival among us. People of all classes are becoming more and more aware of its charm and the mental and physical benefits derived from its pursuit. Even children have had devised for them a toy game involving the principles of billiards. Apropos of this, Judge Ben B. Lindsey, of the Denver Juvenile Court, who has won fame as a psychologist on boy nature, said:

"I know of no more wholesome form of recreation that could come to the American home. I believe the plan of having a billiard table in the home would do more to abolish evil than all the police departments in the city."

Billiards affords the mind pleasant mathematical exercise and quickens the perceptions. To the body it brings a series of excellent and unusual exercises which really reach every part of the muscular system, toning it and also beneficially stimulating the circulation of the blood. If a player wore a pedometer he would be astonished at the distance walked in an evening of billiards.

It is one of the few games for young and old, man and maid, and children.

The Last Draw

By Harry C. Douglas

With a trooper of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police on his first big case—a case that presents ethical, physical and emotional difficulties of supreme moment

FOR the tenth time within the hour Richard Dean peered through the small, rectangular window of the rude shack, every nerve tensed, every sense aquiver with hardly repressed excitement. He was a trooper of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, that splendid body of picked men and gallant riders which has swept—and kept—the Canadian prairie frontier clean of the scum that flock into the new countries, where all classes and creeds of men and women gather in the feverish quest for quick money. Dean was young—a mere boy—but all the fine tradition of the Red Riders fought with him and for him.

Now he was on the first big case that had been assigned to him single-handed. A notorious character had been shot dead outside the Dominion Hotel in Calgary. The killing occurred late at night, and the murderer, holding off the few spectators with his revolver, had managed to escape, though not before he had been recognized as Cyrus E. Walsh, registered at the Dominion as from Boise, Idaho. The young trooper had run his man to earth, trailed him to a deserted shack in the Alberta foothills. He had found the place empty, but with clear signs of recent occupation—blankets lay tumbled into a heap in the rough bunk, the remains of a meal were strewn squalidly on the bare deal table, the ashes were still warm on the open hearth.

In the room beyond, screened by two faded, musty burlap curtains, were packs and a few loose odds and ends. Some distance from the shack was a crazy, tumble-down barn, but the young policeman had feared to put his horse there lest, on his return, the murderer should be warned of the ambush set for him. For the same reason he had been afraid to hobble the animal and turn him loose outside, and the horse had been led inside and quartered in the inner room, while his master settled himself to await the coming of his man.

"Out to get something for the pot most likely," he mused to himself, as he found the remains of a prairie chicken in an old camp oven.

Dean stood at the window, his eyes glued to the trail winding away over the rough, rolling prairie, broken everywhere by flat-topped bluffs, studded sparsely with stunted poplars. His man must come that way. At the rear the shack backed up to the face of a rocky butte; any one entering must ride or walk round to the front, no matter which direction he came from.

Winter was at hand. The ground was held hard in the grip of a black frost; the sullen, leaden-looking sky was full of dun, banked-up clouds containing snow. The massive bulk of the Rockies loomed up indistinctly; he rather felt than saw their brooding immensity.

"He'll have to come soon now, if he's going to beat the snow to it," soliloquized the trooper, turning away from the window.

He cast a regretful look at the ash-strewn hearth as he snuggled down into his tunic length coonskin jacket, the collar of which he wore turned up high over his ears. In spite of the cold creeping into the old shack through every nook and cranny, he dared not light a fire, for the smoke spiral would be certain to warn his quarry. Tilting his stiff-brimmed cowboy hat low over

his features, he strode up and down to keep his blood in circulation, his long, lean legs in the blue pants with the yellow stripes down their outer sides and tucked into the smart, tan riding boots with their bright spurs, forming an unwonted note of color in the drab interior.

Once he went cautiously outside. The mountains were quite hidden now by the thick haze that had descended over everything. A chill wind wafted down from the peaks; a smoky yellow streak ribboned across the horizon; an uneasy soughing—almost a moaning—filled the air. Something soft touched his upturned face.

"Here's the snow all right," he said aloud, struggling with the feeling of utter depression that was beginning to weigh him down. "It'll be blowing a regular blizzard within an hour. If he's not here in sixty minutes he'll hardly make it at all to-night."

Once more he took up his position at the narrow window, his heavy service revolver laid out on the sill, ready to his hand. Slowly, inexorably, the minutes passed. Then he started in the now rapidly gathering gloom, clutching for the pistol; but before his fingers closed on the butt he drew back his arm with a half-angry laugh.

"Must be getting a touch of the nerves," he muttered, realizing that the sound that had so startled him was caused by the stamping of his horse in the inner room.

Now he could scarcely distinguish objects in the shack. Outside, the ground was covered already with a thin, white carpet; the air was fuller of the falling snowflakes every minute. At times a savage gust of wind caught them and whirled them along parallel with the earth, piling them into irregular drifts.

All at once he stiffened. A dark form loomed up through the gloom shrouding the trail. Its head was bowed to the wind, the snow showed like white dust upon the black sombrero and Mackinaw. With his heart beating fast, though his nerves were steady as strung whipcord, Dean grasped his weapon and stole quickly along the wall till he was right behind the door. Here he stood motionless as a statue, every muscle tensed for the few desperate moments ahead.

The sound of muffled footsteps; then a stamping and slapping, as the man ridded footgear and clothing from the snow that clung to them. The latch clicked, the door swung inward, grating on its rusty hinges, and the man stepped across the threshold. A cold, sweet gust of air blew into the dank interior. Then the trooper spoke from the shadow:

"Throw up your hands! Quick! I've got you covered!"

The figure seemed to freeze in its tracks, even as it half turned to close the door behind it. Snowflakes whirled into the room. Then two arms were slowly elevated.

"Keep standing just where you are—right there in the doorway. I'll drill you if you move a muscle."

His boyish mouth set into a hard, straight line, his blue eyes glinting coldly like ice upon which the sun shines, Dean thrust the muzzle of his pistol into the other's chest, as with his free hand he searched him swiftly, deftly.

"That's what I want," he said grimly, taking a revolver from one of the side pockets of the Mackinaw. "Now hold your hands out and I'll give you these in exchange," and, clanking ominously, a pair of bright steel handcuffs glinted dully in the failing light.

A look of sudden, desperate resolve leaped into the newcomer's dark eyes; his teeth snapped together as he determined to risk all on a lightninglike clinch with his captor. His brain, working at high pressure, had been able to show him no way of escape in the brief minute or so that had elapsed since his entry, but the manacles hurried him to a decision. Even the crude chance of a sudden grapple was better than feeling that cold, deadly touch on his wrists as the steel bands of shame closed relentlessly about them. And the gallows waited for him, anyhow.

Even as he prepared to spring into

galvanized life a slight sound from the inner room caused him to change his mind. A look of heavy despair replaced the eager light that, despite himself, he had been unable to keep out of his eyes as his brain hardened into decision.

"Seems to be your show this trip," he said nochalantly, holding out his hands.

"You bet—and I'm going to keep it mine."

The fringed gauntlets were drawn off and flung down, the handcuffs clicked to. Then——

"Stay just as you are."

Moving backward and sideways, his eyes never leaving the man, Dean groped for, and found, the table. A flicker of light showed as he struck a match. Then the glow of a kerosene lamp filled the room. Dean went and closed the door.

"You can sit down now." And he indicated one of the chairs before the dead hearth. "I've had this waiting for you, too," he went on, taking down his lariat from where he had hung it among some pots and pans. As he roped the man securely in the chair, he remarked with a grin: "Just to make sure of enjoying your company to the full—don't want to spoil the pleasure I expect by having to keep too close an eye on you."

"Good heavens! And so I'm roped—two ways—by a kid, a regular rah-rah boy."

The man's expression was a curious mixture of disgust, admiration, and surprise. He had nodded his black sombrero off into the corner as he went to the chair, revealing himself as a middle-aged, dark, clean-shaven man with grizzled hair and a pair of keen, snapping black eyes.

"You'd never have got these on me"—and he glanced down at the handcuffs—"without a scrap, if it hadn't been for the other fellow you've got planted in there," this with a nod to the inner room. "By the way, when's he coming out?"

Dean was puzzled for a moment, and then, smiling broadly, crossed the room and flung back the burlap curtains.

"You mean him?"

The man in the chair cursed softly as he saw the blanketed form of the policeman's horse. Aloud he said:

"Anyway, he served the purpose of a man. If he hadn't moved and made me think there was a pair of you laying for me, you'd have had to scrap to take me; it would have been you or me out—for keeps." And the keen eyes narrowed to slits as two deep furrows bit into the face between cheeks and lip corners.

"It would have been you, then; I wasn't bluffing, but I'd have been sorry. I'd rather take you in alive—as I will now."

All the boyishness faded out of the stern young face as Dean spoke. Then he set about making a fire from the chips and logs lying in a corner. Soon a cheerful blaze was roaring up the chimney; coffeepot and camp oven gave off appetizing odors.

Outside it was quite dark. The wind was howling round the shack in an almost continuous blast. The air was thick with driving snow; the blizzard was roaring down on them from the mountains. Once or twice the crazy building fairly shook beneath the might of the storm as Dean moved about preparing the meal. He knew that he would have to stay the night where he was; it would be sheer madness to tackle the trail. Even if the blizzard passed, treacherous drifts were piled everywhere, masking the coulees that crisscrossed the prairie.

That was the strangest meal he had ever eaten—a meal shared with a murderer whom he was taking in for trial and almost certain hanging; a meal discussed in a shack as temporarily cut off from the world of living men as if it were situated in the manless wastes of Baffin Land.

Dean was surprised to find his prisoner a cultured, educated man, a man of wide personal knowledge and experience and even wider reading. He was one of the most interesting talkers the young trooper had ever listened to.

Something of the wonder he felt must have shown on his face, for as they sat before the fire after their meal Walsh said, smiling bitterly:

"Too bad I don't look the part of the assassin, isn't it? I can see you're thinking how strange it is that a fellow like I am should be wanted for murder?"

The young policeman flushed.

"I beg your pardon," he said frankly.

Walsh laughed outright.

"You Britishers are certainly a strange people," he said. "You send out a boy to corral a man—a killer at that—and then the lad apologizes to the bloodstained wretch just as he might to a respectable citizen with a family of charming daughters."

The ironic tone made Dean uncomfortable. He merely replied, however:

"Well, by our law, y' know, a chap's supposed to be held innocent till he's proved guilty in full court. Anyhow, I'm not expected to insult a prisoner—especially when he's down and I'm on top."

A gleam of admiration shone in Walsh's dark eyes.

"I always liked a game sport," he said pleasantly, all the bitterness gone from his tones. "I'll say this for you fellows, too—you do 'play the game,' as you call it. How'd you come to join the Mounteds?"

"Oh, I hardly know; love of the 'game,' I suppose." And the blue eyes were misty with pride in the tradition of the famous corps of which he was a member.

"Still—as you no doubt know—I'm guilty enough. Proud of it, too. It's not always a crime to pass a man out."

The blizzard howled round the building more loudly than ever as Walsh spoke, as if a legion of mocking demons, riding down the track of the storm, were laughing aloud with evil glee at the confession.

"I'd rather you didn't tell me that—or anything else you may want to keep to yourself," said Dean. "It's my duty to inform you that anything you say to me I shall have to use in giving evidence against you later."

"That's all right; I'm not telling you anything that can't be proved up to the hilt. I said I was proud of shooting that—that—cur dog, and I mean just that. Now he's dead I don't care much what happens to me. I'd have fought—fought like a bearcat—for my freedom as long as there was a chance for me, but as it is I don't care. There was nothing much left for me; I'd proved that the last few weeks."

Dean had allowed his prisoner one hand free, taking the precaution to set his chair so far back from the table that the lamp was out of reach. Now he had taken him, he meant to hold him, to hand him over to the law as his duty was, and lighted lamps were dangerous things to put within reach of desperate men.

Staring moodily into the fire, murmuring the words as if he were talking to himself, Walsh said:

"And only a short while back I was an attorney with an established reputation and practice, and with a fine career before me. Now I'm an arrested felon awaiting trial—and the rope. I'd never done anything I was ashamed of. I was slated for the next political campaign. There were big things—only myself could put limits to their size—ahead. The swine I shot always was a waster who'd never been known to do a decent thing in his life. The world's cleaner and sweeter for his riddance, but the world demands my life of me, the man who passed him out. He *was* a waster, wasn't he?" he broke off suddenly, shooting the question at the policeman almost fiercely.

"I guess he was," the latter agreed. "He certainly smoked up an unsavory record for himself out here—crooked real-estate deals, oil swindles, and worse things. He was an awful rotter with women, too; in fact, an unspeakable beast all round."

"Yet you'll see me hang for killing him?"

"A life's a life," said Dean simply. "Before the law all men's lives are equal. Up here, y' know, we don't allow the private citizen to go about act-

ing as judge and executioner all rolled into one."

"I know; I've heard a lot about your British law, but you can have too much justice—if you buy it at the cost of mercy. Anyhow, what do you think about it yourself? Presuming I'm all I've told you I am, and he was—what you know him to have been—would you say his life was worth as much as mine?"

Dean stirred uneasily in his seat. His simple, direct, honest nature had never concerned itself much with such speculations. He always did the duty that lay plainly before him as he saw it. It is men like Dean who get the world's work done—get it done quietly, efficiently, earnestly—leaving others to talk about it and argue.

"That's nothing to do with me," he replied, meeting Walsh's searching gaze frankly. "That's for the law to say; my duty is only to hand you over to those who will judge you."

"The law—judges—duty!" Walsh spoke with bitter scorn. "When you're as old as I am you'll know that men put over their greatest and most hideous injustices on their fellow men with words like those on their lips. But don't think I'm squealing; I'm not. I knew the price I might have to pay—and it seemed worth even that."

Dean regarded him curiously.

"I say, how you must have hated the bounder to feel that way!"

"I did. If I could be sure there's a hell and know that my hand had sent him to it a few years before the devil claimed his due, I'd die radiantly happy."

The man's features were transformed, rage distorted, passion seared. With a slight shiver the young trooper rose and flung more logs on the fire. The window, thickly incrusted with frozen snow, gleamed as a white oblong in the log wall. The storm had now reached its height. It roared round the shack like a sentient, evil force of destruction, tearing with monstrous hands.

Without a word Dean dropped back into his battered chair and started rolling a cigarette. A thought struck him.

"Like to smoke?" And he held out the brown cylinder tentatively.

"Thanks," said the other, taking it and leaning forward to the lighted match held for him.

Both men smoked on in silence for some time, each busy with his own thoughts. Suddenly Walsh threw his half-smoked cigarette into the fire and straightened up as far as his bonds allowed.

"Will you let me tell you something—man to man—something you'll give me your word of honor never to repeat?" he asked eagerly, a note almost of pleading in his voice.

"Really I'd rather you did nothing of the sort, y' know," said Dean, fidgeting uneasily.

Walsh persisted:

"This is probably my last chance to speak freely to a fellow human, man to man. I would like to tell you why I killed that—that beast." And again he seemed incapable of pronouncing the dead man's name. "What I want to say has nothing to do with my trial; I shan't tell the court anything of it—wouldn't if I'd a hundred lives to save by it. I shall plead guilty to the killing; that should satisfy your law. Why I killed is my own affair surely, if I'm willing to pay the supreme price for keeping my secret. Only I shall pay that price easier if I know before I go that some one who will live on after me knows the truth. I'd like to know that *one* man held me free from the crime of mere, vulgar murder after an ordinary brawl. You're clean; I can see that. It's the last—the only—favor I'll ask."

"But—but why? It can't make any difference. I wish you wouldn't."

"I won't if you put it like that; only you're the man who will make it possible for the law to hang me. I thought, under those circumstances, you might be generous enough——"

"Oh, damn it, man! If you feel like that about it, go ahead. But, you understand, it can't make any difference. As soon as it's humanly possible I'm going to take you in."

Dean was almost angry. He had a

true British dread of touching upon intimate things, of stirring the deeps of human emotion, but the other's appeal to his generosity had been too much for his warm, impulsive youth.

Walsh's hard face softened.

"Thanks, and I'll promise to cut it short. Well, then, my sister and I were left orphans. We'd just enough to skimp along on while I got through my law course and got established. She was only a child; she kept house for me all through the lean years. She knew nothing about life, and I didn't want her to—life's not that pretty. I was wrong there, though; there comes a time when every single one of us has to stand up and face the Big Thing—whatever it is—alone; no one else can help us then. And when that time comes it's better to know things."

Walsh spoke as one utterly world weary. Vaguely sensing what was coming, Dean felt more and more uncomfortable. It was too late for him to draw back, though. After all, too, it was actually a small enough favor the man had asked of him.

"I had to go East—to Washington. It was the beginning of the future for me—the future for which I'd worked, for which we'd both worked through all those lean years. For her it was the Big Thing—and she was left to face it alone. The man came, as he does to every woman sooner or later. She was fascinated, poor child, by his suave, smooth ways and his easy, persuasive talk. It was the old, old story that is always so pitifully new. When I got back they'd gone. I was crazy. The thing was up to me two ways—I should have told her more and put her on her guard a little; I shouldn't have left her. Soon after, he deserted her, of course; did it particularly cruelly. Told her he was through. Worse than that, he tried to get her to go to one of his friends—a crawling thing of his own kidney. It killed her. I swore to get him. I traced him all over the Northwest till I found him—up here. I shot him; that's all."

Putting up his free hand, Walsh shaded his eyes. Dean looked away from him; then he got up and went into the other room, busying himself with the horse. He was very pale when he returned. Somehow he knew that he had been told the simple truth. There was a terrible simplicity of earnestness in the narration, an intensity of suppressed feeling that convinced the policeman of that. In spite of his youth, too, he could sum up a man pretty accurately; many honest, simple-hearted men can. Besides, his calling had helped teach him to sift the wheat from the chaff.

After fidgeting round the room for a while he said, without looking at his prisoner:

"As a man, I don't blame you. You couldn't have done anything else. I—I've got a sister, too, back home."

Walsh removed the hand from before his eyes.

"Then you understand," he said softly. "I'm gladder than ever to have told you. And it will make things easier for me, as I said."

"But it makes them harder for me," burst out Dean. "I wish to God you hadn't told me! But, as I warned you, it can make no difference. I have no more recognized right to be your judge and hold you justified than you had to kill that utter beast. You've made it a thousand times harder for me to go on—but I shall. Man to man, I think you did the right—the only—thing. But as a policeman under oath I'm going to take you in."

The young trooper sat alone before the fire. Walsh lay asleep in the bunk, one hand handcuffed for safety's sake to a hook in the wall. Dean settled himself to keep lonely vigil till dawn. With all his heart he wished that his prisoner had not burdened him with such a load. He put the case to himself; he was to be the main instrument in sending to a shameful death one who had done only what most red-blooded men—what he himself, as he frankly admitted in his inmost thoughts—would have done under similar provocation. And, withal, he never wavered in what seemed to his simple,

honest nature the higher duty. As it had been many times before, the jealously guarded honor of the Red Riders was left in the two hands of one of the humblest of their membership; but it was safe there. No personal considerations, no personal judgment or desire must interfere with that to which he was sworn by oath and honor alike.

His senses began to dull. He had been in the saddle almost night and day for a week, brain and muscles under continuous strain. Now reaction was setting in. The cozy warmth of the shack, too, contrasted with the driving blizzard without, worked its subtle way with him, drowsy as he was. The pipe fell from between his teeth; he never noticed it. His head sagged forward onto the arms outstretched upon the table. He slept.

Dean woke some time later with a start that carried him half to his feet. The fire on the hearth had died down; the bitter cold had crept in. He was numbed and stiff. It was not that, however, that brought him leaping to his feet. The shack was full of acrid smoke, from the writhing, bellying clouds of which tongues of flame started.

Had his pipe, fallen from his lips unnoticed, caused it? Had he moved in his sleep and upset the lamp on the rickety table? Had some ember rolled or flown from the fire? These questions surged madly through his rapidly clearing brain, fighting with fumes of slumber and fumes of fire. To them he found no answer. The place was afire; that was all he knew.

Fighting for breath, he lurched across to the window, which he smashed with a blow of his fist, never noticing the trickle of blood that ran from his gashed wrist. The rush of cold air only fanned the fire to more violent blaze.

"Of course; what an utter fool I was to do that!" And he cursed himself for his impulsive act.

Through fire and smoke a voice—gasping, thick.

Walsh! The man would be burned to death as he lay! And the horse!

Fumbling blindly for the key of the handcuffs, Dean groped across to the bunk, burying mouth and nostrils in the crook of his elbow. Stooping down, he loosed the manacle.

"Get out—quick!" he muttered, as the steel fell to the floor with a faint clanking. "I'm going after my horse, poor brute." And he was gone.

The air was clearer in the inner room, but only for a moment. Even as the policeman let the curtains fall to behind him they caught fire, and a rush of yellow, limned smoke eddied in. The horse plunged and snorted with terror, his iron-shod heels beating a wild tattoo on the log walls. Dean called to him soothingly, stretching out a hand toward the dim shape he saw through the acrid murk. Another blast of flame and smoke rolled in. He tried to cough the strangling stuff from throat and lungs.

Then something struck him on the head. He reeled wildly, lurching against the wall like a drunken man. And then beside the wall he sank down into a huddled heap and knew no more.

When Dean slowly drifted back to consciousness every bone in his body ached. Iron bands seemed clamped about his head, eating into his brain. At first it hurt him to think. He lay as a man awakening on the morning after some great crisis in his life, who, knowing that something vital has happened to him, scarcely as yet puts it into concrete shape before his reason. Gradually thoughts began to take definite shape in his brain, which cooled and steadied. Slowly, with excruciating torture, he sought to rise.

What he saw seemed to be a fair-sized cave. At the far end was a stall in which stood his own horse, its blanket burned into holes, its mane and tail singed to the roots. Before the mouth of the cave a great fire burned; a stable lantern hung from the roof. The leaping flames threw great shadows up and down the walls; they seemed dancing a grotesque measure there. A darker, more solid, shadow fell across him; Walsh flung an armful of wood onto the fire and strode in.

"How are you feeling about now?" the late captive asked easily.

"Not too bad, except for my head—though that aches a little less infernally now, I think. Tell me, what on earth happened? I remember the fire and all that, but nothing else."

"Your horse must have kicked you on the head—or maybe it crowded you against the wall as it streaked for the open. It came out with a rush like a cannon ball just after I'd got clear myself."

The trooper passed a hand over his brow wearily. Then he felt his head all over; it was swathed in bandages.

"How the devil did I get here?" he inquired, puzzled. "And who fixed these?" And his hand strayed again to the cloths upon his head.

"That? Oh, I guess I'd something to do with that. After the horse got out I hung around, expecting you to make your exit every second. You didn't, and then I knew that somehow you had gone down. I tore into the wall of that storeroom proposition with ax and mattock, and—oh, well, I suppose I just got you out in time."

"But why? You'd surely no call to love me, and you'd been given a chance in a thousand to make a clean break for yourself."

"I don't know; I'm that kind of a fool—couldn't stand by, and, in a manner of speaking, see you done to a frazzle under my very eyes."

"You're white, Walsh; by God, you are! Not one chap in a hundred in your shoes would have done it."

"Nonsense! Besides, if it hadn't been for you, I wouldn't have got out of that oven alive myself. If you hadn't stuck around, first with me and then with your horse, you could have saved yourself easily. Any man who takes the chances you did to save a killer and a pony is a man worth saving. I sent one worthless life out of the world; maybe I've evened matters some by keeping a worth-while life in it."

Frank admiration shone from Dean's blue eyes, which gleamed strangely light in his blackened face.

"You told me you liked a game sport, Walsh," he said simply. "I think I know why now." Then, with characteristic eagerness to forsake intimate personalities trending upon the emotional: "But what's this Aladdin's cave affair we're in?"

"It's just plain cave—in the bluff the shack backed up to. It was used as a sort of summer barn once, I guess. When our late residence burned down over our heads I brought you and the horse here and started the fire; there was plenty of kindling handy, I might tell you." And the man smiled grimly. "The blizzard's begun to let up; day'll be here pretty soon now."

Somewhat gingerly, Dean rose to his feet. A sudden thought struck him, a thought that must have occurred to him long before had he not been so bewildered by the rush of events, had his ordinarily keen wits not been dulled by pain and shock.

"What are we going to do about it, Walsh?"

The other laughed.

"Well, I've got the drop on you now," he said easily, with a meaning motion to his ominously bulging side pockets.

"You have; but what about it? It's your show to call the turn now, y' know."

Leaning against the cave wall, Walsh reflected deeply for some time. Then he said:

"Here's the situation as I see it: My life is forfeit to the law. You were sent out to get me—and did so. When both our lives were in danger you freely risked yours to save mine—a life that to you and the law you represent was forfeit. My getting you out as I did doesn't quite even matters, for you wouldn't have been in much danger if you'd let an arrested murderer burn instead of hang."

"You're coming down jolly hard on yourself, Walsh."

"I don't know about that. I'm trying to put the thing in its logical, rational light; that's all. Just to even the score I'll tell you what I'm game to do."

"Yes?"

"I'll play you for my freedom—and that means my life."

Dean was puzzled.

"Play me? I don't quite get you."

Walsh drew a pack of cards from an inner pocket.

"Here's a deck of cards," he said. "We'll each draw three times—alternately. If you win, I'll turn over the artillery to you and give myself up. If I win, I go free. Is it a go?"

The young policeman remained deep in thought for some time, his brows puckered. Walsh need not give him the chance at all, he reflected; in fact, it seemed a quixotic thing to do under the circumstances. Besides——

"I'll take you up," he said, curt decision in his tones. "And I want to say that you're doing a deucedly sporty thing, y' know."

"Forget that. We Americans like to 'play the game'—to a finish—too. Besides, life as a hunted felon isn't a thing to hang onto particularly. There's something else; no matter how much a man may deserve to be passed out, it isn't good to be the fellow who does it. There are dreams—and more real things—in the night at one's elbow always. I'll let fate decide. If I win, I'll take my chance on finding peace with my conscience and dodging the crowd that's howling for my blood. If I lose, I'll know it's best that way—because there could be no more rest for me—and then I wouldn't want to go on. Let's draw," and, breaking off abruptly, he squatted down and placed the cards before him on the rocky floor.

"Righto!" said Dean, sitting opposite, cross-legged, his spurs gleaming redly in the glow from the fire. "How shall we count? Fix it anyhow you like."

"Every card up to ten to count what its spots show, ace to count one, king three, queen two, jack one. You score; that all right?"

"Surely." And the trooper took out notebook and a stub of pencil.

Walsh produced the two guns. Both were loaded. One he put on the floor beside the pack of cards, emptying the shells from the other into the palm of his hand, after which he slipped it back into his pocket.

"Cut 'em then; I'll draw first," was all he said.

The shadows ran up and down the walls more wildly than ever as that strange game began, as if a host of formless spectators were peering over the shoulders of the pair who were playing for a man's life.

Dean cut the pack and laid it down again. Walsh drew out a card.

"Bad start," he said grimly, holding up the ace of spades. "Couldn't have drawn lower—and it's the card of death, they say."

Without replying, Dean credited his opponent with a point. He drew himself; the ruddy light showed the queen of hearts.

The trooper caught a jumble of red spots as Walsh half faced his next card as he removed it. The man threw it across to him without comment; it was the eight of diamonds.

In the tense, strained silence, the crackling of one of the logs burning in the fire at the cavern entrance sounded like a volley of shots.

Dean's smoke-begrimed hand, with the purple smear on the wrist, where the blood from the wound caused by the broken glass of the shack window had congealed, was not quite as steady as usual when he reached out for his second card.

The king of diamonds.

And then Walsh leaned forward for his last fateful draw—that draw upon the result of which depended either life and freedom or arrest and a shameful death. He showed no signs of any undue emotion. Only the black eyes narrowed a little; the lines cut into the face slightly deeper from nose to lip corners.

"Only a five-spot, but you've got to draw a ten to beat me," he said, sudden light leaping into his eyes as he held up the five of clubs. "I'm fourteen—and you're five."

Dean had to fight hard within himself to maintain his outwardly cool demeanor. His heart pounded against his ribs furiously; a lump seemed stuck in his throat, making it difficult for him

to breathe. He was always ready for a fight, body to body or gun to gun; but this cold-blooded playing for life or death was different. First hesitating doubt and then spasmodic swiftness controlled his hand as he made the deciding draw. Looking at the card he held between thumb and forefinger, he sank back almost stupidly.

With something that sounded like a muttered curse, he flung from him the ten of diamonds.

Again silence. The hissing of an eddying whirl of snow, flung by a gust of wind upon the fire, seemed to fill the cavern with sound. Then Walsh rose to his feet with a strained laugh.

"Fate's given me my answer sure enough," he said. "Better pick this up before I'm tempted too far." And with the toe of his boot he slid the revolver along the floor toward the policeman.

Dean stared at the man's boot dully. He noticed, with a feeling of idle wonder that such a thing should strike him at such a time, that one of the eyelet holes was torn through. Suddenly he stood up and jerked out:

"Damn it, Walsh, I can't! I won't!"

"What's biting you, man? Go ahead; I don't mind. I'm yours twice over now—the first time you took me, the second time fate handed me over to you all nicely trussed up and ready for the slaughter."

"No, no, I tell you!" Dean spoke earnestly, for him almost passionately. "The first time the law—through me—took you. I wasn't a free agent then; you belonged to the law, not to me. But you're mine now. Fate, chance—whatever you like to call it—gave me your life. I give it back to you. Take it, get out as quick as you can, and—oh, so long, and good luck."

"You mean this, Dean?"

"Mean it? Of course I mean it. Only don't jaw; get out. I don't even want to see you go. Anyway, my horse needs a rubdown."

Without a look toward the man to whom for the second time he had given his life, the trooper went to the far end of the cave and busied himself with his horse.

Five minutes later, when he turned round, he was alone. Dawn was breaking with a sickly, leaden light. He kicked something with his riding-boot toe—the revolver. Looking idly down, he saw that a card—two cards—had been placed beneath the weapon.

He picked them up. One was the ace of diamonds; the other was the photograph of a happy, sweet-faced girl. In the slumbrous eyes brooded serene innocence—her heritage before the "Big Thing" came. The resemblance to Walsh was obvious.

Turning it over thoughtfully, he read, scrawled hastily across the back in pencil:

You're ace high—the squarest, whitest man I ever knew. C. E. W.

And tearing the ace of diamonds to pieces, Dean reverently put the photograph in his pocketbook. The other's delicately proffered gift was appreciated as fully as even he could have wished.

THE ADVENTURES OF MURDOCK

VICTOR MURDOCK, who recently was appointed to the Federal trade commission by President Wilson, is the original and prize-winning red-headed political adventurer. He first entered Congress as a Republican. He next entered Congress as a Progressive. He now holds a job because his paper supported Wilson for the presidency.

He is the man who made the historic remark:

"Nowadays in politics the people look once at the platform and twice at the man."

The Tiger Lily

By Will Levington Comfort

Author of "Gobi," Etc.

There is a master alchemist, Mattulaw, in this novel, who dreams the ancient dream of transmuting metals. But his best effort results in counterfeit. Working on human material—a street arab—he is more successful, and makes an extraordinary man out of an ordinary boy. But is the boy real or counterfeit? As the story concerns his manhood, we see him put to the test of the acids and fires of the world, the flesh, and—yes—the devil. Jimmy Bard affords an excellent contrast to Ewan Craigie in the opening novel of this issue. You will be interested in comparing them.

(A Three-Part Story)

Part One—Espiritu Santo

FOR many days in succession Jimmy Bard had sold a paper to a quick-stepped, brown-bearded, hunch-shouldered man whom he supposed to be a German and not quite right in the head. This was years ago, before the world was changed. Jimmy was only fourteen at the time, a Boston street boy—plus; narrow-faced, with steady, humorous eyes already touched with hardness, and remarkably smooth, quick hands. His back was straight, his figure slim. Much of the natural evil of the boy was developed, all the good still potential. His whole life was altered on the afternoon that the bearded man dropped a gold piece in his hand instead of a penny.

Jimmy had not looked at the coin. It did not touch his fingers, merely his palm. He did not know until afterward if he were on trial or if the other had made a mistake. The weight and magic of the metal shot some new message to his brain. He glanced at the piece, and called. It wasn't honesty—destiny rather. He would have been glad to profit by the old man's error, but the coin itself forced his voice.

The man took it back, gave him a copper piece, not even an extra one. Jimmy suffered a haze of revolt, but found himself more interested in the touch of the gold than in moralizing on the expensiveness of honest impulses. The next day the Bavarian brought him a little book. It was occult, but fascinating—all about gold; matters that the world does not yet know, but which the boy wanted to believe so badly that he succeeded. Lerdie's romantic monograph upon the perfect metal would doubtless be called a fabrication to-day by the millions who live and die for the minted product and its representative vouchers.

Three or four days later the Bavarian halted abruptly and said:

"Boot down your babers und gome with me."

The two lived together for seven years. The stranger was a master alchemist. The more Jimmy Bard learned in years afterward, the more he came to respect old Mattulaw, who was homesick, but couldn't go home to his country, and whose wife and seven daughters wouldn't come to him because he had been disgraced in their eyes. It was from the books in Mat-

tulaw's rooms that Jimmy found out the mania of his friend and that such manias had always existed.

Mattulaw was a transmuter. He dreamed of learning nature's secret—to make gold of the less evolved metals by artificial heats and pressures. The idea is dangerous to enter upon, because the span of human life is too short. The more a man knows about it, the greater the complication; yet at the same time the greater the lure and the more challenging the certainty that the thing can be done. The longer a man works the wiser he becomes in many other ways, because the attendant studies involve half the arcanum of metaphysics. There are many by-products, but an alchemist really touched with the divine madness, as Mattulaw was, hasn't the time to develop them, except for bread and the means to supply the essentials for continued research and experiment. Mattulaw was like a man engaged in writing his life-work, who stops to do a potboiler now and then for money to live on; only the Bavarian's potboilers were matchless copies of coined gold.

This activity lost him his wife and children. Munich did not recognize the art of his workmanship nor the mastery of his knowledge. It was merely traced to Mattulaw that he had graven a startling duplicate to coins made by the government. The alchemist had been forced to flee without even his dignity. The houseful of women that he loved and slaved for had taken the sides of the neighbors and the town, but Mattulaw's love went on and on. It was only one of the beautiful facets of his innocence that he could not feel himself a criminal; but he knew very well indeed that he was one of the loneliest men in America.

The boy he found in the street helped him through the last years. Jimmy Bard was slow to realize that his master was the greatest of living counterfeiters in the point of workmanship, though his output was small as a mystic's income. There were months in which Jimmy was told to read, when he could not find anything else to do.

They lived together in two upper rooms. Mattulaw encouraged the boy to eat well and often; gave him little lectures on the human organism, especially the spine, how to promote the beauty of health and preserve its rhythm. The alchemist ate but once a day, and very well indeed. His coffee was a conquest of taste and material, his drop of wine a triumphant vintage. He did his own shopping, made his own bread, even milled his own wheat. When he brought home a bit of fish or ham it was a perfect thing of its kind. He loved to share and impart his wisdom and his fastidiousness—a temperate man with ideas upon everything, and always from the hidden side of things.

Jimmy Bard learned what to wear and what to eat. He learned much that the future generations will find of primary interest in regard to stars and bees and wheat and especially sunlight. He learned how to make coffee and brown a fillet of halibut in olive oil; how to bring out all the vitality latent in many commodities. He pored during many hours over the Pythagorean philosophy, the writings of Paracelsus, and much that lies between, accumulating a metaphysical education more like a young Brahman than an American; incidentally he became a master coin maker.

As his own intelligence increased, his admiration for Mattulaw become more infolding. He shivered often at his first idea that the old man was cracked—a street boy's conception of a philosopher of noble parts. Often a sentence spoken in the long evenings of talk recurred afterward in rounder and larger meaning, until the fragment took on its own perfect relation and became like a whisper from the Universal Mind. Jimmy Bard knew things were happening to him, but he didn't realize until afterward the scope and force of his training during the seven years.

Jimmy had a natural cleverness of hands, but the Bavarian set free the gift by making him think *ahead* of all manipulation. This was the first step—to make a strong-lined mental picture

of the thing his hand was about to do. Second, Bard was taught to think *with* the action, until the process became automatic. He had much leisure, and followed to the limit his natural bent for pastimes.

At twenty-one he could have made a living at billiards, and was a pistol shot with a remarkable imagination, having perfected what was called afterward the pulse shot. In card games, especially in those which have to do with the dealer, it was easier for him to win than not—even though he had a natural aversion to cheating, which is the sin against chance. The champions of all the greater games touch the mystic end of performance in matter, whether they know it or not. Mattulaw had taught Jimmy Bard to know what he was doing.

Gradually the young man took charge of the potboiling. Mattulaw's five-dollar gold piece cost three hundred and thirty-three cents, but one had to cut it open to learn that it was not worth five hundred. Jimmy was less than twenty when he made a number of these as well as his master. The assistant now supported the alchemist, who spent his time trying to make a furnace to contain a ray of energy that was almost pure power, like sunlight incredibly focalized. Jimmy was not greedy, but his success thrilled him somewhat, and he loved gold for itself. He increased the quantity of the half eagles, and finally, against the warning of the Bavarian, essayed the ten-dollar piece. His product was a marvel and his distribution consummate, but after a year of marked success luck broke.

There wasn't a whimper from the old man. He was tired, he said. They had a sort of last supper together—before separation. Arrest was inevitable, if they remained. Jimmy did not see the alchemist stir a gold solution in his own coffee, but noted that the old man began to talk very rapidly of God and art and the world. At last Mattulaw announced what he had done, adding that all was well, that he did not have the inclination to become a fugitive again. His mind may have wavered a little as he announced that he would now rejoin his wife and children in Bavaria——

"Und the bolice of Munich vill not be the viser," he added, "for I vill be oud of the body hereavter, undil I gome again."

Also, before the poison stilled his vitality, he advised the young man to laugh at the world as much as he pleased, but to want little; to make that little as a clerk or laborer or a doctor, but not to do government business with gold, because governments never forget and do not count fine workmen above bunglers. Also—the old face was shaken with dissolution by this time—Mattulaw confided to the younger man that he loved him very tenderly and had loved him from the beginning.

Jimmy Bard didn't take Mattulaw's advice—at least not for three years.

There was a group of pale, nervous, quick-eyed men who had much to say about his workmanship who were glad to do the ugly part of it, most joyously taking over the disposal end and urging production at any risk. This set of associates played upon Bard at last like a spray of acid on an open wound. He was more adapted to a monastery than for the society of the hounded, the swollen and twitching martyrs of dope and drink, who were interesting enough sociologically, but hard on one whom they regarded as a chief or fellow gangster. The fact is, Jimmy Bard missed the romance of the counterfeit game. That had passed with his old friend.

It wasn't his own work that had sickened him. The gamble, the danger, the ideal of fine workmanship; there was zest and glow about this end, but he had to trust his fortunes to the underworld, from which he had come as a boy. Queerly enough, his life with Mattulaw was in direct contrast with all that he had known before. The old was spoiled. He hated this second emersion. He had not the patience nor the brand of power to deal with an iron hand among the social outcasts who served his capacity to produce a

good thing. He knew them so well that their presence pained—the scoundrels with polished finger nails and the big beasts who fancy they "get by."

He would have quit, anyway, but his game fell through a second time. Greed, not his own on this occasion, but the rapacity of the wolves, pulled down the whole performance. The government agents gathered so quickly that Jimmy Bard didn't have a chance to get the cash at his several banks. A few dollars, little more than enough to take him to the border, and his one good friend, Copley, an almost mature bull terrier, were all that he took in material way for his twenty-four years mainly spent in Boston.

There was a shot or two at the last minute, connected with Jimmy Bard's get-away. It was a matter of getting Copley. Jimmy didn't shoot to kill. His eye and hand were never better. He saw the papers afterward of the detective's recovery. But it was an added heaviness to the whole game. Jimmy had the hunch that if he hadn't drawn a gun on leaving Boston he would not have been compelled to draw one so many times afterward—a superstition, perhaps. In certain ways he was a giant; in still others he was a child.

II.

Jimmy Bard was ready to take old Mattulaw's advice in full now—ready to earn his living with his hands, ready to permit the various governments to do their own minting. He was two days' journey on foot below the Texas border at Mariposa, only a dollar or two left, Copley at his heels.

He was tired now, and inclined to breathe a trifle heavily on the hills. Two days had shown how far from physical fitness he was. These were the mutton hills of Espiritu Santo Province, he had been informed—a wide, windy pastoral, much sunlight, plentiful water. The lights of a town pricked the dusk of the second day—a town also named Espiritu Santo. The white man entered in a kind of dream.

The smell of sheep had given away to the gentler redolence of cattle at evening. There was jasmine and wild rose and the untellable lure of the Orient in the dewy breath of the deep-drinking palms. Also there was an aroma of wine, garlic, and cooking greens, not so romantic but quite as exciting. Jimmy Bard entered the fonda and sat down in a long, low room, Copley, very tired, soiled, and devoted, at his feet. Candles were brought and wine in stone, then vegetables and firmer foods—all by a dusky-faced daughter of the house, who fancied she was serving some divinity. Between courses, Jimmy talked with the dog:

"Copley, my son, we've had a busy day——"

The terrier looked up sidewise, cocked his ears, and "woofed," by which he indicated that as soon as supper was over he was ready to have another busy day or go to bed, according to the man's suggestion. Copley's white vest was not beyond reproach, but the rest was brindle and didn't show. His face had a smashed-in look, but it didn't hurt him, a prenatal arrangement. Copley talked through his nose. Bard called it singing.

"I understand it. No one else could possibly get you," the man would say. "Singing of the nose; all regular, Back Bay dogs have it."

A veiled woman came in and took a table across the room—a table that lay in the path of the man's eye without turning his head. The veil was thrust back, and the candlelight gathered about the loveliest throat and face that Jimmy Bard had ever seen, and he had been hopelessly dedicated to beauty all his life, though worshiping afar. She was a full-blown woman, earnestly interested in life. A stranger was magic in the little Mexican village—even the girl who brought the food felt that. The woman at the table spoke to the Back Bay dog, but Jimmy couldn't even answer for his friend. From time to time he turned a glance across the room. Once he met her eyes.

All the loneliness and longing, all error and shortsightedness, all youthful blundering and discrepancy, rushed be-

fore him rapidly, and not at all at random. No sin was missed.

Another veil came off. There were tints of sunset bronze in her hair. She spoke to Copley softly again—in English. Somehow Jimmy had supposed her Spanish. He expected her to be joined presently by some elderly capitalist. She looked as if she were cared for by a retinue of slaves, yet had put on the final perfections herself—dewy and fresh in every detail. He would not have allowed the road ram Copley to approach. He would not have approached himself. A man would have to come up out of the ocean to such a woman. He finally realized the quality of her voice—low, mellow, deep wonder shades. Her eyes had a touch of yellow; she would be a flame.

Jimmy walked out into the tropic evening. Southern moon, turfy street, silent palms on either side, breathing deep after the vivid day, lights to the left and a swinging door—Mexican herders up against a white man's faro layout. The talk in near Spanish had to do with "turns" and "splits" and "coppered" bets. There is only one game like that—wayward old faro. Yes, a white man was dealing. A cool breath of wine came out through the open door. Jimmy walked until there was nothing but sand and moonlight. He was deeply disturbed, sat down on a hummock, and Copley stood before his face, leaning on one shoulder and looking worried, as if the town and the moon and his master's soul were all held in running order because he kept his mind on them.

"A woman and a faro bank, Copley ——"

"Woof——"

"I should think you would remark to that extent. A woman and a faro bank, and the name of the place is Espiritu Santo."

The singing of the nose began again.

Jimmy had paid for supper, lodging, and breakfast. The coppers remaining did not render him eligible for dalliance with the twin lures of Espiritu Santo.

"We might keep on going, Copley," he remarked after a considerable smoke.

Copley changed his weight to the other shoulder.

"Then again we mightn't. As for to-night, we've got a berth coming. It's paid for, and the last thing of the sort we purchase. To-morrow it's a job for us."

The next dusk, five miles from the village, Jimmy sat down at the doorway of a little dobie hut that faced the western mountains. He had found a job with remarkable ease. He was to ride sheep range—a herd boss. The reason for the distinction of *boss* was that he was white. Señor Corostad's thousands of sheep were pastured in a system of hill ranges, extending from the town to a distance of twelve to fifteen miles. He employed native herders entirely, but these were inefficient dreamers, unless watched over by some one whom they feared or respected. Jimmy Bard, who had taken the name of "Redmond" since crossing the border, did not look cruel and stern as Señor Corostad would have liked, but he was given a trial. The dobie hut was now his headquarters; the tether of ponies at the door was for his range riding.

"Yes, we got the job, Copley," Jimmy was saying. "You must be very abrupt with me on pay days, if I suggest riding off toward town in an evening. Our business is to herd the herders who herd Señor Corostad's sheep. We don't know how much we draw—in fact, we forgot to ask—but we get grub and this little dobie all to ourselves."

Copley sniffed dubiously.

"I know—I know; but this is experience, my son. We must forget our aristocratic bringing up. A bit garlickish, but one must not look a gift hut in the corners."

Jimmy knocked the ashes from his pipe against the mud wall. In the long silence that followed the moon rose and the candle wick sputtered ominously within, and the terrier's eyelids drooped, drooped.

"Lord, what a beautiful creature!" Jimmy muttered, still in the thrall of the night before. Copley arose sleepily and sat down again on the man's coat.

"And she called you a beautiful dog——"

"Woo-oof!"

"I know better, Copley, and you know better. Why did she do it?"

This was deep.

"And a faro bank. I can almost hear 'em playin'—the young things. We stick by each other, eh, Copley—long as we live?"

The song began. The candle wick tipped in its own oil; the moonlight came in through a broken hole to the east, and the two lay down together.

III.

It was a full month—brimming full. The herds prospered; Jimmy Bard, now "Redmond," won the hearts of the herders; the young lambs throve, and thirty identical golden days ranged themselves side by side. He did much riding, covered many miles each day, was especially conscious of this on account of Copley's tendency to lengthen out. The terrier needed much nourishment to keep him from getting gaunt. Jimmy told him that he had to look twice, at a distance, to be sure he wasn't a jack rabbit.

There were no books. A great reader always, the man now wanted to read himself word by word. He had kept away from town. His hands were hardened to rope and leather. Sometimes he felt himself a man as he had never been; sometimes he felt himself a youth, callow and untried.

His was an uncommon mixture of metaphysical knowledge and underworld training. He had very little hope ever of getting the understanding of men, but he sought very hard in his present solitude to understand himself, to make good with himself. The world had shown him no workman, no friend, no intelligence—such as old Mattulaw had been. Love and loyalty to the old alchemist had become a really important and upstanding fact of his present life. He had known the underworld, before the coming of his friend and since. He had seen the underworld with the eyes of a boy and with the eyes of a man. It had punished him in early years and served him later. There was no use lying to himself. The underworld was not made up of big devils, big revolters against the smugness of trade and society. It was made up of cats and rabbits, weasels and coyotes—some parrots, too, some wolverenes—animals of a little less class than those of the main menagerie.

"Honor among thieves—hell!" Jimmy had mused, looking away into the clean mountains to the west. That was his direction always now—to the west. Some time he would reach the ocean. Supper was over. Copley was in the midst of a dream. His hind legs were twitching—a sort of race at short circuit, putting dream miles behind him—a brave struggle, perhaps, to be a regular sheep dog, which wasn't his natural business. There was a soft thud of hoofs on the other side of the hill, and the woman rode in.

"Hello-o!"—a thrilling voice.

Copley came up with a tentative growl. Jimmy spoke to him first, then to the woman.

Twice since the night of the fonda she had ridden to the hill dobie alone—once in sunlight, once before at evening like this. Each time she was different. In the candlelight at the fonda she had seemed possessed of all the Mediterranean seductions—to fill perfectly the balcony-and-mantilla ideal of old Spain. In the sunlight she was the daring American spirit, larger and fairer and more frank. In her first coming in the dusk, as now, she was Romance itself—something of the pines and birches of the mountain country of America. Each time she had driven deeper into the Northerner's heart.

He had not really touched Romance before. Association with Mattulaw somehow precluded that. Since then women had been merely figures passing to and fro. The women of the underworld were often to him figures of confusion and alarm. This gamester in all

the affairs of men had hardly taken a hand in games feminine. He had concluded that he was destined not to play, but he didn't know the stuff he was made of. Beauty heretofore had made him helpless. Invariably it had appeared as the property of another man. Somehow he drew the idea that beauty must be bought.

"Hello," she said again. "Not lonesome yet?"

"Yes."

"Why don't you go?"

"I'm not through——"

She dismounted without breaking a line of beauty for his quick eye—a dangerous and difficult instant for a woman who rides astride. She had somehow held his eye during the quick performance. She swung the bridle rein forward and approached.

"The more I think of you, the more I see you're quite a fellow, Redmond ——"

He smiled at her words, pulled a grass cushion out from under Copley's head, and they sat down close together —the early dusk like a tinted mist between them.

"You've got wonderful hands," she said with a light, quick movement forward. "I noticed it the first thing."

"They're not much good here," he answered.

"Señor Corostad says you are the best herder chief he ever had——"

"A man could have one hand tied behind him and be half dead in his head for this job."

She was still looking at his hands.

"Perhaps they're safer idle—just at present," he added.

"What did they do—or was it something they did not do?"

"They've made many mistakes, but it wasn't their fault; rather the fault of a head that wanted things——"

"We never get past that. A man who doesn't want things wouldn't be interesting. Say, what's the matter with you? Your eyes have seen a lot—eyes of a man who's not afraid. What's the matter with you?"

She was leaning forward, studying his face.

"You mean because I stay out here?"

"Yes——"

"I didn't like my part up there," he answered.

"And so you ran away?"

"Yes."

"We all run away—sometimes." She spoke with a queer drawl. "I'm thinking I'll try it again soon."

Their eyes met and held. Her whole manner changed as she went on:

"You're young—younger than I am, and I'm so young it's tragic. I can't stay here, but I don't know what to do—where to go. I've been reading a lot of magazines, pictures and stories of the East and West—stories and pictures of this country and China and Bohemia—of war and business and love. Those story people would think I'd lived a whole lot, but I don't know anything about their life. I've lived, but not like that."

"How long have you been here?" he asked.

"Six months," she said with a trace of self-scorn.

"What are you doing here?"

"I'm not doing my best, and I'm going to quit," she declared. "I think I've been trying to be domestic—taking care of Señor Corostad's children. He wants me to take the place of their dead mother. He promises everything money can buy; he calls me Hermosa ——"

"That means beautiful, doesn't it?"

"They called me 'the Tiger Lily' up in the Texas camps."

Her eyes were sullen now, as if challenging him to think the worst.

"I didn't find what I was looking for up there," she added. "Nothing like they write about in the magazines. I thought it might be down here. He has everything that money can do with ——"

"You mean Corostad?"

"Yes. These are his hills; these are his sheep. Espiritu Santo is his mainly; the faro joint, too. He'd do anything for me, but I'm not a mother of another woman's children—not me. He's fifty—and calls me Hermosa——"

Her voice broke a little—the first

time the volume had betrayed itself. It was like the slip of a cellist on a wonderful instrument. But the picture in his mind would not break; a kind of changeless integrity there. She had challenged him in bringing the worst.

"I was trying to make myself believe I could stand it; then you came," she added.

"What did I do?"

The deeper night roved across her eyes. She turned her face to the far ridges of the west. All the purples were gathering in the haze—the dark-touched garnets and amethysts which linger a little on dry, torrid hills after the sun goes down. Jimmy Bard waited for more words, wondering if the quiet of his heart was not the higher intensity which approaches stillness. Also he wondered at the marvelous plan of her making—the big-lined glory of her, the inability to lie.

"It was the call to move on again—that you brought," she answered. "It was like the stories and the pictures. It made me remember how young I was—made me forget how rotten everything is up there——"

"You don't want to go back to the camps?"

"I was honest there. I'd have to sell something here that I never sold there—myself. I tell you he's fifty, and he calls me Hermosa——"

The whole western world was wonderful with afterglow at this moment—no extraordinary color or cloud effects; just the haze with its magically lit horizon borders—a shield of golden smoke where the sun had gone down, its central jewel whitened to incandescence. Over the hills a peace brooded, making them forget the tortured world, yet tightening the pull of their hearts.

"I saw the back of your head," she said queerly. "The place was different instantly; I mean that night when I came into the fonda for supper and found you there. Then I saw your face. I don't know how to say it, but there was a kind of Boy about you—a Boy I never saw exactly. But I should have known he would come. Then I knew I wasn't fit for him when he came. I saw I had played *cat* up there in Texas, that I was playing *cat* here. Oh, you shouldn't have come and stirred me all up, Redmond. I might have stayed asleep——"

Her sudden, low laugh only covered the deeper pathos. It seemed he could not bear her pain.

"To them up there I'm an outlaw," he said. "There's a price on my head ——"

"Boy——" She laughed. "A price on the Boy's head! Ah——"

Her deep tone trailed away, but some of it crawled into his heart and nestled there to stay. He fancied he saw the inner loveliness in her face that would never grow old. All the lines were edged with beauty, as it was revealed to him that moment, like gold perfectly minted—passions that would never make the face ugly, romance that would never give way to feeding and calculation. He had known before he spoke that he couldn't alarm her with his past.

"I shouldn't have forgotten that Boy," she repeated, "because I'm not fit to have him now——"

"The fugitive was thinking he wasn't fit for the Girl," Jimmy Bard said.

She laughed mirthlessly.

"You think I don't know what you came for—why you stay here alone? You're getting right with yourself. You sit and think it over for a month or six weeks, and start out fresh with yourself. That's what you've been doing. The Girl can't do that. The Girl breaks training or falls down; she never can square herself with herself. She has to stay with them that belong to her, even if the Boy comes. Oh, not because the world says so; it's deeper than that. The Girl knows—herself."

After a silence, he spoke:

"How was it you got started down this way?"

"I was sick of the camps—sick of eyes that peer and want——"

"A woman pays a price for being as lovely as you are. It frightens me, but I understand it makes most men brave ——"

"Or ridiculous," she said. "They think it can be bought."

"Often they're right, aren't they?"

"I was sick of them all," she repeated. "He came. He thinks it can be bought. He has everything. He offered everything. He said he was in no hurry; that I should come and see, live near or with his children. Men of fifty can wait. They're not weak. The man who can wait usually gets what he wants. They tire you out, because what you expect them to do to-day they do thirty days from now. He was merely passing down from the States when he saw and said *'Come.'*

"It was Adventure from where I stood then. I was tired of the camps—sick of them all up there. Corostad has kept his word, done all that he said. Only he doesn't expect to lose now. He wouldn't have failed, if you had stayed away——"

He partly lifted himself before her. His hand went out and touched her shoulder.

"Why go back to the camps? Why not with the Boy? We're young. We can begin again. I've only got a month's pay, but I think I can do something with that—something to help to-night."

Her eyes gleamed in the dusk.

"Two young people dreaming on a hilltop," she muttered strangely.

"You ran away once from faces that want things, eyes that peer," he went on intensely. "You don't want to try them again. You don't need to run away from me——"

"Yes, I do; but you please me, Redmond; your voice, your face, your words, your hands. Oh, such hands! But I forgot to wait. I didn't remember. You came too late. I'd bring hell to you now, but—oh, you please me! A woman doesn't run away from the Boy—except just now—like this——"

She arose and ran to her mount, but he caught her bridle rein.

"Listen," he said. "There's a new flash in the sky with your coming. Until you came, I had an idea I was done for. Only Copley and I planned to stick by each other. I don't know what kind of a man I'd make for a woman. I never tried it, but come back here to-morrow night at this time, if you can stand any more of my game——"

"I tell you, we're dreaming," she whispered. "It can't be done. I know enough to know that a man who takes a woman takes her past, too——"

"Not I; I take her as she is. I gamble on this hour. Gambling—that's what I do best——"

"My game isn't in the cards, Boy."

"I would never ask a question——"

"Redmond, you make it hard for me. I was asleep in my own limbo——"

"That's all gone. It's boy and girl, beginning now——"

"God, how I would love it——"

"Come here to-morrow night——"

She bent to him suddenly. He kissed her. She had heard the hoofbeats before they reached his ears.

"I must go now," she whispered. "They're coming for me—his servants. He has them watch everywhere. I'll dream of it all—every word. Boy, if not here—Mariposa. Adios."

IV.

Jimmy Bard—the name must pass out for Redmond hereafter—lit three candles instead of one that night. There was a fling to his muscles as he moved about the shack. A bottle of wine had been opened, when he discovered that Copley, though plainly disturbed, was also trying to make good on the lifted mood.

"It's a great night, Copley—night for a little ride to town. Oh, I know it was your orders to repress any such instincts on my part, but we've got to go to-night. We've been repressing ourselves a long time. To repress is not to conquer, my son——"

Copley lolled his tongue out the left side and scraped his cheek against the floor—as if to attend to a tickle he could not exactly locate.

"It's the brain itch again, Copley. I really ought to take it out and look at it. It isn't in your tongue, old man. It's brain itch to get back to Boston."

Copley pricked up his ears at the

name. Certain ideas of paradise were connected in his mind with Boston. He tried the other cheek against the dry turf just outside.

"I know where your heart is, old friend," Redmond added, brushing his hair. "But they want us so much there that we couldn't feel free—to come and go. We're addicted to feeling free, Copley. And—isn't she a dream?"

Copley piped.

"You're a good little guy," the man added. "You know, and I know, that all our domesticity is spoiled—all our innocent, sleep-o'-night ways rolled up in each other's arms like true mates. A woman spoils that—a woman and a faro bank. You try hard, playing circus and singing for me, to show how ready you are for all that comes, but I understand that you don't approve of Egyptian-Madonna eyes and upsets of domestic virtues. I know if you can't have Boston you'd like these long bachelor talks here in the dobie. But to-night it's the road and the layout again—a night out for us. Continued austerity would be bone-headed in our case. To-morrow night; we don't know yet. If we win to-night—we win more than a few hundred. Don't you think we can make a trinity of it, Copley? They say it can't be done here below, but maybe we can do it. We're out after the impossible; that's a good lay for men——"

Redmond drew forth his little leather bag. There were three gold pieces there—a twenty, a ten, and a five—payment for six weeks' work from Señor Corostad, the hardest and slowest money since street-boy days. He had asked to be paid in gold so as to have a bit of the metal by him. There was a laugh in every dollar of it.

"It's very good stuff," he said to Copley. "It carries, even if our rivals did make it. To-night we're going to lose it, or get some more——"

"Woof!" said Copley gamely.

Redmond rode to town, the terrier rocking behind, favoring his right paw. At the barroom in Espiritu Santo, where the layout was in action, Copley was placed in an empty chair and ordered to go to sleep, which order was defiantly disobeyed. The place was quiet, eight or ten Mexicans and Spaniards present, the evening still young, no tension started anywhere. The dealer was from "up there," a Southwesterner, fifty years old, and named Link Joslin. His beard was touched with gray; his gray eye was mild and wise at the same time; he was lean at the belt, and his long, tanned hands looked handier with a gun than the cards.

"Huddy, Redmond," he said. "Looked for you here long before this. You've been able to stand a whole lot of yourself for a white man. Me—I'm sojournin' down here in Holy Spirit for reasons—just while a little matter of mining cools off up yonder——"

It was the third and largest piece of gold that started Redmond going. He had lost the five and the ten, but the start was stiff and strong. There were but two glances up in the next hour or so—once toward Copley, who was sitting on his haunches, regarding him with weariness and worry, head tipped sidewise, brow corrugated. The second was at the white-clothed male figure standing for a moment in the doorway, glistening boots, with narrow, rolled ankles and patent fenders, white riding breeches and blouse of soft texture like corded silk, rare gloves, jeweled crop, a trailing panama that looked as if it might be crushed in the hand without injury, fragrant cigarette, and a breath of lilac perfume over all—the rest fleshy Spaniard: Señor Corostad, stopping at one of his properties during an evening's stroll.

"Singles" and "combinations" looked alike to Redmond after the first turn of his luck. He played in a kind of still trance. Inasmuch as he wasn't dealing, he had to rely on straight luck and intuition. There were moments in which he could follow the thought work of Link Joslin, and the more subtle operations of Madame Chance herself. In less than two hours, Joslin looked up with the smiling remark that he would be compelled to shut down for

a small period of time while he hunted for Señor Corostad for an advance of capital. Mr. Joslin in addition courteously informed the winner that he had misjudged the weather and trade chances for the evening, and wasn't prepared for uncertain pressures. He actually appeared as pleased as if on the other side of the layout, and Redmond, who couldn't see or feel a taint of acting in the old man's manner, was inclined to choke a trifle at this exposure of man quality. He had been homesick for something of the kind since Mattulaw died.

He restrained Mr. Joslin's impulse to go forth for more funds, and retired with something more than four hundred dollars and the cheerful assent of Link Joslin, to say nothing of the reverence of the natives present.

The night was stifling. Redmond circled far around on the way home, happening in on certain of the eastern herdsmen. It was part of his last full circuit; the rest to be finished before nightfall to-morrow. Though he was a bit sorry for Copley, there was nothing to tire in himself, and he made a night of it.

The sheep were all irritable and weary—some atmospheric pressure since sundown. Jimmy found himself close to the massed soul of the herds—some faculty that had awakened in the four weeks' silence and watching. Something had come to him from watching the stars, too. They were thick and red to-night. The man felt that he was changed somehow. It was all a blur that he had been outlawed up yonder—that he had ever been a master workman, contrary to the powers that always win against the individual. He was like a shepherd boy who has just kissed a maiden for the first time—back in the deep, unsullied beginnings. He could even have forgotten the gold won that night had it not been so heavy against his thighs.

Ten miles from the shack to the east in the lowlands of the big pasture, he roused the farthest of the Mexican herders. Here, too, the sheep were restless. The trail home was slow going with the moon gone down, but Redmond had never felt so young.

He could *feel* his health—that sense which a grown man rarely gets more than a breath of; he could smell the different thicket and tree clumps—sniff the water as he neared the lower ford of the winding Corozal; he could sense the different pressures of air, the earthiness of the bottom lands, the dry and withered grass of the lesser hilltops. The nearer herders spoke to him sleepily. He had learned to like these sun-blackened louts, who knew only meat and sleep, some certain hatband decoration, or the señorita who had smiled last. He turned his pony loose at last with an affectionate clap of the hand, and swung the heavy saddle over the rack at his own door. Copley stood with bowed head, waiting for his master to enter first.

"Our last night at home, Copley. The faro fairies say that we move on—that we try for the Trinity. But, Copley, we mustn't forget to tell her about Mariposa—not to go back that way. They might remember us, Copley, and have a reception—good old U. S. A. welcome——"

The terrier dropped down upon his cushion, checking a long breath as it became audible. The black wall of the east was curdled with gray, and the rising stars faded out. But Copley did not sleep—growled occasionally and sniffed at the dawn.

V.

Redmond was riding back toward the shack the next afternoon—two hours from the time when it would be reasonable to look for the coming of the woman, if the rising storm did not forbid. He had no descriptive name for her yet in his own mind. Señor Corostad's name aroused strange irritation; certainly The Tiger Lily would not do.

Steadily the darkness fell. An angry wind from the west was roaring among the hills. He looked back toward the cliff pasture from which he had come. Señor Corostad had once lost several hundred sheep up there during the progress of an eastbound hurricane,

The sheep had been driven over the cliffs into the Corozal, whipped by the gale through the dark to the escarpments of the mesa, in some places three hundred feet above the river bed.

Redmond reflected that he should have told the cliff herder to drive his sheep farther west as a measure of safety; also he reflected that he should be back at his shack within two hours—if the woman ventured.

He heard a whimpered protest from Copley as he turned and buffeted back. He didn't like this turning—it pulled all his stamina—but he felt the bad omen of flight with an important thing undone. It was too much like other flights. The wind tore past him, and the pony curved into a bow, beating his way forward. A slap of rain in the face, then black deluge. The seven miles to the mesa took more than an hour. By the time he reached there it was full dark. A man had to fight to live up there in the free play of the storm.

It was well he had come. There was more than an hour's business. He rode into herd clumps that were being pressed, as if by a slow-moving wall, toward the abrupt fall of the cliffs. The old story of loss would have to be duplicated that night—the river bed choked a second time with wool and cutlets. Copley got the idea after the struggle was well begun. The eastern push of the helpless herds was stemmed again and again. The battle lasted for hours before the wind veered and the blinding torrents subsided to a steady downpour.

Redmond didn't stop to find what the losses were or if there were any, but he had the satisfaction of knowing that all had been done that a man and a dog and a horse could do. He was fagged now, felt bruised from forehead to foot. All this time he had fancied that the storm would keep the woman from the appointment. Yet as he finally entered the shack the sense came over him that she had been there. It was hardly a perfume. Nothing was changed. He had half concluded that there was something wrong in the hunch when he picked up the coffeepot to place it on the fire already kindled. A note had been pressed into the spout:

> Couldn't wait until night. Best to travel alone—be careful. Come to Mariposa—if it's all true—come quickly. If it isn't, adios, Boy.

It was like her voice in the room. There was plunge to her spirit. She hadn't been able to wait; she had spared him the danger of helping her out from the myriad eyes and hands of Señor Corostad in the province. *Come to Mariposa—come quickly.*

It was one in the morning. She had been there some time in the afternoon, before the storm. Copley, utterly fagged, would not sit down, but growled at the dark outside the door. The man meant to stop only for coffee and corn bread.

"Copley," he said, "it's the road again. We're late, but we've started clean. It looks like Mariposa, after all."

The dog was staring out into the rain. Jimmy glanced into a triangle of mirror, and what he saw there slowed him somewhat—a face very lean, deeply embrowned, just now streaked faintly with the gray lines of fatigue and dusted with a beard of two days.

"It won't do, Copley; we've got to help this somehow," he muttered with a smile. "We couldn't go to her like this; we couldn't even go in her direction——"

It didn't take long. He had the sense that Copley must think him insane when he mounted a fresh pony and turned north. He was traveling light—razors and brushes, a day's food, an extra shirt, a little roll of needles, thread, and pins—thin saddlebags and an extra blanket beneath. The pony was Señor Corostad's, but he meant to hire a native to ride it back when he was within easier walking distance of the border.

In the hours of riding, he thought of the woman—of the first meeting at the fonda, and her three comings to the hut. He knew very well what she meant by a man not being able to forget what a woman has been. He was already fighting her past—the vague-

ness of the suggestion of it all giving him room for greater tumbling when he let go.

The fact was, he couldn't always hold. This fighting was new to him. The green devils came leisurely and showed their class and long training to cope with the best stuff a man's made of. Yet Redmond knew he would die before breaking his promise ever to ask a question. Over it all was the brimming lure of the woman—some dream of her tenderness, like a shot of gold mist through the fabric—something great-hearted about her, even about her failures. She had seemed all around him as she talked, every moment magic.

He passed a huddled herd and scattered it in the dense darkness, the air heavy with the oily, musty odor which goes with much animated mutton. Sometimes he fancied hoofbeats behind. Copley barked from time to time.

Redmond had ridden three hours on the fresh mount. It was time for light, though there was no break in the sky, when he heard a shot close behind—a yelp from Copley. He veered about, a kind of demon in his heart, gun in his hand. Copley had grappled. Redmond sent a pair of bullets at the spurts of gun fire, and there were no more. The night blotted all figures.

He *smelled* man and powder smoke in the wet air, but could not see. Copley was down with one. Redmond could hear the low throat rumble of the terrier—sounds that leaked outside of his jaw hold, but there was not even a movement of shadows ahead to fire at, even if he would have risked a shot where his little friend was at work.

In this instant of pausing, Redmond was caught from the side. He fired twice as he fell from the saddle. A swinging heel struck his throat. There was a groan from the darkness ahead, but he was free from his assailant's hands, his second gun drawn. Now Redmond was crawling forward to Copley's aid—a kind of whine in the deep-throated rumble.

"Let go, my son—come in," he commanded. "Copley, come here!"

The dog whimpered, but obeyed. Redmond heard a curse, then presently a rustle in the dried grass at his hand, Copley coming in to order, belly down, as if he had done wrong. The man's hands went over him—horrid revelations of the dark. The fact was, the short, tough legs didn't work very well—their burden too heavy. The broad, bony chest drooped to the ground like that of a game bird spurred deep in the breast. The master's hand ran up and down Copley's spine a second time. The stubby tail twitched weakly at his touch.

"He dam' near cut you in two, my son, but you hung on and kept him busy, hai?—like your mother would have done, little man. You hung on till I got clear of the others. It was game of you, Copley; game as gold and precious stones."

Redmond felt his own devil high and red. He would have shot to kill, but the assailants were dragging off. It gradually dawned that he himself had been shot in the shoulder and cut in the side, but Copley's wounds were closer to his mind. He lit a match and saw what had been done, but Copley wasn't ready to pass. The blocky head lay in his hand, and the dawn came up red in the washed east.

"Just a minute or two more, Copley, and there'll be enough light. I'll draw some of these edges and folds together when the light comes. Maybe we can pull you through, old heart——"

He had brought the roll of thread and needles from the saddlebags, and now was peering into the wounds the stranger's knife had made. They were deep and wide and hot. There was one place that he couldn't follow—the lines all in a welter. He was working in the gray, Copley lifting his shoulder with each pressure of the needle—a long job, a hurting one. There were moments in which Redmond was half gone himself—the deep sickness that turned everything yellow, even the air opaque. Copley was weary of it all, but he bore it, holding still as he could. Redmond was thinking as he worked that this night attack must be a job of Señor Corostad's men. Had the Span-

iard sent out a party for the woman, too? No one else down here could be interested in his life. The gold was still in his possession. There was quick answer to the sudden suspicion that old Link Joslin had sent a party out for the man who broke his bank. Redmond was about through with the needle when he heard the approach of a pony pair on the back trail. A buckboard drove in. The faro dealer of Espiritu Santo was looking down. Redmond squinted into the square old face, but it wavered and doubled before his eyes. Now he heard Link Joslin's voice:

"Livin' God, Redmond, what you doin'?"

"Sewing up my little dog."

The other landed beside him from the buckboard.

"But, man—you're bleeding to death yourself!"

"No—no——"

"And you're still sewing—— Why, Redmond—the little feller's past help. It's you that need sewing, man——"

"No—no——"

Redmond choked, and shook his head. Then light and voices and bleeding tissues seemed all mixed up in a hasty package that must be sent at once to Mariposa.

VI.

Link Joslin was riding alone northward, but still below the border. Above all things, he loved a good story. He had one. As he drove his pair forward, he doped out how he would tell this story—of a young man who had got to him "deeper than a son."

It was ten days after the night of the big storm. Redmond was still unable to travel. He was lying in a wing of the Duvanes ranch house over at the edge of Santa Clara Province, fifty-five miles north of Corostad's hacienda.

Link Joslin hadn't left him until today. Redmond wasn't healing to suit, but burning himself up in a black smoke of misery and impatience. Link was traversing rather rapidly the last twenty miles to Texas, having some business of his own to attend and a certain commission for his young friend. It was mid-forenoon. Link clucked at his team.

Yes, he had a grand story. It blended in with the story of his own pilgrimage to Holy Spirit. He was one of three in a mining partnership up in Mazeppa. Several months before the three partners had set out in different directions to get money. Link, an old gambler, had an idea that he could deal himself into a few thousand down among the greasers. He had started small; Corostad had demanded high tribute; the herders had played mainly in copper and small "dobie" silver. Finally Redmond had come down "of an evening" and cleaned him out. So much for his adventure in extracting Mexican capital, but at this point the real story began. Link Joslin was getting it all in narrative form as he drove. His arrangement was something like this:

It appeared that Redmond was about to hit the trail when the big storm broke out, and he spent the night saving Corostad a thousand or two sheep, instead of keeping his appointment with a girl. Meanwhile he, Link Joslin, having finished with Espiritu Santo, had gathered up his traps and started to drive north, encountering a bad afternoon and evening on account of the storm. A bit after daybreak the next morning he saw a pony with an empty saddle standing on the trail ahead, and presently a man leaning over a dog. This was the part of the story that Link liked best. "Sewing up my little dog," he muttered repeatedly. He would dilate on this part. He rehearsed it now:

"There he was, leaning over the little beast, whose tongue moved out to touch his hand from time to time—little beast all open underneath—the man swaying above and talking under his breath, talking as if to his own flesh and blood, or to an old friend of the trails. There he was—sewing up the tissues—long, slim hands moving like a surgeon's, steady and strong and tender as a woman's. Guess I know something about those hands——"

Link chuckled—hands across the

faro layout, smoothing out the cards and making them move like slow, sleek, living things—hands that took all he had and "blew" his mining proposition back among the dreams of youth.

"There he was, cut deep in the liver and shot through the right chest, blood in his mouth, rheum in his eyes, sewing up his little dog that twitched every time the needle punctured him—the man himself bleeding to death, little dog cut to the spine from below, and, dam' me, if he didn't live three days on account of that little job of sewing. Wouldn't have died at all—if Redmond hadn't been down and out. Men, you've just got to love a man like that!"

Link jerked himself up at this point, a bit embarrassed to find himself addressing a set of empty brown hills. He was silent for some time, reflecting upon the utter baseness of Spanish blood—that Corostad had sent a party of cutthroats out after the man who was saving his sheep—a man putting up a white man's fight against a storm in a yellow man's country to save a lot of greaser sheep, losing his chance to meet up with his lady, and the Spaniard paying for his murder.

Link Joslin never told the story, after all. At least not as he told it to himself. The first thing he did in Mariposa was to go to the post office, and among the signs of the "lost, strayed, and wanted," men and animals, was a picture of a young man named "Jimmy Bard," a counterfeiter of Boston, who was wanted to the extent of five thousand dollars.

There was a smudgy half tone on the big card. The government had done badly in this likeness. Young Redmond at his worst had nothing of the look of this bad Bostonese, Jimmy Bard. In fact, one wondered that a face and head like that of the half tone could ever include the really remarkable events and accomplishments of the career as set forth in various sizes of print. Link Joslin read the writing carefully. No one saw him jump or turn pale—not even when he read that Jimmy Bard had been traced to Texas some weeks before, and at that time had traveled with a bull terrier.

However, Mr. Joslin went out into the street and walked in the midday sun. Main Street was not thronged, but the occasional man and boy that moved in different lengths of the central artery distracted Link's mind. He was thinking hard. He didn't want anybody to slap him on the back just now; he didn't care to drink—yet. He walked on and on until he was in the open country, from whence he had come in the morning—straight to the river where Texas ends for good and all.

In the silence he thought it out to this effect: Here was a chance in a lifetime to save his friend and end the government's chase. No two ways about it, Jimmy Bard, counterfeiter, was dead—dead as his dog. Why was Jimmy Bard dead? Link Joslin said so. Link Joslin's word was good anywhere in Texas. Link Joslin had found him dead on the trail coming up from Espiritu Santo—saddlebags rifled, pony in saddle standing by. Stranger had carried some gold, and bandits had gotten him. Evidently been a fight—dead dog lying a little distance, knife and gun wounds in man and dog.

Link Joslin went over these details several times, and then arose, for he had used the river bank to sit on in this heavy brain work, and returned to the post office. He inquired for mail which he had no reason to expect, and casually related to the postmaster the matters connected with the closing chapter in the case of Jimmy Bard, counterfeiter.

"At least," he added, pointing to the picture, "that's the fellow I saw lying on the trail down there—and the dawg was a bulldawg."

The postmaster "wanted to know." He bristled considerably at the possibility of this being true. Link bristled at the idea of being doubted. Link explained that he had always been peculiarly delicate about having his word doubted. The postmaster pointed to the "Five Thousand Dollars Reward," and suggested that anybody's word would be doubted a whole lot before

that was paid. This Link was fair enough to admit. He had overlooked the reward entirely.

The postmaster now observed that one of the government agents had left Mariposa that morning for the next town east; that he might be able to get him back on the night train if he telegraphed now. Mr. Joslin granted that this might be worth the chance, though he felt himself falling momentarily into deeper complication. The demand for guile was already exceeding his mind's supply. The postmaster began again:

"If you can prove what you say——"

"Just how would you go about that there?" Link inquired coldly.

"You know where or about where you found that body——"

This was the worst.

"Naturally I've got a pretty good idea about that——"

"If you could lead us to that, for instance——"

"I happen to be going in another direction——"

The postmaster pointed to the placard in the vicinity of the printed "Five Thousand."

Link Joslin allowed there was some magic in that sum, but also in his various mining interests in Mazeppa and elsewhere. He was getting bewildered, especially since his intention had been to return to the Duvanes plantations in Santa Clara Province that very night. A further idea dribbled through at this moment.

"Considering the point that my buckboard and team started up a full bevy of vultures as I approached the scene that mornin'——" he suggested.

"There would sure be some remains —enough to prove your story——"

"Of course it's nothing to me——"

The postmaster's jaw dropped. He steadied himself with a quick squint at the placard again.

"I mean if you believe me or not," Link added. "I furnish the information. You do the proving. I reckon our government will treat Link Joslin square——"

"You mean you won't take us down there?"

"That's what I mean, mister."

Link Joslin had lied for his friend. The fact of the Five Thousand had not touched him at the time. There hadn't been a single compunction. He now found the lie a serious matter. The more serious it grew before his eyes, the more determined he became to see that lie through.

He went out into the street and walked again. He felt it would be very foolish for him to risk the return at once to the Duvanes plantations, after his talk about pressing affairs in Mazeppa and elsewhere, especially since the government agent might be back in Mariposa that night.

Link determined to stay over for a talk with this person, though he had no intention of conducting the postmaster and the secret-service man back to the point of the trail where the vultures were alleged to have feasted. The best he could do was to give them directions and slip back to the Santa Clara plantation after they had gone Espiritu Santo way. They wouldn't find the body and there wouldn't be any reward, but the pressure of his story was bound to live and lighten the curse of sleepless hounding upon the trail of his friend.

There was nothing further to do until the coming of Uncle Sam's special, and Link Joslin now had a chance to think of other matters and a long-delayed thirst. He chose a table presently in the Black Horse, little Mariposa's once best bar, and a fresh problem opened in the very beginnings of his slaking.

Link Joslin had come, hoping to relieve his friend's mind by delivering a message to the woman. He knew her by sight. She had been known as the governess at Corostad's in Espiritu Santo. The problem at present was what was best to do in relation to the woman—now that Jimmy Bard was dead. First and last, Link was a man's man. He had the ideal hard. He could do only one greater thing for a man than to lie for him; that was to die in his behalf.

Notwithstanding what Redmond

thought of this woman, Link didn't believe that Corostad's former governess was safe to be trusted. Of course he would not have considered his own idea against the fury of a young man's heart, except that he was personally involved now in this matter of life and liberty of his friend. Yet Link didn't know if he could face the wounded man—after botching his love story. Drink didn't bite; there was no rest nor recreation in the world. He was down on the blue bottom of things when the woman herself appeared—but not alone.

VII.

Link had come to find the woman; now he was minded to see if she cared to find him. She was sitting with Dog Omahone, a big flash from the East, who had arrived in Mariposa a little before Link had passed down to Espiritu Santo. Dog Omahone was pale, perfumed, and white fat. He had a head on his shoulders in which was a pair of small eyes inclined to burn red. He had come to the Southwest to stay, according to his personal statement, though he intimated that Mariposa was hardly adequate for his idea of business. Link didn't think any more of the woman because of her companion.

About ten minutes after she entered, Link turned again, and found her big eyes staring into his face. She remembered; she arose and came toward him. Her words to Omahone were like one speaks in a trance.

"There's a friend of mine. I'm going over to his table——"

Link brought a chair. Dog Omahone finished his drink and left the place.

"Where is he?" she said, bending forward.

Link felt as if she were taking him by the throat.

"Who, miss?"

"Redmond. You came from down there, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Where is he?"

"Well, miss, he made a little call at my bank one evening over ten days ago—took what I had, all good-natured and dextrous, and went back, so far as I know, to his shack in the hills. Next day was the storm, miss. They heard of him over on the mesa saving Corostad's sheep, but that was the last——"

"He left Corostad?"

"Yes."

"When did you come from there?"

"I got here to-day."

Link's words were poisoning him. Had she gone on he might not have been able to stand the pressure, but the woman sat back in her chair and laughed. She held her lower lip with her white teeth; there was a tear in her eyes, and a queer droop to the corner of her mouth as she laughed.

"He left Corostad, but didn't come to Mariposa. He got wiser overnight; men often do that. And he said he'd never ask a question! Tell him we belonged and we didn't belong. Tell him, if you see him, it was a pretty dream, but I woke up, too. Tell him I'm going to find a man—that will never be hurt——"

Her laughter became more terrible.

"A man that will never be hurt by the Tiger Lily's past——"

She straightened up, steadied her lips, and swallowed, pressing the tears out from between her eyelids. She felt them hot upon her cheek, and smiled at the man before her.

"Funny," she said, rising. "He always did make a kid of me. So long ——"

Link cut a whip for his team the next day. He could hardly live with himself, and a man in that condition is apt to blame it on his horse. He was lost in lies of his own making. He had seen the Tiger Lily take the train west—as she might not have done had he told her the truth.

He had been pestered for hours the night before by the government agent and the postmaster, and they had set off at dawn down into Mexico to find the remains of Jimmy Bard and his dog—as they certainly would not have done had he told them the truth. And now he was to face a friend of his.

The miles were chucked behind at a

merry clip, but Link Joslin, whose word was taken for fact throughout the border counties—the solider the fact the better he was known—old Link Joslin was smothering in a fabric of his own crooked weaving. The face of the woman came back to him, and the face of his young friend as he had asked him to go to her. What lie next?

Out of it all, as he neared the Duvanes plantations, he suddenly raised his hand and slapped a thigh.

"What shall I say to him? By thunder, I'll say the truth to him—and nothing but the truth!"

Link now played his switch upon the flanks of his pony pair, although they were doing very well indeed.

Night was thick in the wing room of the Duvanes ranch house, where Redmond lay. His face was stiff and changed, the deep tan turned to gray. His figure looked long and narrow under the coverlet.

He had listened to Link's story in full.

Once he had asked a question.

He was silent now. Something about the face puzzled the older gambler. It had been the same the night of Redmond's winning—a puzzle across his own faro layout. He could not tell then what the winning meant; he could not tell now how deep the other felt the loss. A hand came up to him from the couch.

"Thanks, Link; it's all right. No man could have done more in a pinch like that—Jimmy Bard's sudden death, and all that——"

The smile was clean cut, steady as flint. The hand dropped back, and then Redmond—no hurry at all—turned his face to the wall.

VIII.

Redmond couldn't get his smile to working. He lay for a long time, unable to rise, careless whether he rose or not. Life had taken the *bound* out of his humor. Snatches of painful sleep, more likely in the hours of sunlight than in the night, when the hours dragged as if they were building railroads by the way—steel rails back into the past, so that nothing of that sorrowful journey could be lost.

There was a queer stiffness between the cheek bones and the corners of the mouth, pressing the latter down. He felt that his face must look insane when he forced a smile.

One thing he always remembered through the tendency to be square. The hell of jealousy *did* come to him, as she said it would. He had fought it as he fought the sheep back from the edge of the mesa; he had fought it as he rode north to join her at Mariposa. Yet she haunted him day and night. She was a plunger; that was all.

A mean woman would never have brought him her worst in their first talk. Perhaps she had come up the years through the ugliest and most sordid stresses of life—even as he had done. Certainly *he* hadn't held the dream all the way. He knew there was something splendid about her, an innate nobility; that she was not only square as a surface, but deep through like a cube. Moreover, he believed that what she had done since their parting was first of all to save him from a life of agony, suggested by her story. He believed that she had given him a chance to come quickly—that she had fought it out when he did not come, that she had seen herself at the worst, worse than the worst, as the first days passed, and—if the tale were true that Link Joslin brought—that she had taken up with a friend to prevent her own turning back.

"She tied herself up to keep from falling down."

This was his own expression, and he came back to it again and again. But none of his thinking sufficed to take any of the pain from his heart. He could draw no more than a sorry smile out of the fact that Jimmy Bard, counterfeiter, was dead—dead as his dog.

He could find no balm in the fact that he would likely have been arrested on his return to Mariposa with Copley, had he got so far that day. At least

there would have been another shooting affair.

Her voice was in his mind day and night, like the sound of the sea to those who live near the shore. He saw the fling of her arms, the brave breast and uplifted head. He would come up from a nap or an abstraction to pictures like this, but no one saw him writhe. No one knew, from his face or voice, that he felt inside much the same as the dog, Copley, had looked that dawn—torn internally beyond any sewing, a welter within, no place to start to stitch.

Link Joslin had to hurry back to Texas. He had made so much of a point of mining interests in Mazeppa that he had to show himself on the spot. Government agents have infinite time and transportation and patience for questions. In fact, Link was gone three weeks, but returned to the Duvanes plantations with abandon, a song most of the way and a story to tell. He couldn't hold it more than a minute after the greeting:

"They couldn't find the dawg!"

The man propped up in the pillows did his bravest to help handle the surplus mirth of the situation, for Link was swollen and inflamed from containing so much.

"They were looking for me in Mazeppa when I got there. They reckoned my story was all true, but they couldn't find hide nor hair of the dawg ——"

"You mean they found the body of Jimmy Bard," Redmond said softly.

"They found the body of a man—the bones of a man—exactly, or near enough the place where I told 'em to look——"

The two were silent.

"One of the party that held up Copley and me," Redmond remarked.

Link nodded.

"But I didn't think there was a white man in that party——"

"Greaser's bones are white as your'n or mine——"

"They found only bones——"

"It was enough, considerin' the bevy of vultures. It was enough to give my young friend, 'Silk' Redmond, free roads and smooth going in Texas——"

This was Link's name for him—"Silk." It had to do with his hands, possibly from their work at the faro layout, or possibly from the sewing.

"So you think I'm free to come and go up there?"

"Do I think so——"

Here the humor rose to a dangerous pitch again, yet Link lingered over the point. "Do I think so? I rather think you're a free man. I rather think I do. And why? I want to ask you *if* old U. S. A., of Washington, D. C., is in the habit of paying five thousand dollars for something she ain't satisfied about——"

"The reward paid?"

"Yes, son; don't get agitated. That's her. She's paid. After settling expenses and fixing up the postmaster for a year's salary and buying a drink or two for the boys, there's about thirty-five hundred of it left—banked right here in these jeans——"

Redmond was slow to see where he came in for a share, but Link Joslin was willing to spend a month in showing him. His point was that there had to be a Jimmy Bard in the first place. Redmond succeeded in loaning the older man a large part of his share for the mining venture in Mazeppa, and the two went different ways, much against Link Joslin's will.

"It's only for a time, Link," the other said. "Friends aren't so numerous that I can do without one like you, but just at present I've got to be alone."

"You'll come to Mazeppa as soon as you're ready?"

"Yes."

"I guess I'll have to take it as you say, Silk. I've just about got that learned; but come soon. A man gets into the habit of you. It's a habit hard to break, my son. So long!"

Link wasn't a master like Mattulaw, or a dumb adorer like Copley, but he was a man friend every minute, and there was meaning to this sort of thing.

Left alone, Redmond tried his legs for a few days in the sun, and always he kept feeling Copley at his heels. His

finger and thumb snapped together close to his thigh, as a man does who keeps tab on his pal, unthinking. It was a symbol of a broader desolation, and the pain that goes on when a man's heart turns back to itself after it has been set free in a woman's.

Often he wondered what would have happened had he really known her in depth and fullness. He had heard of men losing their women in the full tide and power. He was sorry for them; that's all he could say.

He crossed the border to the west of Mariposa in the wilderness, and made his way by stage into Ariosa. Link said he had heard that the woman was tarrying there—and not alone.

Silk had to see—had to be sure. It did not take long. In fact, Silk turned out of Ariosa the same night, and kept going five years.

TO BE CONTINUED.

THE MAN WHO APPRECIATED POETRY

WHEN United States Senator Hitchcock had personal charge of his own daily newspaper out in Nebraska, he received one day the following glowing communication:

DEAR SIR: The striking poem, "Oh, Wherefore?" by Kingsley Langdon, printed in your paper, seems nothing more than the harried hum of a tired spirit. Like everything that Mr. Langdon writes, the thoughts are handled in a masterful way and with ponderous dignity, yet so simply withal that one is disposed to search for hidden meaning beyond the clear message contained in the written lines.

But there is no meaning that the author does not intrench and disserve with light. True, he makes a mutely veiled, though hidden, reference to the majesty of the aurora borealis, but that, it appears, is simply one of the whimsical fancies that occasionally impeach the lines of all his poems.

On reading his closing thought in "Oh, Wherefore?" I am reminded of the wondrous lines of Roxbourne, where he says:

"Who knows the lilt of dark, insensate things
That shimmer through the sunken sea of strife?
Whence comes the chamfered call of fantors in
The harkened pulse of crass inquinate lull
Of those that were and are and yet are not?
And where yawns the grave protuberant athwart
The gay abyss where vim the epoch searchers
Stifle? Comes then the reeking croon of tiers
On tiers, and thrashing yelps of woe that laughs
But knows no morn? What, then, if sounds
The rift unto the azure slope and lowly trend of bright,
Discalceated dawn? Sifts the shrill and soundless beam
Of hope unto the reeking smiles agone?
Who knows? Who knows?"

Roxbourne does not write in the ponderous key of Langdon, but the lines are penetrating and helpful. Oh, that we might have more such lines!

"I don't know," confessed the senator, "whether that fellow was crazy or thought I was."

A Baptist of the Bush

By J. H. Greene

Author of "A Soldier of the Stables," Etc.

A most vivid picture of the gold fields and gold hunters of Australia, and of a man whose sight goes dark as he seeks for riches and whose soul is awakened

THERE are more nicknames than names on a gold field, and the men called the old fellow who stumbled into Creswick's claim everything from Ginger to Jeremiah. London, the little Whitechapel foc's'l runaway, called him the General from a likeness to General Booth, apparent only on Sundays after the customary weekly wash of one pannikin of water. On the other days his long hair and beard was red with Westralian dust, and Archie, whose claim was next to Creswick's, and who could swear in Greek, hailed him as Jeremiah.

He had fallen into the shallow workings-out of the dust, apologizing in city words that his eyes were bad.

Creswick, who had suffered everything from New Guinea chills to Coolgardie typhoid, as well as that blight that strikes on landing, up from the blaze of Fremantle's limestone streets, helped him to his feet.

"Where did you come from?"

"Hannan's."

"This field is played out. None of us, not even the Scotties, are making tucker."

"They said that at every field I struck."

The dust of the wagons had finished what Fremantle had begun, but he had blindly stumbled on from track to track till he landed here at "Linger an' Die."

He pegged out a little north of Creswick, who helped him to fix his rocker, swinging the long wire-bottomed box on the forked sticks for him at the right angle. The old man could see well enough to shovel in gravel and rock it across the wires, and soon was adding his share of red dust wherein five thousand men were toiling like gnomes in a pantomime.

Creswick returned to his shaker, running his fingers through the heap of little pebbles caught by the crossboards, but there was no gold—not the least little pennyweight of a slug—held back by the wire. The newcomer's report added to his conviction West Australia was giving out; certainly this field was done, no others were being discovered, a rush had not been reported for months, and the long, hot, thirsty summer was beginning.

When the big, burning sun dipped into the dust like a tantalizing nugget of gold, Creswick knocked off.

The old man camped on his claim, and Creswick saw he was able to build his fire and unroll his blanket, and so left him for his own camp up the ridge away from the dust of the workings. Most of the men were there, among what their fires had left of the ant-eaten timber.

Next morning he met the General at work, and greeted him cheerily. Later, when the shakers and pans were in full blast and the rush of gravel sounded like shallow surf and the north wind blew the dust into throats and eyes, Creswick noticed that the old fellow was shoveling wildly, many times missing his rocker, and that he had to bend low to peer into the gravel.

"Why don't you feel for it, mate?" he said.

The General looked up. He was like a dust statue, and the dust on his closed

lids gave him the blind stare of a statue. His water bag hung on his rocker sticks. It was also dust-caked, the bottom muddy, marking his small water supply. Creswick rated him a new chum; he worked too eagerly, had too much fat on him, and left his water bag in the sun.

Creswick demonstrated by unbuckling his belt, shaking out a pennyweight piece from the tube, and dropping it into the General's gravel.

"Feel for it," he said.

The General's round, soft fingers rummaged among the ironstone and quartz till he recognized the gold.

"You can't mistake the weight," said Creswick. "I can pick up fly specks in the dark. You save your eyes, old man."

Then Creswick repouched his little slug and told how to treat those eyes. But there was no druggist within a hundred miles; the storekeeper was running low of necessities, not to speak of eye lotions, and the only remedial on the field was plug tobacco. Bushmen use tobacco for many ailments, for earache and toothache as well as heartache, but no daring pioneer had yet tried it for sandy blight.

A week went by. The General shifted his camp up to the ridge, his eyes became worse, and he was almost in darkness. Creswick helped to boil his billy, guided him to and fro across the mullock heaps, and came nearer being a mate to him than to any man in his forty years' prospecting, for loneliness and a lone hand were religion to Creswick.

One afternoon in the slack hour, when the men knock off for a smoke except when on gold, Creswick was sharing his matches with Archie, and London had crept up to listen, when they heard a stifled cry from the General.

"What's up, matey?" said Creswick, going to him.

"It's matey now, is it?" sneered London. "'E wouldn't 'ave me."

"Proving his wisdom, as his trousers are better than yours."

London was not insulted.

"Drapery ain't in my line."

"What would Jeremiah's moleskins fetch you in Petticoat Lane?"

"Wot do you know about the Lane?—you importation. I ain't a remittance man, anyhow."

"Nor I, London, just now, or I wouldn't be here."

Archie settled comfortably in the tailings, enjoying equally the easy upholstery of the sand and the baiting of London.

"Remittances you ain't earned—not even your own stealing—money put in your 'and because your great-grandfather bamboozled some electors, and your great-grandmother——"

"Stow that, London," said Archie, reaching for a stone, "or I'll drop you with this bit of diorite—and I used to bowl for Harrow. Damn you for reminding me!"

He lobbed the diorite skillfully in the dust by London's ear. The wind smothered the Whitechapel repartee with choking sand. These two outcasts from the heights and the depths of their civilization were really friendly, drawn together by this democracy of dirt.

Creswick had gone to the General, who complained of pain in the side from hard rocking and shoveling.

That evening Donald, a big Aberdeen man from Scotchman's camp, came to consult Creswick over prospects. They sat on a log by the fire, and the smoke, redolent of jamwood, mingled with their plug cut. The General sat farther off, silent and still; one reason Creswick liked him.

Away over the plain were the fires, and the bells of the storekeepers' hobbled horses tinkled as they prospected for edible grass as hopelessly as the men did for gold.

Overhead, Orion flashed his belt of splendor, and the Cross was unusually brilliant.

Donald wanted to give up alluvial and go in for reefing.

"No quartz for me," said Creswick, "unless it's a guaranteed jeweler's shop like the 'Wealth of Nations.' 'Creswick's United' was enough for me." Donald took a coal for his brier.

"Squeezed you out, eh?"

"Yes; there's too much business in reefing. Those Stock Exchange sharks ——"

Creswick could grow monosyllabically eloquent on this one subject. He told how his reef, the reef he had blown open with his last stick of gelatine, had been floated on the Melbourne Exchange, how he had been installed as resident manager until a crowd of directors two thousand miles away, not even in touch with a telegraph wire, headed by one David Marion, had manipulated the shares, run the mine into bankruptcy, refused and delayed development capital till he could not pay the miners' wages, and the mine was jumped by the Marion crowd for nonfulfillment of the government labor conditions.

"All I had was shares—prettily printed shares. No, give me my own fifteen square foot of ground, all my own, no mates, and what I take out goes to the assayers and I get me clean, hard coin. In mining the deeper you go the dirtier the work—and all I want with reefers is to meet Dave Marion once with me boots on."

He was silent, and soon Donald left, as the fires grew dimmer and the Milky Way stretched at a different angle across the intense velvet of the sky.

"Ain't you going to turn in, General?" said Creswick, kicking off his boots, travel worn to rawhide and exposing his feet wrapped round with pieces of sacking—"Prince Alberts"—the bushman's substitute for socks.

"So you're Tom Creswick?" said the General.

"Yes, that's me. Suppose you have heard of 'Creswick's United?' "

"Yes."

"Good night, old man."

"Wait a bit," said the General, "before you turn in. Come here—and—and put on your boots, for I am Dave Marion."

The old man stood erect by the embers, the glow striking up at his face, making hollows where his blind eyes were.

When Creswick last saw him he was clean-shaved and trim in a frock coat, seated at the mahogany desk of his handsome Melbourne office. Now he stood, a bearded, disheveled, blinded wreck, waiting like a lone tree for the lightning.

"And Creswick's United!" gasped Creswick.

"They froze me out, too. I deserved it. Why don't you kick me? For mercy's sake do something to me!"

His voice rose to a cracked shriek, but he did not move. He stood expectant, hoping for the blow.

"Quiet, you poor old fool," said Creswick, coming nearer till his feet felt the warm sand.

"What did you want to tell me for? Dam' fool, new-chum ways! Nobody talks their private affairs up here. We're just prospectors. In the bush keep your mouth shut."

"But you—almost a mate to me—honestly don't you want to kill me?"

"No, man, no. Ain't you worse than dead already?"

The old man relaxed.

"So that's it? You'll let me live, blind and broke, to drift out on the sand plain, to die of thirst till the crows pick my bones. All right; I deserve it. All right."

Creswick put his arm round the weak, old wreck and forced him to his seat.

"Sit down," he ordered. "Fill your pipe and forget all about Creswick's United. Forget you ever floated mines. Forget you're Dave Marion, and be just the General. Drop all this loony lingo or I'll take you across my knees and knock some common sense into your foolish old hide. Give me your fist. Shake. Now shut up and fill up. Hold on, I'll cut you some of my plug."

Creswick cut the tobacco, gave him a coal, and the two pipes of peace mingled their smokes in the stray zephyrs of the night wind.

The fires died down, here and there illumined like a lantern from some digger lighting his bedtime smoke. A great silence came down with the heavy dew, and the men shivered as their backs grew wet.

"Tom," said the General.

"Don't talk; smoking and thinking's better."

"I want to tell you——"

"What's the use? I don't care now. I thought I'd smash you if ever I met you, but out here in this God-forsaken country what's the use of smashing?"

There was another silence, and the stars twinkled merrily, as if enjoying some comedy played below.

"Tom, it isn't God-forsaken—and I'm going to pay you back."

Creswick rose impatiently. "Better get a good night's sleep."

Creswick had been watching a blue flame trying to keep alight enough to burn into a log, wondering if the Murchison Gullies had been thoroughly prospected. To him now Creswick's United was a game that had been played.

The General leaned up to him and whispered:

"It is not God-forsaken. I found a big slug to-day when I called out, and it is all yours—part payment."

Creswick felt the great weight in his hand, and the thrill of it nearly made him cry out, too, but before he could look at it there were steps in the scrub behind him, and he had just time to throw it into his shirt as London slouched into the firelight.

He was out of matches. Creswick angrily told him he was out of matches, too, and everything else. London took a light from the fire and remained. It was his habit to prowl round the camps and pick up news, and more than news if he could do it safely. He began a harangue on the failing of the gold.

Creswick felt the slug against his flesh, judging it at least thirty ounces. Of course he would not take it, but the fact that big slugs were still at Linger an' Die meant much to all of them. He had hidden it, as the General had, on instinct. Men do not display their discoveries till forced to. It might mean a run or a pocket, and, if so, he and the General would have to find that run or that pocket.

"Wot's going to become of us? That's wot Hi want to know?" whined London.

His audience was silent, and presently he went back to his own camp, blowing on a fire stick to keep it alight.

"Wait till he's gone for sure," whispered the General. "And remember it's part payment."

"Part my hat!" said Creswick, throwing on another log and drawing out the slug to the blaze.

Creswick had once stood in a falling drive after a premature explosion, and he seemed to be there now, for the earth grew unsteady, the laughing stars became jeering fireworks as he saw that the General's thirty-ounce slug was only a piece of old iron—mere blacksmith's slag.

The weight was enough to mislead in that light gravel, and Creswick remembered how there had been a blacksmith's shop where the General's claim stood in the prosperous days when Linger an' Die had a street of storekeepers' tents.

"Thirty ounces, eh, Tom?" whispered the General.

"Yes."

Creswick appraised the weight, noting there was too much volume for that weight of gold, that the feel was different, and that he could smell the rust. He would not have been deceived for an instant.

"Put it away, General."

"It's yours."

"Put it away. We'll talk it over in the morning—and not a word to a soul."

Neither man slept, but Creswick's insomnia was perplexed and painful. He felt he ought to have undeceived the General, but to douse the old man's joy, to fling that bitter disappointment into his pitiful, blind face was beyond him.

He turned on his bed, a blanket stretched over a pile of gum leaves, and heard a whispering and the rustling of more such leaves from the next tent. He listened. The old man was praying, hoarsely but heartily, uttering thanks that he was enabled to atone in part for the evil he had wrought.

When the crow on Creswick's tent pole awakened him he heard the old

man preparing breakfast. The General insisted on doing this. He could feel his way to the fire as he did through the bush by the angle of the heat on his face.

"I've been thinking," he said over their damper and bacon. "And having no eyes makes you think. It's not right to keep this to ourselves, Tom. This field is not played out. We should let the boys know there is gold here."

Creswick was strongly against this. It was against his secretive principle. It would burst the General's bubble, and he was hoping for some other way out.

"It's every man for himself. Keep it to yourself."

"You're wrong," replied the General with sudden energy. "You're 'way on the wrong track. I used to think that way, to live that way, and see where it led me—to Creswick's United—to robbing and cheating—to being robbed myself and set adrift a blind and helpless derelict, till I met you and the boys. No, man, no! Why should we rob those chaps of their hope? That's what the slug means to them—hope, backbone, a slap on the back; that's their share of it. It belongs to them, and they are going to get it."

The General regarded his slug as a sign of grace. It was a promise that his self-respect would return; it was the lone star of his mental and physical darkness. Creswick, the "hatter"—the man who never took a mate—the lonely, self-contained self-supporter of his own luck, good or bad, was fighting a fanatic of the most virulent type—the newly converted.

Finally Creswick hit on a convincing argument. "It's only about twenty-five ounces, anyway. Don't think you've discovered a new field. There might not be another pennyweight for miles. You may be only raising false hopes and keeping the men from prospecting better ground. Wait till you see if there is any more."

So the matter rested, and they went to work.

All day the General worked eagerly, sometimes quietly whistling to himself, while Creswick watched him, hoping against him that no other pieces of slag would be caught in his ripples.

No more appeared, though the General was not disheartened, but as he felt the slug sagging in his belt, and man after man came by with disconsolate tales, he was ashamed, and his infantile but exacting conscience cried out at him.

That night the field was gloomy. The one storekeeper announced a shortage of supplies and talked of going out of business. There were tales of petty thefts of flour and tinned meats. Some who had tucker enough for the long, dry stages were breaking camp and abandoning their luckless claims. Reports from inside and out back were bad; Kurnalpi and Menzies on rock bottom, typhoid was at Black Arrow, and the roads to the Cross were so dry from the soaks giving out that the warden was limiting the traffic, which meant less tucker, less prospecting, and lowering of luck all round.

Next morning Linger an' Die found itself without a storekeeper, for the man, a big Northam farmer, not overfriendly to this irruption of gold seeking "t'othersiders," had packed his cart and driven off in the night. Three thousand men, most of them down to their last few ounces, were stranded on this barren ridge, a hundred and fifty miles of sun-baked desert islanding them from the next equally arid camp of ill luck and despair. The condenser men at the salt pan were for following the storekeeper. Linger an' Die would thirst as well as hunger.

The seasoned men—like Creswick and the Scotchmen—prepared to stick it out, cutting their rations and making their own condensers out of galvanized iron, and setting their teeth at the long, dry summer.

Meanwhile the General fought daily with Creswick.

"You've got to tell them, Tom, for common humanity's sake. Some of those men trying the sand-plain on a gallon of water are going to their deaths. Why? Because you're holding back the one thing that would keep them here. This slug would give them

grit to hold on; it would bring the storekeepers back; it would mean teams coming out with more tucker. This field is not played out if the boys will only hold on. How can you rob these poor fellows of their hope and their luck?"

This secretive avarice in the man he had wronged gave the General a foothold of moral superiority that was very helpful.

Next afternoon a camel bearing a tall prospector padded in, and the men gathered for news.

"Yes, there is a new rush—the biggest find since the Towers," said the man from his humpy eminence.

"Where?" roared the hundred that heard.

"The Klondike—Alaska—North America."

The prospector looked down on the hungry, desperate men from the back of his expensive mount laden with tucker. The camel, with a bulging water bag at his side and his anatomical advantages over thirst and dry stages, turned his owner's information into an insult.

"No sand plains there. You wash your gold, and have icebergs for breakfast."

The camel man could afford humor, but London's socialism flared up. He threw a stone, hitting the camel, which tossed up his head and unseated his rider. A dozen men caught the guide rope. The crowd shouted the Afghan command: "Ooshtah! Ooshtah!" And the beast was brought to his knees.

"Bushranging!" cried the camel man, seeing his bags unstrapped.

"We're perishing!" cried London. "And you come 'ere guyin' us with your North America an' your gold dug out hicebergs. Capitalistic harrogance! An' we're going to hexpropriate your tucker hand your water and maybe cut out the hunnatural hunearned hincrement of this beast's extry stomachful."

Creswick tried to hold London. Archie explained that Alaska was not in the moon, but London's party was in the majority. Those who had gold tried to measure pennyweights for what they took, but the sight of some canned Singapore pineapples and plum duff melted away all morality, and the attempted trade was becoming a grabbing robbery, with the camel in the midst trying to rise from the rear, and behind striking with his spreading, sprawling feet in all directions, like a quadrupedal boxer.

"Stop, men, stop! I'll buy this man's tucker for the sake of this field. Stop! I buy it!"

It was the General who spoke. He had managed to fight his way into the middle of the turmoil.

"Hi knew it! Hi knew the blind beggar was on gold—keeping it to hisself, too!" cried London. "Who are you to tell me to shut hup?" This was to Creswick.

"Yes, men, I am on gold. There is no need to rob this man. I can buy all he has."

At this word, the magical word gold, the hunger-bred, panic-fostered anarchism died out. They were once more the eternally hopeful gold seekers as they saw the old man fumbling for his belt. The word ran over the mullock heaps like fire. Men not hitherto drawn to the crowd dropped their shovels, left their rockers, some abandoning their claims, picking up sticks to peg out near the new find, some beating on dishes in celebration, as if it were their own. They pressed into the outer edge of the crowd around the General and the still floundering camel.

"Lift him up—let's see it!" came from this eager, excited mob, greedy and gasping to look upon this almost unbelievable gold.

London lifted the General up on the camel and bade him hold to the hump as the animal made his ungainly hoist to his feet, and the whole field saw the blind old man's shaking fingers take the belt from inside his shirt. They saw the bulge in the leather; they guessed the weight; they raised a tremendous cheer, and packed forward, a heated, delirious throng drawn by the gold. They were no longer hungry; thirst was forgotten; a slug had been found. Linger an' Die still held gold.

They were all richer; food and water would come to them; the desperate game against the saltbush and the sand plain, with their horrible perishings, was coming their way, and the gamblers lifted another cheer as the General drew forth his slug and held it—a black piece of iron slag.

There was a silence, as if the men were witnessing an execution.

"What's the gime? It's a bit of rusty horseshoe," said London.

The General seemed to die gradually. The joy faded from his face, he tried to peer through his inflamed eyelids at his slug, and Creswick caught him as he slipped off the camel to the ground.

Creswick had helped him home, and the old man went to bunk. There was neither a revolver nor a razor in their outfit, nor a tree nor a tent pole strong enough to hold a man's weight, so Creswick was not nervous. He made him tea, gave him his pipe, and said nothing.

"Tom, do you happen to have a Testament?" asked the General next morning.

"No," said Creswick. "What for, old man? You couldn't read it, could you?"

"No, though there is a little more light coming through. I'd just like to have the Book about me."

Creswick thought he could get one at Scotchman's camp, but before starting he hid the big damper knife in a log.

Over at Scotchman's camp where the Aberdeen men dourly slung to their ill luck, shouting their "Kameraschi Dhu" over their early porridge and chuckling inwardly over "Bobby Burns' Pocketbook" at evening, Creswick borrowed a Bible.

"Would he like to ha'e me wrestle wi' him in prayer a wee bit?" said old Donald, who lent it.

"I dunno," said Creswick, to whom these were novel problems. "If I had a throw-down like the General's and you wanted to pray for me I'd join in the service with me bare knuckles."

"Mon, it's the Sabbath. Dinna be irreverend."

"I ain't. I ain't nothing, when it comes to praying and Bibles. I'm just a prospector."

The men usually kept the Sunday by taking long, rambling walks. Donald and Creswick were tramping along with their eyes on every inch of the ground and an occasional glance at the sun and their shadows to preserve their direction. They carried no dishes, but Creswick took a handful of the red sand, and, dry blowing it with his breath, found a small speck. There was gold in all these flats, but too fine to be payable without water.

The two argued and propounded the usually visionary schemes to get at these diffused millions, from artesian wells to the production of artificial waterspouts.

Thousands of such men that same Sunday afternoon, over thousands of miles of ironstone, sand patch, and saltbush, were wrestling with that same death riddle of the desert. It was the one topic, and if there were fly specks of gold everywhere the threats of thirst and its black agonies blew in with every hot gust from the unnamed, untraveled spinifex country beyond.

As they returned to camp they heard a voice, and, coming nearer, saw a crowd surrounding the General on a tailings heap.

Creswick thought the old man had become insane.

"No," said Donald; "he's got releegion."

A sermon at Linger an' Die was a novelty, a relief to the dullest day of the week. They laughed, they listened, they were silent and impressed, and some hats came off.

"What's the use of finding big slugs," shouted the General, "if your immortal soul is lost in the tailings? Boys, I was bushed; I was lost; I was doing a perish on the trackless sand to perdition till I turned back, till I realized that my hope and my joy was in a delusion. If it had been gold, I would have gone on believing in that delusion. But gold is no more than

blacksmiths' slag. They are both dross and corruption. I was blind spiritually more than in the flesh. For years gold has been lying on the closed eyelids of my soul like coppers on the eyes of a corpse, till it had to be shown to me, till He found me, till He blinded me to make me see, till He abased me to uplift me, till I am glad of my blindness; I am glad of my disappointment. As He is here now and my witness that I am glad."

His voice cracked and strained; his body shook with surprising energy; he seemed like some poor and discarded instrument that some master was forcing to unusual harmonies.

"Encore! Encore!" cried London, when the General paused for breath.

"Looks like sunstroke," said Creswick.

"Dinna blaspheme; dinna stop him," said Donald. "Releegion isna a disease."

"Baptist of the Bush," murmured Archie, "but there is not even locusts and wild honey in this wilderness."

"Maybe not," snapped Donald. "Maybe we need salt pans and crows and sore eyes instead. I maintain thot a bit o' hell is necessary for salvation."

The theological argument was only interrupted by the General starting off again. The crowd pressed closer, knee-deep in the mullock and tailings, and London, who seemed unusually interested, tried to hold him back.

"Keep a bit for the next service," he said when the General again rested. "Now 'ow about a collection?"

He raised a dish; Creswick dropped in the speck he had found that day, Donald followed suit, and in a few minutes the General had enough tucker gold for the week.

Henceforward the General was pastor of Linger an' Die. He preached regularly by the camp fires of an evening. His eyes grew better, and he accepted that for a sign of increasing grace. London constituted himself his acolyte, and worked his claim for him in the daytime to hold it, for some of the superstitious wanted to jump it. Creswick had told of the old man's disinterestedness. Everybody was sorry for him. Many believed his luck would turn to some tremendous stroke of good fortune.

But the General did no more prospecting. He took long, lonely walks over the plains, sure of his guidance, certain of his bushmanship, sometimes conning his Bible, raising exalted eyes to the pitiless skies, scorning the earth he trod on, a veritable Baptist of the Bush.

His sermons grew more bitter. He reviled himself; he reveled in confession and abasement, telling of the myriad meannesses of his past life and blaming them all on the gold.

"My father came to Australia, lured by the death lights of Ballarat and Bendigo. So did yours. It is in our blood —this craving; it is Australia's curse. We will never be sanctified till we turn our gold fields into gardens and dig God's earth for God's certainties, things that grow and increase, and leave the slug and the nugget and the reef to rot back to the earth that spewed them."

He lashed the Golden Calf these men had traveled so far and so bitterly to come up with; he drew pictures of what these gamblers had abandoned—little farms in the well-watered East, little businesses kept by the distant wives, careers wrecked by that craze that first peopled Australia and afflicts it with recurrent attacks of the madness when a new field is discovered.

Men began to pack up and crawl homeward along the track.

"Mon, you're driving away your congregation," said Donald to him, but the General would not listen. He extended his self-abuse to every man present; he lashed all with his own sins.

"We're gamblers, spendthrifts, and wasters. How many of you are writing home for money—money you'll never repay, money borrowed on false hopes and lying promises—embezzled money, stolen money?"

A man took exception to this, for the General had his critics; he was becoming too rabid.

London rose beside the General. "'E's right, and Hi know. Hi was a

thief, too—Gor blime me! Hi served me time in Pentridge to prove it."

London, too, had learned the luxury of self-revelation. The men cheered. London's confession was not news to all, but it was plucky.

"This is contagious," said Archie in disgust. "I'll be trying to remember if I didn't garrote my grandmother."

He left the firelit circle and its dusty evangelist, followed by Creswick, who also was wearying of the General.

London unctuously began his lurid biography. His record would easily outshine the General's, but the same man again interrupted:

"Hold on! You say you're a thief, and yet you hand round the collection plate. What price that, mates?"

London's wizened face flushed in the firelight till it was that of an honest man, for the first time lit with an indignation that was righteous.

"Yes, but Hi never took one fly speck. I put in me hown bit every time, cos 'e's right, han' I'll be honest. Hi meant to tike all I could. This preaching game looked like a good lay, but Hi couldn't do it while he was blind, and Hi can't now while he can watch me. Hi am a thief, but Hi have me principles. Hi never took a pennyweight from him, an' if yous don't believe me Hi'll plead guilty to more than Hi am charged with. Hi 'av' took from you all your flour, your tea, your baccy before I met 'im, but not since, and now hif you want to cut me ears off an' drive me off the field you can do it."

An ugly growl came from the men. A tucker thief was worse than a gold thief, but the General's voice rose with the shout of a great exultation, and he threw his arms around London.

"The voice of one sinner that repenteth. God is good to me. I have saved a soul. Now will ye believe? Will ye accept the testimonies of two thieves—two repentant thieves who will stand in paradise with the one that repented on the cross beside Him?"

There were souls of all shades of dinginess in that crowd, from actual and hiding criminals to petty drifters and no-accounts, but the General's words and London's courage caught them, and when the perfervid old man called for a hymn one unanimous chorus swelled upward to the stars.

Creswick sat by his fire, seeing his wasted life in the coals. The General awakened his introspection and years of bitter memories, but without consolation.

Archie presently joined him, and the two men smoked, as men do who understand each other.

"He's right," said Creswick. "This gold digging's a mug's game. I've been at it forty years, from the Snowy River to the Gulf and here, and what have I got out of it? How will I finish? 'The body of an unknown prospector was found last week fifty miles south of—Lord knows where.' That's what they'll telegraph east, and it'll take half an inch of newspaper, and that's all of my life of battling."

The General's voice came faintly over the field, and the hymn rose harmoniously, the rough throats mellowed by the distance.

"He has got something out of it," said Archie.

"Yes, repentance; but I ain't got nothing to repent since I squared it with my dead missus. I'm just an ordinary fool—just a fool. Ain't there a Bible anywhere for fools?"

"Did you ever think of this?" said Archie, pulling out a Colt .32.

Creswick straightened as though he had struck a slug.

"No, mate, no; but I've sometimes wished some one would do it for me."

Archie grabbed his hand and put the revolver into it.

"Then do it for me," he said in a voice that broke. "You can put it back in my hand afterward. End this absurdity, this pleonasm we call life. I took a double first at Oxford, but I couldn't believe. Oxford couldn't give me what old Jeremiah out there picked up with his slug. He has the dream that is more real than our waking—the lie that works, the delusion that keeps him alive. I missed it. Shoot! You'll

kill what is more than dead—this corpse that is man."

He was almost raving, almost hysterical, and his fingers clawed Creswick. Then, like a man conscious of a breach of manners, he rose steadily, pulled his tattered shirt around his neck, and drew together his ragged beard, and he spoke with a calm polish, as if from another planet:

"Pardon my incoherence. I fail to convey my reason for asking this favor. Mr. Creswick, I am the younger son of an earl, who threw away a brilliant career in the church. Unfortunately the gold fields were not part of the catechism. Also, never having been a thief, I was handicapped as a preacher. You are right; to repent like David one must have sinned like David. My five thousand pounds of education and your forty years' battling arrive at the same verdict—of thumbs down. We are coheirs of the same futility. I have dry-blown the classics, and find them worth this bullet and powder. You are a graduate of the ground and have discovered Solomon and Seneca in every mullock heap. As one failure to another, will you do me the honor of shooting me through the heart?"

Creswick took the revolver from him.

"Mate," he said hoarsely, "we're both in a deep hole, but I don't really want to go out. I don't like even killing snakes. You've got more education than you can carry, I fancy. I ain't got any, but I know enough to keep going on a dry stage, and, damn you, sir, you've done me good."

The astonished Oxonian found himself shaken by the hand.

"Good?" he gasped. "I—do—good?"

"Yes—I have found a bigger fool than myself."

Without knowing why, Archie reciprocated the handshake, and both, when the General's voice reached them over the fires, turned as if forced. Archie murmured something which Creswick did not understand because it was in Latin, though not a curse.

"*Vicisti Galilæ*—with miners as well as fishermen!"

Sound of hoofs broke in behind them. A man rode out of the scrub leading a pack horse.

"Mates, is this Kurnalpi?" he shouted.

His voice was eager, and it reached the General's congregation.

"No—Linger an' Die."

"What way is Kurnalpi, then?"

Creswick held up his hand, pointing, blackfellows fashion, with a vertical palm, but it was trembling. His iron heart was palpitating. He could hardly speak.

"Thanks," said the man, turning his horses.

"Why—what's up?" Creswick managed to ask.

"A big rush. A seventy-ounce slug —and lots more——"

The man trotted off, stumbling over the shallow workings, and Creswick's anticipatory gold sense, which had guessed the cause of the man's hurry, gave way to a shout.

"I knew it; I smelled it. Now, mate, luck has turned; pack and off."

The man's words had startled the field like a clarion. The General's congregation stampeded up to Creswick. Men tumbled out of their tents half naked and naked, running barefoot, oblivious of the bramble and hot ashes. There was a roar of questions and answers. Then the pandemonium stilled into purpose. Fires blazed anew for lighting as men tore down their camps and packed swags to follow the good news that came out of the dark.

"Twenty ounces for your horses," said Creswick to the condenser man.

"Thirty."

Creswick emptied his belt, but he was short.

"Take mine. It's part payment, if you must go," said the General.

The horses were Creswick's. He would be ahead of the men on foot, leading the rush, in with the first peggers out on the farthest field.

He packed his swag, tools, and tucker on one horse, and was bridling the other.

"Good-by, mate," said the General, holding out his hand.

Creswick for ten seconds erupted the Riverina profanity that teamsters move bullocks with in muddy seasons.

"Hold his head, London," he concluded. "Now up with you, General."

With that, he threw the General up on his pack horse as he would a shovel of earth. The sturdy Bunbury bred brumby was quite able to carry the old man and Creswick's light outfit. The General protested. Creswick threatened to tie his legs under the horse's belly.

"You'll follow," he cried to London as he mounted the other horse.

"My oath!" said London.

"And mine!" said Archie.

Their swags were slung over their shoulder, shovels and pick projecting from the blue blankets, and their blackened billies tinkled their tinware as they tramped forward.

"We'll peg out for you," cried Creswick. "The General and I can hold two claims. We're mates, all."

"Mates—all!" replied London and Archie.

Creswick kicked his heels into his horse's side, and pulled at the General, and the two rode through that mob of elated, excited, gold-hungry men swarming over the plain into the flush, flooding the east with its promise.

THE SALMON CROP

THE movement to substitute fish for other meat in the food-conservation campaign is handicapped at its start by the almost complete failure of the sockeye salmon catch.

The American and Canadian sockeye packs usually yield an average of two million cases of tinned salmon yearly; for 1917 the catch reached only one-tenth of normal. Alaska sockeye figures were cut in half.

This is a serious blow to relief from food shortage and high prices; for salmon, besides being almost the only fish available in inland communities, has always been cheap.

Normally it should have been a record yield. Every four years the salmon run reaches high-water mark. Chronologically 1917 should have been a record year, but in the autumn of 1913 a rock slide blocked the Hell's Gate Channel of the Fraser River Cañon, and millions of sockeye salmon were unable to reach the spawning district farther above and died below the cañon without spawning.

The fisheries department finally blasted a channel through the slide, but too late for all but a small part of the salmon pack.

Every fourth year the sockeye salmon go from the open sea up to the small lakes of the Fraser watershed and lay their spawn on the gravel beds. The young that hatch out remain a year in the lakes, then seek salt water in which to mature for three years, then return to the lakes for the spawning season, being purse-netted and trapped on the way back. Thus the blocked channel prevented spawning in 1913, and there were mighty few hatched to figure in the salmon run four years later.

The sockeye salmon, because of its abnormally large optic nerves, has the best eyesight to be found in all nature—nearly a hundred times as powerful as a human being's. Their memory is in their eyes. They will travel hundreds of miles through rivers and lakes and return time and again to the starting point—all by carrying a camera picture of every rock, shoal, and channel in their optic nerves.

The Two-Dollar Bill

By Robert Ordway Foote

Private Creston Forsyth, of the First Virginia Cavalry, turned up missing one morning, and that was the beginning of a series of events that turned discipline and decency topsy-turvy, all through which a two-dollar bill fluttered tantalizingly and elusively, evidently being in some mysterious fashion the clew to the whole matter

CHAPTER I.

DESERTION AND DEATH.

CONSTERNATION reigned in Troop B of the First Virginia Cavalry. Private Creston Forsyth was reported missing at morning roll call. Such things were to become common enough a few weeks later on the bloody fields of France, but in peaceful camp in its own home city of Richmond the First resented anything which reflected upon its reputation as the crack regiment of the Old Dominion. Particularly wroth was Captain Crenshaw, since he was especially anxious to keep his troop's record perfect.

"Cres is a young reprobate to forget in this manner the duty he owes the First," he hotly exclaimed, speaking of the errant one with a familiarity bred of intimate personal acquaintance with three generations of Forsyths, but not letting that friendship soothe his wrath.

"Something must have happened. I can't believe Cres is intentionally absent," protested First Lieutenant Montgomery Minor, warm personal friend of the missing one.

He was at the moment the only other occupant of Captain Crenshaw's tent. It was pitched on the encampment ground in the outskirts of Richmond, on a field made fertile by the blood of the fighting sires and grandsires of these young men, who had fought fifty years before in defense of their city, against a flag under which their sons were now going forth to an even more desperate war. Captain Crenshaw was not inclined to listen to the defense of Creston Forsyth.

"Failure to report, whether accidental or not, is inexcusable," he declared. "It is bad enough in rough regiments quartered in wet States. For the First Virginia it is not to be condoned."

He was quiet a moment, but Captain Crenshaw was the amateur in arms, not bound by training to dignity before his subordinate, and soon launched forth again.

"I presume Cres is at his philandering," he said. "Probably he calmly decided it was nobody's business but his own if he preferred to sleep at home one night. The young whippersnapper, can't he realize he is no longer a cotillion leader, but a soldier! Creston shall be severely punished."

The fact that there had been another absentee that morning seemed to affect not at all the centering of the captain's wrath upon Private Forsyth, so his lieutenant ventured mildly to remark:

"That fellow, Dubois, in Cres' squad, also was missing this morning."

"I don't give a hang for him! I hope he disgraces himself so we get rid of him," snapped out the captain.

"I rather wish myself the sergeant hadn't recruited him just for the sake of filling up to full strength," agreed Lieutenant Minor. "The rest of us all grew up together; that is, except for a few other recent recruits."

"I tell you, Monte," exclaimed the captain, abandoning even a pretense of formality, "it is not merely because I hate to report stuff like this to old Powers; it is because I hate to have

a fine fellow like Cres imitating that guy Dubois. I don't like his looks."

Old Powers was the First's colonel, and strongly disliked because of certain fundamental notions regarding discipline he sought to put into effect.

At the moment Sergeant Barlow arrived to restore a semblance of military dignity to the captain's tent.

"I have to report that Privates Dubois and Forsyth have not yet been located. The Richmond police say they locked up no soldiers last night," he announced.

"You did not mention any names in asking them?"

"No, sir. I followed your instructions explicitly."

"Very well. Do not make any more stir about locating them than is necessary. And as soon as either one turns up bring him directly to me."

The sergeant departed in due order. When he was out of hearing the captain remarked to his lieutenant:

"Barlow tells me Cres has been getting mighty chummy with this fellow Dubois, shooting craps with him and such foolishness. I don't like it or understand it. Forsyth is a Southern gentleman. For him to take up with this stranger, who is patently of the scum of a big city, is past my comprehension. What do you make of it?"

"I don't get it, either," Lieutenant Monte answered. "Now you have brought up the subject, I don't mind telling you several of the men have mentioned it to me. Of course you know how things go with us. They can't immediately get over the fact that our fathers all belong to the same club."

"It has gone even farther than that, Monte. Yesterday Cres and this fellow were quarreling over money. Seems Cres claimed Dubois owed him a couple of dollars, and was demanding a two-dollar bill he had seen the fellow handling."

"Why should Creston Forsyth, whose father owns a bank for his sons' convenience, fuss over two dollars?" demanded Lieutenant Minor.

His question was not answered.

"Captain, the police send word the body of a murdered soldier has been found down near the munition works. They think he is a cavalryman."

It was Sergeant Barlow who spoke, dispensing with more than the formality of a hurried salute.

"Lordy, it must be Cres!" ejaculated Captain Crenshaw as he rushed out, closely followed by his equally agitated lieutenant.

It was but the act of a few minutes to inform Colonel Powers of the startling police information, climb into his automobile, and give the orderly instructions to ignore speed regulations.

Beside a white sheet which had been spread over an inanimate object that had the shape of a human body a patrolman and a police sergeant were on guard near the munition works, shooing away a few curious slum children. A little to one side squatted a man in civilian clothes—the coroner, awaiting the arrival of the army officers. On the ride from the camp Colonel Powers had been moved to strong speech concerning the possibility of a scandal within the First Virginia, and now he wasted no time in getting to the subject uppermost in his heart. Casting hardly a glance at the sheet, he turned to address the civic functionary:

"This thing must be kept quiet, Curtis."

"Well, of course I haven't nothing to say about that. All I can do is make out my report. It's up to the police and the newspapers, then," answered the coroner.

"I think I can speak for the police, can't I, sergeant?" said Captain Crenshaw.

The police officer nodded.

"I thought so," the captain went on. "I phoned the chief this morning, when this man was first missed."

"Then that is fixed, Curtis, and it lies with you to help us hush this thing up," the colonel persisted.

"I'd like to do what I can for you-all; you ought to know that—me with a son of my own in the service, even if he isn't in the First," assured the coroner. "But there are peculiar circum-

stances about this case that make it hard to keep it quiet."

Leaving the officers and the official at their argument, Lieutenant Minor drifted toward the white-covered object on the ground. He was less concerned over the possible blot on Virginia's crack regiment than he was with the sudden realization that he had lost a very dear friend.

His mind, during the ride from the camp, had hearkened back beyond the few recent months on the Mexican border and in camp at home again.

In that hurried ride he had found time even to regret that his longer service with the First had made him an officer, while his old pal was but a private. It had necessarily thrown them apart. Of late, at least within the last week, Forsyth had been hardly civil to him the few times they met off duty.

Reverently Lieutenant Minor approached the body and threw back the sheet, jerked away, and put an end to the officers' argument with the coroner by his almost joyful shout:

"It isn't Cres! It's that fellow Dubois!"

CHAPTER II.

FOR A TWO-DOLLAR BILL.

At Lieutenant Minor's exclamation the officers forgot their argument with the civil official, and whirled about to gaze upon the body of Dubois, lying face upward, with the cause of death all too apparent in the powder burns which surrounded the small, grim hole in his army shirt. Relief predominated upon the faces of Colonel Powers and Captain Crenshaw as they realized that it was not Creston Forsyth who had been murdered, but, instead, the rank outsider whom they both mistrusted, despite the fact that they had been glad enough to see him recruited, along with others of his kind, to swell the regiment to its full quota.

All National Guard units which have been organized long are clannish, and this trait particularly persists in the South, even in spite of the hospitality of that region. But the momentary relief of the higher officer soon gave way to indignation at seeing any one of his men thus treated, and angrily he demanded:

"Who committed this outrage?"

"That'll probably be for a court-martial to determine," replied the coroner. "All I know is I've got to hold an inquest. Whether it's kept secret depends on how much pull you have with the newspapers."

"What has a court-martial to do with a plain case of murder?" caustically inquired Colonel Powers.

"You don't know who did the shooting," significantly responded the coroner.

"No, I don't," admitted the officer. "If you do, why do you not have him arrested? That is what we all want done certainly."

"I did not know as you did." There was a dryness in the man's words that was particularly offensive. "You wanted the thing kept so quiet."

"That was——" Lieutenant Minor stopped at the warning look in his superior's eye, realizing suddenly that it would hardly do to say that interest in maintaining secrecy had departed with the discovery of the identity of the dead man. But Colonel Powers knew well how such a sudden change of attitude might be seized upon and made capital of. He suavely said:

"To say that we do not want a sensation made of this affair is not to hint that we do not want justice done. If you have any clews, why not act upon them? I gather from your remarks that you think you know the guilty party."

"I have an idea of his general identity, though of course it will be necessary for you to find the exact individual after I have done my work at the inquest," the coroner asserted, his brain still dashing along its single track, on the down grade. "This is not entirely a case for the police."

"What do you mean?"

"This man was killed by another soldier."

Instant suspicion, even dread, appeared in the eyes of the three military

men as they exchanged involuntary glances. But the colonel coolly said:

"That is even more unfortunate for the service and an additional reason for discretion in the handling of this matter."

The coroner had yet another bombshell to explode.

"Moreover, it was by another member of your regiment," he announced.

Even at this, Colonel Powers was not to be betrayed into any exclamation of surprise. Apprehension may have become certainty in his eyes, as it did in those of his two juniors, but just as calmly he asserted:

"Of course we know you must hold your usual investigation; indeed it will be our aim to render you every assistance in it. But it will be an easy matter for you to hold back your report—in fact, any report—for a day or two until I can impress upon the newspapers the importance of suppression of any mention of it. Meanwhile, we are at your service in the inquiry. But, remember, we demand evidence it was one of our men before admitting the charge."

Acquiescence can be expressed in other ways than by difficult words. Coroner Curtis gruffly said:

"Reckon it's about time I got on with my preliminaries. I was talking to that little girl when you-all interrupted."

The child was the typical, brown-haired, scrawny poor white of the cheap quarters in Southern cities. She was surrounded by a group of envious children, many of them far above her own age and by no means all of her own color. Summoned by the coroner, she marched proudly forward to the men.

Back to his business, the coroner proved that, despite his attitude of aloofness from the army officers, he was not an incompetent official. Indeed, they well knew his objections were chiefly founded upon a certain dislike for the aristocratic class which the First cavalry represented, when his own son was not a member of it. Toward the child he assumed a manner at once fatherly and commanding, stern enough to keep her from the temptations of imagination, yet kindly enough not to frighten her.

"You said, didn't you, Edith, that you was up in this tree, hiding from your little sister, when the two soldiers came along and sat down in the shade. What time was it?"

"Right soon after breakfast."

"What time do you have breakfast?"

"When the second whistle blows."

"That is at six-thirty," the coroner explained. "Could you hear what they were talking about?"

"Yes, sir, but I don't know what they were saying."

"You mean you could not understand."

"Yes, sir; it was a lot about some money the tall one said the other one owed him."

"Is this the tall one?" The coroner pointed to the dead man.

"This is the short one," the girl answered confidently. "T'other one is good looking."

"Tell us what they said," she was urged.

"The short one said, 'All right; I'll pay you. You needn't have chased me clear out here for it, nohow. I ain't that cheap. I'd like to know what you follow me around for. I don't like it. What business of you'n is it if I do break bounds?' "

Appalled at her own facility of repetition, the child stopped, but a little urging started her off again on her breathless recital.

" 'I ain't following you,' says the good-looking one. 'I'm following my money. I pre—pre—I reckon youse is going to beat it for good, and I don't propose to be bunked.' Then the other one, the dead one, pulled out a big roll of bills and fished off a couple and held 'em out. He says, 'How—ava-avaricious Southern gentlemen are.' You could see it made the tall one mad. He says, 'I demand the same bill I loaned you after I won it from you in that crap game. You still have it, I know.' "

The little girl imparted realism to her tale by hissing the words through her

teeth. She stopped to admire the effect, but again coaxing induced her to proceed:

"Then this one on the ground tried to jump up and hit the other, but there was a shot, and this one fell on the ground."

"What did you do?"

"I hollered."

"And what did the soldier do?"

"He looked around, scared, but he couldn't see nobody. So he rolled the dead man over, and reached in his blouse pocket and took out a little purse and pulled a bill out of it and looked at it close and threw the purse away. He put that bill in his pocket, but he didn't even wait to pick up the big roll of money on the ground before he ran away."

With a light almost of triumph in his eyes, the coroner looked up at the officers to inquire:

"Am I not right in thinking this may lead to a court-martial?"

"Quite," responded Colonel Powers with dignity. "But it does not necessarily follow that the court-martial will be in the First. I do not observe that even the murderer's command has been identified."

Turning back to the girl, Curtis questioned:

"What did the tall man have around his legs?"

"Leather things, just like this man has. My dad read in the paper that that means he is either an officer or in the cavalry, but this one did not have anything on his shoulders or didn't have a cap like officers do."

Surprise and consternation mingled on the faces of the army officers. How could they longer doubt that Creston Forsyth, their only other missing man, had murdered a fellow soldier? The First was, at the moment, the only cavalry command within a hundred miles. But the coroner did not know all this. Significantly, Colonel Powers said:

"I want to see you alone a minute, coroner."

"Just let me finish with this girl and I will be with you," the man answered. "I want to know what she is going to tell my jury so I can look for corroborative testimony."

Again addressing the child, he asked: "Could you see what the tall soldier took out of the purse he robbed this one of?"

"Yes, sir; I could see fine. It wasn't nothing but a two-dollar bill. He looked at it close, but he didn't tear off a single corner, and there wasn't a corner off it, either. My, I'd be afraid to carry a bill like that! See what bad luck it brought this dead soldier."

Feelingly Lieutenant Minor exclaimed:

"I fear there is more bad luck coming with that bill, too!"

CHAPTER III.

WATCHING THE WOMAN.

Although Lieutenant Montgomery Minor was undeniably right in his prediction that the mysterious two-dollar bill would bring further bad luck, its immediate consequences to himself could hardly be so termed. It brought him an assignment far outside the lines of ordinary military activity and afforded welcome relief from the monotony of a National Guard camp. In short, Lieutenant Minor became, for a time, a detective.

Colonel Powers evidently was persuasive in his conference with the coroner, since that individual suddenly displayed as great anxiety to make a secret of this mysterious slaying within the First as did the agitated officers themselves. In this desire the colonel and his two subordinates were not actuated entirely by military pride. They forgot the duties which a great world war had thrust upon them in considering this problem involving one of their own social order, a boy brought up within their immediate circle, of old Virginia family, a boy with whom the younger officers had been reared, with whose sister they had flirted in true Southern fashion, and who had, in like manner, flirted with their sisters.

That this same clear-faced, clean-limbed young man was now a murderer, a slayer for the sake of a miserable

two-dollar bill, was to them incomprehensible. They made no attempt to reason it out. What concerned them most was action.

But it was not action which would capture a criminal that they contemplated. It was action which would give the suspected man an opportunity to make the explanation which, each of them felt instinctively, would clear him. Failing that, it was their inexpressed intention to give him every chance to escape. Their great, immediate desire was to locate Creston Forsyth in advance of the civil officers, tell him of the danger in which he stood, and let him, if possible, clear up the mystery without the humiliation of a public scandal.

To arrive at a feasible plan a conference was held in Colonel Powers' quarters upon return to camp. It was attended only by the colonel, Captain Crenshaw, and Lieutenant Minor, the officers already "in the know." A sergeant had been commissioned to spread the unofficial report that Private Forsyth was absent under special orders, trying to clear up a certain mystery. Army rumor was trusted immediately to connect this mission with the death of Dubois, which was already being whispered about, but that in this case rumor would fail to establish the true connection the officers were confident.

"Our first move must be to locate Cres," announced the captain.

"Undoubtedly, and a simple matter," interjected the colonel with a touch of sarcasm. He was a stickler for military regulations, as are many amateur commanders, and, while accepting, did not approve of this necessity which forced him for the time to put other considerations first. Captain Crenshaw likewise entertained a hardly definable resentment against the man who had brought this hitch in the ordinarily even tenor of the life of the First.

Only in the eyes of Lieutenant Montgomery Minor did the light of real sympathy shine. He was wondering to what lengths his friend could have been driven that he would kill a fellow soldier for a two-dollar bill—he a Forsyth, a member of one of the wealthiest families in Virginia.

The others seemed to take note of the lieutenant's attitude, for suddenly turning to him Colonel Powers said:

"You are given twenty-four hours' leave. Go out and see what you can do toward finding Private Forsyth. Be careful not to provoke comment. Then come back with whatever information you uncover and we will consider further steps."

Alone in his own quarters, Monte lost his air of assumed confidence as he racked his brain as to his manner of proceeding.

What would be the method of a detective in similar circumstance? There did not seem much sense in returning with the traditional microscope to the scene of the crime. Monte retreated into a more or less retentive memory. What course had been followed by the hero of the last detective story he had read? What—oh, yes, he had watched the woman!

But who was the woman in the present case? Monte could think of no suspicious affair of Cres' which promised a clew, nor of any innocent one, either, until there came into his eyes the vision of the lovely creature who was known to the most exclusive circles of Richmond society as Miss Nancy Morgan. Immediately his proper course was determined.

As has been hinted, it was not bad luck which the two-dollar bill had brought to Lieutenant Minor. "Yes, suh, Miss Nancy was home and would be mighty tickled to see young Marse Monte," the venerable colored butler assured him at the Morgan home in quaint old Franklin Avenue, thoroughfare of a once proud aristocracy and still retaining its air of quiet distinction. Miss Nancy bore out the reassuring words as she rushed in with hands extended by exclaiming:

"Oh, Monte, what a pleasant surprise!"

But if her presence and her cheery greeting dispelled for an instant Monte's new-found sense of responsi-

bility, her second remark revived it, for she inquired:

"Did you get leave, too?"

That "too," he felt, could apply only to Creston Forsyth. A flirt Nancy Morgan might be; what truly charming Southern girl is not? But that her real interest in life for the moment was wrapped up in Cres, unless it was in himself, he felt certain. But he as lightly asked:

"Must I always share your attention with some one else in this way, even when I am the only masculine person present?"

"You should be satisfied to have my company without demanding all my thoughts," she flung back, and they were off—on a verbal tilt over sweet lips, luring eyes and love, merrily exchanging the airy persiflage which, south of the Mason and Dixon's line, passes for conversation wherever a man and a maid are gathered together.

It progressed joyfully until a little later Monte found himself sitting on the sofa beside the glowing Nancy, holding her willing hand and realizing afresh that she combined all that he could consider most desirable in a girl. Suddenly a sense of desolation came over the emotional young officer, a realization that in a few more days he would be leaving this dreamy, happy, laughing home town and home-town girl for a mobilization camp and no girl at all. That but a few weeks later he might be a heap of inanimate human flesh in a European trench. With a gesture of defiance, alike of convention and destiny, he gathered the surprised girl in his arms and implanted a kiss on her lips.

Scenting, perhaps, something of his mood, the girl did not gayly slap him, as would have been her action at a less serious demonstration. Instead, she gently pushed him aside, whispering:

"You mustn't, Monte, dear."

Abashed at her manner, he let her go, and she continued tremulously:

"Before I would not have minded a bit of spooning, but now that you are all going away love seems too serious a thing to joke about."

Respecting her response to his own seriousness, Lieutenant Minor drew himself up very straight, bowed formally, and said:

"Nancy, will you do me the honor to become my wife?"

Genuinely startled, the girl could only exclaim: "Why, Monte!" Collecting herself, she said: "That is a very great compliment, Monte, but I—you didn't know, of course you couldn't know, that I am engaged to Creston Forsyth."

"No, I didn't know," he murmured huskily.

"We have kept it a secret for six months," she went on hurriedly in a kindly attempt to lighten his embarrassment. "Just think, in our dreams we had set our marriage for this month. If this trouble had not come, we might be at Old Point Comfort now."

He could only say dully: "Old Point Comfort?"

"Yes; Cres loves it above any other spot in the world. I asked him last night if he couldn't go there on his leave; he seemed so tired out and distressed about something, and I told him he needed a rest. But he was right gruff about it—just said he had some special duties to perform."

Wildly the now aroused lieutenant reached for his hat. The call of duty had reasserted itself. Incidentally a "hunch" had popped into his brain. As he dashed down the walk to his horse, Nancy Morgan wondered if Monte Minor could have cared so much, after all. Even in his seriousness she had suspected the philandering for which he was noted. His unceremonious departure strengthened her doubt, and she dismissed Monte in thoughts of the steadier Creston.

CHAPTER IV.

FOLLOWING A HUNCH.

It did not take Lieutenant Minor long to report to his commanding officer, with a mysterious request for extended leave of absence.

"I still have twenty hours under your orginal order, but I may require several days," he announced.

"What have you discovered?" demanded Colonel Powers.

"I have strong reason for believing Private Forsyth may be at Old Point Comfort. The truth of the supposition I cannot vouch for, nor can I tell you how I acquired the clew." Then dropping formalities, which will only cling for just so long to a militia officer, he continued: "Really, colonel, I am just following a hunch, but it is the only possible chance I see."

Colonel Powers had been none too well pleased at his onerous efforts to suppress publication of the fact that one of the First's men had been murdered. Even the duty he felt he owed the Forsyth family was beginning to fade before his annoyance. So he sharply exclaimed:

"All right; take all the leave you need. I'll have you marked for ten days. This thing is in your hands now. If you find him, use your own judgment as to what to do with him. But don't bring him back if it means scandal for his family."

Early the next forenoon Lieutenant Montgomery Minor, accompanied by several bags in the custody of a ubiquitous porter, strolled in through the ancient entrance of the Chamberlain at Old Point Comfort, carefully scrutinized the first young man in student officers' uniform who passed before him, and cheerfully remarked:

"Hello, Cres, you here, too?"

There being no apparently logical reason for denying the assumption, erstwhile Private Creston Forsyth, of the First Virginia Cavalry, now, to every outward appearance, one of the promising young men whom Uncle Sam was educating at Fortress Monroe in artillery tactics, merely contented himself with grunting:

"Hello, Monte."

"This is a pleasant surprise; I was afraid I'd be lonesome here," went on Monte, ignoring the coldness of his friend's greeting.

He had determined, on his way down, to use finesse in approaching Cres on the delicate subject of whether or not the latter was a murderer, and, "If so, why?" as the advertisements say. This attitude was determined by a certain embarrassment on Monte's own part. Politely reared, he realized that this was a subject on which one must converse with due regard to the feelings of the second party.

"What are you doing here?" suspiciously demanded Forsyth.

"Oh, just enjoying a leave," gayly answered the lieutenant.

Of a truth, he felt exceedingly pleased with himself. Here was the much-sought Cres before his eyes; moreover, that individual was not behaving like a fugitive from capital punishment. Therefore, the prospect of a few carefree days in a delightful resort was certainly one to be enjoyed. The First had been in service more than a year, having been for a time stationed on the Mexican border, and it was a long while since any of its young bloods had danced beside the laughing waters of Hampton Roads.

"Just on a lark, dear boy, and with you to help me we'll have a grand time."

"But how did you happen to get leave?" persisted the evidently not enthusiastic Cres.

"Colonel thought I needed a rest," volunteered the irrepressible one. "Come on, while I get roomed."

"Can't stop. Got an engagement," ungraciously replied the newly found student officer, coolly turning on his heel and leaving without further ceremony to his friend of a lifetime.

Probably if Private Forsyth had been a little more polite in his action, Lieutenant Minor would not have descended to the ungentlemanly action of following. But it occurred to the lieutenant with sudden force that he was hardly carrying out his unspoken, hinted instructions, which he privately construed to mean issuing a warning to the suspected murderer.

Monte had decided that in case Cres did not have a justifiable motive for the crime he would advise his friend to attempt escape. However, to have the private elude him now, before he had sought the expected explanation,

would be exceedingly embarrassing when he came to report the result of his investigations. Accordingly he followed, at a safe distance, down the long hotel hall and out to the sun pavilion, there to decide that if Creston Forsyth was a slayer he had hit upon an excellent antidote for a troubled conscience.

Seated upon the shady side of the extensive circular veranda, which was lapped by the soft little waves of the bay, was as handsome and entrancing an example of Spanish beauty as the young Virginian had ever beheld, and straight for her headed the errant private of the First Cavalry. He was by no means to have the field undisputed. Already the beautiful, dark-eyed señorita, richly but tastefully gowned, was surrounded by several admirers, all in uniforms. She was giving convincing demonstration that a Spanish girl without her fan is not as Samson without his hair. For her a swagger stick did as well, since she made small attempt to veil her soft glances.

Yet, despite the boldness of the creature, the impressionable Monte found her, at least from a distance, possessed of undeniable charm. There was about her gestures, as he watched her, an abandon so tempered by a faintly hinted, natural timidity that it became at once appealing.

No Virginian when in Virginia is ever far away from some one with whom he can claim acquaintanceship, if nothing more. Turning from his almost rude scrutiny of the fascinating brunette, Lieutenant Minor was lucky enough to recognize a Roanoke girl, a schoolmate of his sister's. But once established by the not unattractive Miss Matilda Perkins, his eyes still persisted in straying toward the queen of the veranda.

"Ensnared so soon by the cunning Cuban," remarked Miss Matilda, a trace of envy in her voice.

"Is she a Cuban?" exclaimed Monte, too engrossed to notice the opening the girl had left him for obvious flattery.

"Yes, a much cultivated Cuban, who, I see, has made another conquest. Really, you constitute a record, even for her, as I gather you do not yet know her reputation." There was resignation, rather than reproach, in Miss Perkins' voice now. She recognized the inevitable.

"Before you came Creston Forsyth, of Richmond, seemed the quickest victim," the girl continued. "He just arrived yesterday afternoon, and he has been dancing attendance ever since."

"Come, Matilda, I admit I am hard hit," Monte humbly pleaded. "Tell me who she is. I see I am the next victim, provided Cres has not too much of a start."

"You will have sharp competition. All the young officers are in her train. But Cres seems to have made an especial impression, so perhaps she will fancy other specimens of the First Virginia Cavalry. She is Señorita Camila Guadalupe Anita Lopez. I am told Lopez may be called the Spanish Smith."

"It is a pretty name, all the same," he protested. "What do her friends call her?"

"Anita, I believe. She is accompanied by a horrible, fat, old woman. Before you do something rash you really must see the duenna to realize what this girl may look like when she ages."

Ignoring the implied joke, Monte eagerly exclaimed:

"Will you introduce me? Please, Matilda?"

"Oh, I'm good-natured, Monte, and I don't love you, so I don't care what happens to you. Yes, I'll introduce you to-night at the hotel hop," conceded the piqued Matilda.

"Why waste a perfectly good afternoon?" objected the eager Monte. "Why not make it sooner?"

"All right; sooner, if opportunity presents," consented Miss Perkins, and went away with a laugh that was hardly mirthful. No Southern girl likes to think she is outshone. Nor does any other girl, for that matter.

Left to his own devices, Monte finally managed to tear himself away from the sun pavilion and return to the office to register. But he was soon hurrying back there again, and on the way encoun-

tered the man he had come to the Point to find.

"See here, Cres, why so stand-offish?" he demanded.

Cres halted reluctantly.

"Pardon, Monte," he replied; "you see, I'm mighty busy catching up with these student officers that have a start on me. Really I haven't a minute to spare now. See you later."

"No, you don't. See me now. Tell me how you happen to be here. I hadn't heard of you being transferred from the First. What are you doing here?"

"I'm minding my own business," Cres flared back. "Suppose you try it. Please remember I'm no longer a private in your troop."

"There are a lot of things I must remember," flashed the lieutenant, trying to put meaning in his voice. "One of them is that I'm a friend of yours and must try to help you out of any trouble you may get into and keep you out of more."

Humbly Cres held out his hand.

"I'm sorry, old man. I have a lot on my mind, and my nerves are near the snapping point. I really must rush along."

"You're forgiven," replied Monte. "Another thing I must remember is that I am broke until I can cash a check. Can you let me have a few dollars?"

"I'm in the same fix myself until this afternoon," Cres said sincerely.

"Just a two-dollar bill would do," Monte suggested.

"I haven't even a two-dollar bill," Cres answered; then added, with an unnecessary flush: "That is, that I can spare. But I must run along. See you after luncheon."

As he dashed off, he left a decidedly limp lieutenant behind him.

CHAPTER V.

DARK EYES.

Amorous of disposition though Lieutenant Montgomery Minor might be, he must be credited with having had a more vital reason than hope of a delightful flirtation with a fascinating Cuban to prevent his hurrying through the errand which had brought him to the Hotel Chamberlain.

Creston Forsyth's admission that he possessed a two-dollar bill with which he would not part even to relieve the temporary financial distress of the lieutenant was a "stickler," so the latter told himself as he endeavored, in the privacy of his own room, to bring the light of reason to bear on the problem. The simple solution, as being the one nearest at hand, he dismissed at once. Of course, common sense told him, the thing to do was to corner Cres, tell him it was known beyond doubt that he was the murderer of Dubois, find out if he had an excuse which would hold good, not merely before a court-martial, but before the more exacting bar of public opinion. If it would not, the young man must, in the nature of things, as Montgomery Minor's early training had taught, be given an opportunity quietly to drop from sight.

Such was the proper method of handling his delicate case, the soldier detective well realized. But it would hardly be the Virginia way. Suppose the murder had been committed over a grievance which was strictly Forsyth's own concern? Suppose it had been over a woman? Monte would feel cheap, butting in. Moreover, he might himself be shot.

That the officers of the law had been persuaded to turn over the case to the military Monte was confident. Not all of them would be as obdurate as had been the coroner. The honor of the First was very dear to every heart in Richmond. Suppose he should, through an untactful move, betray the secret all others were guarding so well? No, he concluded, it would be better to let affairs develop themselves.

Having thus assuaged his sense of professional duty, Lieutenant Minor went in search of the lovely Cuban and some one to present him to her. That duty was accommodatingly performed by the good-natured Miss Matilda Perkins in the palm room early in the afternoon, or, to use her own phrase, "in the evening," any time from three o'clock

to dusk falling under that designation in Virginia.

To the unobservant person it might have seemed that Lieutenant Minor's reception at the hands of the fair señorita was marked by extreme cordiality. But not so to the enamored Monte. He had watched her coquettishness at a safe distance, and he felt distinctly aggrieved to note that she met him with no greater, if no less, warmth than she seemed to extend to all her admirers.

In that immediate group, on the present occasion, was soon included Creston Forsyth, and Lieutenant Minor was rather agitated to note that once or twice there seemed to pass between him and the fair Cuban glances that implied an understanding which their outward manner did not reveal.

In perfect English, which retained but a touch of the softening vowels of her native tongue, the girl carried on a lively conversation with her group of worshipers. And it was by no means entirely confined to the topic which Monte had supposed would be uppermost in such a circle.

True, Señorita Lopez was forced at times archly to counter brazen compliments directed at her beauty and charm. But to her credit he noted that she did not encourage such subjects; indeed she seemed anxiously to avoid them, betraying an anxiety to talk rather of war, in which she was a wild partisan for the Allied cause, and of military life in general, for which she showed an enthusiasm sustained by a startlingly clear knowledge, for a girl, of army and navy life and precedent. It was notable that every one of her admirers wore a uniform, nor were all of the subaltern age. Several times the youngsters were forced to part ranks to allow a dignified higher officer to pause while he did homage to the Cuban queen.

In no group of men could Lieutenant Montgomery Minor remain long in the background. Having for a time sized up the preferences of Señorita Anita from the outside of her circle of admirers, the young Virginian gradually became one of the more fortunately placed half dozen devotees, and was informing this fair lady that he was, like her favorite, Creston, also of the First Virginia Cavalry.

"Oh, is that possible!" she exclaimed in a full, deep voice, which was, when first heard, almost startling, but which, on acquaintance, came to possess a unique appeal not equaled, the enamored Monte was convinced, by the softest of Southern slurring. "I have many friends in that regiment. In fact, I now regard it as distinctly my own."

"In that case why not join its immediate representative in parade duty? The sunshine outside is most alluring." Monte said it with his courtly bow. But he required his best training in the art of hearts and hands to survive the reply.

"But I already am promised for that delightful duty to another representative of the First Virginia. At least," she continued, smiling at Cres, "I believe he can be so regarded, even if he has recently changed his allegiance."

"I owe no allegiance to any power but yourself," gallantly responded Forsyth.

"A pretty speech, but one better unsaid in these times," answered the girl, losing her gay manner. "Please remember that my country also is engaged in this war. The only allegiance we any of us owe is to the ideal of democracy."

Not so easily to be turned aside, Monte persisted:

"May I, then, speak for the honor of to-morrow escorting you to parade at the fortress?"

"I am sorry," she was more than gracious, "but that also is spoken for."

"That is unfortunate, for I have something of much importance to tell you; something more important, even, than that I think you the most charming person I have ever met."

Lieutenant Minor used his best manner, but with it he endeavored to impart an air of mystery. Rightly he sensed that a girl like this, constantly in the companionship of army men, must have a passion for anything savor-

ing of a secret; it is a trait which is controlled by sex, not nationality.

The señorita's interest seemed to quicken.

"In that case, you might escort me over to Ocean View for the bathing to-morrow morning. I have wondered that no one has volunteered."

From the group came a storm of protestations; but, despite their loudness, Lieutenant Minor thought he detected a trace of raillery. However, the newcomer carried off the engagement, and, well satisfied with himself, drifted back to the lonesome Miss Matilda, there to redeem himself with soft speeches for what had appeared to be previous neglect.

Truth to tell, he had something of importance which he wished to discuss with the delightful Cuban, although it had been secondary when he had made his play to obtain an engagement with her. He wished to ascertain how the land lay with Creston Forsyth. Occasionally a man may be approached through a feminine friend when his own chums hesitate to broach intimate personal affairs to him themselves.

Monte could not rid himself of the idea that there was something doubtful, something not strictly regular, in this sudden, mysterious transference of Private Forsyth, of the First Virginia, to be a student officer of artillery at Fortress Monroe, particularly as all other such transfers had been made and publicly announced months before.

In this new spirit of doubt, tempered, however, by caution, he later attempted to hold conversation with Creston in the bar, now denatured of its ardent spirits and dedicated to the popular limeade of the South. But Cres was in anything but a friendly mood.

"What are you trying to butt in on this Spanish damsel for, Monte?" he demanded as soon as they had met.

"Why should I not 'butt in,' if you call it that?" heatedly replied the lieutenant. "You cannot expect to have an entirely free field."

"But don't do it, Monte; please don't," pleaded Cres. "I have a particular reason for my attentions. But you haven't. You are simply flirting. I am not."

"Hard hit, are you?" Monte clapped him heartily on the shoulder. Then he sobered. "What about a certain little girl in Richmond?"

"Kindly leave her out of this," Cres hotly cautioned. "I tell you I have a particular reason for warning you to let Señorita Lopez alone."

"All the same I have a bathing engagement with the fascinating señorita to-morrow morning and I intend to keep it."

"Keep it nothing! You'll ride over there and ride back, but she won't go in. She never does. That was the reason for the smothered laugh at your expense there in the palm room. I fell for it yesterday. I don't know why she acts that way; perhaps she is bow-legged."

"Here, Cres Forsyth, you cannot insult that girl in my presence, even if I have known her only a few hours. You are so enraptured with her you are insanely jealous. Jealous men always knock the object of their affections. Now, I want to know what you are doing down here? I'm tired beating around the bush with you."

"It is none of your business what I am doing down here," snarled back the private. "At least I am tending to it instead of messing in yours."

"You are nothing but a plain deserter," Monte hissed between his teeth. "This is all poppycock about a transfer to the officers' training school. I've a notion to put you under arrest."

Controlling his temper with obvious difficulty and speaking under his breath, Cres answered:

"You will do nothing of the sort, because in spite of the fact that you are peevish with me now you will not get me in a scandal. But take my advice. Keep your hands off my affair with Señorita Lopez for a few days or you will start something you can't finish. After that we will neither of us care what you do."

Coolly he walked off, leaving Monte too nonplused to take any definite action against him.

CHAPTER VI.

THE GAUDY PARASOL.

Though the night's repose of Lieutenant Minor had been anything but restful, it was a fresh, thoroughly animated, neatly groomed young officer who appeared before Señorita Lopez the following morning to escort that young woman across Hampton Roads to the bathing beach at Ocean View. In the night hours Monte had wrestled with his intricate problem of friendship and duty, finally reaching the conclusion that he would tolerate no further parleying with Creston Forsyth.

Having reached this decision, the lieutenant put it resolutely behind him and gave himself up to the joys of companionship with a new type of female charmer. Never before had he known a girl with whom he was so quickly on terms of ease. Nor ever had he encountered another girl who could so quickly throw over an artful, flirtatious air for one of frank good-fellowship. She did not mind smoke; nay, she courted it. She preferred to stand outside on the front upper deck of the tiny ferryboat, and made him identify, so far as he could, the different war craft in the harbor. She wondered at their ignoring the danger of submarines, and was wonderfully interested in his story of nets across the harbor entrance and secret passages among them—known only to trusted pilots.

But chiefly she was interested in the First Virginia Cavalry. She knew the names of many of its officers, and confessed she considered Colonel Powers, the commander, a "perfect dear."

"But my friends are not all officers," she added quickly in her delightfully husky voice. "There is Creston Forsyth. I think he is just fine, and I have another very dear friend there. He and Cres are great chums. His name is Frank Dubois. Is he in your troop?"

Struck dumb, Lieutenant Minor merely stared, unseeing, across the waters at Willoughby Spit. Taking his abstraction for an attempt to recall the name, she went on:

"Probably he is in another troop. It was he who gave me this parasol. Don't you think I show deep devotion by carrying it?"

The parasol in question was a flimsy affair of a peculiar saffron hue that ill accorded with her otherwise pleasing attire of pink silk mull, a color that served to accentuate the delicate roses of her dark cheeks. Monte had been sensitive to the jarring note as he met the señorita in the hotel. But now, with the question thus directly presented, he made a stammering attempt at a denial that the parasol was aught but beautiful.

"Oh, I know it looks horrible with this dress, but I had no other handy. Then truly it does remind me of dear old Frank. I wish you knew him. I think the acquaintance would be of value to you both."

They were at the landing now, and the confusion saved Monte the embarrassment of a reply. On the electric car which carried them the mile to the beach he took good care that the conversation was steered into safer channels. And so responsive was his companion, so interested in really masculine things, that he soon forgot the unpleasant recollection of his errand at the beach, which her mention of Dubois had brought up.

But one other incident of the visit to the beach disturbed his tranquil joy in the Cuban girl's presence. It was when she showed a disinclination to go in bathing. The day, she declared, was too chilly. They finally compromised by sitting at ease on the veranda of the little hotel and watching the summer crowds drift by. Another bit of gaudy saffron flashed by in the crowd.

"There is the mate to my parasol," gayly exclaimed the señorita, her dark eyes showing a flash that took on something more than a mere hint of amusement. "I wonder if Frank Dubois has another old sweetheart down here."

Monte, on his part, was wondering if he saw a touch of the much advertised Spanish jealousy. It was strengthened by her next remark:

"I never did like the look of this thing. I made the threat to Frank that

I was going to put it up at auction and sell it to the highest bidder among my suitors."

"How did he take such a reception of his gift?" queried Monte.

"He begged me to keep it a while at least. Said he would come back later and give me two dollars for it himself."

"Two dollars!" the lieutenant exclaimed, looking more closely at the flimsy trifle.

"Oh, it is worth more than that, I assure you," the girl laughed back. "If he does not appear with his little two dollars soon, I shall sell it to the first inquirer. Are you in the market?"

"I might be able to find two dollars," he said thoughtfully.

"This will have to be a nice new two dollars," she gayly stipulated.

"All in one piece?" he asked.

"Yes, all in one piece. I have none of your Southern superstitions about two-dollar bills bringing bad luck. I don't think money ever is bad luck. So it must not have any of the corners torn off, the way you people fix them."

"A brand-new two-dollar bill, with the corners intact," he recited, with a nervous laugh. A train of thought had been set in motion in his brain, and it was now rushing downhill toward conclusions.

"Yes, that is the kind," she mocked. "Have I a purchaser with the wherewithal?"

"I might be able to find such a bill," Monte answered.

"That is what another man told me," she tantalized. "He may find one first. What a pretty girl that is passing!"

If she thus wished to turn the conversation, she was highly successful. Lieutenant Minor seized at the pretext like a submarine victim at a life preserver. Moreover, he successfully kept it turned until they were about to disembark from the returning ferry before the hotel. Then he banteringly said:

"Suppose I do find that elusive sort of a two-dollar bill—when could I close the transaction?"

"When would you like to?" she demurely asked.

"To-night," he suggested.

"Not to-night," she parried; "I have an engagement for to-night. Say to-morrow over at Ocean View again. I love to watch the crowds over there."

With that he had to be content. And content of mind was not easy for Lieutenant Minor the remainder of that day. What connection was there between this beautiful Cuban girl and the murder of a soldier in the interior of Virginia? None, apparently. Yet could this eternal connection of a two-dollar bill with everything Creston Forsyth did be merely a matter of coincidence?

Determined to delay no longer, Lieutenant Minor went in search of his friend, but his inquiries were in vain. By dinner time, when he finally located Forsyth just about to enter the dining room, the young officer was near the point of desperation. Indirection no longer sufficed him. Drawing the other a little to one side, he said:

"See here, Cres, you have a two-dollar bill I want."

"What the devil do you mean?" cried the other, trying to jerk away.

"You know what I mean. We've fooled around long enough. You shot Frank Dubois."

"What of it?" Forsyth asked sullenly.

"Now, Cres, I was sent to find you and help you. If you had a good excuse, I was to bring you back and let you vindicate yourself. If not, I was to help you make yourself scarce. But I won't stand this defiant attitude of yours any longer."

"Let me go. I have a dinner engagement in there," protested Cres. "I'll talk to you to-morrow."

"I will not let you go. I want this two-dollar mystery explained. What connection has Señorita Lopez with the case?"

"Listen, Monte; I can't tell you anything now. Wait till to-morrow."

"I will not wait until to-morrow. At any moment police may walk into this hotel looking for you. Then it will be asked why I was here letting you run around flirting with a dark-eyed beauty and pretending to be a student officer."

In Cres' eyes there came a crafty

look, but his words rang sincerely as he pleaded:

"Monte, for the sake of our long friendship you must let me go free for to-night. I give you my word I will not try to escape. You love her yourself?"

"I don't know, Cres," honestly answered the lieutenant.

"Well, I know my feelings," Cres whispered dramatically. "This is the last night I shall ever see her. Let me go to her!"

Baffled, Lieutenant Minor released his hold on the other's jacket and watched him enter the dining room and pass among its many tables until he reached that occupied by Señorita Lopez and her duenna, there to take the third chair.

CHAPTER VII.

TWO DOLLARS, C. O. D.

Though his friend's appeal to sentiment had moved Lieutenant Minor to delay his intended action in forcing Creston to reveal the details of the slaying of Dubois, the officer was by no means satisfied he had done a wise thing in letting the soldier go. In ordinary circumstances he would not have dreamed of doubting the pledged word of a Forsyth. But the connection of Señorita Lopez with the case, which connection he felt certain existed, had thrown him off his usual line of reasoning. In telling Cres he did not know whether or not he loved the Cuban fascinator, he had frankly exposed his heart—he did not know. While she attracted him more than any other girl he had ever met, she at the same time repelled him. There was about her a certain undefinable quality which aroused in him a half-felt feeling of antagonism, the while he was desperately admiring her.

With his emotions mixed as they were, Lieutenant Minor did something which would have been impossible for him in his customary frame of mind. He deliberately set himself to shadow his friend and the Cuban girl. In this action, he told himself in justification, he would be but carrying out his orders from his superiors. He had been commissioned to unravel the mystery of the Dubois murder, and he proposed to delay no longer on the job.

Secure in the knowledge that Cres would not suspect him of turning detective in this bald fashion, Monte coolly had himself placed at a table which commanded an excellent view of the señorita and her admirer. He was punished by being forced to watch the girl carrying on, under the apparently unseeing eyes of her duenna, an even more desperate flirtation than was her wont.

Flames were added to the lieutenant's jealousy by the very evident fact that the girl, if her eyes spoke truth, was far gone over her companion. But both his bitter meditations and his excellent dinner were cut short by the completion of the meal by his three suspects. Only partially placating an astonished ebony servitor with a sizable tip, he deserted his own dinner in an early course to follow Cres and Señorita Anita.

Through the halls they sauntered, lost in each other's conversation and successfully eluding the duenna. On out into the lovely Virginia night they went, and toward the tunnellike entrance to old Fortress Monroe, where ladies, escorted by officers, could freely enter. A fine moon shone full overhead, and Lieutenant Minor could not but admire the couple's taste when they mounted one of the ancient stone stairways to the broad, grassy mound which forms the outer wall of the fortifications.

Without a thought of the adage that eavesdroppers never hear good of themselves, the officer, using as a protection one of the chimneys which incongruously pop up through the grass from the officers' quarters in the walls beneath, crept up close to the couple. But the first words to reach his ears were in the girl's sweetly husky voice as she laughingly said:

"No, I don't suppose I do need my precious parasol to-night, dear. I don't know why I carry it—my affectionate disposition, I presume. Perhaps I was

afraid Lieutenant Minor would steal it. He has been anxious to buy it."

"He has!" Cres appeared unduly agitated over this simple bit of information. "I better complete the purchase right here while I still have the opportunity."

"But I have told you I can only sell it over on the porch of the inn across the bay, where it was given to me," she answered; "that was part of my bargain."

"I have had an awful scramble to get the sort of a two-dollar bill you demand," Cres said, with what struck the hidden listener as a sinister meaning in his emphasis. "There is no telling how long I can keep it, with Monte pestering me at every step to let him have a two-dollar bill."

"It really wouldn't be safe to sell it to you here," the girl objected rather half-heartedly. "A bargain is a bargain. I've been expecting Frank Dubois to turn up at Ocean View to buy it of me there himself."

"I don't think Dubois will come soon. I got this bill from him." Cres hesitated, then went on: "Probably Monte will be waiting at the hotel to sandbag me for this."

He had pulled out his wallet, and was extracting a bill.

"But how will I know it is the kind of a bill I asked for? You know my gaudy parasol is very dear to me. I must have proper payment for it."

"You can look at the bill under my pocket flash."

Cres turned the little light upon the bill, at the same time leaning forward to whisper something softly in the girl's ear. She laughed coyly, but scrutinized the money closely. Then handing over her parasol, she said:

"You must not be too serious with me, my dear. You know young soldiers who go to the war are in great danger always."

"So are pretty girls always," was his answer as he slipped his arm about her.

"Stop, sir!" the señorita almost shouted.

Three dark figures, unnoticed before by the watching lieutenant, had suddenly sprung up from the deeper grass just at the edge of the stonework. Two of them rushed to assist Cres in holding the madly fighting Cuban girl, while the third seized the recently purchased parasol that Cres held forth to him.

"What the devil is all this?" demanded Lieutenant Minor, dashing out from behind his chimney.

But before he could do more than shout he was covered with an army automatic by the holder of the parasol, and had obeyed a sharp command to throw up his hands. Cres had torn loose from the struggling group, and managed to gasp out:

"It's only Lieutenant Minor. He has been shadowing me for my regiment."

However, the officer—Monte now saw, in the moonlight, that it was a captain—did not lower his pistol, and the bewildered lieutenant stood helpless while he saw two other officers overcome the scratching, biting girl and snap handcuffs on her. When she had been led away the captain inquired of Cres:

"You vouch for this man?"

"Yes, he is my first lieutenant. He had to follow me because of my killing Dubois. I knew all the time he was there behind the chimney. It gave me rather a reassuring feeling, too, I can tell you. I couldn't see you, and thought I had made a mistake in location. He is all right, I assure you."

The captain put away his weapon and turned his attention to the mysterious parasol. In the light of Cres' electric flash he coolly unscrewed the top of the handle and slipped out a roll of soft tissue thickly covered with writing and small maps. Holding out his hand to Forsyth, he said:

"Congratulations! You pulled it off without a hitch. This should mean a commission for you."

CHAPTER VIII.

GAME TO THE LAST.

"No doubt it is a feather in your cap, but one I'd rather not wear," Lieutenant Minor was telling prospective Lieutenant Forsyth. It was the following morning, and the first opportunity the

two had had, after the exciting night, for exchanging confidences.

"But she was a spy, Monte, and an enemy to our country," Cres defended himself.

"You did perfectly right to work for the recovery of the papers," Monte replied stiffly. "But to make love to a girl in order to send her to her grave —that's what it means!"

"I did it to catch an accomplished spy," Cres protested hotly.

"All the same, I'd sooner have stayed a private," Lieutenant Minor came back as warmly. For a moment another clash seemed imminent, but Forsyth cooled down sufficiently to say:

"Before I get through I'll convince you I was right."

"Will you also convince me you were right in murdering Dubois—not that I care anything about what happened to him, except that I fail to get his connection."

"Why, you poor simp!" Cres freely expressed his opinion. "I supposed you had guessed by this time he was a spy, too. I had to kill him to get that precious two-dollar note that bought the parasol."

"Say, I have heard nothing but two-dollar bill for a week! What is it all about?" demanded Monte.

"The signal, the pass, the credential of a member of this gang. It had extra-colored thread meshes painted on it to make a certain design, and to the man possessing it were to be given the maps," Forsyth explained.

"Oh, that's what she was driving at!" Monte whistled, in a flood of enlightenment.

"Sure. She expected Dubois down here himself. He was on his way when I killed him, but as he was to send a substitute if he could not get off that made it easy for me."

"But what would a common soldier in a Virginia National Guard regiment be doing with all those coast-fortification plans?"

"Who less likely to be detected with them?" Cres answered question with question.

"But as a deserter he would have been constantly subject to arrest and search."

"He was not a deserter. He had leave from Colonel Powers; got it on some flimsy excuse of going to see a sick mother. I didn't know that, though, when I shot him as a last resort in getting that priceless two-dollar bill. You see, we did not know who had the maps here at the beach."

"Colonel Powers is a damned smooth old rogue," commented the lieutenant, forgetting respect for a superior officer. "He led me to suppose you both were cutting it. And he sent me out to find you."

"So you would be handy if I needed help. And Nancy Morgan gave you the tip where to look. Oh, she didn't mean to! I had a hunch the night before the Dubois matter that I'd be coming this way, and had her ready for you. Of course she did not know the spy secret."

"I begin to get this," Monte declared. "But with all this brilliancy I don't see how you square up your conscience on the girl question."

"You were my unwitting aid in all this, because we had her guessing. She did not know which of us had the note —the two-dollar bill. She knew it was to come from the First Virginia if Dubois could not bring it himself, and the downy old colonel saw to it that few people knew that Dubois was dead. Even now he's searching for another leak in the First, possible accomplices of Dubois. But, as my assistant, you are entitled to a fond farewell with the dark-eyed beauty."

"I don't quite understand how you can talk so lightly when she is to die at sunrise," Monte indignantly protested.

"I've been hardened, I guess. But why don't you go see her? It might cheer her up. I don't think she recognized you last night, and she would like to feel she still has one friend."

"Give me an order and I will. Our rank seems to be reversed in this matter."

Go he did, in some unexpressed, half-

understood emotion of pity, harboring a faint hope that he might convey to the condemned girl a hint that not all men were glad to see her die.

From the bright sunlight to the darkened cell was a change that temporarily blinded the lieutenant. But he was greeted by a familiar husky yet cheery voice, which he had come to listen for with a feeling closely akin to that he always experienced in the early stages of an affair of the heart.

"Welcome to our happy home!" it said. "Our impressionable lieutenant come to pay his last respects!"

Through the thick, smoke-laden atmosphere he saw a smiling boy contentedly holding a cigarette and laughing in his face.

"Where——" he exclaimed, but was cut short by the boy's mocking: "Here, dearest!"

With his improved vision Lieutenant Minor saw that the young man possessed the laughing, long-lashed, dark eyes of Señorita Anita.

"Bilked!" he ejaculated, squatting on a handy stool.

"So were all the others, except that Forsyth, curse him! He did me. I was a fool to let him put it over on me on the fort wall that way, when all my instructions called for daylight at Ocean View. Do you know now, sweetie, why I let you take me there?"

Ignoring the dig, Monte exclaimed: "And you wore a wig!"

"I did not," came the indignant denial. "Give me credit for what skill I did show. They cut my hair this morning so it would not interfere with the rope to-morrow. It was all my own."

"At least you were a Cuban?"

"Never saw the island. I am a Bavarian, raised in Spain and educated in France and England, where I was of extreme value to my empire through my feminine appearance. The French and English officers are as susceptible as the Americans."

"And now you are about to die at the hands of the latter."

"It has been longer coming than I expected. It is the fortune of the game I played, the most fascinating known, with life as a stake. Now run along, adoring one, and leave me to more pleasant meditations."

With a profound salute of genuine respect, Lieutenant Montgomery Minor withdrew.

CARRYING REFORM TOO FAR

THE grand jury of a small city in Maryland threw a bomb into the town's usual placidity last fall when it brought in a report attacking in scathing terms the styles of dress worn by the girls of the community. The report stated, among other things, that "our young men would live in a realm of purer thought if some of the ladies of the city and county would attire themselves in a more becoming dress."

According to the foreman of the jury, he and his fellows were moved to wrath chiefly by the following items:

1. Startling low-necked waists revealing a shocking area of neck and shoulders.
2. The wearing of silk and crêpe de Chine waists and combinations that are sensationally transparent.
3. The tendency of young women to reveal, through careless postures, altogether too much silk hosiery.
4. The wearing of skirts from nine to twelve inches above the ground, with a tendency toward even shorter lengths.

When the report was made public, the feminine part of the population was thoroughly enraged.

"Good gracious!" said one of them. "What do they want to do—keep us from wearing anything at all?"

Waring of Sonoratown

By Henry Herbert Knibbs

Author of "Sunny Mateel," "The Amazing Tenderfoot," Etc.

(A Four-Part Story—Part Four)

CHAPTER XXVII.

WACO.

THE tramp Waco, drifting south through Prescott, fell in with a quartet of his kind camped along the railroad track. He stumbled down the embankment and "sat in" beside their night fire. He was hungry. He had no money, and he had tramped all that day. They were eating bread and canned peaches, and had coffee simmering in a pail. They asked no questions until he had eaten. Then the usual talk began.

The hobos cursed the country, its people, the railroad, work and the lack of it, the administration, and themselves. Waco did not agree with everything they said, but he wished to tramp with them until something better offered. So he fell in with their humor, but made the mistake of cursing the trainmen's union. A brakeman had kicked him off a freight car just outside of Prescott. One of the hobos checked Waco sharply.

"We ain't here to listen to your cussin' any union," he said. "And seein' you're so mouthy, just show your card."

"Left it over to the White House," said Waco.

"That don't go. You got your three letters?"

"Sure! W. B. Y. Catch onto that?"

"No. And this ain't no josh."

"Why, W. B. Y. is for 'What's bitin' you?' Know the answer?"

"If you can't show your I. W. W., you can beat it," said the tramp.

"Tryin' to kid me?"

"Not so as your mother would notice. Got your card?"

Waco finally realized that they meant business. "No, I ain't got no I. W. W. card. I'm a bo, same as you fellas. What's bitin' you, anyway?"

"Let's give him the third, fellas."

Waco jumped to his feet and backed away. The leader of the group hesitated wisely, because Waco had a gun in his hand.

"So that's your game, eh? Collectin' internal revenue. Well, we're union men. You better sift along." And the leader sat down.

"I've a dam' good mind to sift you," said Waco, backing toward the embankment. "Got to have a card to travel with a lousy bunch like you, eh?"

He climbed to the top of the embankment, and, turning, ran down the track. Things were in a fine state when a guy couldn't roll in with a bunch of willies without showing a card. Workmen often tramped the country looking for work. But hobos forming a union and calling themselves workmen! Even Waco could not digest that.

But he had learned a lesson, and the next group that he overtook treading the cinders were more genial. One of them gave him some bread and cold meat. They tramped until nightfall. That evening Waco industriously "lifted" a chicken from a convenient hencoop. The hen was old and tough and most probably a grandmother of many years' setting, but she was a welcome contribution to their evening meal. While they ate Waco asked them if they belonged to the I. W. W. They did to a man. He had lost his card. Where could he get a renewal? From headquarters, of course. But he had been given his card up in Portland. He had cooked in a lumber camp. In

that case he would have to see the boss at Phoenix.

There were three men in the party besides Waco. One of them claimed to be a carpenter, another an ex-railroad man, and the third an iron molder. Waco, to keep up appearances, said that he was a cook; that he had lost his job in the Northern camps on account of trouble between the independent lumbermen and the I. W. W. It happened that there had been some trouble of that kind recently, so his word was taken at its face value.

In Phoenix, he was directed to the "headquarters," a disreputable lounging room in an abandoned store on the outskirts of the town. There were papers and magazines scattered about; socialistic journals and many newspapers printed in German, Russian, and Italian. The place smelled of stale tobacco smoke and unwashed clothing. But the organization evidently had money. No one seemed to want for food, tobacco, or whisky.

The "boss," a sharp-featured young man, aggressive and apparently educated, asked Waco some questions which the tramp answered lamely. The boss, eager for recruits of Waco's stamp, nevertheless demurred until Waco reiterated the statement that he could cook, was a good cook, and had earned good money.

"I'll give you a renewal of your card. What was the number?" queried the boss.

"Thirteen," said Waco, grinning.

"Well, we may be able to use you. We want cooks at Sterling."

"All right. Nothin' doin' here, anyway."

The boss smiled to himself. He knew that Waco had never belonged to the I. W. W., but if the impending strike at the Sterling smelter became a reality a good cook would do much to hold the I. W. W. camp together. Any tool that could be used was not overlooked by the boss. He was paid to hire men for a purpose.

In groups of from ten to thirty the scattered aggregation made its way to Sterling and mingled with the workmen after hours. A sinister restlessness grew and spread insidiously among the smelter hands. Men laid off before pay day and were seen drunk in the streets. Others appeared at the smelter in a like condition. They seemed to have money with which to pay for drinks and cigars. The heads of the different departments of the smelter became worried. Local papers began to make mention of an impending strike when no such word had as yet come to the smelter operators. Outside papers took it up. Surmises were many and various. Few of the papers dared charge the origin of the disturbances to the I. W. W. The law had not been infringed upon, yet lawlessness was everywhere, conniving in dark corners, boasting openly on the street, setting men's brains afire with whisky, playing upon the ignorance of the foreign element, and defying the intelligence of Americans who strove to forfend the threatened calamity.

The straight union workmen were divided in sentiment. Some of them voted to work; others voted loudly to throw in with the I. W. W., and among these were many foreigners—Swedes, Hungarians, Germans, Poles, Italians; the usual and undesirable agglomeration to be found in a smelter town.

Left to themselves, they would have continued to work. They were in reality the cheaper tools of the trouble makers. There were fewer and keener tools to be used, and these were selected and turned against their employers by that irresistible potency, gold; gold that came from no one knew where, and came in abundance. Finally open threats of a strike were made. Circulars were distributed throughout town overnight, cleverly misstating conditions. A grain of truth was diluted in the slaver of anarchy to a hundred lies.

Waco, installed in the main I. W. W. camp just outside the town, cooked early and late, and received a good wage for his services. More men appeared, coming casually from nowhere and taking up their abode with the disturbers.

A week before the strike began a committee from the union met with a committee of townsmen and representatives of the smelter interests. The argument was long and inconclusive. Aside from this, a special committee of townsmen, headed by the mayor, interviewed the I. W. W. leaders.

Arriving at no definite understanding, the citizens finally threatened to deport the trouble makers in a body. The I. W. W. members laughed at them. Socialism, in which many of the better class of workmen believed sincerely, began to take on the red tinge of anarchy. A notable advocate of arbitration, a foreman in the smelter, was found one morning beaten into unconsciousness. And no union man had done this thing, for the foreman was popular with the union to a man. The mayor received an anonymous letter threatening his life. A similar letter was received by the chief of police. And some few politicians who had won to prominence through questionable methods were threatened with exposure if they did not side with the strikers.

Conditions became deplorable. The papers dared not print everything they knew for fear of political enmity. And they were not able to print many things transpiring in that festering underworld for lack of definite knowledge, even had they dared.

Noon of an August day the strikers walked out. Mob rule threatened Sterling. Women dared no longer send their children to school or to the grocery stores for food. They hardly dared go themselves. A striker was shot by a companion in a saloon brawl. The killing was immediately charged to a corporation detective, and our noble press made much of the incident before it found out the truth.

Shortly after this a number of citizens representing the business backbone of the town met quietly and drafted a letter to a score of citizens whom they thought might be trusted. That was Saturday evening. On Sunday night there were nearly a hundred men in town who had been reached by the citizen's committee. They elected a subcommittee of twelve, with the sheriff as chairman. Driven to desperation by intolerable conditions, they decided to administer swift and conclusive justice themselves. To send for troops would be an admission that the town of Sterling could not handle her own community.

It became whispered among the I. W. W. that "The Hundred" had organized. Leaders of the strikers laughed at these rumors, telling the men that the day of the vigilante was past.

On the following Wednesday a rabid leader of the disturbers, not a union man, but a man who had never done a day's work in his life, mounted a table on a street corner and addressed the crowd which quickly swelled to a mob. Members of The Hundred, sprinkled thinly throughout the mob, listened until the speaker had finished. Among other things, he had made a statement about the national government which should have turned the mob to a tribunal of prompt justice and hanged him. But many of the men were drunk, and all were inflamed with the poison of the hour. When the man on the table continued to slander the government, and finally named a name, there was silence. A few of the better class of workmen edged out of the crowd. The scattered members of The Hundred stayed on to the last word.

Next morning this speaker was found dead, hanging from a bridge a little way out of town. Not a few of the strikers were startled to a sense of broad justice in his death, and yet the hanging was an outrage to any community. One sin did not blot out another. And the loyal Hundred realized too late that they had put a potent weapon in the hands of their enemies.

A secret meeting was called by The Hundred. Wires were commandeered and messages sent to several towns in the northern part of the State to men known personally by members of The Hundred as fearless and loyal to American institutions. Already the mob had begun rioting, but, meeting with no resistance, it contented itself with insult-

ing those whom they knew were not sympathizers. Stores were closed, and were straightway broken into and looted. Drunkenness and street fights were so common as to evoke no comment.

Two days later a small band of cowboys rode into town. They were followed throughout the day by other riders, singly and in small groups. It became noised about the I. W. W. camp that professional gunmen were being hired by the authorities; were coming in on horseback and on the trains. That night the roadbed of the railroad was dynamited on both sides of town. The Hundred immediately dispatched automobiles with armed guards to meet the trains.

Later strangers were seen in town; quiet men who carried themselves coolly, said nothing, and paid no attention to catcalls and insults. It was rumored that troops had been sent for. Meanwhile the town seethed with anarchy and drunkenness. But, as must ever be the case, anarchy was slowly weaving a rope with which to hang itself.

Up in the second story of the courthouse a broad-shouldered, heavy-jawed man sat at a flat-topped desk with a clerk beside him. The clerk wrote names in a book. In front of the clerk was a cigar box filled with numbered brass checks. The rows of chairs from the desk to the front windows were pretty well filled with men, lean, hard-muscled men of the ranges in the majority. The room was quiet save for an occasional word from the big man at the desk. The clerk drew a check from the cigar box. A man stepped up to the desk, gave his name, age, occupation, and address, received the numbered check, and went to his seat. The clerk drew another check. A fat, broad-shouldered man waddled up, smiling.

"Why, hello, Bud!" said the heavy-jawed man, rising and shaking hands. "I didn't expect to see you. Wired you thinking you might send one or two men from your county."

"I got 'em with me," said Bud.

"Number thirty-seven," said the clerk.

Bud stuffed the check in his vest pocket. He would receive ten dollars a day while in the employ of The Hundred. He would be known and addressed while on duty as number thirty-seven. The Hundred were not advertising the names of their supporters for future use by the I. W. W.

Bud's name and address were entered in a notebook. He waddled back to his seat.

"Cow-punch," said some one behind him.

Bud turned and grinned. "You seen my laigs," he retorted.

"Number thirty-eight."

Lorry came forward and received his check. "You're pretty young," said the man at the desk.

Lorry flushed, but made no answer.

"Number thirty-nine." The giant sheepman of the high country strode up, nodded, and took his check. "Stacey County is well represented," said the man at the desk.

When the clerk had finished entering the names there were forty-eight numbers in his book. The man at the desk rose.

"Men," he said grimly, "you know what you are here for. If you haven't got guns, you will be outfitted downstairs. Some folks think that this trouble is only local. It isn't. It is national. Providence seems to have passed the buck to us to stop it. We are here to prove that we can. Last night our flag—our country's flag—was torn from the halyards above this building and trampled in the dust of the street. Sit still and don't make a noise. We're not doing business that way. If there are any married men here, they had better take their horses and ride home. This community does not assume responsibility for any man's life. You are volunteers. There are four ex-Rangers among you. They will tell you what to do. But I'm going to tell you one thing first; don't shoot high or low when you have to shoot. Draw plumb center, and don't quit as long as you can feel to pull a trigger. For any

man that isn't outfitted there's a rifle and fifty rounds of soft-nosed ammunition downstairs."

The heavy-shouldered man sat down and pulled the notebook toward him. The men rose and filed quietly downstairs.

As they gathered in the street and gazed up at the naked halyards, a shot dropped one of them in his tracks. An eagle-faced cowman whipped out his gun. With the report came the tinkle of breaking glass from a window diagonally opposite. Feet clattered down the stairs of the building, and a woman ran into the street, screaming and calling out that a man had been murdered.

"Reckon I got him," said the cowman. "Boys, I guess she's started."

The men ran for their horses. As they mounted and assembled, the heavy-shouldered man appeared astride a big bay horse.

"We're going to clean house," he stated. "And we start right here."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A SQUARED ACCOUNT.

The housecleaning began at the building diagonally opposite the assembled posse. In a squalid room upstairs they found the man who had fired upon them. He was dead. Papers found upon him disclosed his identity as an I. W. W. leader. He had evidently rented the room across from the courthouse that he might watch the movements of The Hundred. A cheap, inaccurate revolver was found beside him. Possibly he had fired, thinking to momentarily disorganize the posse; that they would not know from where the shot had come until he had had time to make his escape and warn his fellows.

The posse moved from building to building. Each tenement, private rooming house, and shack was entered and searched. Union men who chanced to be at home were warned that any man seen on the street that day was in danger of being killed. Several members of the I. W. W. were routed out in different parts of the town and taken to the jail.

Saloons were ordered to close. Saloon keepers who argued their right to keep open were promptly arrested. An I. W. W. agitator, defying the posse, was handcuffed, loaded into a machine, and taken out of town. Groups of strikers gathered at the street corners and jeered the armed posse. One group, cornered in a side street, showed fight.

"We'll burn your dam' town!" cried a voice.

The sheriff swung from his horse and shouldered through the crowd. As he did so a light-haired, weasel-faced youth, with a cigarette dangling from the corner of his loose mouth, backed away. The sheriff followed and pressed him against a building.

"I know you!" said the sheriff. "You never made or spent an honest dollar in this town. Boys," he continued, turning to the strikers, "are you proud of this skunk who wants to burn your town?"

A workman laughed.

"You said it!" asserted the sheriff. "When somebody tells you what he is you laugh. Why don't you laugh at him when he's telling you of the buildings he has dynamited and how many deaths he is responsible for? Did he ever sweat alongside of any of you doing a day's work? Do you know him? Does he know anything about your work or conditions? Not a damned thing! Just think it over. And, boys, remember he is paid easy money to get you into trouble. Who pays him? Is there any decent American paying him to do that sort of thing? Stop and think about it."

The weasel-faced youth raised his arm and pointed at the sheriff. "Who pays you to shoot down women and kids?" he snarled.

"I'm taking orders from the governor of this State."

"To hell with the governor! And there's where he'll wake up one of these fine days."

"Because he's enforcing the law and

trying to keep the flag from being insulted by whelps like you, eh?"

"We'll show you what's law! And we'll show you the right kind of a flag——"

"Boys, are you going to stand for this kind of talk?" And the sheriff's heavy face fairly quivered with anger. "I'd admire to kill you!" he said, turning on the youth. "But that wouldn't do any good."

The agitator was taken to the jail. Later it was rumored that a machine had left the jail that night with three men in it. Two of them were armed guards. The third was the weasel-faced youth. He was never heard of again.

As the cavalcade moved on down the street, workmen gathered on street corners and in upper rooms and discussed the situation. The strike had gotten beyond their control. Many of them were for sending a delegation to the I. W. W. camp demanding that they disband and leave. Others were silent, and still others voted loudly to "fight to a finish."

Out beyond the edge of town lay the I. W. W. camp, a conglomeration of board shacks hastily erected, brush-covered hovels, and tents. Not counting the scattered members in town, there were at least two hundred of the malcontents loafing in camp. When the sheriff's posse appeared it was met by a deputation. But there was no parley.

"We'll give you till sundown to clear out," said the sheriff, and, turning, he and his men rode back to the courthouse.

That evening sentinels were posted at the street corners within hail of each other. In a vacant lot back of the courthouse the horses of the posse were corralled under guard. The town was quiet. Occasionally a figure crossed the street; some shawl-hooded striker's wife or some workman heedless of the sheriff's warning.

Lorry happened to be posted on a corner of the courthouse square. Across the street another sentinel paced back and forth, occasionally pausing to talk with Lorry.

This sentinel was halfway up the block when a figure appeared from the shadow between two buildings. The sentinel challenged.

"A friend," said the figure. "I was lookin' for young Adams."

"What do you want with him?"

"It's private. Know where I can find him?"

"He's across the street there. Who are you, anyway?"

"That's my business. He knows me."

"This guy wants to talk to you," called the sentinel. Lorry stepped across the street. He stopped suddenly as he discovered the man to be Waco, the tramp.

"Is it all right?" asked the sentinel, addressing Lorry.

"I guess so. What do you want?"

"It's about Jim Waring," said Waco. "I seen you when the sheriff rode up to our camp. I seen by the papers that Jim Waring was your father. I wanted to tell you that it was High-chin Bob what killed Pat. I was in the buckboard with Pat when he done it. The horses went crazy at the shootin' and ditched me. When I come to I was in Grant."

"Why didn't you stay and tell what you knew? Nobody would 'a' hurt you."

"I was takin' no chance of the third and twenty years."

"What you doin' in this town?"

"Cookin' for the camp. But I can't hold that job long. My whole left side is goin' flooey. The boss give me hallelujah to-day for bein' slow. I'm sick of the job."

"Well, you ought to be. Suppose you come over to the sheriff and tell him what you know about the killin' of Pat."

"Nope. I was scared you would say that. I'm tellin' *you* because you done me a good turn onct. I guess that lets me out."

"Not if I make you sit in."

"You can make me sit in all right. But you can't make me talk. Show me a cop and I freeze. I ain't takin' no chances."

"You're takin' bigger chances right now."

"Bigger'n you know, kid. Listen! You and Jim Waring and Pat used me white. I'm sore at that I. W. W. bunch, but I dasn't make a break. They'd get me. But listen! If the boys knowed I was tellin' you this they'd cut me in two. Two trucks just came into camp from up north. Them trucks was loaded to the guards. Every man in camp's got a automatic and fifty rounds. And they was settin' up a machine gun when I slipped through and beat it, lookin' for you. You better fan it out of this while you got the chanct."

"Did they send you over to push that bluff—or are you talkin' straight?"

"S' help me! It's the bleedin' truth!"

"Well, I'm thankin' you. But get goin' afore I change my mind."

"Would you shake with a bum?" queried Waco.

"Why—all right. You're tryin' to play square, I reckon. Wait a minute! Are you willin' to put in writin' that you seen High-chin Bob kill Pat? I got a pencil and a envelope on me. Will you put it down right here, and me to call my friend and witness your name?"

"You tryin' to pinch me?"

"That ain't my style."

"All right. I'll put it down."

And in the flickering rays of the arc light Waco scribbled on the back of the envelope and signed his name. Lorry's companion read the scrawl and handed it back to Lorry. Waco humped his shoulders and shuffled away.

"Why didn't you nail him?" queried the other.

"I don't know. Mebby because he was trustin' me."

Shortly afterward Lorry and his companion were relieved from duty. Lorry immediately reported to the sheriff, who heard him without interrupting, dismissed him, and turned to the committee, who held night session discussing the situation.

"They've called our bluff," he said, twisting his cigar round in his lips.

A ballot was taken. The vote was eleven to one for immediate action. The ballot was secret, but the member who had voted against action rose and tendered his resignation.

"It would be plain murder if we were to shoot up their camp. It would place us on their level."

Just before daybreak a guard stationed two blocks west of the courthouse noticed a flare of light in the windows of a building opposite. He glanced toward the east. The dim, ruddy glow in the windows was not that of dawn. He ran to the building and tried to open the door to the stairway. As he wrenched at the door a subdued soft roar swelled and grew louder. Turning, he ran to the next corner, calling to the guard. The alarm of fire was relayed to the courthouse.

Meanwhile the two cowboys ran back to the building and hammered on the door. Some one in an upstairs room screamed. Suddenly the door gave inward. A woman carrying a cheap gilt clock pushed past them and sank in a heap on the sidewalk. The guards heard some one running down the street. One of them tied a handkerchief over his face and groped his way up the narrow stairs. The hall above was thick with smoke. A door sprang open, and a man carrying a baby and dragging a woman by the hand bumped into the guard, cursed, and stumbled toward the stairway.

The cowboy ran from door to door down the long, narrow hall, calling to the inmates. In one room he found a lamp burning on a dresser and two children asleep. He dragged them from bed and carried them to the stairway. From below came the surge and snap of flames. He held his breath and descended the stairs. A crowd of half-clothed workmen had gathered. Among them he saw several of the guards.

"Who belongs to these kids?" he cried.

A woman ran up. "She's here," she said, pointing to the woman with the gilt clock, who still lay on the sidewalk. A man was trying to revive her. The

cowboy noticed that the unconscious woman still gripped the gilt clock.

He called to a guard. Together they dashed up the stairs and ran from room to room. Toward the back of the building they found a woman insanely gathering together a few cheap trinkets and stuffing them into a pillowcase. She was trying to work a gilt-framed lithograph into the pillowcase when they seized her and led her toward the stairway. She fought and cursed and begged them to let her go back and get her things. A burst of flame swept up the stairway. The cowboys turned and ran back along the hall. One of them kicked a window out. The other tied a sheet under the woman's arms and together they lowered her to the ground.

Suddenly the floor midway down the hall sank softly in a fountain of flame and sparks.

"Reckon we jump," said one of the cowboys.

Lowering himself from the rear window, he dropped. His companion followed. They limped to the front of the building. A crowd massed in the street, heedless of the danger that threatened as a section of roof curled like a piece of paper, writhed, and dropped to the sidewalk.

A group of guards appeared with a hose reel. They coupled to a hydrant. A thin stream gurgled from the hose and subsided. The sheriff ran to the steps of a building and called to the crowd.

"Your friends," he cried, "have cut the water main. There is no water."

The mass groaned and swayed back and forth.

From up the street came a cry—the call of the range rider. A score of cowboys tried to force the crowd back from the burning building.

"Look out for the front!" cried the guards. "She's coming!"

The crowd surged back. The front of that flaming shell quivered, curved, and crashed to the street. The sheriff called to his men. An old Texas Ranger touched his arm. "There's somethin' doin' up yonder, cap."

"Keep the boys together," ordered the sheriff. "This fire was started to draw us out. Tell the boys to get their horses."

Dawn was breaking when the cowboys gathered in the vacant lot and mounted their horses. In the clear light they could see a mob in the distance; a mob that moved from the east toward the courthouse. The sheriff dispatched a man to wire for troops, divided his force in halves, and, leading one contingent, he rode toward the oncoming mob. The other half of the posse, led by an old Ranger, swung round to a back street and halted.

The shadows of the buildings grew shorter. A cowboy on a restive pony asked what they were waiting for. Some one laughed. The old Ranger turned in his saddle. "It's a right lovely mornin'," he remarked impersonally, tugging at his silver-gray mustache.

Suddenly the waiting riders stiffened in their saddles. A ripple of shots sounded, followed by the shrill cowboy yell. Still the old Ranger sat his horse, coolly surveying his men.

"Don't we get a look-in?" queried a cowboy.

"Poco tiempo," said the Ranger softly.

The sheriff bunched his men as he approached the invaders. Within fifty yards of their front he halted and held up his hand. Massed in a solid wall from curb to curb, the I. W. W. jeered and shouted as he tried to speak. A parley was impossible. The vagrants were most of them drunk. The sheriff turned to the man nearest him.

"Tell the boys that we'll go through, turn, and ride back. Tell them not to fire a shot until we turn."

As he gathered his horse under him, the sheriff's arm dropped. The shrill "Yip! Yip!" of the range rose above the thunder of hoofs as twenty ponies jumped to a run. The living thunderbolt tore through the mass. The staccato crack of guns sounded sharply above the deeper roar of the mob. The ragged pathway closed again as the riders swung round, bunched, and

launched at the mass from the rear. Those who had turned to face the second charge were crowded back as the cowboys, with guns going, ate into the yelling crowd. The mob turned, and like a great, black wave swept down the street and into the courthouse square.

The cowboys raced past, and reined in a block below the courthouse. As they paused to reload, a riderless horse, badly wounded, plunged among them. A cowboy caught the horse and shot him. Another rider, gripping his shirt above his abdomen, writhed and groaned, begging piteously for some one to kill him. Before they could get him off his horse he spurred out, and, pulling his carbine from the scabbard, charged into the mob in the square. With the lever going like lightning, he bored into the mob, fired his last shot in the face of a man that had caught his horse's bridle, and sank to the ground. Shattered and torn he lay, a red pulp that the mob trampled into the dust.

The upper windows of the courthouse filled with figures. An irregular fire drove the cowboys to the shelter of a side street. In the wide doorway of the courthouse several men crouched behind a blue steel tripod. Those still in the square crowded past and into the building. Behind the stone pillars of the entrance, guarded by a machine gun, the crazy mob cheered drunkenly and defied the guards to dislodge them. From a building opposite came a single shot, and the group round the machine gun lifted one of their fellows and carried him back into the building. Again came the peremptory snarl of a carbine, and another figure sank in the doorway. The machine gun was dragged back. Its muzzle still commanded the square, but its operators were now shielded by an angle of the entrance.

Back on the side street, the old ex-Ranger had difficulty in restraining his men. They knew by the number of shots fired that some of their companions had gone down.

The sheriff was about to call for volunteers to capture the machine gun when a white handkerchief fluttered from an upper window of the courthouse. Almost immediately a man appeared on the courthouse steps, alone and indicating by his gestures that he wished to parley with the guard. The sheriff dismounted and stepped forward. One of his men checked him.

"That's a trap, John. They want to get you, special. Don't you try it."

"It's up to me," said the sheriff, and shaking off the other's hand he strode across the square. At the foot of the steps, he met the man. The guard saw them converse for a brief minute; saw the sheriff shake his fist in the other's face and turn to walk back. As he turned, a shot from an upper window dropped him in his stride.

The cowboys yelled and charged across the square. The machine gun spat and stuttered a fury of slugs that cut down horses and riders. A cowboy, his horse shot from under him, sprang up the steps and dragged the machine gun into the open. A rain of slugs from the upper windows struck him down. His companions carried him back to cover. The machine gun stood in the square, no longer a menace, yet no one dared approach it from either side.

When the old Ranger, who had orders to hold his men in reserve, heard that the sheriff had been shot down under a flag of truce, he shook his head.

"Three men could 'a' stopped that gun as easy as twenty, and saved more hosses. Who wants to take a little pasear after that gun?"

Several of his men volunteered.

"I only need two," he said, smiling. "I call by guess. Number twenty-six, number thirty-eight, and number three." The last was his own number.

In the wide hallway and massed on the courthouse stairs the mob was calling out to recover the gun. Beyond control of their leaders, crazed with drink and killing, they surged forward, quarreling, and shoved from behind by those above.

"We're ridin'," said the old Ranger.

With a man on each side of him he charged across the square.

Waco, peering from behind a stone column in the entrance, saw that Lorry was one of the riders. Lorry's lips were drawn tight. His face was pale, but his gun arm swung up and down with the regularity of a machine as he threw shot after shot into the black tide that welled from the courthouse doorway. A man near Waco pulled an automatic and leveled it. Waco swung his arm and brained the man with an empty whisky bottle. He threw the bottle at another of his fellows, and, stumbling down the steps, called to Lorry. The three riders paused for an instant as Waco ran forward. The riders had won almost to the gun when Waco stooped and jerked it round and poured a withering volley into the close-packed doorway.

Back in the side street the leader of the cowboys addressed his men. "We'll leave the horses here," he said. "Tex went after that gun, and I reckon he's got it. We'll clean up afoot."

But the I. W. W. had had enough. Their leaders had told them that with the machine gun they could clean up the town, capture the courthouse, and make their own terms. They had captured the courthouse, but they were themselves trapped. One of their own number had planned that treachery. And they knew that those lean, bronzed men out there would shoot them down from room to room as mercilessly as they would kill coyotes.

They surrendered, shuffling out and down the slippery stone steps. Each man dropped his gun in the little pile that grew and grew until the old Ranger shook his head, pondering. That men of this kind should have access to arms and ammunition of the latest military type—and a machine gun. What was behind it all? He tried to reason it out in his old-fashioned way even as the trembling horde filed past cordoned by grim, silent cowboys.

The vagrants were escorted out of town in a body. Fearful of the hate of the guard, of treachery among themselves and of the townsfolk in other places, they tramped across the hills, followed closely by the stern-visaged riders. Several miles north of Sterling they disbanded.

When a company of infantrymen arrived in Sterling they found several cowboys sluicing down the courthouse steps with water hauled laboriously from the river. The captain stated that he would take charge of things, and suggested that the cowboys take a rest.

"That's all right, cap," said a puncher, pointing toward the naked flagstaff. "But we-all would admire to see the Stars and Stripes floatin' up there afore we drift."

"I'll have the flag run up," said the captain.

"That's all right, cap. But you don't sabe the idee. These here steps got to be *clean* afore that flag goes up."

"And they's some good in bein' fat," said Bud Shoop as he met Lorry next morning. "The army doc just put a plaster on my arm where one of them automatic pills nicked me. Now if I'd 'a' been lean like you——"

"Did you see Waco?" queried Lorry.

"Waco. What's ailin' you, son?"

"Nothin'. It was Waco went down, workin' that machine gun against his own crowd. I didn't sabe that at first."

"Him? Didn't know he was in town."

"I didn't, either, till last night. He sneaked in to tell me about the killin' of Pat. Next I seen him was when he brained a fella that was shootin' at me. Then somehow he got to the gun —and you know the rest."

"Looks like he was crazy," suggested Shoop.

"I don' know about that. I got to him before he cashed in. He pawed around like he couldn't see. I asked what I could do. He kind of braced up then. 'That you, kid?' he says. 'They didn't get you?' I told him no. 'Then I reckon we're square,' he says. I thought he was gone, but he reached out his hand. Seems he couldn't see. 'Would you mind shakin' hands with

a bum?' he says. I did. And then he let go my hand. He was done."

"H'm! And him! But you can't always tell. Sometimes it takes a bullet placed just right, and sometimes religion and sometimes a woman to make a man show what's in him. I reckon Waco done you a good turn that journey. But ain't it hard luck when a fella waits till he's got to cross over afore he shows white?"

"He must 'a' had a hunch he was goin' to get his," said Lorry. "Or he wouldn't chanced sneakin' into town last night. When do we go north?"

"To-morrow. The doc says the sheriff will pull through. He sure ought to get the benefit of the big doubt. There's a man that God Almighty took some trouble in makin'."

"Well, I'm mighty glad it's over. I don't want any more like this. I come through all right, but this ain't fightin'; it's plumb killin' and murder."

"And both sides thinks so," said Bud. "And lemme tell you; you can read your eyes out about peace and equality and fraternity, but there's goin' to be killin' in this here world just as long as they's fools willin' to listen to fools talk. And they's always goin' to be some fools."

"You ain't strong on socialism, eh, Bud?"

"Socialism? You mean when all men is born fools and equal? Not this mawnin', son. I got all I can do figurin' out my own trail."

CHAPTER XXIX.

BUD'S CONSCIENCE.

Those riders who had come from the northern part of the State to Sterling were given transportation for themselves and their horses to The Junction. From there they rode to their respective homes. Among them was Bud Shoop, the giant sheepman, and Lorry, who seemed more anxious than did Shoop to stop at Stacey on their way to the reserve.

"Your maw don't know you been to Sterling," Shoop said as they rode toward Stacey.

"But she won't care, now we're back again. She'll find out some time."

"I'm willin' to wait," said Bud. "I got you into that hocus. But I had no more idee than a cat that we'd bump into what we did. They was a time when a outfit like ours could 'a' kep' peace in a town by just bein' there. Things are changin'—fast. If the gov'ment don't do somethin' about allowin' the scum of this country to get hold of guns and ca'tridges wholesale, they's goin' to be a whole lot of extra bookkeepin' for the recordin' angel. I tell you what, son; allowin' that I seen enough killin' in my time so as just seein' it don't set too hard on my chest, that mess down to Sterling made me plumb sick to my stummick. I'm wonderin' what would 'a' happened if Sterling hadn't made that fight and the I. W. W. had run loose. It ain't what we did. That had to be did. But it's the idee that decent folks, livin' under the American flag, has got to shoot their way back to the law, like we done."

"Mebby the law ain't right," suggested Lorry.

"Don't you get that idee, son. The law is all right. Mebby it ain't handled right sometimes."

"But what can anybody do about it?"

"Trouble is that folks who want to do the right thing ain't always got the say. Or mebby if they have got the say they leave it to the other fella.

"What did the folks in Arizona do long back in eighty, when the sheep disease got bad? First off they doctored up the sick sheep, tryin' to save 'em. That didn't work, so they took to killin' 'em to save the good sheep. But the disease had got into the blood of some of the good sheep. Then some of the big sheepmen got busy. Arizona made a law that no stock was to be shipped into any of her territory without bein' inspected. That helped some. But inspectors is human, and some sick sheep got by.

"Then one day a fella that had some brains got up in the statehouse and spoke for the shuttin' out of all stock until the disease was stomped out. You

see, that disease didn't start in this here country. But who downed that fella? Why, the sheepmen themselves. It would hurt their business. And the funny part of it is them sheepmen was willin' enough to ship sick sheep anywhere they could sell 'em. But some States was wise. California, she put a tax of twenty-five dollars on every carload of stock enterin' her State—or on one animal; didn't make no difference. That inspection tax had to be paid by the shipper of the stock, as I said, whether he shipped one head or a hundred. And the stock had to be inspected before loadin'."

"You mean immigrants?" queried Lorry.

"The same. The gate is open too wide. If I had the handlin' of them gates I would shut 'em for ten years and kind of let what we got settle down and get acquainted. But the man hirin' cheap labor wouldn't. He'll take anything that will work cheap, and the country pays the difference, like we done down to Sterling."

"You mean there can't be cheap labor?"

"The same. Somebody's got to pay."

"Well, Sterling paid," said Lorry, "if a man's life is worth anything."

"Yes, she paid. And the worst part of the whole business is that the men what paid didn't owe anything to the smelter or to them others. They just made a present of their lives to this here country. And the country ain't goin' to even say 'thanks.'"

"You're pretty sore about it, aren't you, Bud?"

"I be. And if you had my years you'd be likewise. But what's worryin' me right now is I'm wonderin' what your maw'll say to me when she finds out."

"You can say we been south on business."

"Yes," grunted Bud, "and I got the receipt right here on my left wing."

"Hurtin' you much?"

"Just enough to let me know I'm livin' and ain't ridin' through hell shootin' down a lot of pore, drunk fools that's tryin' to run the oven. And them kind would kick if they was ridin' in hell on a free pass and their hotel bills paid. But over there is the hills, and we can thank God A'mighty for the high trails and the open country. I ain't got the smell of that town out of my nose yet."

When they arrived at Stacey, Lorry learned that his father had recently gone to the ranch. After supper that evening, Mrs. Adams mentioned the strike. The papers printed columns of the awful details; outrages and killings beyond the thought of possibility. And Mrs. Adams spoke of the curious circumstance that the men who put down the lawlessness were unnamed; that all that could be learned of them was that there were ranchers and cowmen who were known by number alone.

"And I'm glad that you didn't go riding off down there," she said to Lorry. "The paper says men from all over the State volunteered."

"So am I," said Shoop promptly. "I was readin' about that strike over to The Junction. Lorry and me been over that way on business. I seen that that young fella, number thirty-eight, was one of the men who went after that machine gun."

"How do you know that he was a young man?" queried Mrs. Adams.

"Why—er—only a young fella would act that foolish, I reckon. You say Jim is feelin' spry ag'in?"

"Oh, much better! He's lame yet. But he can ride."

"That's good."

"And did you see that the paper says men are volunteering to go to France? I wonder what will happen next?"

"I dunno," said Shoop gravely. "I been thinkin' about that."

"Well, I hope Lorry won't think that he has to go. Some of the boys in town are talking about it."

"It's in the air," said Shoop.

"And his father will need him now. Could you spare him, if Jim finds he can't get along alone?"

"I don't know," laughed Bud. "I reckon I need somebody to look after them campers up to my old place."

"Oh, I forgot to tell you; the folks that were here last summer stopped by on their way to Jason. Mrs. Weston and her girl. They said they were going to visit Mr. Bronson."

"H'mm! Then I reckon I got to keep Lorry. Don' know what three females would do with just Bronson for comp'ny. He's a tickin' at that writin' machine of his most all day, and sometimes nights. It must be like livin' in a cave."

"But Dorothy hasn't," said Lorry.

"That's right! My, but that little gal has built up wonderful since she's been up there! Did you see my watch?"

"Why, no!"

"Some style to that!" And Shoop displayed the new watch with pride. "And here's the name of the lady what give it to me."

Lorry's mother examined the watch, and handed it to Lorry, to whom the news of the gift was a surprise.

"But she didn't give him a watch," said Shoop, chuckling.

Up in their room that night, Lorry helped Bud out of his coat. Shoop's arm was stiff and sore. "And your mother would think it was a mighty queer business, if she knowed this," said Bud, "or who that number thirty-eight was down there."

"You sure made a good bluff, Bud."

"Mebby. But I was scared to death. When I was talkin' about Sterling so free and easy, and your maw mighty near ketched me that time my arm was itchin' like hell-fire, and I dassent scratch it. I never knowed a fella's conscience could get to workin' around his system like that. Now if it was my laig, I could 'a' scratched it with my other foot under the table. Say, but you sure showed red in your face when your maw said them Weston folks was up to the camp."

"Oh, I don' know."

"Well, I do. Here, hook onto your Uncle Bud's boot. I'm set. Go ahead and pull. You can't do nothin' but shake the buildin'. Say, what does Bronson call his gal 'Peter Pan' for?"

"Why, it's a kind of foreign name," flashed Lorry. "And it sounds all right when you say it right. You said it like the 'pan' was settin' a mile off."

"Well, you needn't to get mad."

CHAPTER XXX.

IN THE HILLS.

Lorry's return to the mountains was somewhat of a disappointment to his expectations. Dorothy had greeted him quite casually and naturally enough, in that she knew nothing of his recent venture. He was again introduced to Mrs. Weston and her daughter. For the first time Dorothy heard of the automobile accident and Lorry's share in the subsequent proceedings. She asked Lorry why he had not told her that he knew the Westons. He had no reply save "Oh, I don' know," which rather piqued Dorothy. He was usually definite and frank.

The Westons occupied Bronson's cabin with Dorothy. Bronson pitched a tent, moved his belongings into it, and declared himself jokingly free from Dorothy's immediate tyranny.

Dorothy, busy in the kitchen, asked her father to invite Lorry to dinner that evening. Through a sort of youthful perverseness not unmixed with bucolic pride, Lorry declined the invitation. He would be busy making ready for another trip in the hills. He had already planned his own evening meal. He appreciated the invitation, but they could get along without him. These excuses satisfied Bronson. Lorry's real reason for declining was that Dorothy had not invited him in person. He knew it, and felt ashamed of himself. What reason had he to expect her to invite him personally, except that she had almost invariably done so heretofore? And back of this was the subtle jealousy of caste. The Westons were "her kind of folks." He was not really one of them. Boyishly he fancied that he would do as a companion when there was no one else available. The fact is he was very much in love with Dorothy and did not realize it.

And Dorothy was disappointed in

him. She had wanted the Westons to know what a really fine fellow he was.

Alice Weston at once recalled Lorry's attitude toward her on a former occasion when he had been tacitly invited to go with them to the Horseshoe Hills and he had stayed at the hotel. She told Dorothy that Mr. Adams was not to be taken too seriously. After all, he was nothing more than a boy, and perhaps he would feel better having declined to risk possible embarrassment at their table.

Dorothy was inwardly furious on the instant, but she checked herself. What did Alice Weston know about Lorry? Well, Alice knew that he was a good-looking young savage who seemed quite satisfied with himself. She thought that possibly she could tame him if she cared to try. Dorothy, with feminine graciousness, dared Alice to invite Lorry to the dinner. Alice was to know nothing of his having declined an earlier invitation. Greatly to Dorothy's surprise, Alice Weston accepted the challenge.

She waited until just before the dinner hour. He was mending a pack saddle when she came to his cabin. He dropped his work and stood up.

"I have been thinking about that tramp you arrested," she began. "And I think you were right in what you did."

"Yes, ma'am," stammered Lorry. Her manner had been especially gracious.

"And I didn't have a chance to say good-by—that time"—and she smiled—"when you rode off waving your scarf ——"

"It was a leg of lamb," corrected Lorry.

"Well, you waved it very gracefully. What big, strong arms! They don't look so big when your sleeves are down."

Lorry promptly rolled down his sleeves. He felt that he had to do something.

"And there is so much to talk about I hardly know where to begin. Oh, yes! Thank you so much for repairing our car."

"That was nothin'."

"It meant a great deal to us. Is that your horse—the one standing alone over there?"

"Yes, ma'am. That's Gray Leg."

"I remember him. I couldn't ever forget that morning—but I don't want to hinder your work. I see you are mending something."

"Just fittin' a new pad to this pack saddle. I was figurin' to light out tomorrow."

"So soon? That's too bad. But, then, we can visit at dinner this evening. Dorothy said she expected you. I believe it is almost ready."

"I don't know, Miss Weston. It's like this——"

"And I know Mr. Bronson meant to ask you. He has been quite busy. Perhaps he forgot."

"He——"

"So I am here as ambassador. Will I do?"

"Why, sure! But——"

"And mother would be so disappointed if you didn't come. So should I, especially as you are leaving to-morrow. What is it they say in Mexico, 'Adios?' I must run back." She proffered her hand gracefully. Lorry shook hands with her. She gave his fingers a little, lingering squeeze that set his pulses racing. She was a mighty pretty girl.

"We shall expect you," she called, halfway to the cabin.

And she sure could change a fellow's mind for him without half trying. She hadn't give him a chance to refuse her invitation. She just knew that he was coming to supper. And so did he.

Alice Weston held Lorry's attention from the beginning, as she had intended. She was gowned in some pale-green material touched here and there with a film of silver. Lorry was fascinated by her full, rounded arms, her beautifully strong wrists, and by the way in which she had arranged her heavy, dark hair. In the daylight that afternoon he had noticed that her eyes were blue. He had thought them brown. But they were the color of wood violets untouched by the sun.

While she lacked the positive outdoor coloring of Dorothy, her complexion was radiant with youth and health. Lorry felt subdued, disinclined to talk despite Dorothy's obvious attempts to be entertaining. He realized that Dorothy was being exceedingly nice to him, although he knew that she was a little high strung and nervous that evening.

After dinner Bronson and Lorry smoked out on the veranda.. When the others came out, Bronson suggested that they have some music. Lorry promptly invited them to his cabin.

"Alice plays wonderfully," said Dorothy.

Bronson, talking with Mrs. Weston, enjoyed himself. He had been isolated so long that news from the "outside" interested him.

Lorry, gravely attentive to the playing, happened to glance up. Dorothy was gazing at him with a most peculiar expression. He flushed. He had not realized that he had been staring at Alice Weston; at her round, white throat and graceful arms. But just then she ceased playing.

"Have you anything that you would like?" she asked Lorry.

"There's some here. I don' know what it's like. Some songs and dances the boys fetched up for Bud."

"What fun!" said Alice. "And what an assortment! Shall we try this?"

And she began to play a flimsy tune printed on a flimsy sheet that doubled and slid to the keys. Lorry jumped up, spread it out, and stood holding a corner of it while she played. Close to her, he was sensible of a desire to caress her hair, to kiss her vivid lips as she glanced up at him and smiled. He had no idea then that she was deliberately enthralling him with every grace she possessed. And the fact that she rather liked him made her subtleties all the more potent. It flattered her to see the frank admiration in his gray eyes. She knew he was anything but "soft," which made the game all the more alluring. He was to leave soon—to-morrow. Meanwhile, she determined that he should remember her.

Late that evening Bronson and the others said good night. Alice, not Dorothy, asked Lorry when he was to leave. His "some time to-morrow" sounded unnaturally indefinite.

He was standing in the doorway of his camp as the others entered Bronson's cabin. Alice Weston was the last to enter. For an instant she stood in the lamplight that floated through the doorway, looking back toward him. Impulsively he waved good night. Her attitude had seemed to call for it. He saw her fingers flash to her lips. She tilted her chin and threw him a kiss.

"Dog-gone the luck!" he growled as he entered his cabin. And with the brief expletive he condemned his disloyalty to the sprightly slender Dorothy; the Peter Pan of the Blue Mesa; the dream girl of that idle noon at the Big Spring. The other girl—well, she was just playing with him.

In view of Lorry's training and natural carefulness it was significant that he decided next day that he had forgotten to lay in enough supplies for his journey south. He would ride to Jason and pack in what he needed. He had a fair excuse. Bronson had recently borrowed some of his canned provisions. He was well on his way to Jason that morning before the others had arisen.

He was back at the camp shortly after nine that night. As he passed Bronson's cabin he saw a light in the window. Mrs. Weston was talking with Dorothy. Lorry had hoped to catch a glimpse of Alice Weston. He had been hoping all that day that he would see her again before he left. Perhaps she was asleep. As he passed the corral a greeting came from the darkness:

"Good evening! I thought you had gone."

"I—I didn't see you," he stammered.

Alice Weston laughed softly. "Oh, I was just out here looking at the stars. It's cooler out here. Then you changed your mind about going?"

"Nope. I had to go to Jason for grub. I'm going to-morrow."

"Oh, I see! We thought you had gone."

"Got a headache?" queried Lorry. Her voice had been so unnaturally low, almost sad.

"No. I just wanted to be alone."

Lorry fumbled in his pockets. "I got the mail," he stated.

"I'll give it to Mr. Bronson."

Lorry leaned down and gave her the packet of letters and papers.

"Good-by. I won't see you in the mornin'."

"We'll miss you."

"Honest?"

"Of course!" And she gave him her hand. He drew his foot from the stirrup. "Put your foot in there," he said, still holding her hand.

"But why?"

"'Cause I'm goin' to ride off with you, like in books." He laughed, but his laughter was tense and unnatural.

It was dark. The stars shone faintly. The air was soft with a subtle fragrance; the fragrance of sun-warmed pine that the night had stolen from the slumbering woodlands. She slipped her foot in the wide stirrup. Half laughing, she allowed him to draw her up. She felt the hard strength of his arm, and was thrilled. She had not meant to do anything like this.

"You been playin' with me," he told her, whispering, "and I take my pay."

She turned her face away, but he found her lips and crushed her to him.

"Oh!" she whispered as he kissed her again and again. Slowly his arm relaxed. White-faced and trembling, she slid to the ground and stood looking up at him.

"I hate you!" she said.

"No, you don't," said Lorry quite cheerfully.

And he reached out his hand as though to take her hand again. She stood still, making no effort to avoid him. Then—— "No, please!" she begged.

Lorry sat for a moment looking down at her. There had been no make-believe on her part when he held her in his arms. He knew that. And now? She had said that she hated him. Perhaps she did for having made her do that which she had never dreamed of doing. But he told himself that he could stand a whole lot of that kind of hate. And did he really care for her? Could a girl give what she had given and forget on the morrow? He would never forget.

She had told herself that he should have reason to remember her.

After he had gone she stood gazing across the starlit mesa. She heard Lorry whistling cheerily as he unsaddled his pony. A falling star flamed and faded across the night.

CHAPTER XXXI.

IN THE PINES.

Alice Weston pleaded headache next morning. She did not get up until noon. Meanwhile Dorothy came, bringing hot coffee and toast.

"Does it really hurt?" queried Dorothy. "Or is it one of those headaches that is always going to hurt, but never does?"

Alice smiled and sipped her coffee. "Oh, it's not bad. I want to rest. Perhaps it's the altitude."

"Perhaps," said Dorothy. "I'm sorry, Alice."

They chatted a while. Suddenly Alice thought of the letters Lorry had given her. She had carried them to her room, and had forgotten them.

"Mr. Adams left some mail with me last night. I happened to be outside when he rode past."

"Why, I thought he had gone!"

"He said he had to go to Jason for something or other. He left early this morning, I think."

Dorothy glanced at the mail. "All for daddy—except this circular. H'mm! Intelligent clothing for Intelligent People.' Isn't that awful? How in the world do such firms get one's address when one lives way up here in the sky? Do you ever get advertisements like this?"

"Oh, yes. Heaps of them."

"Well, *your* gowns are beautiful," sighed Dorothy.

"You are a darling," said Alice, caressing Dorothy's cheek.

"So are you, dear." And Dorothy

kissed her. "And you coaxed Lorry to come to dinner, after all! I don't know what made him so grumpy, though. I would have been sorry if he hadn't come to dinner last night, even if he was grumpy."

"Do you like him?" queried Alice.

"Of course. He has been so nice to us. Don't you?"

Alice's lips trembled. Suddenly she hid her face in her hands and burst into tears.

"Why, Alice, what *is* the matter?"

"Nothing," she sobbed. "I'm just tired—of everything."

"It must be the altitude," said Dorothy gravely. "Father says it does make some persons nervous. Just rest, Allie, and I'll come in again."

Without telling her father anything further than she was going for a ride, Dorothy saddled Chinook.

Dorothy was exceedingly trustful, but she was not at all stupid. She thought she understood Alice's headache. And while Dorothy did not dream that her friend cared anything for Lorry, she was not so sure that Lorry did not care for Alice. Perhaps he had said something to her. Perhaps they had become rather well acquainted in Stacey last summer.

Dorothy rode toward the Big Spring. She had no definite object in view other than to be alone. She was hurt by Lorry's incomprehensible manner of leaving. What had she done to cause him to act so strangely? And why had he refused her invitation and accepted it again through Alice? "But I'll never, never let him know that I care about that," she thought. "And when he comes back everything will be all right again."

Just before she reached the Big Spring her pony nickered. She imagined she could see a horse standing back of the trees round the spring. Some Ranger returning to Jason or some cattle outfit from the south was camped at the spring. But when Chinook nickered again and the other pony answered he knew at once that Lorry was there. Vhy had he stopped at the spring? He had started early enough to have made a camp farther on.

Lorry saw her coming, and busied himself adjusting one of the packs. As she rode up he turned and took off his hat. His face was flushed. His eyes did not meet hers as she greeted him.

"I didn't look for you to ride up here," he said lamely.

"And I didn't expect to find you here," she said as she dismounted. She walked straight to him. "Lorry, what is the matter? You're not like my ranger man at all! Are you in trouble?"

Her question, so frank and sincere, and the deep solicitude in her troubled eyes hurt him, and yet he was glad to feel that hot pain in his throat. He knew now that he cared for her more than for any living being; beyond all thought of passion or of selfishness. She looked and seemed like a beautiful boy, with all the frankness of true comradeship in her attitude and manner. And she was troubled because of him—and not for herself. Lorry thought of the other girl. He had taken his pay. His lips burned dry as he recalled that moment when he had held her in his arms.

Dorothy saw the dull pain in his eyes, a sort of dumb pleading for forgiveness for something he had done; she could not imagine what. He dropped to his knee, and taking her slender hand in his kissed her fingers.

"Don't be silly," she said, yet her free hand caressed his hair. "What is it, ranger man?"

"I been a regular dam' fool, Dorothy."

"But, Lorry! You know—if there is anything, anything in the world that I can do—— Please, *please* don't cry. If you were to do that I think I should die. I couldn't stand it. You make me afraid. What is it? Surely it is not—Alice?"

He crushed her fingers. Suddenly he stood up and stepped back. The sunlight shone on his bared head. He looked very boyish as he shrugged his shoulders as though to free himself from an invisible hand that oppressed

and irritated him. His sense of fair play in so far as Alice Weston was concerned would not allow him to actually regret that affair. To him that had been a sort of conquest. But shame and repentance for having been disloyal to Dorothy were stamped so clearly upon his features that she understood. She knew what he was about to say, and checked him.

"Don't tell me," she said gently. "You have told me. I know Alice is attractive; she can't help that. If you care for her——"

"Care for her! She was playin' with me. When I found out that——"

Dorothy caught her breath. Her eyes grew big. She had not thought that Alice Weston—— But then that did not matter now. Lorry was so abjectly sorry about something or other. He felt her hand on his sleeve. She was smiling. "You're just a great big, silly boy, ranger man. I'm really years older than you. Please don't tell me anything. I don't want to know. I just want you to be happy."

"Happy? And you say that!"

"Of course!"

"Well, mebby I could be happy if you was to set to and walk all over me."

"Oh, but that wouldn't do any good. Tell me why you stopped here at the spring. You didn't expect to meet any one, did you?"

"I—stopped here—because we camped here that time."

"Well, Lorry, it's really foolish of you to feel so badly when there's nothing the matter. If you wanted to kiss Alice and she let you—why, that isn't wrong. A boy kissed me once when I was going to school in the East. I just boxed his ears and laughed at him. It is only when you act grumpy or feel badly that I worry about you. I just want to be your little mother then—and try to help you."

"You make me feel like I wasn't fit to ever touch your hand again," he told her.

"But you mustn't feel that way," she said cheerily. "I want you to be brave and strong and happy; just as you were that day we camped here. And you will, won't you?"

"Yes, ma'am. I'm takin' orders from you."

"But you mustn't wait for me to tell you. Just be yourself, and then I know you will never be ashamed of anything you do. I must go now. Good-by, Lorry."

She gave her hand, and he drew her to him. But she turned her face away as he bent his head above her.

"No. Not now, Lorry. I—can't. Please don't."

"I—guess you're right. I reckon you showed me just where I stand. Yes, you're plumb right about it, Dorothy. But I'm comin' back——"

"I'll wait for you," she said softly.

He turned briskly to the ponies. The pack horses plodded up the trail as he mounted Gray Leg and rode over to her. She reached up and patted Gray Leg's nose. "Good-by, everybody!" she chirruped. And she kissed Gray Leg's nose.

Back in the ranges, far from the Big Spring, he made his camp that night. As he hobbled the horses he talked to them affectionately after his manner when alone with them. "And you, you old trail hitter," he said to Gray Leg, "I reckon you think you're some ladies' man, don't you? Well, you got a right to be proud. Step along there, and 'tend to your grazin' and don't go to rubbin' noses with the other horses. You're a fool if you do."

CHAPTER XXXII.

POLITICS.

The week following Lorry's departure the Westons left for the East. As for Dorothy, she confessed to herself that she was not sorry. While Alice had been unusually nice to every one, Dorothy felt that Alice was forcing herself to appear natural and happy. Mrs. Weston knew this, and wondered what the cause could be. Mrs. Weston had found Dorothy delightful and Bronson interesting, but she had been so long in the West that its novelty had worn thin. She did not regret it

when they shipped their machine from Stacey and took the Overland for New York.

A few days after they had gone, Bud Shoop rode up to the Blue Mesa. It was evident that he wanted to talk with Bronson, so Dorothy coaxed Bondsman to her favorite tree, and sat stroking his shaggy head as she read from a new book that Shoop had brought with the mail.

The genial Bud was in a fix. Perhaps Bronson, who had been a newspaper man and knew something about politics, could help him out. Bronson disclaimed any special keenness of political intelligence, but said he would be glad to do anything he could for Shoop.

"It's like this," Bud began, seating himself on the edge of the veranda, "John Torrance, who was supervisor before you came in, got me this job and put it up to me to stick. Now I like John, and I figure John ain't scared of me. But here's where I lose the trail. A ole friend, the biggest shipper of sheep in this State, goes and gets it into his head that they's a State senator over there drawin' down pay that ought to come to me. Recollec', I said he was a sheepman—and I been for the longhorns all my days. And he's got the nerve to tell me that all the sheepmen in this here county are strong for me if I run for the job. If I didn't know him like I know this here right hand I would say he was gettin' hardenin' of the brain in his ole aige. But he's a long ways from havin' his head examined yet.

"Then along comes a representative of the Cattlemen's Association and says they want me to run for State senator. Then along comes a committee of hay tossers from up around St. Johns and says, polite, that they are waitin' my pleasure in the matter of framin' up their ticket for senatorial candidate from this mesa country. They say that the present incumbrance in the senatorial chair is such a dog-gone thief that he steals from hisself just to keep in practice. I don't say so. Course, if I can get to a chair that looks big and easy, without stompin' on anybody—why, I'm like to set down. But if I can't, I figure to set where I be.

"Now this here war talk is gettin' folks excited. And ridin' excitement down the trail of politics is like tryin' to ride white lightnin' bareback. It's like to leave you so your friends can't tell what you looked like. And somebody that ain't got brains enough to plug the hole in a watch key has been talkin' around that Bud Shoop is a fighter, with a record for gettin' what he goes after. And that this same Bud Shoop is as honest as the day is long. Now I've seen some mighty short days when I was tradin' hosses. And then this here stingin' lizard goes to work and digs up my deputy number over to Sterling and sets the papers to printin' as how it was me, with the help of a few parties whose names are of no special int'rest, settled that strike."

"So you were at Sterling?"

"Uhuh. Between you and me, I was. And it wa'n't what you'd call a girl's school for boys, neither. But that's done. What I'm gettin' at is: If I resign here, after givin' my word to Torrance to stick, it looks like I been playin' with one hand under the table. The papers will lie like hell boostin' me, and if I don't lie like hell, boostin' myself, folks'll think I'm a liar, anyhow. Now, takin' such folks one at a time, out back of the store mebby, where they ain't no wimmenfolks, I reckon I could make 'em think different. But I can't lick the county. I ain't no angel. I never found that tellin' the truth kep' me awake nights. And I sleep pretty good. Now I writ to Torrance, tellin' him just how things was headed. What do you think he writ back?"

"Why, he told you to go ahead and win, didn't he?"

"Yep. And he said that it was apparent that the State needed my services more than the service did. That's somethin' like a train with a engine on each end. You don't know which way it's headed."

"I'd take it as a sincere compliment."

"Well, I did swell up some. Then

I says to myself: 'Bud, you ain't no fancy office man, and even if you are doin' good work here you can't put it in writin' for them big bugs at Washington.' Mebby John is so dog-gone busy—like the fella with both hands full and his suspenders broke—that he'd be glad to get behind most anything to get shut of me."

"I think you're mistaken. You know you can't keep a born politician out of politics."

"Meanin' me?"

"You're the type."

"By gravy, Bronson! I never seen you hidin' your watch when I come up to visit you before."

"See here, Shoop. Why don't you write to Torrance and ask him point-blank if he has had a hand in getting you nominated for senator? Torrance is a big man in his line, and he probably knows what he is doing."

Shoop grinned. "You win the pot!" he exclaimed. "That's just what I been thinkin' right along. I kind of wanted somebody who wasn't interested in this deal to say it. Well, I reckon I bothered you long enough. You got your alfalfa to—I—you got your writin' to do. But they's one thing. If I get roped in and got to run, and some new supervisor comes botherin' around up here, puttin' some ranger in my camp that ain't like Lorry, all you got to do is to move over into my cabin and tell 'em to keep off the grass. That there four hundred and eighty is mine. I homesteaded it, and I got the papers. It ain't on the reserve."

"I thought it was."

"So do some yet. Nope. I'm just east of the reservation line; outside the reserve. I aimed to know what I was doin' when I homesteaded that piece of sky farm."

"And yet you took exception to my calling you a born politician."

Shoop chuckled. "Speakin' personal, I been thinkin' about that job of State senator for quite a spell. Now I reckon you got sense enough not to get mad when I tell you that I just been tryin' out a little speech I framed up for my constituents. Just a kind of little alfalfa-seed talk. Outside of ijuts and Mexicans, it's about what I aim to hand to the voters of this here district, puttin' it up to them that I was roped into this hocus and been settin' back on the rope right along. And that's a fact. But you got to rub some folks' noses in a fact afore they can even smell it."

"And you have the nerve to tell me that you framed up all that stuff to get my sympathy? Shoop, you are wasting time in Arizona. Go East. And forgive me for falling for your most natural appeal."

The genial Bud chuckled and wiped his eyes. "But it's true from the start to the wire."

"I must congratulate you." And, "Dorothy!" called Bronson. "Come and shake hands with our next senator from the mesa country."

"Really? But we will lose our supervisor. Still, I think Mr. Shoop will make a lovely senator. You are just the right size—and—everything."

"I reckon you're right, missy. Half of the game is lookin' the part afore election. The other half is not sayin' too much after election. If any man gets a promise out of me afore election, it'll have to be did with a stump puller."

"But we won't see you any more," said Dorothy. "You will be so busy and so important. Senator Shoop will speak here. And Senator Shoop will speak there. And—let me see! Oh, yes! The senate adjourned after a stormy session in which the senator from Mesa County, supported by an intelligent majority, passed his bill for the appropriation of twenty thousand dollars to build a road from Jason to the Blue Mesa. What fun!"

Bud polished his bald head. "Now I reckon that ain't such a joke. We'll build a road plumb through to the old Apache Trail and ketch them tourists goin' into Phoenix."

"You see," said Dorothy, turning to her father, "I know something about politics. I read the local papers. Mr. Shoop's name is in every one of them. I read that article about the Sterling strike. I have been wondering——"

Shoop immediately called attention to Bondsman, who was gently tugging at the supervisor's pants leg. "Now look at that! Do you know what he's tellin' me? He's tellin' me I got a piano in that there cabin and we ain't had a duet for quite a spell. That there dog bosses me around somethin' scandalous."

Bondsman slipped from beneath Dorothy's hand as she stooped to pat him. He trotted to Shoop's cabin, and stood looking up at the door.

"Would you be playin' 'Annie Laurie' for us?" queried Shoop.

Dorothy played for them, unaccompanied by Bondsman. Shoop shook his head. Either the tune had lost its charm for the Airedale or else Dorothy's interpretation differed from Bud's own. "Thanks, missy," said Shoop when she had finished playing. "Guess I'll be movin' along."

"Oh, no! You'll stay to-night. I'll play for you. Make him stay, father."

"I wish you would, Shoop. I'd like to talk with you about the election."

"Well, now, that's right neighborly of you folks. I was aimin' to ride back this evenin'. But I reckon we'll stay. Bondsman and me ain't so spry as we was."

After supper Dorothy played for them, with no light except the dancing red shadows from the pine logs that flamed in the fireplace.

Shoop thanked her. "I'll be livin' in town," and he sighed heavily, "where my kind of piano playin' would bring the law on me mostlike. Now that ole piano is hacked up some outside, but she's got all her innards yet and her heart's right. If you would be takin' it as a kind of birthday present, it's yours."

"You don't mean *me?*"

"I sure do."

"But I couldn't accept such a big present. And then, when we go away this winter——"

"Listen to your Uncle Bud, missy. A little lady give me a watch onct. 'Twa'n't a big watch, but it was a big thing. 'Cause why? 'Cause that little lady was the first lady to give me a present in my life. I was raised up by menfolks. My mammy she wa'n't there long after I come. Reckon that's why I never was much of a hand with wimmenfolks. I wa'n't used to 'em. And I don't care how old and ornery a man is; the first time he gets a present from a gal it kind of hits him where he breathes. And if it don't make him feel warm inside and mighty proud of bein' who he is, why it's because he's so dog-gone old he can't think. I ain't tellin' no secret when I say that the little lady put her name in that watch alongside of mine. And her name bein' there is what makes that present a big thing—bigger than any piano that was ever built.

"Why, just a spell ago I was settin' in my office, madder'n a cat what had tore his Sunday pants, 'cause at twelve o'clock I was goin' over to the saloon to fire that young ranger, Lusk, for gettin' drunk. I pulled out this here watch, and I says to myself: 'Bud, it was clost around twelve o'clock by a young fella's watch onct when he was filled up on liquor and rampin' around town when he ought to been to work. And it was the ole fo'man's gal that begged that boy's job back for him, askin' her daddy to give him another chanct. And the boy he come through all right. I know—for I owned the watch. And so I give Lusk another chanct."

Dorothy stepped to Shoop's chair, and, stooping quickly, kissed his cheek. Bondsman, not to be outdone, leaped into Bud's lap and licked the supervisor's face. Shoop spluttered, and thrust Bondsman down.

"Things is comin' too fast!" he cried, wiping his face. "I was just goin' to say somethin' when that dog just up and took the words right out of my mouth. Oh, yes! I was just wishin' I owned a piano factory."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE FIRES OF HOME.

Bud Shoop read the newspaper notice twice before he realized fully its import. The Adams House at Stacey was for sale. "Then Jim and Annie's patched it up," he soliloquized. And

the genial Bud did not refer to the Adams House.

Because his master seemed pleased, Bondsman waited to hear the rest of it with head cocked sideways and tail at a stiff angle.

"That's all they is to it," said Shoop.

Bondsman lay down and yawned. He was growing old. It was only Bud's voice that could key the big Airedale up to his earlier alertness. The office was quiet. The clerk had gone out for his noon meal. The fall sunshine slanted through the front-office windows lazily. The room was warm, but there was a tang of autumn in the air. Shoop glanced at the paper again. He became absorbed in an article proposing conscription. He shook his head and muttered to himself. He turned the page, glanced at the live-stock reports, the copper market, railroad stocks, and passed on to an article having to do with local politics.

Bondsman, who constituted himself the guard of Shoop's leisure, rapped the floor with his tail. Shoop glanced over the top of his paper as light footsteps sounded in the outer office. Dorothy tapped on the door jamb and stepped in. Shoop crumpled the paper and rose. Bondsman was at her side as she shook hands with the supervisor.

"My new saddle came," she said, patting Bondsman. "And father's latest book. Why don't you cheer?"

"Goodness, missy. I started cheerin' inside the minute I seen you. Now I reckon you just had to have that new saddle."

"It's at the store. Father is over there talking politics and war with Mr. Handley."

"Then you just set down and tell your Uncle Bud the news while you're waitin'."

"But I am not *waiting*. I am visiting *you*. And I told you the news."

"And to think a new saddle could make your eyes look like that! Ain't you 'shamed to fool your Uncle Bud?"

"I haven't—if you say you know I have."

"Course. Most any little gal can get the best of me."

"Well, because you are so curious —Lorry is back."

"I reckoned that was it."

"He rode part way down with us. He has gone to see his father."

"And forgot to repo't here first."

"No. He gave me the reports to give to you. Here they are. One of Mr. Waring's men, that young Mexican, rode up to the mesa last week and left word that Lorry's father wanted to see him."

"I aim to know about that," chuckled Shoop. And he smoothed out the paper and pointed to the Adams House sale notice.

"The Adams House for sale? Why ——"

"Jim and Annie—that's Jim Waring and Mrs. Waring now—are goin' to run the ranch. I'm mighty glad."

"Oh, I see! And Lorry is really Laurence Waring?"

"You bet! And I reckon Lorry'll be fo'man of that ranch one of these days. Cattle is sky-high and goin' up. I don't blame him."

"He didn't say a word about that to me."

"Course not. He's not one to say anything till he's plumb sure."

"He might have said *something*," asserted Dorothy.

"Didn't he?" chuckled Shoop.

Dorothy's face grew rosy. "Your master is very inquisitive," she told Bondsman.

"And your little missy is right beautiful this mawnin'," said Shoop. "Now if I was a bowlegged young cowpuncher with curly hair, and looked fierce and noble and could make a gal's eyes look like stars in the evenin' I reckon I wouldn't be settin' here signin' letters."

"He *isn't* bowlegged!" flashed Dorothy. She was very definite about that. "And he's not a cowboy. He is a ranger."

"My goodness! I done put my foot in a gopher hole that shake. I sure am standin' on my head, waitin' for somebody to set me up straight ag'in. You ain't mad at your Uncle Bud, be you?"

Dorothy tossed her head, but her eyes twinkled, and suddenly she laughed. "You know I like you—heaps! You're just jealous."

"Reckon you said it! But I only got one ear laid back yet. Wait till I see that boy."

"Oh, pshaw! You can't help being nice to him."

"And I got comp'ny."

"But really I want to talk seriously, if you will let me. Lorry has been talking about enlisting. He didn't say that he was going to enlist, but he has been talking about it so much. Do you think he will?"

"Well, now, missy, that's a right peart question. I know if I was his age I'd go. Most any fella that can read would. I been readin' the papers for two years, and b'ilin' inside. I reckon Lorry's just woke up to what's goin' on. We been kind of slow wakin' up out here. Folks livin' off in this neck of the woods gets to thinkin' that the sun rises on their east-line fence and sets on their west line. It takes somethin' strong to make 'em recollec' the sun's got a bigger job'n that. But I admire to say that when them kind of folks gets started onct they's nothin' ever built that'll stop 'em. If I get elected I aim to tell some folks over to the statehouse about this here war. And I'm goin' to start by talkin' about what we got to set straight right here to home first. They can *feel* what's goin' on to home. It ain't all print. And they got to feel what's goin' on over there afore they do anything."

"It's all too terrible to talk about," said Dorothy. "But we must do our share, if only to keep our self-respect, mustn't we?"

"You said it—providin' we got any self-respect to keep."

"But why don't our young men volunteer. They are not cowards."

"It ain't that. Suppose you ask Lorry why."

"I shouldn't want to know him if he didn't go," said Dorothy.

"Missy, I'm lovin' you for sayin' that. If all the mothers and sisters and sweethearts was like that, they wouldn't be no conscription. But they ain't. I'm no hand at understandin' wimmenfolks, but I know the mother of a strappin' young fella in this town that says she would sooner see her boy dead in her front yard than for him to go off and fight for foreigners. She don't know what this country's got to fight for pretty quick or she wouldn't talk like that. And she ain't the only one. Now when wimmen talks that way what do you expect of men? I reckon the big trouble is that most folks got to see somethin' to fight afore they get goin'. Fightin' for a principle looks just like poundin' air to some folks. I don't believe in shootin' in the dark. How come, I've plugged a rattlesnake by just shootin' at the sound when he was coiled down where I couldn't see him. But this ain't no kind of talk for you to listen to, missy."

"I—you won't say that I spoke of Lorry?"

"Bless your heart, no! And he'll figure it out hisself. But don't you get disap'inted if he don't go right away. It's mighty easy to set back and say 'Go!' to the other fella; and listen to the band and cheer the flag. It makes a fella feel so durned patriotic he is like to forget he ain't doin' nothin' hisself.

"Now, missy, suppose you was a sprightin' kind of a boy 'bout nineteen or twenty, and mebby some gal thought you was good lookin' enough to talk to after church on a Sunday; and suppose you had rustled like a little nigger when you was a kid, helpin' your ma warsh dishes in a hotel and chop wood and sweep out and pack heavy valises for tourists and fill the lamps and run to the store for groceries and milk a cow every night and mornin'.

"And say you growed up without breakin' your laig and went to punchin' cattle and earnin' your own money, and then mebby you got a job in the ranger service, ridin' the high trails and livin' free and independent; and suppose a mighty pretty gal was to come along and kind of let you take a shine to her, and you was doin' your plumb durndest to put by a little money, aimin' to trot

in double harness some day; and then suppose your daddy was to offer you a half interest in a growin' cattle business, where you could be your own boss and put by a couple of thousand a year. And you only nineteen or twenty.

"Suppose you had been doin' all that when along comes word from way off somewhere that folks was killin' each other and it was up to you to stop 'em. Wouldn't you do some hard thinkin' afore you jumped into your fightin' clothes?"

"But this war means more than that."

"It sure does. But some of us ain't got the idee yet. Course all you got to do to some folks is to say 'Fight' and they come a runnin'. And some of that kind make mighty good soldier boys. But the fella I'm leavin' alone is the one what cinches up slow afore he climbs into the saddle. When he goes into a fight it's like his day's work, and he don't waste no talk or elbow action when he's workin'."

"I wish I were a man!"

"Well, some of us is right glad you ain't. A good woman can do just as much for this country right now as any man. And I don't mean by dressin' up in fancy clothes and givin' dances and shellin' out mebby four per cent of the gate receipts to buy a ambulance with her name on it.

"And I don't mean by payin' ten dollars for a outfit of gold-plated knittin' needles to make two-bit socks for the boys. What I mean is that a good woman does her best work to home; mebby just by sayin' the right word, or mebby by keepin' still or by smilin' cheerful when her heart is breakin' account of her man goin' to war.

"You can say all you like about patriotism, but patriotism ain't just marchin' off to fight for your country. It's usin' your neighbors and your country right every day in the week, includin' Sunday. Some folks think patriotism is buildin' a big bonfire once a year and lettin' her blaze up. But the real thing is keepin' your own little fire a goin' steady, right here where you live. And it's thinkin' of that little fire to home that makes the best soldier.

"He's got a big job to do. He's goin' to get it done so he can go back to that there home and find the little fire a burnin' bright. What do some of our boys do fightin' alongside of them Frenchman and under the French flag, when they get wounded and get a furlough? Set around and wait to go back to fightin'? I reckon not. Some of 'em pack up and come four, five thousand miles just to see their folks for mebby two, three days. And when they see them little fires to home a burnin' bright, why they say: 'This here is what we're fightin' for.' And they go back, askin' God A'mighty to keep 'em facin' straight to the front till the job is done."

Dorothy, her chin in her hand, gazed at Bud. She had never known him to be so intense, so earnest.

"Oh, I know it is so!" she cried. "But what can I do? I have only a little money in the bank, and father makes just enough to keep us comfortable. You see, we spent such lots of money for those horrid old doctors in the East, who didn't do me a bit of good."

"You been doin' your share just gettin' well and strong, which is savin' money. But seein' you asked me, you can do a whole lot if Lorry was to say anything to you about goin'. And you know how better'n I can tell you or your daddy or anybody."

"But Lorry must do as he thinks best. We—we are not engaged."

"Course. And it ain't no time for a young fella to get engaged to a gal and tie up her feelin's and march off with her heart in his pocket. Mebby some day she's goin' to want it back ag'in, when he ain't livin' to fetch it back to her. I see by the Eastern papers Torrance has been sendin' me that some young fellas is marryin' just afore they go to jine the Frenchmen on the front. Now what are some of them gals goin' to do if their boys don't come back? Or mebby come back crippled for life? Some of them gals is goin' to pay a mighty high price for just a few days of bein' married. It riles me to think of it."

"I hadn't thought of it—as you do," said Dorothy.

"Well, I hope you'll forgive your Uncle Bud for ragin' and rampin' around like this. I can't talk what's in my heart to folks around here. They're mostly narrow gauge. I reckon I said enough. Let's go look at that new saddle."

"Isn't it strange," said Dorothy, "that I couldn't talk with father like this? He'd be nice, of course, but he would be thinking of just me."

"I reckon he would. And mebby some of Lorry."

"If Lorry should ask me about his going—"

"Just you tell him that you think one volunteer is worth four conscripts any time and any place. And if that ain't a hint to him they's somethin' wrong with his ears."

Shoop rose and plodded out after Dorothy. Bondsman trailed lazily behind. Because Shoop had not picked up his hat the big dog knew that his master's errand, whatever it was, would be brief. Yet Bondsman followed, stopping to yawn and stretch the stiffness of age from his shaggy legs. There was really no sense in trotting across the street with his master just to trot back again in a few minutes. But Bondsman's unwavering loyalty to his master's every mood and every movement had become such a matter of course that the fine example was lost in the monotony of repetition.

A dog's loyalty is so often taken for granted that it ceases to be noticeable until in an unlooked-for hazard it shines forth in some act of quick heroism or tireless faithfulness worthy of a tribute yet unwritten.

Bondsman was a good soldier.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

YOUNG LIFE.

Ramon was busy that afternoon transferring mattresses and blankets from the ranch house to the new, low-roofed bunk house that Waring had had built. Ramon fitted up three beds—one for the cook, one for an old range rider that Waring had hired when his men had left to enlist, and one for himself.

The partitions of the ranch house had been taken down, the interior rearranged, and the large living room furnished in a plain, comfortable way.

As Ramon worked he sang softly. He was happy. The señora was coming to live with them, and perhaps Señor Jim's son. Señor Jim had been more active of late. His lameness was not so bad as it had been. It was true the Señor Jim did not often smile, but his eyes were kindly.

Ramon worked rapidly. There was much to do in the other house. The bale of Navaho blankets was still unopened. Perhaps the Señor Jim would help to arrange them in the big room with the stone fireplace. The señora would not arrive until to-morrow, but then the home must be made ready that she would find it beautiful. And Ramon, accustomed to the meagerly furnished adobes of Old Mexico, thought that the ranch house was beautiful indeed.

Waring ate with the men in the new bunk house that evening. After supper he went over to the larger building and sat alone in the living room, gazing out of the western window. His wounds ached, and the memory of almost forgotten trails grew young again. Again in Old Mexico, the land he loved, he saw the blue crest of the Sierras rise as in a dream, and below the ranges a tiny Mexican village of adobe huts—gold in the setting sun. Between him and the village lay the outlands, ever mysterious, ever calling to him. Across the desert ran a thin trail to the village. And down the trail the light feet of Romance ran swiftly as he followed. He could even recall the positions of the different adobes; the strings of chilis dark red in the twilight; the old black-shawled señora who had spoken a guttural word of greeting as he had ridden up.

Back in Sonora men had said: "Waring has made his last ride." They had told each other that a white man was a fool to go alone into that coun-

try. Perhaps he had been a fool. But the thrill of those early days, when he rode alone and free and men sang of him from Sonora to the Sweetgrass Hills! And on that occasion he had found the fugitive he sought, yet he had ridden back to Sonora alone. He had never forgotten the face of the young Mexican woman who had pleaded with him to let her lover go. Her eyes were big and velvet black. Her mouth was the mouth of a Madonna. Waring had told her that it was useless to plead. He remembered how her eyes had grown dull and sullen at his word. He told her that he was simply doing his duty. She had turned on him like a panther, her little knife glittering in the dusk as she drove it at his breast. The Mexican lover had jerked free and was running toward the foothills. Waring recalled his first surprise at the wiry strength of her wrist as he had twisted the knife from her. If the Mexican lover had not turned and shot at him—— The black figure of the Mexican had dropped just where the road entered the foothills. The light had almost gone. The vague bulk of the Sierras wavered. Outlines vanished, leaving a sense of something gigantic, invisible, that slumbered in the night. The stars were big and softly brilliant as he had ridden north.

The old wound in his shoulder ached. The Mexican had made a good shot—for a Mexican.

Out on the Arizona mesa, against the half disk of gold, was the black silhouette of a horseman. Waring stepped to the doorway. Ramon was seated just outside the door, smoking a cigarette. The southern stars were almost visible. Each star seemed to have found its place, and yet no star could be seen.

"It is Lorry," said Ramon. "He has ridden far."

Waring smiled. Fifty miles had not been considered a big day's ride in his time. *In his time!* But his day was past. The goddess he had followed had left him older than his years, crippled, unable to ride more than a few hours at a time; had left him fettered to the monotony of the far mesa levels and the changeless hills. Was this his punishment, or simply a black trick of fate, that the tang of life had evaporated, leaving a stagnant pool wherein he gazed to meet the blurred reflection of a face weary with waiting for—what end?

Unused to physical inactivity, Waring had grown somber of mind these latter days. Despite the promise of more comfortable years, he had never felt more lonely. With the coming of Lorry the old order would change. Young blood, new life would have its way.

The sound of pattering hoofs grew louder. Waring heard the old familiar, "Hi! Yippy! Yip!" of the range rider. Young blood? New life? It was his own blood, his own life reincarnate in the cheery rider that swung down and grasped his hand. Nothing had changed. Life was going on as it always had.

"Hello, dad! How's the leg?"

Waring smiled in the dusk. "Pretty fair, Lorry. You didn't waste any time getting here."

"Well, not much. I rode down with Bronson and Dorothy."

"Do you call her 'Dorothy?'"

"Ever since she calls me Lorry."

"Had anything to eat?"

"Nope. I cut across. How's mother?"

"She will be here to-morrow. We have been getting things ready. Let Ramon take your horse——"

"Thanks. I'll fix him in two shakes." And in two shakes the bridle and saddle were off, and Gray Leg was rolling in the corral.

While Lorry ate, Ramon laid a fire in the big stone fireplace. After supper Lorry and his father sat gazing at the flames. Lorry knew why he had been sent for, but waited for his father to speak.

Presently Waring turned to him. "I sent for you because I need some one to help. And your mother wants you here. I won't urge you, but I can offer you Pat's share in the ranch. I bought his share last week. You'll have a working interest besides that. You

know something about cattle. Think it over."

"That's a dandy offer," said Lorry. "I'm right obliged, dad. But there's something else. You put your proposition straight, and I'm goin' to put mine straight. Now, if you was in my boots, and she liked you enough, would you marry her?"

"You haven't told me who she is."

"Why—Dorothy Bronson. I thought you knew."

Waring smiled. "You're pretty young, Lorry."

"But you married young, dad."

"Yes. And I married the best woman in the world. But I can't say that I made your mother happy."

"I guess ma never cared for anybody but you," said Lorry.

"It isn't just the caring for a person, Lorry."

"Well, I thought it was. But I reckon you know. And Dorothy is the prettiest and lovin'ist kind of a girl *you* ever seen. I was wishin' you was acquainted."

"I should like to meet her. Are you sure she is your kind of girl, Lorry? Now wait a minute; I know how you feel. A girl can be good looking and mighty nice and think a lot of a man, and yet not be the right girl for him."

"But how is he goin' to find that out?"

"If he must find out—by marrying her."

"Then I aim to find out if she is willin'. But I wanted to tell you—because you made me that offer. I was askin' your advice because you been through a lot."

"I wish I could advise you. But you're a man grown, so far as taking care of yourself is concerned. And when a man thinks of getting married he isn't looking for advice against it. Why don't you wait a year or two?"

"Well, mebby I got to. Because—well, I didn't ask Dorothy yet. Then there's somethin' else. A lot of the fellas up in the high country have enlisted in the regulars, and some have gone over to Canada to join the American Legion. Now I don't want to be the last hombre on this mesa to go."

"There has been no call for men by the nation."

"But it's comin', dad. Any fella can see that. I kind of hate to wait till Uncle Sam says I got to go. I don't like goin' that way."

"What do you think your mother will say?"

"Gosh! I know! That's why I wanted to talk to you first. If I'm goin', I want to know it so I can say to her that I *am* goin' and not that I aim to go."

"Well, you will have to decide that."

"Well, I'm goin' to—before ma comes. Dog-gone it! You know how it is tryin' to explain things to a woman. Wimmen don't understand them kind of things."

"I don't know about that, Lorry."

Lorry nodded. "I tell you, dad—you kind of set a pace for me. And I figure I don't want folks to say: 'There goes Jim Waring's boy.' If they're goin' to say anything, I want it to be: 'There goes Lorry Waring.'"

Waring knew that kind of pride if he knew anything. He was proud of his son. And Waring's most difficult task was to keep from influencing him in any way. He wanted the boy to feel free to do as he thought best.

"You were in that fight at Sterling," said Waring, gesturing toward the south.

"But that was different," said Lorry. "Them coyotes was pluggin' at us, and we just nacherally had to let 'em have it. And besides we was workin' for the law."

"I understand there wasn't any law in Sterling about that time."

"Well, we made some," asserted Lorry.

"And that's just what this war means. It's being fought to make law."

"Then I'm for the law every time, big or little. I seen enough of that other thing."

"Think it over, Lorry. Remember, you're free to do as you want to. I have made my offer. Then there is

your mother—and the girl. It looks as though you had your hands full."

"You bet! Business and war and—and Dorothy is a right big order. I'm gettin' a headache thinkin' of it."

"Well, turn in. I'm going to. I have to live pretty close to the clock these days."

"See you in the mornin'," said Lorry, giving his hand. "Good night, dad."

"Good night, boy."

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE HIGH TRAIL.

Black-edged against the silvery light of early dawn the rim of the world lay dotted with far buttes and faint ranges fading into the spaces of the north and south. The faint light deepened and spread to a great crimson pool, tideless round the bases of magic citadels and faërie towers. Golden minarets thrust their slender, fiery shafts athwart the wide pathway of the ascending sun. The ruddy glow palpitated like a live ember naked to the wind. The nearer buttes grew boldly beautiful. Slowly their molten outlines hardened to rigid bronze. Like ancient castles of some forgotten land, isolated in the vast mesa, empty of life, they seemed to await the coming of a host that would reshape their fallen arches and their wind-worn towers to old-time splendor; and perfect their imageries.

But the marching sun knew no such sentiment. Pitilessly he pierced their enchanted walls, discovering their pretense, burning away their shadowy glory, baring them for what they were —masses of jumbled rock and splintered spires; rain-gutted wraiths of clay, volcanic rock, the tumbled malpais and the tufa of the land.

Black shadows shifted. That which had been the high-arched entrance to a mighty fortress was now a shallow hollow in a hill. Here and there on the western slope of the mounds cattle grazed in the chill morning air. Enchantments of the dawn reshaped themselves to local landmarks.

From his window Lorry could discern the distant peak of Mount Baldy glimmering above the purple sea of forest. Not far below the peak lay the viewless level of the Blue Mesa. The trail ran just below that patch of quaking asp.

The hills had never seemed so beautiful, nor had the still mesas, carpeted with the brown stubble of the close-cropped bunch grass.

Arizona was his country—his home. And yet he had heard folk say that Arizona was a desert. But then such folk had been interested chiefly in guide-posts of the highways or the Overland dining-car menu.

And he had been offered a fair holding in this land—twenty thousand acres under fence on a long-term lease; a half interest in the cattle and their increase. He would be his own man, with a voice in the management and sale of the stock. A year or two and he could afford to marry—if Dorothy would have him. He thought she would. And to keep in good health she must always live in the West. What better land than Arizona, on the high mesa where the air was clean and clear; where the keen August rains refreshed the sunburned grasses; where the light snows of winter fell but to vanish in the retrieving sun? If Dorothy loved this land, why should she leave it! Surely health meant more to her than the streets and homes of the East?

And Lorry had asked nothing of fortune save a chance to make good. And fortune had been more than kind to him. He realized that it was through no deliberate effort of his own that he had acquired the opportunity which offered. Why not take advantage of it? It would give him prestige with Bronson. A good living, a good home for her. Such luck didn't come to a man's door every day.

He had slept soundly that night, despite his intent to reason with himself. It was morning, and he had made no decision—or so he thought. There was the question of enlisting. Many of his friends had already gone. Older men were now riding the ranges. Even the clerk in the general store at Stacey had volunteered. And Lorry had consid-

ered him anything but physically competent to "make a fight." But it wasn't all in making a fight. It was setting an example of loyalty and unselfishness to those fellows who needed such an impulse to stir them to action. Lorry thought clearly. And because he thought clearly and for himself he realized that he, as an individual soldier in the Great War, would amount to little; but he knew that his going would affect others; that the mere news of his having gone would react as a sort of endless chain reaching to no one knew what sequestered home.

And this, he argued, was his real value. The spirit ever more potent than the flesh. Why, he had heard men joke about this war! It was a long way from home. What difference did it make to them if those people over there were being starved, outraged, murdered? That was their own lookout. Friends of his had said that they were willing to fight to a finish if America were threatened with invasion, but that could never happen. America was the biggest and richest country in the world. She attended to her own business and asked nothing but that the other nations do likewise.

And those countries over there were attending to their own business. If our ships were blown up, it was our own fault. We had been warned. Anyway, the men who owned those ships were out to make money and willing to take a chance. It wasn't our business to mix in. We had troubles enough at home. As Lorry pondered the shallow truths a great light came to him. "Troubles enough at home," that was it! America had already been invaded, yet men slumbered in fancied security. He had been at Sterling——

Lorry could hear Ramon stirring about in the kitchen. The rhythmically muffled sound suggested the mixing of flapjacks. Lorry could smell the thin, appetizing fragrance of coffee.

With characteristic abruptness, he made his decision, but with no spoken word, no gesture, no emotion. He saw a long day's work before him. He would tackle it like a workman.

And immediately he felt buoyantly himself again. The matter was settled.

He washed vigorously. The cold water brought a ruddy glow to his face. He whistled as he strode to the kitchen. He slapped the gentle-eyed Ramon on the shoulder. Pancake batter hissed as it slopped over on the stove.

"Cheer up, amigo!" he cried. "Had a good look at the sun this mornin'?"

"No, señor. I have make the breakfast, *si.*"

"Well, she's out there, shinin' right down on Arizona."

"The señora?" queried Ramon, puzzled.

"No. The sun. Don't a mornin' like this make you feel like jumpin' clean out of your boots and over the fence?"

"Not until I have made the flapcake, Señor Lorry."

"Well, go the limit. Guess I'll roust out dad."

Bud Shoop scowled, perspired, and swore. Bondsman, close to Shoop's chair, blinked and lay very still. His master was evidently beyond any proffer of sympathy or advice. Yet he had had no argument with any one lately. And he had eaten a good breakfast. Bondsman knew that. Whatever the trouble might be, his master had not consulted him about it. It was evidently a matter that dogs could not understand, and hence very grave. Bondsman licked his chops nervously. He wanted to go out and lie in the sunshine, but he could not do that while his master suffered such tribulation of soul. His place was close to his master now, if ever.

Around Shoop were scattered pieces of paper; bits of letters written and torn up.

"It's a dam' sight worse resignin' than makin' out my application—and that was bad enough," growled Shoop. "But I got to do this personal. This here pen is like a rabbit gone loco. Now here I set like a bag of beans, tryin' to tell John Torrance why I'm quittin' this here job without makin' him think I'm glad to quit—which I am, and I ain't. It's like tryin' to split

a flea's ear with a ax; it can't be did without mashin' the flea. Now if John was here I could tell him in three jumps. The man that invented writin' must 'a' been tongue-tied or had sore throat some time when he wanted to talk awful bad. My langwidge ain't broke to pull no city rig—or no hearse. She's got to have the road and plenty room to side-step.

"Now, how would I say it if John was here? Would I start off with "Dear John" or 'Dear Old Friend?' I reckon not. I'd just say: 'John, I'm goin' to quit. I tried to do by you what I said I would. I got a chanct to bust into the statehouse, and I got a good reason for bustin' in. I been nominated for senator, and I got to live up to the name. I'm a goin' to run for senator —and mebby I'll keep on when I get started, and end up somewhere in Mexico. I can't jine the reg'lars account of my physical expansibility and my aige, so I got to do my fightin' to home. I'm willin' to stick by this job if you say the word. Mebby some folks would be dissap'inted, but I can stand that if they can. What do you reckon I better do?'

"Now that's what I'd say if John was here. Why in tarnation can't I say it on paper? Lemme see."

Bud filled a sheet with his large, outdoor script. When he had finished, he tucked the letter in an envelope hurriedly. He might reconsider his attempt if he reread the letter.

He was carefully directing the envelope when Lorry strode in.

"'Bout time you showed up," said Shoop.

Lorry dropped his hat on the floor and pulled up a chair. He was a bit nervous. Preamble would make him more so. He spoke up quickly.

"Bud, I want to resign."

"Uhuh. You tired of this job?"

"Nope. I like it."

"Want more pay?"

"No. I get all I'm worth."

"Ain't you feelin' well?"

"Bully! I'm going to enlist."

"Might 'a' knowed it," said Bud, leaning back and gazing at the newly addressed envelope on his desk. "Got your reports all in?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, seein' you're quittin' for the best reason I know, I'm right glad. You done your work like I expected. Your mother know you're goin' to jine the army?"

"I told her yesterday. I've been at the ranch."

"Uhuh. How's your dad?"

"He ain't so spry. But he is better."

"Uhuh. That young Mexican stayin' at the ranch with him?"

"You couldn't chase Ramon away with a gun."

"Uhuh. Well, Lorry, I just been sweatin' out a letter tellin' John Torrance that I've quit. I'm goin' to run for State senator."

"I knew they would land you. Everybody knew it."

"So we're both leavin' the service. And we're leavin' a mighty good job; mebby not such big pay, but a man's job that has been the makin' of some no-account boys. For no fella can work for the service without settin' up and ridin' straight. Now when I was a young buster chasin' cow tails over the country I kind of thought the forestry service was a joke. It ain't. It's a mighty big thing. You're leavin' it with a clean record. Mebby some day you'll want to get back in it. Were you goin' on up?"

"I figured to straighten up things at the cabin."

"All right. When you come down you can get your check. Give my regards to Bronson and the little missy."

"You bet I will!"

Bud rose and proffered his hand. Lorry, rather embarrassed, shook hands and turned to go. "See you later," he said.

"I was goin' over to Stacey," said Shoop. "Mebby I'll be out when you get back. But your check'll be here all right. You sure look like you was walkin' on sunshine this mawnin'. Gosh, what a whoopin' fine place this here world is when you are young—and —and kind of slim! Now Bondsman

and me—we was young onct. When it comes to bein' young—or State senator—you can have the politics and give me back my ridin' legs. You're ridin' the High Trail these days.

"If I could just set a hoss onct, with twenty years under my hide, and look down on this here country, and the sage a smellin' like it used to and the sunshine a creepin' across my back easy and warm, with a sniff of the timber comin' down the mawnin' breeze; and way off the cattle a lookin' no bigger'n flies on a office map—why, I wouldn't trade that there seat in the saddle for a million in gold. But I reckon I would them days. Sometimes I set back and say 'Arizona' just to myself. Accordin' to law, I'm livin' single, and if I ain't married to Arizona she's my best gal, speakin' general. Course a little lady give me a watch onct. And say, boy, if she sets a lot of store by you—why you—why, git out of this here office afore I make a dam' fool of myself!"

And the genial Bud waved his arm, blustering and swearing heartily.

Bondsman leaped up. A ridge of hair rose along his neck. For some unknown reason his master had ordered Lorry to leave the office—and at once. But Lorry was gone, and Bud was patting the big Airedale. It was all right. Nothing was going to happen. And wasn't it about time for the stage to arrive?

Bondsman trotted to the doorway, gazed up and down the street, and came back to Shoop. The stage had arrived, and Bondsman was telling Shoop so by the manner in which he waited for his master to follow him out into the sunlight. Bud grinned.

"You're tellin' me the stage is in—and I got a letter to send."

Bud picked up his hat. Bondsman had already preceded him to the doorway, and stood waiting. His attitude expressed the extreme patience of age, but that the matter should be attended to without unreasonable delay. Shoop sighed heavily.

"That there dog bosses me around somethin' scandalous."

Halfway across the Blue Mesa, Dorothy met her ranger man. She had been watching the trail. Lorry dismounted and walked with her to the cabin. Bronson was glad to see him. They chatted for a while. Lorry would have spoken of his father's offer—of his plans, of many things he wished Bronson to know, yet he could not speak of these things until he had talked with Dorothy. He would see Bronson again. Meanwhile——

A little later Lorry went to his cabin to take stock of the implements and make his final report. He swept the cabin, picked up the loose odds and ends, closed the battered piano gently, and sat down to think.

He had made his decision, and yet—he had seen Dorothy again; touched her hand, talked with her, and watched her brown eyes while he talked. The Great War seemed very far away. And here he was at home. This was his country. But he had set his face toward the High Trail. He could not turn back.

Dorothy stood in the doorway, her finger at her lips. Bronson was busy writing. Lorry rose and stepped out. He stooped and lifted her to Gray Leg. She sat sideways in the saddle as he led the pony across the mesa to the veritable rim of the world.

Far below lay the open country, veiled by the soft haze of distance. He gave her his hand, and she slipped to the ground and stood beside him. For the first time the tremendous sweep of space appalled her. She drew close to him and touched his arm.

"What is it, Lorry?"

"You said—once—that you would wait for me."

"Yes. And now you are here, I'll never be lonesome again."

"Were you lonesome?"

"A little. I had never really waited—like that—before."

He frowned and gazed into the distances. It had been easy to decide—when alone. Then he faced her, his gray eyes clear and untroubled.

"I'm going to enlist," he said simply.

She had hoped that he would. She

wanted to think that of him. And yet, now that he had spoken, now that he was actually going—— Her eyes grew big. She wanted to say that she was glad. Her lips trembled.

He held out his arms. She felt their warm strength round her. On the instant she thought of begging him not to go. But his eyes were shining with a high purpose that shamed her momentary doubt. She pressed her cheek to his.

"I will wait for you," she whispered, and her eyes were wet with tears of happiness.

She was no longer the little mother and he her boy, for in that moment he became to her the man strength of the race, his arms her refuge and his eyes her courage for the coming years.

THE END.

THE GREAT AMERICAN GAME

PRICE COLLIER and other authorities on "England and the English" devote much space to Great Britain's national enthusiasm for outdoor sports. Their games for generations have been little short of a religion. From them, it is claimed, sprang the Englishman's reputation for fair play, sportsmanship, and his steady carrying of the British flag in the spirit of a game to the other side of the horizon. No single factor is more responsible for the British empire than its passion for sporting games.

The United States affords a parallel in its steady progress to world leadership in business. We have carried the ball over the goal because business to us is a game. It is the sporting side of business that keeps our big industrial heads in the contest after they could comfortably retire—on until they die in harness.

To the real Yankee commercialist, business is neither a necessity nor a burden; it is a game, a sport. We all number men among our friends who go down and out periodically, but always come back—like the man who is fanned at bat, but lands a home run next inning.

Listen to a crowd of traveling salesmen in the railway smoking compartment—boasting of deals they have put over, with the enthusiasm of an angler with a thirty-eight-pound 'lunge. They sit around discussing trick plays, unfair umpires, and problems involving the law of chance like so many baseball fans or poker players.

It is a favorite sport in the oil country to beat a man at his own game, drive him to the wall, then set him up in business again.

We attended a collegiate athletic meet in which the greatest applause went to the defeated pole vaulter because he tried so much harder than the better man who won easily; a year later saw a brilliant salesman turned down for a job in favor of some dogged line plunger admired for everlastingly keeping at it, never giving up.

Business is a game to Americans. Among the players there exist unwritten rules and a sense of fair play as sacred as the Rig-Veda. The public may get a raw deal, but the players usually are on the level among themselves. The rules are beginning to extend to and include the public. This bodes well for our new trade beyond our frontiers. Sport built up the British Empire; fair play kept it there. Business as a sport built up American world leadership; fair play to all will hold us to the goal.

Songs of the Training Camps

(Officers' Training School.)

By Berton Braley

THE BREAKING POINT

THERE'S a feud between Kelly and Klaw,
They sputter like steaks on a grid,
For Klaw calls big Kelly a "Chaw"
And Kelly says Klaw is a "Yid;"
There's a row between Linton and Jones,
And there's trouble with Hyland and Wright,
And our barrack resounds with the tones
Of quarrel, dissension, and fight.

We used to be joyous and blithe
And pleasant and placid to boot,
But lately two-thirds of us writhe
In a nervous excitement acute;
We're fidgety, crochety, sore
We wake at the dawn with a scowl,
And things that we grinned at before
Now cause us to curse and to growl.

The reason? It's simple enough,
We've worked and we've studied and grilled,
We've gone through a mill that is rough,
We've dug and we've hiked and we've drilled,
And now that we're pretty near through
And most of the labor is past,
We're fretting and wondering who
Will land the commissions at last.

There's rumor and whisper at mess
And guesses in trench and latrine,
We spread wild reports as we dress,
We gossip at school and canteen;
We hear they'll examine on this
Or lay all their stress upon that—
What marvel our nerves go amiss
And every one talks through his hat?

But wait till it's over; then Klaw
And Kelly will patch up their row,
And Linton and Jones will haw-haw
At the way that they carry on now;
The winners and those they defeat
Will act like good men who fought well,
For the finish is not hard to meet
It's only the worry that's hell!

Vance and the Vampire

- By Howard Philip Rhoades

Of a kiss auction and its startling consequences

BILLY VANCE dolorously observed signs across the street, indicating "The New York Racket Store," "The Broadway Bar," and "The Manhattan Restaurant." He groaned especially as he looked at the last. This was because it was an establishment for the sale of food. The general dolor was because the wind-swept street outside was that of a small place in the Middle West, five million railroad ties from that lovely spider's web which divides the long island discovered by the late H. Hudson.

He was roused from his gloomy reverie by a young man whose keenness was that of a needle among plowshares. The newcomer beamed pleasingly.

"You are Mr. Vance, a theatrical man, are you not?" he greeted.

"I was a theatrical man," corrected Vance. "Just now I am a mathematician figuring the ratio of smiles to meals." He was frank, for somehow he scented better things.

"What I wanted to see you about, Mr. Vance," said the young man, "is the lady. You'll pardon my interest in her, but," nervously, "she's still here, isn't she?"

"Yes, she and I are both suffering the same displeasure."

"She is an actress, I take it?" questioned the other.

"Some don't take it that way," said Vance. "But I guess it's just the season. When girls and music don't go over, you can bank that Bill Shakespeare and Mr. Griffith are not buying any bonds. What's on?"

"Listen!" imparted the other in low, guarded tones. "I don't like to talk here where it's so public. You and the young lady are not busy to-night? Can't we go up to your room and talk over how to make a nice little bit for you both?"

"If this were the McAlpin, and my rooms were on the top floor, I would still be willing to walk up on those terms," answered Vance, showing more interest. "Lead on, Macduff!"

"Saunders," said the other.

"Glad to know you. Wait till I get my key."

In the room of Billy Vance, on the third floor, Saunders continued: "To-night, at the auditorium, there's to be the first of a series of events to raise money for a clubhouse for the women of this town. The women all are backing it fine. The thing has been to get the men interested. I've been in town here for some time, promoting this and other civic matters, and I think I started the livest thing the town ever knew when I thought of the kiss auction."

"A worthy idea," said Vance. "I saw a sign about it down the street."

"A good idea," continued Saunders, "but a tricky one. I had the two pippins of the town lined up, beautiful girls, too. Then one of them is taken down with mumps, and the other—the best one, a knock-'em-cold stunner—she and her old lady gets into a society feud, which, take it from me, has the mountaineer kind beat to a frazzle, and they ease out of town for Chicago."

"They were the only girls in the town?" asked Vance.

"Were they? Why, to compare the

others—that gang just panting to be kissed—to the denizens of an old ladies' home would be a cruelty to those kind old souls. Broomstraws and trucks, sad age and simpering youth—you know the sort—the worst epidemic of citronitis I ever saw, the greatest bunch of antivampires ever gotten under several roofs."

"You mentioned Miss North," suggested Vance.

"North? From now on my favorite direction! Fellow man, when I saw you this morning with that mirage of milk and honey drifting along by your side, I asked myself how I ever stay away from the high buildings. I wasn't born out here. In fact, I have been angling here for that common fish of which P. T. Barnum spoke, but a short time. So I appreciate a city woman who knows a cosmetic or two. Miss North has that knack of city women which enables one of them who might look like the late Lewis Morrison in character at three a. m. to make up like a million-dollar doll. But when she has the looks to begin with—say! I want Miss North to come over to the bazaar to-night and be kissed!"

"Strange," said Vance, "when I saw that sign I had the same desire. But I'd be breaking up more homes than a credit furniture house to let a member of the late 'Daring Darlings' get loose in that bunch of married men!"

"Vance!" cried Saunders. "Listen! When you passed me with her this morning one of the gay boys of this garden spot caught me by the arm and asked who you were. One of those weird hunches you can't explain grabbed me, and I said, 'That's a New York society girl and her uncle, stopping at the hotel for a couple of days.' I kept laughing to myself for a block about that story. Then I came to."

Saunders did not notice that Billy Vance winced at the term "uncle" and that a shade passed over his face as he questioned sharply: "Came to what?"

"I began to hope you were theatrical people, and we could pull something along that line. I inquired here, and found out. Now the men in this town wouldn't be allowed to kiss a burlesque actress; that is, in public, but how about a New York society girl, volunteering her services to help the cause and chaperoned by her uncle, a wealthy capitalist?"

"You're a showman, Saunders," said Vance, warming. "Can we put it over?"

"Sure. The clerk, a pal of mine, says nobody is really hep to who you are, and your names on the register couldn't be improved by fabrication. There's one evening paper here, run by a good-natured ivory dome I've got subsidized. All we've got to do is to get him over and pump him full, have Miss North send the proper offer of her services by me to the committee, and then let me get busy with what the town is pleased to call its sports—the fellows who get their coca nolas regular every day—and we're set."

"The terms?" asked Vance. "They are what?"

"Well, what would you expect?"

"The theatrical profession," said Vance, with dignity, "has given the vernacular a term as eminently satisfactory as expressive. I refer, sir, to fifty-fifty."

"But," reminded Saunders, "this is a benefit proposition, and the lady is a society dame who is donating her services."

"And," said Vance, "remember you mentioned the word proposition. Even in uplift circles charity is not referred to as a 'proposition.'"

"I'll explain," promised Saunders. "This is to be the first of several events to raise money for the building fund. If this kissing thing goes over, the first event will be a success, and the project will get a good start. We may take in several hundred dollars from the kiss auction, but I will have to account for it all, providing we say Miss North volunteers her services, which is all we can say, and use her. However, as a general proposition, it will be worth something to me, and I am willing to dig down in my jeans for a hundred dollars."

Vance at first objected, but after a bit consented that the "proposition" should go on a salary basis.

"We're all fixed, then," pronounced Saunders, "except the victim. How about her?"

"Well, she's been confabbing with a couple of bum comics, one of which eats garlic, all season," said Vance lightly. "So she hadn't ought to kick."

Nevertheless, at the mention of the possible effect of the "proposition" on Miss North, Vance, for the first time, began to disclose a second side of his character. He had been the manager while arranging. Now he was merely a man, ready to approach a woman with whom his relations were more or less unusual.

He stood a moment, hesitant, as some forbidding thought assailed him. Then he braced, and said: "You stay here. I'll go over to her room and sort of —well, break the ice."

He crossed the hall and tapped lightly upon a door.

"Yes?" said an impatient voice.

"Me, Miss North," said Vance, with a trace of diffidence.

"Come in!" shortly.

Vance entered and crossed the room to a slender, blond girl of a pouting type, who reclined, reading, a box of chocolates beside her, and her thin skirts dropped from elevated feet in such a way as to display shapely, silk-clad ankles.

"Say!" she challenged. "I thought you said we were going to get out of this tank."

"Dear," he began conciliatorily, "that's what I want to tell you about."

He began to brush his fingers through her yellow locks. She drew away impatiently. "Well, tell me!" she snapped.

He explained Saunders' scheme. Before she could utter the condemnation which seemed imminent he added: "We're pretty near broke, and a hundred dollars will put us back on Broadway with a few nickels in our clothes."

"You want to get me pinched!" she charged.

"Do you think I would have picked you out of that bunch we left back there in the mountains, and risked my life and future sneaking away from them, if I didn't care a lot for you, and if I wasn't intending to be pretty careful what I got you into?" asked Vance, with feeling.

"Yes, you do," she said with a pretty contempt.

"I do, and you do, too. Have you forgotten how you clung to me and said you loved me for taking care of you that night? I'm afraid you've been trying to, for the farther we've come East the less you've seemed to care. But you'll see what a good friend I am in time. What we want to do now is to get us something to buy hash and a place on the cushions. What do you say?"

"Kiss all the yahoos in this hick factory for a hundred bucks? Half of them would have asafetida on their breath!"

"If your objection is the price, I don't think we can get any more. I've had that out with him."

"What sort of a showman are you?" she pouted. "Fifty-fifty ought to be your bottom proposition. Is there to be a contract?"

"No, not a written one."

"Well, why don't you"—she made a quick, expressive gesture—"just take out our share?"

"That would be cheating him. I don't mind gyping the public a little once in a while. It's looking for it. But not a partner. That isn't show ethics."

"Where do you get that correspondence-school talk?" she asked. "Upon thinking it over, I don't see why I should make a spectacle of myself."

"Oh!" he cried, pretending a pain in the head. "And you are the girl who was working in the after show of the carnival when I engaged you to appear on the end in 'The March of the Amazons.' Next you'll be heading a reform on women's dress. Can we starve?"

"You don't need to. Some way you can get back to your wife."

He made a gesture of impatience. "Yes," he growled, "with a parrot and a cylindrical-record talking machine, with 'Honey Boy' for the latest tune. I've wasted my time on her for the past ten years, and the moment I saw you I knew it."

"You've been saying around these bum restaurants that your wife can make the best beef stew in the world."

"Bah! What's a beef stew? Something to eat and forget. What is hash, anyhow, beside a woman of fire and beauty? Must I remain a simp, going home every year to that blue-eyed, stolid piece, buying her clothes she don't appreciate and making a regular prayer every time I get her to step out to a place where they even serve beer. Must I go on doing this simply because I happen to be married to her?"

"I wonder you've stuck this long, considering how you talk to me."

He looked at her almost tearfully. "Can't you understand, Maybelle?" he said. "This isn't a bunch of cooked-over stuff I'm handing you. Listen! Has any one in the whole profession ever said to you that Billy Vance is a lady chaser? No, I guess not. They couldn't. They've got nothing on me. There's nothing to have. I've played fair with the missus, but I haven't q ite seen clear, and you're the first, the very first, as I cross my heart, that I've ever made love to like this."

"Dot's nice," she said carelessly, after the manner of a German comedian.

"Be serious, dear," he begged. "I want to marry you and make a home for you. The way you are now you're unsettled and unhappy."

"I should think you would profit by what's happened to other fellows and keep away."

"They were not the right sort of men, nor making love to you in the right sort of way. Your husband——"

"Forget him!" she ordered.

"I know you've gone through enough for him, but you haven't him now, and I want to make you a home."

"Well, how about this kiss thing?" she asked, seeming eager to talk of anything save love.

"It's up to you. Will you?"

"I might as well. I've done everything else."

"Great! Give me a little kiss, then."

"Give? I thought you said auction? Got a ten on you?"

"You rascal!" he cried. "But you will marry me when we put this over, Maybelle?"

"We'll see. Bring on your conspirator."

Vance brought Saunders and introduced them.

Saunders stood in the door, hat in hand, tall, dark, handsome. As he looked upon Miss North there shone in his eyes a light which made Billy Vance feel he had made a mistake. Her air of indifference dropped from Miss North like a discarded garment as she rose.

Billy Vance, a little lined of face, a bit gray at the sides, rather irregular of lines, stood, dubious. Then the showman instinct conquered, and he cried: "What a pair! You'll knock them off the benches! How are you on the declamatory, Saunders?"

"Just like William Jennings Sunday when I have such inspiration," responded Saunders.

"Thank you," said Miss North prettily. She was no longer the defiant ruler of Billy Vance, but a woman looking wistfully upward.

"Let's get down to business," Vance broke in on their smiles. "Have this newspaper fellow over right away. Tell him, Saunders, we need a column on the first page. I'll dig a cut of Miss North out of my trunk. It was used on the coast, you understand, when she participated in some big society affair. Late this afternoon Miss North should meet the committee, and possibly a few other ladies, so to establish the personal touch."

Saunders went to bring the editor. Billy Vance nervously paced up and down, trying to hum a tune. Then he turned to Miss North, who had

dropped back into her indifference with the departure of Saunders.

Presently Vance, fearing the reappearance of Saunders, nervously ventured: "He's a good-looking young fellow, Saunders."

"Yes," she admitted, looking at him in a curious way. "But handsome is as handsome kicks in. The woods are just spilling out these kids who want to buy you for a nut sundae."

Her voice sounded a note seeming to indicate indifference to Saunders, despite that first warmth. It seemed also to hint some preference for maturity. Perhaps, Vance felt, he had misjudged her inner heart. Encouraged, he said: "I was glad to see you weren't taken by him."

"Fellows like him are apt to be fresh," she commented. "I'd rather be with an old, established firm."

Vance felt she would have tolerated a kiss, but was prevented from an attempt by the arrival of Saunders.

The theatrical manager to the newspaper editor, with adroit suggestion and proper reserve, made known the eagerness with which his niece, the Eastern society girl, had seized upon the opportunity to help and his own indulgent spirit in aiding her. The editor, whose metropolitan sophistication was such that he always grew nervous while passing through the crowded streets of Louisville, Kentucky, hurried away, hot with the big story of the year.

"Now," suggested Saunders, "we had better fix upon a time for Miss North and me to visit the high moguls this afternoon."

"It wouldn't be proper for my niece to go without her uncle," said Vance.

"Of course it wouldn't," said the "niece," giving "uncle" a look which made him wish he had snatched the kiss. They fixed an hour late in the afternoon, and Saunders withdrew, pleading business. Miss North and Vance had the best lunch in three days, and then the lady excused herself, saying she would take a nap to brace herself for the evening.

The few calls paid by the trio late that afternoon indicated the extent to which the sensational developments regarding the bazaar had spread. Everywhere in the first homes of the town they found women with visible excitement dropping the evening paper to welcome them. Vance, stiff as in the days when he did the English lord, while acting as manager of a repertoire company; Saunders, enthusiastic and assuring, and Miss North, with the proper degree of sweet condescension, went over tellingly.

To repeated invitations to dinner she rippled: "Really, I should love to. But a number of letters regarding important charities in the East must be dictated before I come to you to-night."

At the door of her room, as she withdrew to prepare for dinner, Vance squeezed her hand and murmured soulfully: "My, you did lay it over this afternoon. You're just finding your speed! With you as leading woman, and me as manager, we'll make 'em stand up on their seats and beg."

"Don't wind yourself, Bill," she warbled, once more resisting.

"If I could only make you see——" he began.

"Cut the love scenes. Back to the beef stew!" she teased.

"I'm off beef stew for life!" he cried. "Forgive me for dragging you into this. Once we get back, I'll show you how I appreciate you."

"Let's go on with the show," she tantalized, leaving him and casting backward a smile half of encouragement, half of disappointment.

"My batting average is going up," mused Vance in his room. "To-morrow she will like me better and there will be a day when we will have words with a minister."

The plotting trio made final arrangements for the evening at dinner.

The auditorium, which they sought about eight o'clock, was a large building in which were held most of the town's social functions. It glowed with lights and was beautifully decorated and filled with perhaps two hundred of those who would have been

listed had the place possessed a blue book.

The triumphant procession of Miss North through the receiving line, and from group to group, lent an intoxication which mentally lifted the townspeople to some Fifth Avenue salon. They were glorified by the actual presence of one of America's first women, a creature of the sort with whose pictures country editors garnish their papers, an exalted being loved the more because unknown.

"A warm house out front," suggested Miss North to Vance.

"Hush!" he warned. "Saunders is getting ready to put you on."

The speech Saunders made was inspired by more than hope of monetary gain. He was brazen in describing the beauty of Miss North and eloquent in telling of her magnanimity and concern for clubwomen everywhere.

"By chance in your part of the world," he said, "for she is seldom in the Middle West, Miss North, one of America's most charming débutantes, stands before you this evening, offering those rarest of rewards, her kisses. This she will do for that great class of her sisters, the clubwomen."

"The same gang that ran me out of Decatur when I was there with the carnival," whispered Maybelle to Vance.

"Now, gentlemen," Saunders was crying, "you of the flower of this fair city, what will you bid for the first kiss from the lips of this famous American beauty?"

Essentials of this tale do not deal with the suppressed eagerness with which men bald and bushy came forward, nervous under the eye of wife and sweetheart; nor the speed at which the grouchy, old eagle squeezers dropped lucre at the shrine of beauty; nor yet with the events which resulted for months after the riot. The statement that the auction, with Miss North as kissee, went over like the sale of liquor the last night before a town becomes dry is not exaggerated.

This tale concerns itself with the love of Vance for Miss North and their efforts to get back to the city of too many press agents. To that end be it stated that when it was all over, including the shouting, Billy Vance, counting in one of the anterooms, discovered the auction had netted five hundred dollars.

"Five hundred simoles," said Vance to Miss North, who was sitting near by, "and he offers us a hundred."

Saunders was in his office across the auditorium, counting the proceeds of other minor events.

"Yes," she commented, "but what can we do?"

"We'll use strategy to get our fifty-fifty," he answered. "It's fair in the show business, and the world will tell you we were the show."

"Well, what's the program?"

Vance bent across the table, and said in a low voice: "You go over and see Saunders. Tell him we've made a lot more than he had expected, and use your woman's ways on him to persuade him he ought to give us half. I'll come over to back you up, if you can't make the ripple."

She started away, and Vance sat looking at the piles of silver and paper with happy relief. Here was the problem solved, and a chance for more than a lone hundred. He pictured Broadway of a sunny morning and himself, immaculate in Palm Beach toggery, starting forth to arrange a new season, a season which would put him very much on the map, a season with a new queen of the "girls and music time."

He dreamed so pleasantly that he did not notice time slipping by. Then he heard a sort of gasping sigh, and, turning, saw Miss North. There was a wild look in her eye, and she half turned as if expecting pursuit.

"What——" he stammered.

"Oh——" she started, and then weakly fell against the door casement. He was beside her, and she fell upon his shoulder, gripping him tight as if afraid.

"Dearie, what's the matter?" he comforted.

"He—he——" She fell into a chair, her breast heaving, her eyes burning with terror. "When I spoke to him about 'fifty-fifty' he said—things—that ——"

"The crook!" shouted Vance, on his way into the hall.

"No"—clinging to him—"that won't help. Let's beat him at his own game. He wants to rob us. You've got the money. Why not——"

She came close and whispered in Vance's ear, her arm clinging about him.

"You're mine!" breathed the showman, this sentiment overshadowing his attention to her proposal. "Yes, you bet we will! He can't insult my little girl and get away with it."

She drew out of his arms and said: "He'll be over in a minute. I must get out the side way. What'll you tell him?"

"I'll have something. Here's the money. Hold tight to it. Just a moment—for fear we might miss connections. I'll peel off a fifty. That'll do me. You're the treasurer, sweetheart."

"The traction car is the first thing out; it leaves in five minutes," she said. "Where will I meet you?"

"In the station at Collinsville," he said, after a moment's thought. "The main line to New York goes through there, with a train just before midnight. Somehow I'll ditch Saunders. Then I'll come over on the next traction car, meet you at the station, we'll give Saundy the merry guffaw, and, ho, for a dive under the North River."

"Can we do it?" she wondered.

"We've got to. Kiss me—now hurry! Remember, I'll be over on the next traction, and meet you in the station. Good-by!"

He sat, carefully planning, for five minutes by his watch. When he felt Maybelle was safe on the traction car he rose and crossed the hall to the office of Saunders.

"Why," he began in a surprised tone as he entered, "I thought Miss North ——" Saunders gave back the question in his look. Vance started again in low, confidential tones: "You didn't treat her right, Saunders. But she's young and pretty, and I know you didn't mean any harm. So when she complained I just smoothed it over, and sent her back to you with the money."

Saunders came up to the lure finely.

"With the money?" he cried.

"Yes." Then, appearing to have the situation dawn upon him, Vance hurried on: "She threatened to beat it with the dough, but I laughed. She said she'd done all the hard work, but I kidded her and told her to go along. I didn't think there was a chance——"

"You're a bum thinker," cried Saunders, springing up.

"The car——" started Vance.

Saunders consulted his watch. "It's gone now," he finished. "This is a thing we can't report to the police. Too much fuss could come out of it. One of us must be on that next car and head her off in Collinsville. That's our only chance for the kale."

"After the way she raved over what you said to her, you wouldn't have a chance to make her listen," said Vance. "She's pretty strong for me, so I'm the one to go after her."

Saunders vigorously opposed this. Argument followed, but finally the promoter agreed to allow the manager to go after the girl and the money. "You can't get back to-night," he said. "The next car over is the last. If you don't mind, I'll go to the hotel, for I'm dead tired."

They walked to the hotel. Saunders got his key—it now appeared he was making this his home—bade his associate broker in kisses good night, and went upstairs.

Vance stretched out in an easy-chair to dream some more. The ease with which he had disposed of Saunders was a golden cap to the sheaf of pretty visions.

Something in his subconscious mind grasped the whine of a car wheel a block away. He started, thinking his car was coming in. "What car is that?" he asked the clerk sharply.

"The last one to Collinsville," said that party sleepily.

"What!" cried Vance. "I thought the one which left about fifteen minutes ago, at eleven o'clock, was next to the last one."

"One don't leave at eleven o'clock," said the clerk dogmatically. "That was the last. It left at eleven-fifteen."

"How does it connect at Collinsville with the New York flyer?"

"Gets there eighteen minutes ahead of it."

"Was that my last chance to get over to-night?"

"You might take a taxi," suggested the clerk. "The road's good, and it's only twenty-five miles. You'd have close to an hour to run it in."

"I've got to get over to-night," said Vance, "or——" He looked apprehensively toward the stairs up which Saunders had disappeared.

"What's that?" ventured the clerk.

"Order the taxi," said Vance, and checked out hurriedly for himself and Miss North. In the machine, he told the chauffeur: "Make the New York flyer at Collinsville and you get an extra five."

The interurban car had not been at Collinsville five minutes before the taxi whirled in. The chauffeur collected his bonus, and Vance glanced around the station. Nobody was there who interested him.

"Have you seen a young lady"—he described her to the agent—"she would be asking about the time of the New York flyer."

"Was she with a sort of a—well—good-looking fellow?" asked the agent.

"You saw her," cried Vance, his eyes bulging. "Was she?"

"It looked that way to me," confessed the agent.

"Where are they?" Vance gasped.

"Over in the restaurant," the agent pointed. "You have ten minutes to train time."

Vance reconnoitered outside the restaurant. There was a partition down the middle, dividing the lunch counter from a line of tables. Vance chose the counter side, and entered. His back to the partition, he ordered a cup of coffee.

As a waiter passed, Vance gave him a quarter and said: "See that good-looking dame over there with the fellow? Let me know when they move." Then he turned his back again to the partition, and, while waiting for the sinkers to go with his coffee, mechanically pored over a paper which happened to be lying on the counter.

A New York date line is the most fascinating thing in the world to the New Yorker abroad in the lesser regions of the world. That is why, in the midst of his anguish, Vance started to read. At first his interest was merely casual. But a moment later he read with intense absorption. His fingers clutched the paper and drew it nearer. Beneath black headlines he saw:

> One man has been killed and one wounded in the week since Tony Blagachi, famous gunman, escaped from Sing Sing prison. The wounded man reveals that both were charged by Blagachi with attentions to Mrs. Blagachi during his prison term. Blagachi, who is insanely jealous, before his present conviction wounded three men for this reason. Although he has been reported seen around the home of his wife several times in the past week, the police admit their inability to catch him, and further trouble is expected.

"Mister," said the waiter, "the fellow and the girl are leaving."

"All right," said Vance, plowing into further details.

"Say," persisted the waiter, trying to nurse another tip, "she looked like Theda Bara, only thinner. Who is she?"

"Her *right* name," imparted Vance, "is Mrs. Tony Blagachi. She and Mr. Saunders are welcome to their reception in New York. I was old and slow enough to swallow that lie about the car, to be shook down for the roll, and to hold the bag at the front door of the hotel. But Tony is a young man, and quick on the trigger."

"New York flyer—— N' York!" bawled a voice in the door.

"No," said Vance decisively. "Not to-night. To-morrow me and my little fifty bucks will climb aboard. Boy, this coffee—and events—has kind of made me hungry. Fix me up a nice beef stew!"

THE GIRL THAT MARRIED ANOTHER MAN

(A sailor chantey ballad, to be sung at the halyards)

OH, it's easy come, and it's easy go,
With most of the little girls I know—
Haul away, my bullies!
And when you come, and when you part,
They never take it deep to heart;
Haul away, my bullies!

Oh, there was Martha, at Liverpool,
Who never heard of the Golden Rule—
Haul away, my bullies!
And there was Gunga, the temple girl,
And Minnie and Marie and Pearl—
Haul away, my bullies!
In Rotterdam, Marseilles, Orleans—
And each of 'em taught me what love means;
Haul away, my bullies!

But there is a girl that stands apart,
I can never get her out o' my heart—
Haul away, my bullies!
Oh, I try to forget, but I never can,
The girl that married another man—
Haul away, my bullies!

HARRY KEMP.

JUST WHAT ARE
? "The Psychomancers" ?

Holman Day in the next POPULAR, out March 20th, tells all about them in the book-length novel—a mystery story of a new dimension

Castle Innis

By Henry de Vere Stacpoole

Author of "The Gold Trail," "In His Place," Etc.

Do you believe in ghosts? No? Neither did this hard-headed chap, but he had an adventure in the realm of the disembodied that he has never been able to explain

IRELAND is perhaps the most conservative country on earth. She clings to her past as she clings to her virtue, and she would exchange any day a new town hall or drainage system for an old misery or grievance to pet and dandle, supposing that such a thing could be unearthed.

Here one may still believe in haunted houses without discredit—and rent them without disappointment, sure of a banshee if nothing else, and here, a few years ago, the Reverend Arthur Ridgwell Dilnott, rector of Pebwell, Cambridgeshire, came for the hunting as a guest of Mr. Michael Blake, whose estate lies in the top horn of Tipperary, not a hundred miles from Loch Derg.

Dilnott did not believe in ghosts. He was a full-blooded parson of the old type, riding fourteen stone, fond of good port, a good dinner, a good cigar, and a hand at whist; beloved by his parishioners. Brother parsons called him pig-headed. He was, at all events, in his beliefs and disbeliefs. He did not believe in ghosts, but he believed in demons and evil spirits, holding, however, that these latter belonged to a past day, though capable, perhaps, still of earthly manifestations.

Riding to the meet this morning with Michael Blake, the Round House on the Arranakilty Road brought his mind in clash with the mind of his host, a man steadfast in opinion as himself.

"That's where old Micky Doolan was killed in '61," said Blake. "He was a piper, blind as a bat, and he used to sit there the day long on a stool under that wall, with his long pipes under his arm, playing away whether folks were passing or not. You'd hear the droning of the pipes at the turn of the road, and there he'd be sitting, not asking for a copper or minding you, just playing away to himself. My father gave him many a shilling, and the poor folk, specially on market days, weren't behind hand. They said he was rich and carried all his money in gold in his pocket, and one evening, close on dusk, two fellows crept up on him from behind the wall and killed him for his money. That was on the fifth of December, and every fifth of December since then there he sits, playing his pipes from dusk till dawn, so that not a soul from Arranakilty to Cloyne will use the road."

"You mean to say his ghost sits there?"

"And what else would be sitting there?"

"You don't believe that nonsense *surely*."

"Don't believe it?" said Blake. "And why shouldn't I believe it? Half the countryside has heard him."

"But there are no such things as ghosts—the manifestations have been proved over and over again to be fraudulent as far as apparitional appearances, the result of mediumistic influence, are concerned, illusory as to the rest. Rats and neurotic women and practical jokers; subtract those factors and the whole theory of haunted houses falls to the ground."

"I tell you there *are* ghosts," replied Blake, and then the argument began getting so acute that as they rode into

the main street of Arranakilty, Dilnott was saying:

"I don't wish to quarrel with you, my dear fellow; let us leave the subject. It is simply repugnant to common sense."

That is the sort of man Dilnott was.

Blake laughed, but he said no more. The street was crowded with all sorts and conditions of people drawn to the "meet of the houn's," several pink coats the worse for weather showed up in front of the Dog and Badger Inn, and here, now, from the direction of Clogher, came Hennessy, the master, the hounds, and the hunt servants, jigging along against the dull gray background of the road, greeted and greeting all and sundry.

Blake introduced Dilnott to the master, who declared his intention of first drawing Boyles Wood, and presently, on the stroke of ten, the hunt pressed back along the Clogher Road, passed through a gate, and entered a stretch of waste land, where, across a rise of the ground, a clump of firs and larches showed, cutting the sky line a quarter of a mile away.

It was a dark, gray, luminous morning; weather that in England would have indicated rain before noon. But there would be no rain, for the hills were set away in the distance, hills across which the wind was blowing, warm and scented from leagues of heather and bog land.

There was a fox in Boyles Wood, and he broke cover to the west like a red streak among the bushes and broken land. Dilnott, who was mounted on Rat Trap, a fiddle-headed brute that carried him like a feather, brooked no interference with a straight line, and was wound up by nature to go all day, found himself at the end of the first five minutes facing a stone wall; then it was behind him, Rat Trap taking it as a cat takes a larder window sill, and before him a hillside, falling to a river in spate, shallow and broad by a mercy.

Across the river, a rise took him to a hog's back along which the hounds were streaming straight as if along a ruled line, over humps and dips in the teeth of the wind, and with a view of all Tipperary from Loch Derg to Kings County on either side. Then another valley set with pines and winter-stripped trees and echoing to the tune of hounds and horn gave them check for a moment, only to pass them on across a bridge and another spating river and by a village where cocks were crowing and chimneys smoking, but not a soul in sight; to a waste land, where the hounds, dumb and flowing like hounds in a dream, led them still in the teeth of the wind; killing at last, not a hundred yards from the covert, that in another hundred seconds would have swallowed the tail of the good red fox.

"Thirty minutes from the wood," said Hennessy, looking at his watch.

Dilnott, tipping forward, ran his hand over the neck of Rat Trap, unblown and fresh almost as at the start. Thirty minutes of real life had brought fresh blood to his cheeks and youthened him by a full ten years, and the blowing wind had so banked down his prejudices that had you said the word "ghosts" to him he might have resented it without snapping your head off.

But ghosts were as far from his mind at this moment as from the minds of Hennessy or Michael Blake. Hennessy, after a look round, determined to draw Barrington Scrub a mile away over the moorland. They drew it blank, passed on to a big spinny a couple of miles away in the direction of Silvermines, and here the hounds started a fox, running into him and killing him two miles away and right on the edge of a wood by the road to Silvermines.

It was now one o'clock, and along the road appeared Rafferty, Blake's groom, with two fresh horses. Dilnott creaked out of his saddle, devoured the sandwiches he had brought with him, and consumed half a flask of sherry; then mounted the Cat, half sister to Rat Trap, a strawberry roan with a fleering eye and uncertain manner.

"Go gentle with her, sir," said Raf-

ferty. "Once she gets warm, you can handle her like butter, but till she's taken her first fence don't lay whip or spur to her or she'll have you off and rowl on you."

It was three o'clock, and Dilnott was handling her like butter across a country of fields and stone walls when, clapping spurs to her, the stone wall before him wheeled to the right, then came a sickening slither, and he was seeing stars, with the Cat trying to "rowl" on him.

He had managed to disengage himself, however, and when he had finished stargazing and feeling around for broken bones, he got on his feet, recaptured his mount, led her through a gate onto the road, and got into the saddle.

The hunt had vanished. The faint toot of horn through the dull gray weather came from away toward Silvermines, but without awakening any echo in his heart. He had done enough hunting for one day. When one is over forty-five a cropper toward the end of the day is a different thing from a cropper at the start. Dilnott found himself thinking of a hot bath, followed by a cigarette and a comfortable armchair and just forty winks before dinner time.

Mounting the Cat, by a miracle unhurt and now subdued and in her right mind, he turned from the direction of Silvermines. A mile along the road, he met in with an old man driving a donkey cart. This individual was deaf, but after a while and by dint of shouting came to understand his questioner.

"Castle Blake, did you say, sor? It's right forenint you, a matter of twelve miles and a bit as the crow flies and eleven by the road. What's that you say, sir? I'm hard of hearin'. There ain't no cows. I was sayin' crows. Keep ahead sthrait as an arra, and you'll see the top of it poppin' up beyant the trees of Gallows Wood; you can't make no mistake."

Dilnott resumed his way. Five miles on, a lady feeding hens before a cabin gave him more information.

"D'you mane Mr. Michael Blake's, sor? Why, it's nigh into Kings County from here; it's maybe siventeen miles you'll have to go. When you get to the crossroads take the way to Castle Down; keep sthrait ahead till you fetch the crossroads; you can't make no mistake."

Dilnott resumed his way till he came to a place where the road forked. There were no signposts, and the two ways were equal in breadth. He uttered no pious ejaculation. Leaving the matter, with loose rein, to the instinct of the Cat, that animal selected the right-hand way, brought him to a crossroad with no signpost, and, being left again to instinct, began to browse on stray tufts of grass and snatch sustenance from the hedgerows.

Meanwhile dusk was falling and the wind was rising and the trees whispering to the wind. Half an hour later, in full dark, lit occasionally by a glimpse of moon peeping through the broken clouds, Dilnott was riding along a road that Gustave Doré would have loved, looking no longer for Castle Blake, but for anything with a roof on it that would give him a light, the sight of a human face, and even a boiled potato.

He was faint from hunger—faint, yet ravenous. Roast legs of mutton flanked by decanters of port rose before him as he rode. Boiled turkeys and celery sauce, hams, York hams, brown and crumbed over. Larks on toast. So, in the desert, men conjure up date palms and shadowy wells, and now, just as though his hunger had conjured it up, Dilnott, waking from his food musings, became aware of the lights of a big house through the trees on the left of the road, and, on the wind setting from there, a smell recalling roast pheasant hung just to the right moment. More, it recalled bread sauce and a salad of Pebworth tomatoes sliced in vinegar and oil.

The constructive imagination of the man was adding a dish of Arran Chief potatoes bursting in snow through their brown jackets when a wide-open gateway and a drive leading to the house took his eye lit by a glimpse of the

moon. He turned the Cat into the drive, and rode up it, sure of the one thing a stranger may be sure of in Ireland—a warm reception and a real and concrete hospitality, including in its form the best bed and the biggest potato.

The door of the great house was open, casting lamplight on the drive and on a carriage that had just set down a gentleman in a cloak who was mounting the steps. Two grooms in half livery were cracking jokes with the driver of the carriage. One of these ran to take the newcomer's horse. Dilnott slipped from the saddle and gave him the reins.

"What house is this?" asked he.

"Castle Innis, sir, and you're only just in time, for they be just goin' in to dinner."

"Who's your master? I'm staying at Castle Blake and have lost my way."

"Sir Patrick Kinsella's the master here, sir, and glad he'll be to see you."

"Thanks," said Dilnott. He went up the steps and entered a big hall. The hall was paneled with oak, black as ebony with age, hung with suits of armor, and lit by a galaxy of candles extraordinarily beautiful in their number and effect amid that setting of gloom and armor and oak.

Down the broad staircase were coming the guests; a troop of men, led by a stout gentleman of fifty or so in a red coat, with a face to match, joking and laughing as he came with the fellows behind him, and evidently gone in liquor. Not far gone, but gone—joyous, exuberant, and, clapping eyes on Dilnott when he was almost up with him, almost embracive.

"I have lost my way," said Dilnott, "and though I do not wish to intrude ——"

But the great Kinsella, not even listening, with his arm half round him, swept him along, still bandying gibes with the fellows behind, into a huge room where a table was set out that would have seated forty.

Hungry as Dilnott had been and was, he would have thought twice before entering that house, seeing the condition of its occupants. Fond enough of his half bottle of port, he had a very great horror of intoxication in any form, even the mildest, and, seated now at the left of his host, who occupied the head of the table, he could not but perceive the condition of the men about him. The noise was terrific, and now servants were flying in every direction, clapping down plates in front of the guests—plates that were empty.

Now, opposite Dilnott and on the right of the host, sat an evil-looking, long-visaged man with a patch covering half of his face. Behind the host and above the fireplace was hung a big mirror with a slight tilt forward. Dilnott, glancing by chance at this mirror, was astonished and horrified to see in it the reflection of a skull, looking in the surrounding gloom and glow like a picture by Holbein.

The candlelight lit it to perfection, and, moreover, demonstrated the monstrous fact that it was moving, tilting from side to side, rotating slightly, while the movements of the lower jawbone caught in profile could be plainly seen.

Suddenly, and corresponding to a burst of laughter from the man with the patch on his face, the thing tilted back and the lower jaw fell.

Then Dilnott knew that it was the true reflection of his vis-à-vis.

He sprang to his feet and made the sign of the cross.

The Cat stumbled, nearly unseating him, and he awoke. He had never dismounted; he had entered no house. Musing on York hams and roast pheasant Sleep had sandbagged him and Fantasy had introduced him into that most extraordinary society. It was a nightmare, arising from the home of nightmares—the stomach.

Horse hoofs and a voice behind made him turn. It was Blake, mud to the eyes, but happy.

Dilnott told of his cropper and how he had fallen out of the run, and as they rode on he began to tell of his further adventures.

"I must have fallen asleep for a

moment," said he, "and I had a most extraordinary dream."

"And what was the dream?" asked Blake.

"Well, it was this way," began the other. Then he stopped. They had reached a gateway clearly shown by the moonlight through the thinning clouds. It was the gateway he had entered in his dream, and there lay the avenue up which he had ridden.

He reined in.

"Where does that lead to?" asked he.

"Castle Innis," said Blake. "Look, you can see the ruins through the trees. It was burned out in the thirties, set fire to one night old Pat Kinsella was having one of his jamborees. The whole crowd were burned, and a good riddance. I've had the story often from my father. Kinsella and Billy Knox, who was his chief henchman in all sorts of wickedness, and Black French and Satan Moriarty—and a score of others—only three of the lot were sober enough to escape."

"What sort of man was Kinsella?"

"A huge, big chap riding fifteen stone. He was the master of the hounds—but he couldn't master the whisky bottle."

"And Knox?"

"Oh, Knox was a devil. My grandfather laid him out once for maltreating a horse; half his face was afflicted with some disease or another, so he had to wear a patch to cover it, and he had a squint eye and an impediment in his speech, and with all that he was a great man after the girls—there's no knowing what girls will take to. Well, what was this dream you were telling me of?"

"I've clean forgot it," said Dilnott.

A good raconteur, tingling and burning to tell, his mouth was stopped by Micky Doolan, the blind piper of the Round House.

A year later, unburdening himself of the story to me, he began: "Now I'll tell you one of the strangest *coincidences* you ever heard of."

That is the sort of man Dilnott was.

GOOD-NATURED TO THE LAST

SOLDIERS from the Canadian Northwest have made a reputation for themselves in the European trenches because of their indifference to the niceties of army "form." Obsessed with the idea that the only important thing in the world is to shoot a bullet or jab a bayonet through a "Boche," they put in precious little time learning the frills and trimmings of what may be called the social side of military discipline.

One of these embattled democrats, a private, was in London on a short leave of absence from France. Walking along the street one morning, he passed a British colonel without saluting him. The officer, amazed and outraged, called him back and gave him a verbal dressing down which, according to all rules and regulations, should have made the husky private cringe in the dust.

He did look a little crestfallen until the colonel, trying to find some possible excuse for the man's breach of discipline, barked at him:

"Do you drink?"

At that a light came to the face of the big boy from the Northwest woods.

"Well," he said, ignoring the abuse he had just received, "I don't mind splitting a bottle of ale with you, colonel, old top."

A Chat With You

DO you know any one who believes that we can talk with the spirits of the dead? Time was, not so long ago, when such a man was regarded as a hopeless crank, but the times are changing.

The war has set in motion new currents of thought. Many of the most notable names in science and letters are listed among those who believe in some sort of communication between the seen and the unseen world—Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Maeterlinck, the Belgian poet, our own William James, first of all modern teachers of psychology, and a host of others. It is no longer so fashionable to scoff at the man who thinks that some day we may draw aside the blue veil that separates the brown earth from a world not realized.

AFTER all, it was not so many years ago that the man who thought he could fly was looked upon as a harmless lunatic. Darius Green, whose greatest achievement was to fall off the roof of his barn, was the classic type of the aviator. Then, not quite so long ago, came scientists like Langley and Lilienthal to interest themselves in the problem of flight, and finally Orville and Wilbur Wright appear, and with resistless American ingenuity and perseverance at last hammer the way through to the solution of the problem. Now, there is scarcely any one who has not heard that strange aërial reverberation and looked up to see the winged form high up in the blue sky, and to thrill at the thought that there is a man up there driving through those cool, far reaches in which we have all longed to soar.

LOOKING back it seems inevitable. Since the days of Icarus, the desire to fly was in the human spirit. It was inextinguishable. Defeat and disaster could not blot it out. It sprang up again and again, and that fact alone seemed to point to its final triumph. The desire to know what happens to the human spirit after death is even stronger and more powerful. All the great religions have made their strongest appeal in their answer to this question. We will all die. The river carries everything before it. Some move fast and some slowly, but all inevitably toward that valley of shadows beyond which we cannot see. Will it be a happy hunting ground, the Elysian Fields, Valhalla, or the heaven of golden crowns and sounding harps—or will it be Oblivion? We all want to know, and the scientists, who have bit by bit conquered so much through the centuries, are now attacking the citadel of the final secret.

IF what we have just been talking about interests you at all, we want you especially to read the new novel by

Holman Day, "The Psychomancers," which appears complete in the next issue of THE POPULAR. Don't think that it is an argument for or against spiritualism. It is first of all a strange, absorbing, and arresting story. It is a tale of the devious ways of the fake spiritualist as well as the performance of the genuine believer in the psychic. It is a moving and stirring drama of action and strongly drawn characters. It is the kind of story that sets one thinking and asking himself questions. A number of years have passed since the novels of this writer began appearing regularly in THE POPULAR. The first, if you remember, was "The Red Lane." "Sandlocked" and "Yankee Grit" were two others. They have all been different, all characterized by the marked originality and vigor that goes into everything that Day writes. "The Psychomancers" is one of the best and most original. Holman Day has won a place as the foremost writer of tales of action and adventure in New England to-day. We are glad to think that THE POPULAR has helped him to do it.

CLYDE BRUCKMAN is already well known as a writer of tales of sport and athletics. Life in one of the training camps has a good deal of the athletic element in it. Bruckman is now at work on a series of training-camp stories. The first of them, "Not According to Hoyle," will appear in the next issue. Also in the same issue there is a gripping drama of the North, "Snow-blind," by Theodore Seixas Solomons, and, by way of a climatic change, another of Beatrice Grimshaw's colorful tales of the South Seas. In "Yonder in Yokohama," Clarence Cullen takes us to Japan, and in the third installment of "The Arbiters" Rowland gives us a view of the almost unknown and medieval side of Europe. "The Brutality of Banker McKnight" in the same issue is a tale of American business as it is now in New York or any other American city, and "The Turquoise Horse," by H. H. Knibbs, takes us into a sacred khiva of the Navahos in the Southwest. "White Slackers," by Major Evans, who is a good soldier as well as a fine writer, and now on active service in the marines, is a tale of his own U. S. marines, who claim with good justification to be the busiest and best-drilled organization in the regular army.

TO go back for a moment to the unseen world, we think there is another state of existence, different from that of the spirits and different from the world we live in most of the time. All of us have been there. It is a delightful place. In it a man may go through all the hardships of mountains and polar snows and tropical jungles, without pain or hurt. He may drink wine that leaves no headache, associate with desperate criminals and remain safe, lead forlorn hopes and always win —go wherever and soever his fancy listeth. We call it the world of fancy and the world of imagination. We try hard to show you the open door to it every two weeks in THE POPULAR.

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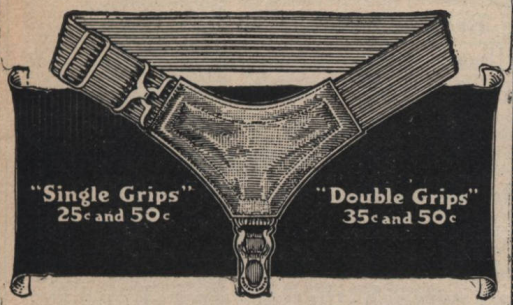

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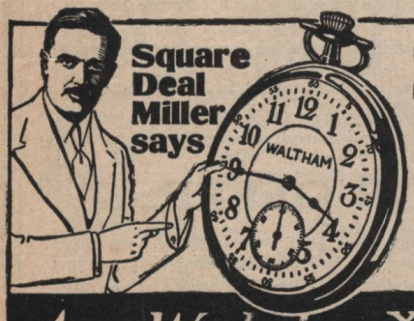

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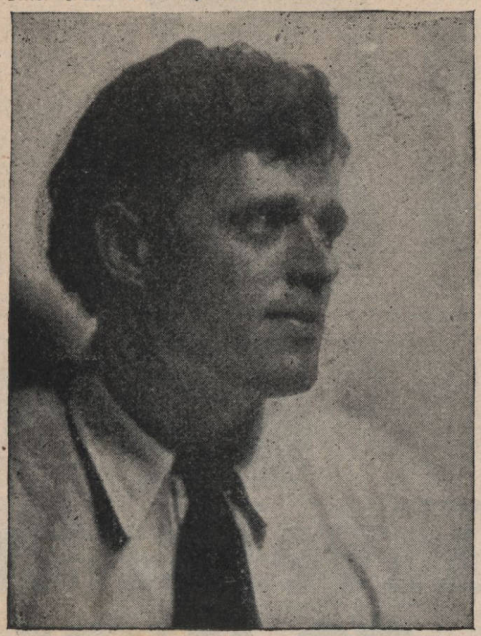

He Smashed a Dream

OUT of a disillusioned life Jack London clung to his dream of the Brotherhood of Man. Once the brilliant and picturesque leader of the American Socialist Party, he ruthlessly cut off the associations of a lifetime and left the party when his comrades failed to divine the life-battle of Democracy in the shambles of Europe. It is given to few of us to feel the heart wrench that act cost London. But he was running true to form.

As a newsboy, coast pirate, sailor, he was boy and man, without fear. His last act of matchless intellectual fearlessness proved the strain of the thoroughbred. From the sand lots of San Francisco to a first line writer of America, London took his lickings standing up and faced the world unafraid. As long as men's hearts are young and blood runs warm London's stories will be read. Through every line of his writings is the heroic strain.

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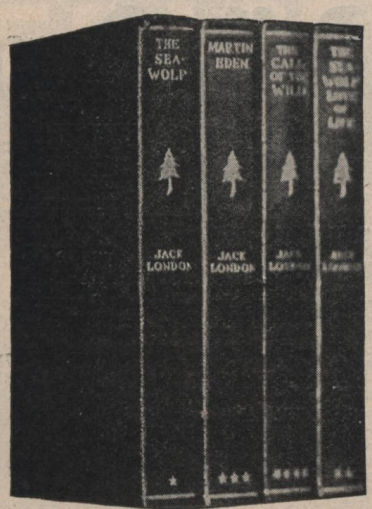

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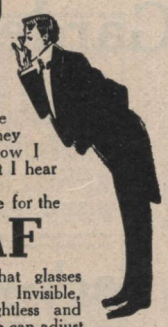

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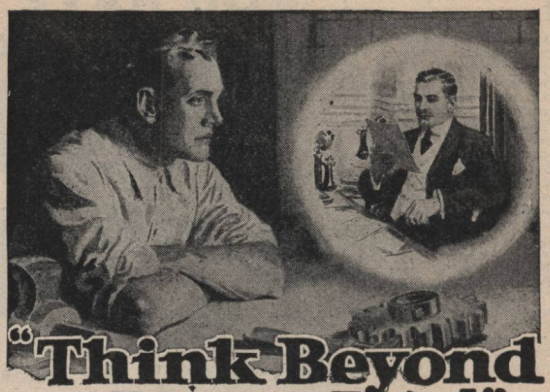

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"There is not a man in power at the Bethlehem Steel Works today," says Charles M. Schwab, in the American Magazine, "who did not begin at the bottom and work his way up. Eight years ago Eugene Grace was switching engines. His ability to *out-think* his job, coupled with his sterling integrity, lifted him to the presidency of our corporation. Last year he earned more than a million dollars. . . . . Jimmie Ward, one of our vice-presidents, used to be a stenographer. The fifteen men in charge of the plants were selected, not because of some startling stroke of genius, but because day in and day out, they were *thinking beyond their jobs.*"

If you want to be somebody, to climb to a position of responsibility, *get ready for it.* Do what you are doing *now* better than the men beside you, and *train for the job ahead.* You can do it—in spare time—through the International Correspondence Schools.

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- ☐ STATIONARY ENGINEER
- ☐ Marine Engineer
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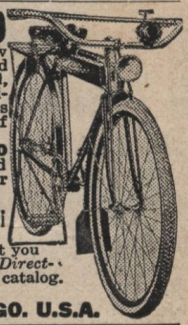

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Tobacco Habit Banished In 48 to 72 Hours

Immediate Results

Trying to quit the tobacco habit unaided is a losing fight against heavy odds, and means a serious shock to your nervous system. So don't try it! Make the tobacco habit quit you. It will quit you if you will just take **Tobacco Redeemer** according to directions.

It doesn't make a particle of difference whether you've been a user of tobacco for a single month or 50 years, or how much you use, or in what form you use it. Whether you smoke cigars, cigarettes, pipe, chew plug or fine cut or use snuff—**Tobacco Redeemer** will positively remove all craving for tobacco in any form in from 48 to 72 hours. Your tobacco craving will begin to decrease after the very first dose—there's no long waiting for results.

Tobacco Redeemer contains no habit-forming drugs of any kind and is the most marvelously quick, absolutely scientific and thoroughly reliable remedy for the tobacco habit.

Not a Substitute

Tobacco Redeemer is in no sense a substitute for tobacco, but is a radical, efficient treatment. After finishing the treatment you have absolutely no desire to use tobacco again or to continue the use of the remedy. It quiets the nerves, and will make you feel better in every way. If you really want to quit the tobacco habit—get rid of it so completely that when you see others using it, it will not awaken the slightest desire in you—you should at once begin a course of **Tobacco Redeemer** treatment for the habit.

Results Absolutely Guaranteed

A single trial will convince the most skeptical. Our legal, binding, money-back guarantee goes with each full treatment. If **Tobacco Redeemer** fails to banish the tobacco habit when taken according to the plain and easy directions, your money will be cheerfully refunded upon demand.

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If you're a slave of the tobacco habit and want to find a sure, quick way of quitting "for keeps" you owe it to yourself and to your family to mail the coupon below or send your name and address on a postal and receive our **free** booklet on the deadly effect of tobacco on the human system, and positive proof that **Tobacco Redeemer** will quickly free you from the habit.

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Sarah Bernhardt "THE DIVINE SARAH"

The World's Most Noted Actress Sends Nuxated Iron

To the French Soldiers to Help Give Them Strength, Power and Endurance

General Gibson Says It Should Be Used By Every Soldier Who Goes To The Front—That He Himself Is Hale And Hearty In His 91st Year, He Attributes Largely To His Recent Use of Nuxated Iron—

Dr. H. B. Vail, formerly Physician in the Baltimore Hospital, Former Health Commissioner Wm. R. Kerr and others give valuable advice and information on the use of Nuxated Iron as a tonic, strength and blood builder.

"What every soldier most needs is tremendous 'stay there' strength, power and endurance, with nerves of steel and blood of iron. To produce this result, there is nothing in my experience which I have found so valuable as organic iron—Nuxated Iron," says Dr. H. B. Vail, formerly Physician in the Baltimore Hospital and a Medical Examiner. "A large quantity of this valuable product was sent to the French soldiers by Mme. Sarah Bernhardt. I took Nuxated Iron myself to build me up after a serious case of nervous exhaustion. The effects were apparent after a few days, and within three weeks it had virtually revitalized my whole system and put me in a superb physical condition.

"If General Gibson's advice were followed and every soldier who goes to the front carried a package of Nuxated Iron in his kit, I am sure that the men would not only be better, stronger fighters, but that we would have far less sickness in the Army and much less work for the Red Cross and Army Hospitals to do. Time and again I have prescribed organic iron—Nuxated Iron—and surprised patients at the rapidity with which the weakness and general debility were replaced by a renewed feeling of strength and vitality."

General Horatio Gates Gibson says Nuxated Iron has brought back to him in good measure that old buoyancy and energy that filled his veins in 1847, when he made his triumphant entry with General Scott into the City of Mexico, and that he attributes the fact that he is hale and hearty in his 91st year, after an active military life with service in both the Mexican and Civil Wars largely to his recent use of this wonderful product.

Another remarkable case is that of General David Stuart Gordon, noted Indian fighter and hero of the battle of Gettysburg. General Gordon says: "When I became badly run down this year, I found myself totally without the physical power to 'come back' as I had done in my younger days. I tried different 'so-called tonics' without feeling any better, but finally I heard of how physicians were widely recommending organic iron to renew red blood and rebuild strength in worn-out bodies. As a result, I started taking Nuxated Iron, and within a month it had roused my weakened vital forces and made me feel strong again, giving me an endurance such as I never hoped to again possess."

Former Health Commissioner of Chicago Wm. R. Kerr said: "As Health Commissioner of the City of Chicago, I was importuned many times to recommend different medicines, mineral waters, etc. Never yet have I gone on record as favoring any particular remedy. But in the case of Nuxated Iron, I feel an exception should be made to the rule. From my own experience with it, I feel that it is such a valuable remedy that it ought to be used in every hospital and prescribed by every physician in this country, and if my endorsement shall induce anæmic, nervous, run-down men and women to take Nuxated Iron, and receive the wonderful tonic benefits which I have received, I shall feel greatly gratified that I made an exception to my life-long rule in recommending it."

Dr. E. Sauer, a Boston physician, who has studied both in this country and great European Medical Institutions, said: "If people would only take Nuxated Iron when they feel weak or run-down, instead of dosing themselves with habit-forming drugs, stimulants and alcoholic beverages, I am convinced that in this way they could ward off disease, preventing it becoming organic in thousands of cases, and thereby the lives of thousands might be saved who now die every year from pneumonia, grippe, kidney, liver, heart trouble and other dangerous maladies. Thousands of people suffer from iron deficiency and do not know it. If you are not strong or well, you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next take two five-grain tablets of Nuxated Iron three times per day after meals for two weeks. Then test your strength again and see how much you have gained."

NOTE—Nuxated Iron, which is so strongly endorsed by Mme. Sarah Bernhardt, the world's most noted actress, and which has been used with such surprising results by Generals Gibson and Gordon, and former Health Commissioner Kerr of Chicago, and which is prescribed and recommended by physicians in such a great variety of cases, is not a patent medicine, nor secret remedy, but one which is well known to druggists everywhere. Unlike the older inorganic iron products, it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black, nor upset the stomach; on the contrary, it is a most potent remedy in nearly all forms of indigestion, as well as for nervous, run-down conditions. The manufacturers have such great confidence in Nuxated Iron, that they offer to forfeit $100.00 to any Charitable Institution if they cannot take any man or woman under sixty who lacks iron and increase their strength 100 per cent. or over in four weeks' time, provided they have no serious organic trouble. They also offer to refund your money if it does not at least double your strength and endurance in ten days' time. It is dispensed by all good druggists.

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Gem Damaskeene Blades shave clean, quickly, comfortably—the edge is harder, smoother, sharper, more durable—shaves a coarse beard as easily and smoothly as it does a light one—with no after irritation even to the most sensitive skin.

A Blade with a Keen Sense of the Requisites of a Good Shave

The sealed, waxed-paper wrapped package protects blade—insuring a dust-proof package and rust-free blades, **seven blades for 35c** (50c in Canada).

$1.00 **New—special—compact. Khaki Service outfit** includes **GEM DAMASKEENE RAZOR** complete with **seven blades** and shaving and stropping handles. *$1.50 in Canada.*

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Someone is happy!

Everyman's Pledge:
America Shall Win this War!
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