

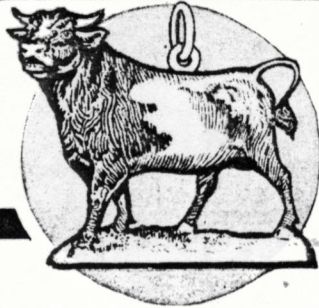
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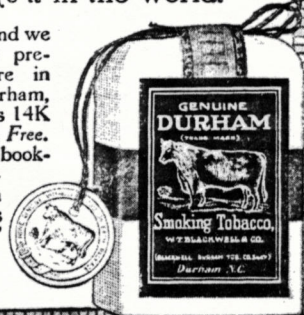


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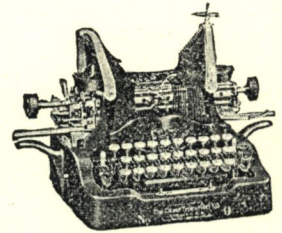
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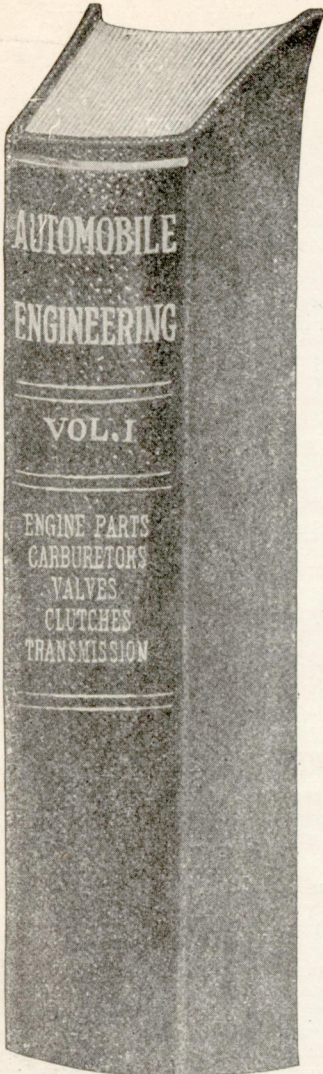
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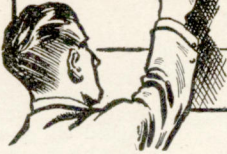
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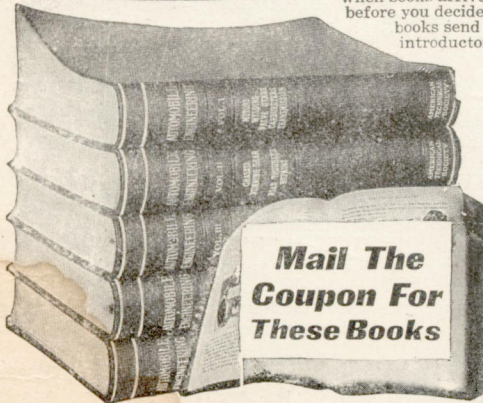
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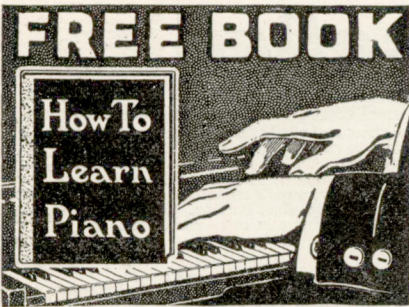


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Marcus Lucius Quinn Conservatory of Music
Studio A5, 598 Columbia Road, BOSTON, 25, MASS.

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. LVII.

SEPTEMBER 7, 1920.

No. 4

The Unknown Quantity

By Howard Fielding

Author of "Breath of the Devil," "Bill, the Owl," Etc.

Fielding particularly excels in tales of mystery, in which thrills are not lacking, but are subordinate to the interest of his plot. Graphic and rapid portrayal of events and deftness of style make this story notable even among those that have appeared in the POPULAR heretofore by the same author.

(A Complete Novel)

CHAPTER I.

WHAT HAPPENED TO MR. DRAKENFELD?

INVESTIGATORS of various sorts swarmed in New York in the summer of 1919. Everybody knows this, because everybody was investigated, even the investigators, many of whom were not well situated to stand it. What truths were discovered the public will never learn, for you can't get anything into print without a press agent, and no press agent will give out the truth. That isn't what he's paid for; if he did it he'd be fired.

I never was a press agent, but I was an investigator, and there is only one reason why I shall not be fired for giving out the facts which follow; I have already quit. The job didn't suit me, and I never wanted it; the office sought the man. It happened this way:

A law school of high standing had recently given me a diploma, because I had fallen half a mile with an airplane. I hit the sacred soil of Texas when I came down, but that wasn't my fault. Texas was under me at the time, and as the engine was stalled I had no other place to go. Eventually I found myself once more in New York, to my great joy; got the diploma aforesaid, and formed an insignificant connection with the distinguished firm of Bullard, Kay & Evans. Mr. Bullard was my patron, a friend of the

family in old days, when my grandfather was accumulating the money which I hope to spend before it rusts. The veteran lawyer is a fervent patriot, and a sworn foe of all who menace the foundations of things as they are; special counsel to a number of leagues and societies all of them engaged in some sort of investigation. He was looking for good investigators and he drafted me.

My service was informal at first, and then I was equipped with a species of legal authority, though I think the less said as to its validity the better. Mr. Bullard's opinion certainly commands respect, and he said that I was an agent of the government. At any rate I was special assistant to somebody whose official status might have been viewed favorably by most of the inferior courts.

Whether or not I had valid powers, I had responsibilities, obligations of honor; and not only was my reputation constantly at stake, but my career and my patrimony as well. The esteem of Mr. Bullard was essential to my future, for no budding lawyer could afford to leave that office under a cloud, and besides the old man was a trustee under my father's will. For all these reasons it behooved me to walk very straight in the paths of investigation.

On an afternoon in August, 1919, my immediate chief in the "Pussyfoot Service"—as I called it—put me on the trail of a man named Henry Drakenfeld. It was the small-

est of routine matters; there was no charge against the man, and virtually no basis for suspicion. He had rented a little office in a downtown building, and the overzealous superintendent had reported the new tenant as mysterious in his business relations, of Austrian parentage and Russian affiliations.

My chief said that I could probably learn all that we required about Drakenfeld at the Hotel Lansing where he had lived for some time. The manager of the hotel was one of the persons to whom Drakenfeld had referred when applying for his office.

I had the advantage of acquaintance with the manager, Johnny Brett; and I knew him to be truthful, except in professional affairs, when he was telling a guest why it was still necessary to charge the war-time rates of five dollars for a two-dollar room that was really worth no more than one. And at that Johnny Brett wasn't as bad as the average. He was out when I called, and it may have been half past four o'clock when I finally nailed him.

"I don't know much about Drakenfeld," said he, "except that he's honest. He's lived here for two or three years, and has run behind in his account quite often, but has always squared up as soon as he got the wherewithal. His money comes irregularly, and doesn't last long."

"From what source does it come?"

"Inventions; mostly electrical, as I understand. He never says much about his business—or anything else. But I judge that he's invented some really valuable things, only he couldn't handle them and they got away. He had to go to somebody else for the money, and you know what that means. He got what they absolutely had to chip up before fastening their tentacles on the goods, and then he was frozen out."

"If he does his own inventing, he must have a laboratory," said I. "Where is it?"

"I don't know," Brett replied. "He used to have some kind of an arrangement with Gesner & Lahn, makers of electrical apparatus, on Elm Street, but they were burned out, three or four months ago, and have never resumed business. I've understood that since then Drakenfeld hasn't done any mechanical work; he's been trying to finance a patent of his. No; I haven't the least idea what it is, but I think he's found the man who will eventually steal it—identity not yet revealed to me."

"What's his nationality? Some say Austrian, others Russian."

"He lived in Russia for some years when he was young, but the family were Austrians. They all came to this country ten or twelve years ago, and the men became citizens. Most of them are dead now, but there's an elder brother of Henry's who went back to Russia."

"Is the brother a bolshevik?"

"Search *me*; but it's a sure thing that Henry isn't. He's a plutocrat, just like myself; that is, he will be one, when he gets the stuff. He's got brains and ambition; and he makes good money, too; I know he does; but he can't hang onto it. He's got a weakness; a pretty woman can twist him around her finger. That's where his money goes."

I expressed a natural regret that Drakenfeld should be so foolish; and Brett and I exchanged the usual congratulatory glance because we were immune; that is, each of us thought that he himself was so, though, perhaps, a little doubtful of the other.

"Do you know any of his woman friends?" I asked.

Brett shook his head.

"You see he's always owing me money," he explained. "Naturally he doesn't want me to get too wise. Even the girls on the switchboard don't know anything. He keeps his friends off the wire; being an electrician, he knows all about listening in."

"Another address?" I suggested; and Brett owned that he suspected it. Drakenfeld was out most of the time, day and night; hated sleep, apparently.

"I haven't laid eyes on him since he settled a good-sized bill, about a week ago," he added.

"He received money at that time?"

"Yes; and I was glad, for other than selfish reasons. Drakenfeld had been a good deal worried, I thought. Something besides a board bill on his mind. I figured that it was a woman. But he seemed in better spirits when he paid his bill, so I guess the money fixed everything. It will, if you use it right."

That was all I got from Brett, and he couldn't give me the name of any person who might tell me more. There was nothing here to arouse suspicion, yet in those days a practical scientist was worth looking up, at least to the extent of finding out where he did his work. His laboratory, if he had one,

should have been on our lists already, together with some facts about the man; and the mere absence of this data gave the subject a momentary aspect of importance. But probably Drakenfeld himself would tell me all about it, and prove his scientific researches to be as innocent as anything can be that is done for no higher aim than money to spend on pretty women.

Drakenfeld's new office was in the Waldo Building on William Street near Wall. Trinity was telling the hour when I reached that region: six—billions. They say the old clock used to look down Wall Street and count millions when it struck, but now it ticks millions, and doesn't ring up for anything less than a billion. I was too late to have much hope of finding Drakenfeld; the building already seemed deserted when I entered the tomblike marble hall, and the elevator man was my only companion for the whole height of the shaft. My destination was Room 1605, on the topmost story.

I tapped on the door and turned the knob at the same time. The door yielded to my hand, and I saw an open desk and an empty chair, with a window for background. There was no one except myself in that room. On the desk, however, a man's straw hat was sitting on its crown in the middle of the blue blotter; and beside it stood an ash receiver holding two-thirds of a large cigar whose odor was still in the air and not stale. It came into my mind that Drakenfeld was visiting a neighbor, for I had noticed a door standing ajar a little way down the hall. I congratulated myself that I hadn't missed my man, and sat down contentedly to wait for him.

The room was not yet fully furnished, and I got a curious impression that it never would be. This came, I think, from something in the look of things arousing an untraceable reminiscence of some other place. It was not based on any rational suspicion that the office had been hired as a bluff. There were indeed indications that Drakenfeld meant to be handsomely surrounded in his little den. A fine old mahogany table stood in a corner, and on its top was a beautiful cabinet with glass doors—empty. It was probably intended to hold models of the invention which Drakenfeld was trying to finance. Several framed pictures were on the floor, leaning, with their faces to the wall. Only one had been hung—an excellent print of "The Fool," by Franz Hals.

There the silly fellow stood, twanging his guitar and leering at his lady-love; and I could never tire of watching him; he restores my faith more than a hundred sermons. An ineffable charm is painted in with this repellent subject, because the artist saw the exact truth, and dared to tell it, and knew how. Sincerity such as that would have saved the world some millions of selected lives, and the rags of its poor honor, if it had entered into the hearts of leading men, five years ago. Just the simple truth; that alone would have done it—to portray the lustful, greedy world as it is. There were men whose voices not even press agency could have bedeviled from the public ear, but alas, they had nothing to say that was true.

After what Brett had told me of Drakenfeld's weakness, I was a little surprised to find this picture standing obviously first in his liking. Still, the painted fool is happy, and perhaps Drakenfeld in his romantic adventures required and expected no more. Of course, in my meditations Drakenfeld was the fool; it never occurred to me that it might be myself.

There was a faint sound of shuffling feet, a tinkle of keys, and then the door opened and I saw a woman with broom and duster—a woman prematurely old and beginning to be gray; perhaps quite pretty not so long ago, and obviously a victim of life's tragedy. Chronic defeat and haunting terror were in her countenance, with a hint of impotent cunning, her last poor weapon against the world. She seemed unreasonably startled by my presence, and by the absence of the proper tenant; her unsteady gaze roved to all parts of the room, as if she expected to see Drakenfeld in the wastebasket or under the wicker couch that stood against a wall.

"The gentleman isn't here," she said at last, quite innocent of any desire to offend. "He'll be coming back, of course."

"I hope so," said I. "I haven't seen him. The door was unlocked, and I came in."

She meditated upon this with a manner of slyness somewhat suggestive of an unsound mind.

"Did you see the lady that was here, sir?"

"No," said I. "How long ago?"

"Around half past five or later," said she, and seemed to expect me to continue the subject.

"Why did you ask if I had seen her?"

"I thought you might have been waiting

for her, down below," said she, and seemed imperfectly convinced when I denied it.

"What happened while she was here?" I asked.

"Oh, just nothing; nothing much at all. There was a few high words, but she went right away. It ain't worth having any trouble about."

Apparently there had been a quarrel between Drakenfeld and a woman, overheard by this odd creature who had been unreasonably excited by the occurrence. I asked where she was when the quarrel took place. In 1606, the next room. What had she heard? Oh, just that the gentleman told the lady to go away. He spoke loud but not roughlike; on the contrary quite polite. He said, "Go away, *please*." My witness was positive on that point.

And what had the lady said? The witness didn't know; hadn't heard a word. It was all over before she could get to the door of 1606 from the place in that room where she had chanced to stand when the trouble began. She was in time to see the lady coming from Mr. Drakenfeld's office, "with her eyes blazing like a tiger's;" and she herself had dodged back into 1606 and shut the door—a very significant detail, letting me know not only that the lady had been in a blazing wrath, but that she possessed an eloquent and compelling personality. It was not terror but a sudden, unendurable sense of her own inferiority that had quelled this poor woman and driven her to hide. Indeed, she seemed not wholly unaware of this, and her vague description of the lady consisted chiefly of crude terms of admiration.

She was even moved to show me by imitations, wild facial expressions, and weird struttings, how the lady had "stood up tall like a queen"—an exhibition at which I had not the heart to smile. Moreover there was in this portrayal a kind of crazy skill, intentional or unconscious. If the design were to make me see Drakenfeld's visitor as a person capable of tragic deeds, the attempt fully succeeded. And as a climax she added this:

"What's more, I'd like to know where she went. She didn't take no elevator; I'd have heard the doors."

"Why do you tell me all this?" I demanded suddenly. "What else happened up here? Why were you frightened when you came into this room?"

She was frightened now, sure enough, but unfortunately she was driven away from the

truth instead of toward it as I had hoped. Incomparable slyness entered into her; she began to lie really well, giving me to understand that she had dreaded to walk in on Mr. Drakenfeld when he was angry. She was afraid of him, anyhow; he had driven her away the day before yesterday, when she came in too soon. Apparently there was something about the man that terrified her, though she still honestly insisted that "he never spoke rough."

"Where is Mr. Drakenfeld now?" said I. "It's evident that you know."

She stared at me, her mouth open and her lips trembling. Slowly she retreated a pace or two, then stopped, steadying herself with a hand on the doorknob.

"You know where Mr. Drakenfeld is," I repeated, "and I insist that you tell me. I'm going to find him, anyhow."

I took a step toward her, and at that she turned and fled, executing the movement with animal quickness, so that her strangled cry seemed to speak in the empty air after she was gone. She had slammed the door behind her, and I lost an appreciable moment trying to pull it open without turning the knob. The woman must have sprung the catch, unknown to me. When I got out she had vanished.

To the left, the door that I had previously noticed still stood open—wider, I imagined. The woman might have gone that way, and something told me that it was the way to Drakenfeld; that he had been hiding there all the time, for some obscure reason. But when I reached the door I was surprised to find that it opened not on an office but a stairway, leading to the roof, of course.

At the top was another door, rather small and low, and, what was more important, locked. I was momentarily baffled till I realized that I had not yet reached the level of the roof, and was merely trying to get into a storeroom. A passage to the left seemed, from where I stood, to be a blank butt end. This was an illusion; it led to another right-angle turn, and to a second stairway, of about ten steps, with the sky beyond.

Against the blue background there appeared grotesquely the soles of a man's shoes, heels upward, and his legs to the knees, clothed in loose gray trousers. He must have fallen forward across the threshold which was raised considerably above the roof on which his body lay, the rigid legs

being thus tilted up the more absurdly as viewed from my position.

And when I had sprung up the stairs I saw him lying with his arms outspread and his face pressed hard against the metal of the roof, like an awkward diver who has fallen flat on the water. Death, which revels in such monstrous statuary on the battlefield, had found a chance to create a single choice piece of it in the Wall Street district, safely beyond cannon shot.

Blood, not very much, had crept out in various directions from under him; and I presently wondered that there was not more, for when I turned him over I saw what seemed a horrible wound involving nearly the whole breadth of his body. A strange wound, by what I could see of it; conceivably the weapon was a shotgun, held close, but not aimed directly at the victim; rather from left to right.

He might have caught at the barrel in the moment of discharge, with his left hand which was lacerated and burned. But this explanation did not satisfy me; it could hardly account for several injuries to the throat and chin, since the body wound did not extend much above the lower end of the breastbone.

I thought of a bomb, but the effects were not sufficient unless the thing had been a mere toy. Perhaps Drakenfeld's invention was of an explosive character, yet this idea hardly suited the design of the cabinet in his office; and, besides, if a machine of any sort had blown up, where were the pieces? A few might be in the inventor's body, surely not all. This catastrophe had not taken place on the open roof but in the constricted passage of the stairway, yet there was no wreckage nor so much as a dent in the walls. Blood on the upper steps showed where Drakenfeld had first fallen, and a broad smear on the left side was the mark of his hand, made while he was trying to rise; but there was nothing else except a tiny rag from his coat which had been blown to the right side where a few drops of blood that went with it had glued it to the paint. Moreover, there was the question whether Drakenfeld had retained strength to creep over the threshold, like a wounded animal instinctively seeking the free air, or had been dragged to where he lay by a person who had meant to put the body out of sight on the roof but had lacked the strength.

The mystery of this death was too much

for me; I could not read the story of it from the visible indications. And, naturally, I wasted no time trying to do it. Perhaps a quarter of a minute sufficed for my examination. This big, blue-eyed, square-jawed Teuton could hardly be anybody else than Henry Drakenfeld, and he was dead with many evidences of murder. The only person known to me who could throw light on the crime was doubtless now in flight, scared by my aimless questioning; and my first act must be to prevent her from getting out of the building, if I could.

I made two steps of the nearest stairs, and not more than three of the other, and I lost no time anywhere till my thumb was on the button of the elevator. An ascending car was about to stop at the fifteenth floor. Hoping to save a few seconds, I ran down to meet it there, arriving just in time to go aboard at the heels of two young women whose presence I regretted. It was unpleasant to alarm them by giving any order, and I thought it wouldn't be necessary, but we were barely under way when the red light began to glow in the indicator.

"Don't stop," said I to the conductor. "Get down as fast as you can. I'm a government officer, and this is important."

He took my word for it, and was less surprised than I had expected; indeed, I thought he might have got a hint of what had taken place. He said he had seen the cleaning woman "beatin' it down the stairs" just as he started up. Possibly he had spoken to her and learned something. She had come clear from the sixteenth floor, he said, and was "all in." His English was indescribable, but he used it with an ingenuity which got his meaning over.

"Was anybody down below?" I asked. "Where's the superintendent?"

Yes; and he would stop the woman. What had she done?

As I made no reply he began to excuse himself for intrusiveness; I forget what he called it, but that is the translation. It was my job to ask the questions; he knew that. There was nothing nosey about *him*. He knew better than to interfere with an officer. And he was so busy trying to square himself with the government that he neglected to check the car properly; let it run past the main floor, and then stopped it with a very hard jolt.

This frightened one of the young women so that she cried out, but the other showed

no alarm whatever, and met my sympathetic glance with a quick, bright smile, revealing the most beautiful white teeth; and next instant she addressed to her companion a few ordinary words that gained a value from the way they were pronounced. The quiet, low-pitched voice and sweet serenity of manner reinforced a suggestion that had come already with my first discerning glance at her, and I was startlingly reminded of a cousin whom I greatly value. The actual resemblance was not close; the stranger was of a somewhat darker strain, more vivid in coloring, and her large and very brilliant hazel eyes were peculiar to herself—I have never seen the like. Yet the tall, slender figure, the exquisite mouth and chin, and small white teeth; the voice besides—these were very similar; and certainly she had established in my marrow an odd delusion of kinship, admiration, and loyalty.

For ten seconds I had mighty little interest in the murder of Drakenfeld. It would have been necessary to speak his name several times in my ear before getting my attention. Yet there was nothing here that savored of instantaneous romance; I was wholly unaware of any sentiments other than those that I have mentioned, not even the strange, nameless pang that beauty sometimes inflicts at first sight. The young lady, so to speak, had united herself to me by a different sort of bond. I vaguely fancied that there must be something answerable in her own consciousness. I spoke to her, saying I don't know what, and she replied in words now equally forgotten, but certainly there seemed no sense of strangeness on either side, no constraint in either voice.

Meanwhile, the elevator man was struggling with the car which presently he brought to the desired level. The doors opened, and I saw the shorter girl escape with haste born of her recent alarm, and the taller walk out ahead of me with a grace that surprised me no more than if I had known her always. She might pass into the crowd and be lost to my sight forever, but I never thought of that; I knew she wouldn't.

As soon as I was clear of the car I saw the superintendent of the building, halfway down the hall, at a telephone. Beside him stood the scrubwoman wringing her hands and pouring out a half intelligible stream of talk which the man vainly tried to check. Hearing steps approaching, the woman turned nervously; became silent for an instant, star-

ing and clutching her brow; and then spoke loud and clear, flinging out her arm at full length.

"There she is! That's her!" she cried.

She was pointing at the tall girl who stopped, and looked at the wild woman gently, with pity for her evident distress. Then, perceiving that an accusation of some sort was being launched against herself, she turned to me, and seemed to put the matter in my hands without a word. The fact that I was an officer had nothing to do with it; her reliance on me for protection was personal and sincere—or I was a fool.

The elevator man had run past us. He spoke to the superintendent in a resounding whisper, announcing the dignity of my status. The superintendent said, into the telephone: "Yes; I hope you can send it right over"—evidently the patrol wagon; after which he hung up the receiver, and gave his attention to me.

"I'm here in consequence of your report on Drakenfeld," said I. "What has this woman told you?"

"She says Drakenfeld has been shot. She found him dead, and didn't dare report it—afraid of getting into trouble; but she talked with a man that came to see him—you I suppose—and got a different kind of scare, so she came down here to me. She thinks it was done by a woman who called on Drakenfeld and quarreled with him and then disappeared. Mrs. Berger"—he called to her in a shouting voice, wishing her to repeat the identification which she had just made, but he failed to get her attention. She was telling her story to the elevator man, and nothing could stop her.

"I think Mrs. Berger knows very little about it," said I. "It's not even certain that Drakenfeld was shot by anybody. I have seen his body—"

"What *did* happen to him?" the superintendent interrupted.

"Don't ask me," I responded. "What happened to Henry Drakenfeld is going to be a mighty hard question."

CHAPTER II.

THE ADVENTURE OF A FOOL WITH A WOMAN.

The superintendent decided to proceed without a second identification. He addressed himself to my tall young friend, trying to speak sternly but a good deal shaken by the lady's manner—thereby rising in my

estimation because he knew a manner when he saw one.

"This woman says you were in Mr. Drakenfeld's office, and that there was a quarrel. Is that so?"

I couldn't see the girl harried by a cross-examination under such circumstances. I was too shaky on the facts; I couldn't have protected her.

"Excuse me," said I promptly. "This seems to me inadvisable. I will question this witness, if you please, and I prefer to do it in private." I turned to her. "Would you mind coming with me? I must go up again to Mr. Drakenfeld's office."

"I will do whatever you think best," said she; and I proceeded to tether the superintendent so that he couldn't bother us.

"You'll wait here till the police come, of course," said I. "Detain Mrs. Berger, and get her story straight."

At this the girl, standing very near me, spoke softly.

"Please say something kind to her," said she. "The poor woman is terribly frightened, and I think she hasn't really meant to do anything wrong."

"Don't be alarmed, Mrs. Berger," said I. "You'll be all right. Just tell the superintendent what you know, and there'll be no trouble."

It is doubtful if she heard what I said, but the girl heard it; and, though it was neither intelligent nor kind, except in manner of utterance, at least I had done my poor best at her command. She thanked me with her eyes; nodded farewell to the short girl who remained rooted to the spot, staring blankly as if she didn't know what to do or say; and then we walked away, the elevator man following.

"Did you wish her to come with you?" I asked.

"Oh, no," she responded. "There's no reason why she should. We're not really acquainted. I merely found her in an office where I went to make inquiries. I am looking for a position as stenographer; that's how I encountered Mr. Drakenfeld. There was an error in an advertisement; it read Room 1605, but should have been 1505."

"Do you wish to tell me about the scene with Drakenfeld?" said I, willing that she should speak in the elevator man's presence since she seemed to have so plain a story.

"I have no objection, except that it is not

pleasant to speak ill of him now," said she; "and I really can't speak otherwise and tell the truth. He was shockingly rude to me. Perhaps I shouldn't have walked in without knocking, but I thought it was the public entrance of a suite. At any rate, it seemed a trifle; it was not as if I had interrupted a private conversation, or even a man's usual work. He was merely standing by his desk, and gathering up some things as if about to leave."

"What sort of things?" We were now leaving the car.

"I didn't notice."

"Did he put them in his pockets?"

"No; in a paper bag. I think he was only putting the desk to rights. But I hadn't must time to see, for he began at once to shout at me, telling me to go away. I was so startled that I stood stock-still, and the door closed behind me. Then he was perfectly furious, but I think he didn't mean me to understand all he said. Some of it was only to relieve his own irritation; that part was in German."

I gathered that she knew that language.

"He must have been ashamed," she went on, "for he moderated his tone, and told me where I ought to go. I'm afraid I didn't thank him. I was very angry. I have a dreadful temper," she added with that charming smile of hers.

"So you walked down the stairs to 1505," said I.

"Down the stairs, and back and forth in the corridor," she amended. "Oh, it was quite a while before I was myself again."

I had left Drakenfeld's door open. We entered, and I stood beneath the picture of the fool.

"Will you sit down?" said I.

She hesitated.

"Ought we to stay here?" she said. "He is lying there alone. I feel that some one ought to be with him. Shall we go? I am not timid; I have never had any terror of the dead."

There came to me an odd idea, which would have been natural, perhaps, if I had really been a detective. I wasn't; I was a raw recruit, the rankest of amateurs without aptitude or training. The value of my idea, as I saw it, was that it promised an acquittal for this young woman, in case any one should be insane enough to accuse her of the death of Drakenfeld; and this was possible unless I could persuade her to change her story.

She had not gone directly to Room 1505; she had paced the corridor; had been alone at the very time when the murder was committed.

"By the way," said I, coming out of my meditation, "did you hear a shot, while you were on the fifteenth floor?"

"I heard a strange sound," she answered. "It was hardly like a shot—though I know nothing whatever of firearms. It sounded too dull and like a blow with something heavy. I barely noticed it, and I'm surprised that I remember." A moment's pause. "Shall we go now?"

I assented, and we went out into the corridor. She started in the right direction, but that was not significant, for she already knew that the way to the roof was not around the shafts of the elevators. So we came to the first stair, and began to ascend. I took care to give her no guidance; let her precede me by a step. It was nearly certain that, if she had never been that way before, she would make the same mistake that I had made, and try to go into the locked store-room.

For a moment, as we came to the top, it seemed that I had fully succeeded. She stopped, but turned toward me, where I stood on a slightly lower level. I thought she showed nervousness; perhaps she felt more reluctance than she had been willing to confess, and was now seizing a moment to prepare her mind. What she said to me seemed to confirm this theory; it was clearly a device to cover a brief delay.

"You wish to know my name, of course. How singular I hadn't thought of it. I have a card here——" she made a movement to take something from a little silk bag, and then went on somewhat as if she were reading from the card she hadn't taken out. "Miss Angela Dee—D, double e; and I live on Seventy-third Street," mentioning the number which I was very sorry to hear. We had a man under observation in that house, and I believed him to be a very bad egg.

"Are you pleasantly situated?" I asked. "Have you made any promising acquaintances?"

"One or two," she answered; and, turning, went on without the least hesitation along the way to the left. In effect she had not even noticed the deceptive door.

When we came to the turn, she raised her eyes. There was now no view of the dead man from that point, for in the course of my examination I had drawn him fully out to the

roof, and the raised threshold hid him. But when we had ascended three or four steps he became visible, and his aspect seemed to me a thousand times more shocking than when I had been alone. I was aghast at having led Miss Dee into such a presence; I begged her to descend, and even laid a restraining hand upon her arm.

"No," she said softly; "let me go on. I will cover his face." And she went nearer by two steps to that repellent spectacle.

It was long past seven by the clocks, but really, of course, an hour earlier, and the evening was very clear. On that high roof daylight still lingered, and the face of Drakenfeld, discolored, and painfully contorted with the strain of his last effort, stared upward at the sky.

"I beg you to come back," I pleaded again, but she did not stop; she merely looked away from that which she approached, and turned to me her countenance from which the color had completely fled.

In the same instant, while she looked down at me, my ears were deafened by an explosion accentuated by its nearness and the narrow space. I knew only that its source was between Miss Dee and myself, and that it seemed to leap out straight at my body. Some missile struck me in the side, and I fell against the wall. Miss Dee sank back on the steps; I saw rather than heard her scream, and my own voice sounded as if it were sealed up in a tin can when I cried out to know if she was hurt. She only gave me back the same question, and with such anguish of entreaty in the quivering lips that I replied in a gasp, not waiting for the breath with which to speak.

"It missed me. Don't be distressed. You are safe?"

"Yes—but you—oh, it seemed to go straight toward you." My own impression exactly. "What could have made it go off? I didn't touch it."

Apparently this said in bewilderment alone, not in defense; there was no sign that she perceived anything in what had taken place but an utterly mysterious and terrifying accident. Beyond doubt it was mysterious enough, but what was left of my intelligence rebelled against regarding it as accidental. The silk bag with a ragged hole near the bottom lay where it had fallen, and was now partly covered by her skirt. I saw a vapor rising from it, and I smelled burning cloth. Lest her dress should be

ignited I snatched the bag away, crushing it between my hands till the feeble fire seemed to be extinguished. Then I laid it on the stairs within the lady's reach.

"A revolver?" I had felt its outlines. "Will you let me see it?"

"Why—surely." She put her hand on the bag. "Do you wish——"

"The revolver only," said I. "Please give it to me."

Looking in my face all the time she groped in the bag; found and drew forth the weapon. And by the reasonable chances of the game I ought to have been dead next instant. That was the least of my troubles. If she was the sort of girl to do a thing like this I *wanted* to be dead. It couldn't come too soon. Here was a question to be answered, and for the true answer I was willing to pay the price.

She handled the revolver childishly, and with shuddering aversion; gave it to me at last, muzzle foremost and aimed with the traditional accuracy of firearms that go off by accident. The heart in my bosom ticked some seconds that were longer than time has any right to be, but I still failed to learn what the unmeasured spaces of eternity are like.

When the lady had released her hold of the weapon I turned it to a safe angle, and viewed it with more interest than its intrinsic merit deserved. It was small and of an old pattern lacking all modern devices of safety; five shot, and of a large caliber for its weight. I glanced at each side of the cylinder; it seemed to be empty except for the exploded shell under the hammer.

I looked down at my side which had begun to ache. The bullet had struck my leather belt, plowing a long furrow in it, and going out through the back of my coat. There would be a good bruise under that furrow, but virtually I was unharmed.

Was it possible, was it believable that this girl had tried to kill me so that she could escape before the arrival of the police? The plan was feasible. They would come up by the elevator; she might have gone down by the stairs. But, indeed, there was a better way, visible from where I stood—a fire-escape ladder, painted blood red and singularly conspicuous, that led down from the roof to an adjoining structure less tall by one story. If Miss Dee had been upon the roof, earlier that afternoon, she must have seen the top of that ladder; might even have hesi-

tated whether to make use of it after Drakenfeld was dead. For, of course, if any of my suspicions were in line with fact she had committed that crime, and with premeditation—had come prepared to use mysterious means for the man's extinction.

These thoughts came to me against my will, and with that peculiar clearness of which the mind is capable after escape from death—as if refreshed by halting at the call of the false news that it need work no more. I did not credit these promptings of the reasoning faculty, but they held me attentive for some moments, and must have been to some extent legible in my face. I became aware that my companion was watching me with acute anxiety, and I was ashamed of inward treason and of outward neglect unmannerly and cruel.

"Let us go down," said I. "You are too much shaken by this accident to stay here longer."

I put out my hand to help her rise, and I thought she hesitated, shrinking. Then she took it; strove for control and failed; clasped it with both of hers, and so clung to me, weeping, her face hidden, her tears wetting my wrist. This was soon over, really a restrained emotional display for such a situation and such a woman—a creature of blood and flame despite the quiet of her usual ways. What was in her mind I could not know, but the gross facts must be as clear to her as to me. If that bullet had gone an inch to the right it must have given me a mortal wound; I should have fallen on that stairway and never again have risen by my own strength. And if it were indeed an accident, the woman wholly innocent and with no will to flee, what would have been her position, there between two men, the dying and the dead, when the police came?

While these thoughts were passing I heard men's voices. Some one said, "It's locked." And then the superintendent, as if farther down the stairs: "That isn't the door. Go on to the left."

I thrust Miss Dee's revolver into my pocket.

"Not a word about the accident," I cautioned her.

She gave me a long glance; it rested on my eyes like kisses.

"The bag," she whispered. "It is torn and burned."

I crushed that piece of evidence into the breast of my coat.

CHAPTER III.

POINTING OUT PERILS TO A BLIND MAN.

My breast pocket was uncommonly large, and it happened to contain only a letter or two, nevertheless the silk bag overloaded it, and might be seen if I should leave my coat open—the scar on my belt besides; but with the coat buttoned I looked, or, at least, felt, as if I had stolen a peck of potatoes, baked potatoes at that, for to my surprise the infernal thing was still hot. I must have failed to squeeze some of the sparks, and they were continuing to do business. This agreeable discovery I had just made when the police appeared, after some slight delay in the passage.

There were two men in plain clothes and two in uniform, the superintendent overtaking them just as they turned the corner. The leadership plainly lay with one of the detectives, a cheerful Irishman of thirty-five, with light blue eyes in a face beautifully bronzed. He halted where we stood in the space at the foot of the stairs while the others went to the roof.

The detective had seemed a little surprised at the sight of us, and I had an uncomfortable moment while he glanced from me to my companion and back again. It would have been a relief to speak, but I couldn't think of anything to say; and it was he that opened the conversation.

"My name is Martin. I got yours from Mr. Boggs"—the superintendent. "He mentioned this lady, besides, though not by name."

"Miss Dee," said I, and Martin raised his hat. "It was she who went to Drakenfeld's office, by mistake."

"Yes; so I heard. Wrong address in an advertisement." He gestured toward the stairs. "She's been up there, I suppose. She's identified him as Drakenfeld."

"It is the man I saw in the office," Miss Dee responded, with the quiet precision of a lady who reproves an offender. "I did not know Mr. Drakenfeld, as you may already have been told."

Whether Martin felt himself properly sat on, for the trick he had attempted, I didn't know, but the incident was unfortunate and I hastened to cover it with words, telling of Drakenfeld's strange rudeness to Miss Dee, and anything else that promised to be interesting. The detective listened restlessly, as if harassed by vague suspicions. Perhaps

he noticed that my voice sounded as if I were lying. It did, though I believed what I said.

"Was he on the roof when he was shot?" Martin inquired, at the first pause in my eloquence.

"There's no certainty that he was shot at all," said I; "or that anybody else was present. He was on the stairs when it happened. I think it was an explosion, an accident."

"Is that so?" Martin was interested now, all right. "Excuse me just a second." He ascended far enough to look out along the roof, waving a hand behind him as if requesting us not to move.

Evidently the other detective was at that moment examining Drakenfeld's wound, for Martin asked: "How does it look, Paddy? What hit him?"

"Dummed if I know," was the response. "He's all scratchedlike, but I don't see where nothing went deep. There's a coat button and a piece of a fountain pen sticking in him, and he's burned some, where the clothes was blowed off his chist; but I don't see no gunshot wound."

Miss Dee was somewhat affected by these details of Drakenfeld's misfortune. She drew close to me, not timidly but with reliance delicately differentiated from that which is blindly given to a stranger in a tragic moment. My feeling of a natural intimacy returned with added force, as if we should have known each other long.

I heard Martin say: "Better let him alone, Paddy. The doctor'll be here in a minute. Search all around the roof. Where does that escape ladder lead? Send a man down to see if anything is open below."

A voice not Paddy's, and noticeably more remote, said: "That ladder is fresh painted. It's all wet. Nobody could have gone down that way and not left tracks."

"Well, that's good luck," said Martin, and came down to the foot of the stairs. Immediately I observed that same uneasiness in his manner, as if he had descended into an atmosphere of suspicion. He looked from side to side, sniffing.

"Ain't it queer," said he, "that the fumes of an explosion should stay in a place like this; a kind of funnel, as you might say, with a draft up through it all the time? Smells like burning rags. Don't you notice it?"

I certainly did. It came from my own

pocket, but I couldn't tell that to Martin. I had tried to hope that the odor was imaginary. Apparently not, but what to do? Should I deny this vapor, or sniff the tainted gale with an imitation of the detective's curiosity? Miss Dee saved me the hazard of trusting my voice on such a theme.

"I noticed it when we first came up," said she; "but it's almost gone now."

Then I struck in, striving to change the subject—leaning against the wall meanwhile, with folded arms, squeezing the silk bag as hard as I dared.

"Drakenfeld was an inventor," said I, "an electrician and chemist. Personally he seems to have been a quiet and gentlemanly fellow. How shall we account for his violent behavior to Miss Dee when she entered his office this afternoon? There must have been a reason, and when we get down to it, we shall understand what happened afterward."

"Yes," said Martin. "I guess we shall." Then to Miss Dee: "And you walked right in? The door wasn't locked, you say?"

"No, but he thought it was," said she; "that was evident from what took place. I startled him, greatly. He seemed to think I had seen some things that were on his desk, but I hadn't. He was gathering them up when I came in, and he put them down quickly, yet carefully, as if they were fragile. The side of his desk hid them, and I know only that they were small objects—quite a number of them—and that some were in a paper bag. Still, I didn't really see anything but the top of the bag."

This was a slight improvement on the story as she had told it to me, but perhaps my theory that Drakenfeld's death was accidental had tended to refresh her memory. I hastened to avail myself of this advantage.

"In my opinion they were parts, or perhaps models, of something on which Drakenfeld had been working," I said. "For a purpose not yet clear to us he subsequently brought them up here; doubtless he was getting ready to do that when Miss Dee interrupted him. The things were of a dangerous nature. Drakenfeld, carrying them under his left arm—or in his left hand close to his breast—stumbled on these stairs, and was killed by the resulting explosion."

Martin nodded slowly.

"No shooting, you think? Nobody present but himself?"

"That is my view," said I, trying to speak just like a man of brains and experience.

"Would you mind standing aside a little?" said the detective. "Thank you." He put his finger on the wall. "Now what would be your view of *that*?"

It was the hole made by the bullet from Miss Dee's revolver. Entering at a sharp angle the projectile had left a gouged mark very conspicuous and undeniably fresh.

"You happened to be covering it with your shoulder," Martin remarked, "but I'd noticed it before."

I perceived clearly that the devil was in this game, and playing a very strong hand. The wall was metal-sheathed except for one wooden panel, and the bullet had hit it right in the middle, having taken a strange jump after scarring my belt. Martin could hardly have thought me so childish as to have tried to conceal the bullet hole with my shoulder; it was sure to be found. His intimation had been intended merely to convey his general estimate of my intelligence, and his conviction that I was hiding evidence from the police. If I should now tell the truth, he would doubt my sincerity and despise my judgment. Not for an instant would he believe that the shot was accidental, but only that I was a "mark" in a double sense, having stood up for a target, and then allowed myself to be bamboozled by the protestations of a pretty woman.

In effect I should be accusing Miss Dee of having tried to murder an officer in the government's service who, she supposed, was holding her in virtual arrest. The revolver was undeniably in her possession; let her explain how it had happened to go off at a moment so opportune. That is what the police would say. And I had no explanation to offer, unless it could be found in the contents of the silk bag, which Martin would certainly expect to see. I was afraid to take a blind chance on this; and, besides, I seemed to know what Miss Dee wished me to do. This feeling was decisive, and I withheld my evidence.

Martin was examining the mark on the wall, with the eye of an expert.

"This bullet didn't come from any modern, high-powered shell," he said. "Somebody's gat was a rank back number, or I'm the more mistaken. Guess we'll have a good view, when I've dug out this pill."

The same idea was very active in my own mind, and I proceeded to argue against it—like an incompetent lawyer with a bad case.

"No bullet killed Drakenfeld," said I. "We shall have to find out what actually did it. I hoped to find some fragments here that might correspond with the things which he was handling when Miss Dee surprised him. There's nothing of the sort on his desk now; he must have taken the stuff away with him. That's why I asked Miss Dee to come up here—in the hope that she could identify the pieces."

"But she says she didn't see anything," Martin objected, "except the top of a paper bag."

"Well," said I desperately, "where's that bag? And he wouldn't have brought it empty. Where's the contents?"

"It might have blown up," Martin suggested. "And then again, somebody might have copped it." I thought his glance rested for a moment on my breast.

This man was too much for me, in the present situation. He was certain to get me, unless I could break away. I imagined him inspired by jealousy of the new brood of investigators; I had seen a little of that in previous contacts with the police. If he could get me into a hole, and put Miss Dee in such a position that he could make her arrest inevitable, he would score a gratifying triumph, so I thought. It was necessary to shake him off. I was deadly anxious for a word in private with Miss Dee, and, besides, there was the smoldering volcano in my pocket.

"I must return to Drakenfeld's office," said I. "The door is unlocked——"

"Not now," Martin said, suppressing a smile. "I looked out for that. Here's the key. I'll drop in on my way down. I haven't heard Miss Dee's evidence as yet."

"I'm afraid it's not of much use," she said. "I've already told all I know."

"To the captain here," Martin promoted me one grade from the lieutenantcy I had held a year ago. "Sure. But you see we don't know yet whether Uncle Sam will want to follow up this case. It may be only a murder from private motives, and just a job for the common police. And that reminds me—I gather from what the captain said, that you didn't go direct from Drakenfeld's room to the one below; you waited in the corridor a few minutes to get over your nervousness, and while there you heard the shot."

"I heard a sound," she said.

"And how much longer were you there—in the hall?"

"I don't know. Five or ten minutes."

"And nobody came down?"

"Not all the way. I remember seeing that woman, the one who cares for the rooms on the sixteenth floor. She was on the stairs, almost at the top, and looking down at me; but she went back."

"Yes; she saw you there," said Martin. "When the shot was fired—according to her own story—she was in an office at the end of the hall, about under us as we stand. She went to the door, and then back to her work. It took a matter of two minutes, as I figure it, for the idea to get hold of her mind that something was wrong. Then she came up here, and found the body. In that two minutes the murderer had got away, naturally. She says he wasn't on the top floor. If he was hiding on the roof, I'd like to know why, and also how he got down eventually. He didn't take an elevator; he couldn't have gawn down by the stairs without being seen by you; and, anyhow, he never got to the bottom. Where did he go? I guess that's going to be a very serious question in this affair."

Some minutes ago the superintendent had come down from the roof, passing us with only a nod to Martin, and hurrying away as if on urgent affairs. In fact, duty called him to all parts of the building at once, for it was being searched by the police.

"You are making out a case against the scrubwoman," I said to Martin. "Is there any evidence?"

"No," said he; "but if she did it, we'll get her, of course. There'll be the weapon, you see; the one that made that hole. It'll be hidden somewhere in the top part of this building, along with anything she may have taken off of Drakenfeld. When those things are found, she'll confess. If we don't find 'em, she's innocent."

He caught my eye, and gave me a meaning glance to which I instantly responded with a meaning nod. Neither of them meant anything to me; I hadn't time to think about it. All I wanted was to break the clinch, and my nod did the business.

"All right," he said. "I'll be down in a few minutes."

He saluted Miss Dee who responded with a charming ease of manner far beyond my imitation. It was she who saved us from the error of guilty haste, as we walked into the passage—a regular whispering gallery with a probable listener at either end. Si-

lence would be suspicious; I must find something to say that would be safe.

"I'm afraid you'll be late to dinner," was the best I could manage.

"Thank you"—with the ghost of a smile.

"It will wait till I come."

"And it won't be cold?"

"It always cools a little, after sunset; especially the butter, which makes it nicer, of course."

"I see. Your landlady scrimps on the ice."

"It's a lodging house," she explained. "I have a little food in my room; that's what I meant."

Cake and tea, after such an experience; I was starved by the mere thought of it. Still, she might not like to go alone to a restaurant so late; I must persuade her to let me take her to dinner at some cheerful place where she could have a good time. An alluring prospect, for me, and darkened singularly little by the shadow of the tragedy in which we stood. Recklessness was always my specialty, and, besides, I had been an airman, in which sport one learns to forget life-and-death matters quicker than seems humanly possible. I didn't quite forget that somebody had been murdered, but I easily ignored it, and flew away in fancy toward dinner with the most beautiful and interesting girl in the world.

While I was leading up to the invitation, however, we entered Drakenfeld's office, and the door was shut behind us. Instantly the changed countenance of my companion reminded me that we had merely been acting, in the hall, and that the bright and pleasant scene was over.

We both glanced round to assure ourselves of privacy; I even opened a clothes closet, empty except for a piece of wrapping paper on the floor, and an egg box with the crossed cardboard which had once protected its fragile contents.

"I am your only listener," said I. "Are you frightened?"

"I am shaken to pieces." Only the thrill in her voice gave any sign of it. "I am afraid of that detective. He means to arrest me."

"I won't let him. You are my witness in a government case, and he doesn't dare touch you."

"How can I ask you to protect me——"

"I hope it isn't necessary to ask. You were in my company and there was an acci-

dent. I should be a brute to let you suffer for it."

"You make me ashamed to speak selfishly," she said, "but my position is worse than you suppose. Mr. Martin can easily find out that I had that pistol; the housekeeper knows it."

"At Seventy-third Street?"

"Yes; and there are cartridges in my room. If the bullet is dug out of the wall——"

"It'll look rather bad. I shall have to tell the story."

"But can you tell it? Oh, I mean, of course, will it help *me*? They will say I meant to do it. Every one will believe the worst possible—that I killed this man, and then tried to escape from you."

"We must meet this danger," said I; "fix up our own story and be the first to put it over. To begin—why did you have that revolver, and where did you get it?"

"It was in a trunk—one of my mother's that I have at the house. The revolver had belonged to my father, long ago, and my mother had kept it after his death; and there were a few cartridges, too. It happened that I had a very terrifying experience while looking for a position. It was in a room like this, at the top of a high building, quite late in the afternoon. I found a man alone, and he tried to detain me in his private office. He became excited; behaved as if he were insane."

"Many of them are," said I, very tense, for I was mentally engaged in strangling that man.

"Fortunately I am quite strong," said she, "and quick besides, which was even more to the purpose. Mother used to say that I was making tennis a career, and wasting my life; but, really, I was saving it. However, I didn't wish to do it again, and it was absolutely necessary to continue looking for work. So I thought of that pistol; and the housekeeper was with me when I got it from the trunk, in the cellar. I have a very small room, without space for trunks."

"If we are forced to tell this story," said I, "it will be dreadfully unpleasant, but at least you will win sympathy."

"None; less than none," said she. "I must tell you the truth about myself. I am hiding my identity, because otherwise I could not hope to get employment. I am Anne Dillon's daughter. Don't think that I am ashamed of my name or of my mother, though I don't share her opinions. I'm not a

radical of any sort, and I don't hate England. I hate none of them, not even Germany; I can't personify a nation, as my mother does. I see only a group of men holding political power which all of them misuse, for their own ambition's sake, and for the advantage of the greedy commercial interests that support them."

Not a radical of any sort, you see. I devoutly hoped that Martin was still on the roof or had gone deaf. What this girl said to me didn't matter; I was far past caring what she believed; I knew what she was, or thought I did, and her misfortunes ached in my heart.

Her mother, widely known as a "feminist" and author, had just been sent to prison for twenty years under the espionage law, as the ostensible result of writings and addresses against England, with especial reference to Russian affairs. As to these she had let some very wild cats out of the bag; her knowledge of what was going on seemed uncanny, and she wouldn't tell how she got it. That was the real reason for the severity in her case, as I happened to have heard.

Anne Dillon's daughter couldn't afford to be arrested on any charge, and certainly she couldn't shoot a government officer by accident, not if the Angel of Chance should personally come down to testify in her favor. All thought of open dealing in that matter was now nonsense. And moreover, though I knew of no earthly reason why Anne Dillon's daughter should have been more likely than Miss Dee to shed the blood of Drakenfeld, she would surely be held for that crime if it could plausibly be shown that she possessed the physical means. Something must be done to cover the revolver, and the need was so immediate that I could not take the time for even a decent expression of sympathy with her in the bitter grief for her mother's fate. A dozen words which no grammarian could have patched into a sentence were all I could utter on that theme, but she seemed to discover that they were sincerely kind. Then I plunged frankly but aimlessly into the difficulties of the situation, and it was she who provided the first genuine idea.

"Nobody knows that I took the pistol with me to-day," she said. "If I could go home and put it somewhere, and hide the cartridges, or change them for others with different bullets——"

"That's the answer," said I; "but *you*

mustn't go there. Are your keys in this bag?"

"Yes; but how can you send any one without——"

"I'm going myself."

"No; I can't let you do that." She spoke firmly. "You will have to give false testimony——"

"Did you kill Drakenfeld? Did you shoot a piece out of my belt on purpose? No; and I'm merely trying to avoid what will amount to testifying that you did. If I've got to lie, at least I'll exercise a choice. I won't do it in a way to shield a murderer, and hurt an innocent person who was under my orders and protection. Now tell me how to find your room."

"It's on the top floor, in the middle."

I was too much excited to comprehend what this implied, though I vaguely wondered where the window was, and how she could manage to dine in such a place.

"It has a skylight." She seemed to answer my thought. "The gas is close to the door on the left."

Curiously enough she now seemed exhilarated, filled with a wild kind of joy that made her beauty shine. And by this time I was well keyed up, living a good deal of life for every tick of a watch.

"You don't mind my going in? It seems necessary. Where are the cartridges?"

They were on a shelf in a wardrobe; she made a swift movement, infinitely graceful, as if she were taking them down. Not to be forgotten, that gesture; I could find the cartridges in the dark.

She reminded me that I had promised to wait for Martin. True enough; and I had also promised him something else, with my head, but I didn't know what it was. Certainly it would be unwise to run away from him.

"I shall have to come back," said I, "after you are clear of this place. Once outside, you must take a cab to the Hollis Building, on the north side of Union Square. We have offices on the sixth floor. Ask for my chief——" and I gave the name. "He won't be there, as I happen to know. Say you have a message from me, if you encounter anybody who seems to amount to anything. Wait a few minutes, just for an alibi; and then ride up to Duncan's. Do you know where that is?" It was a restaurant quite near to where she lived.

"I have passed the door," said she.

"Will you dine with me there? Or wherever you please, of course; but it's there we'd better meet. In case of delay, call up Duncan's and have me paged. And whatever happens, don't be distressed; I won't say afraid, because you're not that sort. What I mean is that I'll play this game with you to the limit. That's not only my desire but my duty, for I'm on this case, and I've got to find the right answer. You're wholly innocent, and yet very painfully situated, so that any accusation against you will more powerfully help the guilty."

With that I opened the door, so that she couldn't say anything to hold me back. She understood the plan; we had no time to discuss it. But there was one detail which I had overlooked, of such importance that she had to speak of it, even in the hall where listeners were to be feared.

"The money for the cab," she said. "All I have is in the bag. And it's not enough," she added.

With appropriate secrecy I gave her a bill from my pocket, and she tucked it into her glove, while we waited for the rapid car which took interminable seconds for the ascent. Martin did not appear, however.

Down below, guarding the entrance of the building, there were two policemen, one of whom I had met on a previous occasion, when my conduct had been of a different color than at present. This encounter with an acquaintance who had reason to think well of me should be a help, yet I looked for a hard fight to pass Miss Dee through the lines. Nothing of the sort; I merely mentioned that she was going somewhere at my request, and that was enough. The only trouble was in hiding my astonishment, for the explanation did not dawn on me.

The officer thought that Miss Dee was a government detective. Even Martin himself had been in doubt and afraid of making a mistake that would be wounding to his vanity. That was why he had issued no stringent orders.

I met him in the sixteenth hall; he was coming from Drakenfeld's office, red-hot.

"Where's Miss Dee?" he demanded. "You promised me that she should be here."

"When did I promise that?" said I.

"Why, man, I gave you the eye, and you agreed."

"Oh, that was what you meant. Well, I didn't get it. Sorry. I've sent her away with a message."

Then he plumped the question at me, as to whether she was in the service, and I knew why she had got away so easily. I didn't dare keep Martin in doubt; there would be too great a crash when he found out who Miss Dee really was. I answered simply, no.

"Didn't you say she was, when you passed her out of this building?"

"Certainly not." But I knew that I should be accused of it on the day of reckoning.

"The murder lies between those two women," said he; "and you've let one of them out without even searching her. We haven't found anything. Where's the gun? I'll bet it's gone, and you're responsible."

"I'll stake my reputation on Miss Dee," said I foolishly.

"You sure have done just that," he rejoined; "and you stand to lose. Let me lay this case before you for a minute. A doctor has seen the body. There's no bullet wound; the injuries are superficial, mostly mere scratches. The explosion wasn't heavy, though it was high-powered stuff that went off—a very small quantity. The shock may have stopped Drakenfeld's heart, but more likely it was the vapor that killed him. There's no trace of any bomb. The doctor thinks the explosive was in a number of little containers made of something like gelatine, that burned in the flash. The shot touched off the dynamite, and was meant to do it, by somebody who knew what the result would be. We can't stand for mere coincidence, that Drakenfeld just happened to be carrying death under his arm when somebody held him up. The trick was turned by a person having scientific knowledge; and where does a crazy old scrubwoman come into that?"

"I think she's telling the truth," said I. "The bullet hole is the only liar; you'll find it had nothing to do with Drakenfeld. I still believe he stumbled on the stairs——"

"If that was so, there'd be a burned mark on the light-gray paint, but there isn't. The bullet hole is telling the truth, but what are you doing?" He drew a full breath, and faced me squarely. "Now, captain, I hope you'll take this as it's meant, for your own good. You don't know anything about detective work; you've had no experience; you're only a big, full-blooded kid, not long out of college. I know all about you. You were born rich, and you've lived reckless——"

rough sports, fast cars, airplanes of your own; and incidentally you've chased the girls. But it hasn't spoiled you yet. It's a damned pity you had that fall out of the sky, and queered the balance wheel in your head so that you couldn't stick in the aviation service. There's where you'd have made good. As a detective, however, you're rotten."

"Thanks for these kind words," said I; "but where do we go from here?"

"Go find your chief, no matter where you have to look. Take Miss Dee, if you can get her. Have you made an appointment?"

"Yes."

"Well, there's one chance in a million that she'll keep it. She may be the finest girl in the world; I don't pretend to judge, as yet." Martin was just in time with that. "Take her to see your chief, and don't let her out of your sight till you've told all you know, and loaded off the responsibility on the man higher up. He may not be as crazy as yourself, where a pretty girl is concerned; and even if he's worse you won't be disgraced and go to prison for anything that he does. But that's where you're headed now; for I tell you plainly that Miss Dee is in bad, and it's your honor and liberty that you risk when you shield her the way you're doing. Where do you think she's gone?"

"To the Hollis Building, with a message."

"Well," said he, pressing the button of the elevator, "this saves me the trouble of going near Union Square. I know where Miss Dee is not. And even if I meet her by accident, I'll merely tip my lid and go by. I don't want any mix-up with Uncle Sam on this case, and, besides, I've taken a great fancy to yourself. That's right, though you don't believe it. I want to give you every chance; it'll be a fine lesson for you. And you'll make quite a reputation besides, which you won't deserve, for it's mere luck that has put the solution of this murder into your hands. I hope you'll win out, but for God's sake go straight. At your left hand, my son, there's a precipice a mile deep."

The car had risen within earshot, and Martin's tone changed to one of professional cordiality.

"Well, captain," said he, "I'm on my way. Keep in mind those little matters we were speaking of, and I'll be much gratified. See you again soon."

He stepped aboard, and the shaft engulfed him. I waited for the next trip of the car,

in order to give him a chance to get out of the way, not because I had anything to detain me. I begrudged the time, small as it was; I wanted to be doing something; it was never my way to waste many minutes merely thinking. Miss Dee and I were in a mighty bad place, and it was up to me to get us out. The way was plain: Miss Dee must be protected temporarily, and then the Drakenfeld case must be solved. As to the insides of that mystery, I hadn't a rational idea, but when you know for certain that a thing has to be done, you generally do it. All I asked was the privilege of getting into action.

CHAPTER IV.

ANOTHER DRAKENFELD MAKES AN ENTRANCE AND AN EXIT.

I have said that I had no rational idea in the Drakenfeld case, nothing which could be called a theory. That is true; but I had a kind of suspicion hardly deserving of so strong a word. It was based on observation alone, on my almost unconscious judgment of the countenance and bearing of a certain person. This was the elevator man who had first taken me up, and had afterward taken me too far down—into the basement, along with Miss Dee and her chance acquaintance. Subsequently another person had been in charge of the car; and when he came for me, after descending with Martin, I asked whether the change was usual at that hour.

Earlier, so he told me. He was the regular night man, but had come on a little late that evening. And where was the day man—the one whom he had relieved? Gone home; half an hour ago. Nobody had detained him, on account of what had happened upstairs? Oh, no; my informant expressed all possible surprise at the idea. The other man was very good; more than six years in America; apparently beyond suspicion, and, besides, he had not left the car. He knew nothing at all.

"You came from the same place on the other side," said I.

"Yes; both from——" He named a city, or perhaps a region, which I had never heard of, and can't remember. I learned, however, that the other Greek's name was Frank, a designation singularly unsuited to his physiognomy.

Of course it was possible that Frank had revealed to me only his customary aspect, but I doubted it. As I recalled his face, it

wore a knowing and a cunning look; and he was certainly excited. I was persuaded that he had dropped the car into the basement not from mere inattention but from acute nervousness. Here was a clew which Martin had certainly overlooked, and I resolved to follow it up.

Martin's statement that nobody had gone down by the elevator, immediately after Drakenfeld's death, was based partly on Frank's evidence, probably corroborated by the superintendent and other persons in the lower hall at the time. But Frank might have traveled up and down in his car, and not have been noticed by anybody. If I could have spared the time, I would have tried to learn where he lived; but my business was too urgent. Frank must wait till to-morrow.

My acquaintance on guard duty at the door informed me that Martin had gone right out, to the station probably. It was my opinion, on the contrary, that he was headed for Union Square, despite what he had offensively said in regard to the chance of Miss Dee's visiting that region. Certainly I hoped that Martin would go there. Miss Dee would have left when he arrived, and he would merely have the disappointment of learning that she had really kept her word. Meanwhile I could get to Seventy-third Street in a cab. The subway express might be somewhat more speedy, but an accidental halt in the tube would be fatal; and, besides, I needed a kind of privacy that I might examine the contents of my pockets. Curiously enough, by the way, the fire in the silk bag seemed to have gone out the moment that Martin could no longer eye the breast of my coat.

Looking for a cab I ran upon the first piece of luck that had come to me thus far—except the original meeting with Angela Dee; Heaven pardon for forgetting that. By the curb I saw a very expensive and swift car, and, beside it, my excellent friend Orlando Pierce, alone. He must have been working late in his office, and he was going uptown.

It would have been useless to ask for a better man. Pierce was utterly lawless; entirely devoted to his friends, and not so situated that he could safely betray me, even if he should wish to do so. I hailed him; got the offer of a ride without asking; and the permission to sit in the rear part of the car, without offense. I told him frankly that

I had something to do which I preferred to keep to myself, and he cheerfully assented. Pierce's whole life consisted of—I might almost say depended upon—keeping things to himself.

When we were in motion, I took the silk bag from my pocket, and reverently removed the contents. Miss Dee had given me permission, but the act seemed intrusive nevertheless. There were two handkerchiefs, one badly scorched, the other not at all, a notebook blackened on one side, a letter that had got it worst of all, a vanity box, a bunch of keys, and a little purse. Turning the bag inside out I found the lining half consumed. The burned part must have been uncommonly combustible, perhaps from some liquid that had been spilled upon it recently. There were plain indications that the blaze had started near the bottom, around the hole that the discharge of the revolver had made. Apparently it had then worked under the end of the notebook and up the other side which was the chief seat of damage. The book had acted as a fireproof partition; the letter and the spoiled handkerchief had lain to the right, so to speak; the other articles, including the revolver, to the left. A single black mark on the unscorched cover of the notebook had obviously been made by the flash from the loose-jointed cylinder of the weapon at the instant of discharge.

Here was the end of any chance to argue that the fire had preceded the shot, and had exploded the cartridge. I doubted that there had been heat enough in the hottest spot; and I now knew that where the cartridge lay there had been virtually none. It was the flame from the end of the barrel that had set the bag afire. Beyond that, in the line of causation, I could not go; there was nothing here that even hinted at an explanation; and I proceeded to question the weapon itself.

As I have said, it lacked all modern safety devices, but it did have a hammer so shaped that it would not readily catch on anything. I had thought it might have caught on the cover of the notebook, but that was impossible; and the lining of the bag on the unburned side—the only one possible to consider—was without rent or seam, perfectly smooth. And what was even more convincing, the ancient mechanism of the revolver had been long estranged from oil; to work it as a self-cocker was an athletic exercise, and when it had been cocked with the thumb

the necessary pull on the trigger was equal to at least five times the weight of the weapon. I was very familiar with firearms, but here was something new to me, in the way of hard action.

This thing go off by accident? I should really like to know how. The hammer fell as if it were tired; I doubted that it would explode a shell. And there came to me a memory picture of Miss Dee ascending the steps above me, and holding the bag lightly by its cord. Her left hand had held it, raised a little, so as to be almost directly in my line of vision, as I looked up into her face. She had made no sudden movement. I could swear that if this rusty pistol had been full-cocked and hanging by a looped string around the trigger, it would not have been discharged by anything which Miss Dee did at that time. Impossible; the force required could fairly be called violent, and I knew positively that the revolver had lain as if cradled in wool when the shot came.

The car slowed up, and Pierce spoke without turning his head:

"You asked me to stop here."

"Yes," said I. "Thanks."

We were just below Washington Square, near a little shop that I knew by reputation. I restored the bag and revolver to my pockets, and left Pierce waiting for a couple of minutes while I bought a box of cartridges, of .38 caliber but of a style that couldn't be the same as those in Miss Dee's possession. I got in beside Pierce, swore him to secrecy, and asked for a little speed—a request never addressed to him in vain.

We stopped on Seventy-third Street near Amsterdam Avenue, and Pierce said he would wait. I think he expected me to reappear with a pretty girl, and was hopeful of two, but nothing was said on that subject.

When I reached Miss Dee's house there was no one at the windows, or in the hall when the key had let me in. I ascended, and all the doors were closed; the place was silent as if tenantless. Four flights I climbed, and came to the middle room, and entered, and closed the door. Above me was the skylight, partly open, and the stars shone through it—just enough to show me the outlines of that little room. I knew that it was not a miracle of order, nor even of neatness save as her own labors with it might avail.

I felt the delicacy and fineness of the life she led there, under such hard conditions.

And there came to me, with sickening reproach, the thought of the luxury that had surrounded me from my cradle, of the self-indulgence that had strewn my path with waste. I knew that I had taken more than my share while she was getting less than hers; that I had gorged myself with food while she was hungry—we together on this raft at sea, with fellow castaways that float around the sun, alive after the disaster we call birth, cut off from any refuge other than death, and with a certain stock of necessaries to be shared among us.

Why, when I owned two airplanes for my pleasure, I used to spend more for gasoline in a few days than would support this far more precious life on such a scale for a whole year. A minor item in my bill, and there were others that I didn't care to think of; for the first time in my experience I was properly ashamed.

There must have been a dangerous contagion in the air. Miss Dee had denied that she was any sort of radical, but it seemed likely that she had poisoned my mind. Doubtless it was my duty to inform against her.

I found the gas, and lighted it; and saw a few good books on a tiny stand beneath it. Opposite was the wardrobe, not a handsome piece nor in the flower of its youth. It was well filled with what seemed to be pretty dresses whose origin was indicated by parts of a frock in process of construction, which lay on the narrow bed.

At the first attempt I touched the envelope with the cartridges, took it down, counted and pocketed the contents, and substituted others from the box which I had bought. I restored the refilled envelope to the shelf, and laid the revolver beside it, after cleaning it hastily with a handkerchief, taking the empty shell from the cylinder, and slipping in a loaded one of the other pattern.

Two tenants were audible below me when I came out into the hall, but they went into their rooms, and I made the whole descent unseen. Neighbors across the street were all I had to fear, and there was small likelihood that one of them would notice or remember me. Still, I didn't loiter on the doorsteps by any means, and I kept a sharp lookout. That was why I saw Detective Martin and his partner called Paddy coming round the corner from Amsterdam Avenue.

It was a long distance for such immediate

recognition—certainly more than five hundred feet—but the Lord has given me an eye like a telescope, a fine asset when I used to fly; and I spotted Martin while his hind leg was still cut off from view by the edge of the apartment hotel in the southeast angle. There was no chance in the world that either of the men had seen me, or would do so while I was covering the short distance to Columbus Avenue. Numerous wayfarers would intervene to shield me, now that I had come down to the pavement level. I walked around the block to where the car still waited, and Pierce carried me to Duncan's. He grumbled a little at my desertion of him, but on the whole behaved like a good sport.

Miss Dee had not arrived; it was too early to expect her; I had made very quick time. At that hour it was unnecessary to engage a table; I merely waited on a divan in the gaudy entrance hall, filled with eddies of tobacco smoke, and perfumes at fifteen dollars a bottle—fifteen and up, as the merchants say.

It was not pleasant to think of Martin and his desecrating search, but he was a good, clean Irishman with gentlemanly instincts in his vitals. It might have been much worse, and, at any rate, I couldn't prevent it. The great peril I had averted, but there were others almost as serious. Martin would certainly learn who Miss Dee really was. This might not have the least effect upon his own opinion of the Drakenfeld affair, but it would influence his conduct; he would arrest Miss Dee, of course, at the first opportunity. The house would be watched, and some time in the course of the night a general alarm would be sent out unless she had already been taken.

I had no intention of letting her go home; I would take her to the house of a lawyer who had been my father's friend, was co-trustee with Bullard, but much broader in his views, and a good fellow besides. He would defend Miss Dee, and probably begin by hiding her in his house for a few days. This would be a dazzling change from the little skylight room, but the guest would ornament that mansion, and more than match its inmates in both the form and the substance of gentility.

It occurred to me that time was speeding, and that possibly I ought to telephone Mr. Conniston—the lawyer aforesaid—and prepare his mind and Mrs. Conniston's for the honor in store for them. Unfortunately I

had not yet consulted Miss Dee, and it was conceivable that she might not consent to the arrangement. Minutes passed, and still she didn't appear. I began to be haunted by a harrowing suggestion emanating from the silken and bejeweled panorama before my eyes. Miss Dee knew something of Duncan's; a good deal can be seen through the broad doorway. Was it possible that she had gone home to dress? She had worn a plain blue frock so dark in shade as to be almost black, and a very charming hat, as it seemed to me; a costume perfect in line, and exquisitely becoming; but there were few ladies among Duncan's guests who were not in evening attire. Miss Dee would have been well aware of that.

I might ring up the house on Seventy-third Street, and ask for Miss Dee, but Martin would hear of it, and might trace the call. The risk was not worth while; the chances were ten thousand to one that she had not gone home.

Could she have got into trouble on the way up? How about money? It was my impression that I had given her ten dollars; that there had been no bills of smaller denomination in my pocket. The whole sum was two hundred dollars; I had drawn it from the bank that afternoon, and had spent nothing but change, of which I happened to have a handful.

The dire thought came to me that there might have been a lone dollar on the outside of my roll, and that Miss Dee might not have inspected it till she took it from her glove to pay for the cab. Anxiously I consulted the roll which should have been made up of nine tens and a hundred. There were ten tens, and that was all. I must have given Miss Dee a hundred-dollar bill.

She had no other money; the size of the bill might have been an inconvenience, or even a source of danger. The nighthawk cabman is by no means extinct, and dreadful crimes have sprung from less temptation than the sight of a hundred dollars. I am not easily disturbed by fanciful alarms, but these were backed by the solid truth that something must have happened or Miss Dee would long ago have come to Duncan's. She could not fail to be aware of my anxiety, and as she hadn't relieved it by telephoning, she must be so situated that she couldn't.

I tried to call up our offices in the Hollis Building, but nobody was there. The only other place where news might possibly be

had was the house on Seventy-third Street. Duncan himself promised to receive any lady who should ask for me, and to see that the wire was held in case of a call by telephone. No cab being instantly available, I walked, and reached Seventy-third Street just in time to encounter Martin at the Amsterdam Avenue corner.

"Ah, captain," said he; "it's easy to guess where you're going, but she isn't there."

"I was looking for you," said I. "Information came to me that you had gone to Miss Dee's house. What did you do there?"

"Made a quiet search," he replied. "No rumpus kicked up, and no disturbance of property. By the way, it seems she's Anne Dillon's daughter. No doubt you've taken that fact into consideration, as affecting your own welfare. But I'll say no more on that point; I've given you my advice, and you've turned it down. Of course I found the gat where you planted it—the same one you had in your hip pocket, downtown. I pulled up your coat tails when you weren't noticing, and saw the butt of the gun. An old-timer, easily identified. I suppose she gave it to you, and convinced you of her innocence. Very good."

He had dropped into a sing-song tone, like a child speaking a piece of poetry, and now he favored me with the second stanza.

"I found the cartridges, too, looking just as pretty as if they were the real ones. No doubt you bought them on your way up-town; it's what I'd have done myself, if sufficiently interested. Now, if I knew what else she gave you, besides the gun—the thing that had been afire, and is still in your breast pocket—I might be in a position to agree with your theory of the case. As it is, I'll have to go my own way."

He pulled out his watch with a peculiar jerk that confused my attention because I didn't know what was coming, and prevented me from speaking what was on my tongue.

"Gee; it's getting late," said he. "I must step on the gas. So long. I hope you'll come through this affair with honor and reputation, and I don't say you won't."

"Hold on a minute," said I. "What are you going to do?"

"Turn in my report."

"Including all those dreams you've just been telling me?"

"Dreams?" said he, and touched me quickly on the breast. "Show me what's there."

He had me. Why hadn't I got rid of that bag?

"Not now and not here," said I. "Where can we meet a little later? Midnight, perhaps."

He was on the point of forcing an issue right on the spot, but changed his mind.

"Call me up, at the station, at eleven-thirty," said he, "and name the place."

"All right," said I. We saluted, and he walked away.

What could I do with the brief respite I had gained? Take legal advice from Mr. Conniston, perhaps; I could think of nothing better. I was out of my depth, and knew it. I couldn't merely throw myself on Martin's mercy, and ask him to swallow the coincidence of the accidental shot. He wouldn't do it. I should simply be removing from his mind the last possible doubt of Miss Dee's guilt.

Even with Mr. Conniston I should have difficulty in making the truth acceptable, but he was a great reader of character, and would be easily persuaded if she were present. I hailed a cabby, as my ferryman Vain Hope, and saved five seconds by a ride to Duncan's.

There was no word of any lady, but a man had asked for me; and as he wasn't precisely an ornament for the lobby of that fashionable resort he had been sequestered in a little office of the management, Duncan having taken him for some sort of stool pigeon with whom I should wish to speak privately if at all. To my astonishment this was Frank, the elevator man, still wearing that guilty look, and in addition a strip of surgeon's plaster alongside his left eye. His hands were similarly decorated. Before I could speak he told me that he had been hit by a motor car, and patched up in a drug store. That was why he hadn't come earlier.

"Who told you I was here?" said I, for it seemed incredible that this fellow should have got his information from Miss Dee.

He gave me her name at once, however; identified her as the lady who was with me in his car, and went on to say that she had sent him with a message. She couldn't meet me this evening; she would telephone me to-morrow and tell me why. Very sorry; but she had to go to Brooklyn to see a friend.

That was the gist of it, in Frank's barbarous dialect which I could fairly well understand, but no human being could write. As for the message, it sounded like the voice

of Shakespeare speaking through the lips of a spiritualistic medium; but if you have surveyed the medium before the lights were lowered, what else do you expect? Miss Dee *must* have given the address; she might not have dared to speak as she had wished; she might have failed to make her language comprehensible. Quite possibly Frank was giving me his best interpretation of what he had heard.

Where had he seen her? On William Street, near the building. He was standing at a corner when she came up and spoke to him. Had she paid him for delivering the message?—a trick question, of course. No; she had said that I would pay. She had only a hundred-dollar bill and couldn't change it.

This seemed to prove the meeting, and I tried in vain to get a clearer report of the conversation. Frank enlarged upon the subject, but from imagination rather than memory. There were, however, a few mangled phrases not original with him, and possibly Miss Dee's. "To Brooklyn to see a friend," was certainly not hers, though he persisted in declaring that it was.

"You didn't come straight up here," said I. "Why not?"

He explained that the lady had taken him across Brooklyn Bridge in a taxicab, because he lived over there and was in a hurry to get home. He had to see a man who would be waiting for him; then he would come right back to New York, so he had told the lady, and do her errand with me. She didn't have to tell him where Duncan's was, he said with pride; he had a friend who worked in the kitchen. And he would have been here soon enough, but for his accident.

His eagerness and voluble particularity as to that mishap stamped it as genuine; and it was natural besides, for he seemed to be one of those men who make bad soldiers because they lose the power to take care of themselves when under the influence of excitement. And I suspected that Frank had not been calm since the death of Drakenfeld.

What to make of the message I did not know. Essential parts were obviously missing, whether they had never got into Frank's head, or had been knocked out of it at the time of his injury. There were seeming contradictions in his story besides.

"You were loafing on a corner when Miss Dee saw you," said I; "but next minute you

were in a great hurry to go home and meet a friend. How is that?"

"No loafa there," he protested. "I wanta see you but you no come out till I gotta go."

What was his business with me? He stumbled on his answer, trembled visibly, and forgot the English words that he wished to use, yet managed to make his meaning clear in one disjointed speech not very long. This little rascal knew something about Drakenfeld, and he had come to sell it, if I would pay the price!

The impudence of his proposal almost commanded admiration. He was ignorant as a dog, but he must have known that I could use the law to make him speak; and what was more directly obvious, that I could take him by the throat and choke his information out of him. But, as he himself suggested, if I should get it that way, it might not be reliable.

I couldn't wait for any legal process, and the weakness and somewhat battered condition of my adversary made violence or threats repugnant. He read this in my face, and the answering ecstasy of relief that came into his eyes made me feel as if I had promised not to hurt him.

"If you tell me the whole truth, and it is worth anything at all," said I, "you'll get a hundred dollars."

It appeared that this was not enough. Mr. Drakenfeld had offered him much more for his silence, and, besides, he had a partner who would kill him if he sold out for too little. Any partner of Frank's might very probably commit murder, and rather than be an accessory to that crime, I met the figure, provisionally; drew a check, and sent it out to Duncan to be cashed.

Encouraged by this proceeding, Frank told me that he knew where Drakenfeld had been living, not at the Hotel Lansing, and under another name. He had two rooms in a lodging house; Frank had seen them. One was fitted up for cooking, and I gathered that Drakenfeld had enlarged the facilities in a manner regarded as mysterious—his laboratory beyond a doubt.

That was all I learned before my money was brought in; the remainder of the story I extracted while we rode in a cab to Montague Street on Brooklyn Heights. The address had cost me the full two hundred dollars; Frank demanded it, and won his point by mere readiness to waste time in haggling. To me time was worth more than money;

and, indeed, if the story was true the price was very small. There was a fair chance that I had found the key of the whole mystery, and at the very least I should be in a trading position with Martin. I should have something to say to him at half past eleven.

My elation was mingled with a serious though formless disquietude, verging on a treason to friendship. Miss Dee had gone to Brooklyn; the place where she had set Frank down from her cab—near his home—was barely five minutes walk from the Montague Street house, though in a poor neighborhood. Was it believable that she had known something of Drakenfeld and had hidden it from me?

I asked Frank if he had heard her give any instructions to the cabman. Yes; but it was only the name of a hotel or apartment house, strange to him and now forgotten. Would twenty dollars help him remember? He squirmed painfully, but admitted at last that he could not deliver the goods. He did recall, however, that the cabman had hesitated and then said: "Oh, yes; that's up on the Park Slope." This was worth a thousand dollars to me, but I paid only ten; and freed from all unworthy suspicion, I proceeded to dig out and translate the further contents of Frank's mind.

He had a friend, an iceman, with a route on Brooklyn Heights, whom he had sometimes assisted in making deliveries, thinking he might go into that business if he could save up the necessary capital. Among the customers was Drakenfeld, known as Drake; and Frank had frequently taken ice to his rooms, in the past three months. When Drakenfeld applied for an office in the William Street building he rode in the other elevator and did not see Frank; but Frank saw him, and subsequently discovered that he bore a different name, lived in a different borough, and was under suspicion as perhaps an undesirable tenant—which proves that there was one good investigator in the cab as Frank and I rode together.

The two acquaintances met in the elevator on the first day after Drakenfeld moved in. Naturally the conversation ran to ice, and Drakenfeld experienced a chill. He bargained for Frank's silence, but no money had been forthcoming, only promises. A payment was due this afternoon, and Frank was waiting confidently for Drakenfeld to settle, when news came of his death. Here was an asset gone bad in hopeless style.

The story was of the sort that can be believed though told by a liar. A naturalness and a fatality were in it, corresponding with the mysterious proceedings of the "divinity that shapes our ends rough," as Hamlet should have worded it, "Hew them how we will." And there were certain details of the improvised laboratory which were obviously veracious, for Frank described it as it looked to him who had no notion of the use of anything he saw. He knew from the maid that there was something suspicious about it, and about the man himself whose comings and goings were extremely irregular.

"But he paid good, over there," said Frank; "so all right."

Sometimes when Drakenfeld was at home his door would be locked against everybody for a day or two at a stretch, but when he was away anybody could get in. The maid kept her pass-keys in a little closet near Drakenfeld's door, to the left. He often had callers, mostly women; and though Frank had never seen any of these he quoted the maid to the effect that all were supposed to be rich, and one was very beautiful. The rooms were up one flight, in the rear; apparently in an extension.

I halted the cab at a little distance, and paid the cabby a small fee to see that he didn't run away. The house had once been a residence of some pretensions, but it was now gone shabby. In the vestibule, with the door open behind them, were two women of middle age and similar appearance, both clothed in the same style of labored and ineffectual excellence, like two sisters in the dressmaking business. One was obviously a departing guest; the other proved to be the landlady, Mrs. Mellen.

I asked for Mr. Drake, and she made no comment on the hour. She said she thought he had visitors; she would take up my name.

"It's all right; they expect me," said I, and made for the stairs, the landlady following with mild expostulations. She halted, however, at the head of the stairs, and I heard a woman call to her in a somewhat excited tone, from the hall above. "Mrs. Mellen, is that you?" with an urgent request that she come up, for some reason which did not reach my ears.

Ten paces brought me to a door with a mullioned glass panel, thinly curtained on the inside, and showing a faint light. Just as I reached it another door opened at my right hand, and an old man in a bath robe thrust

out a tousled gray head. He looked as if he had been called from bed by some alarm, but he said nothing to me.

From Drakenfeld's rooms, subdued apparently by distance, came the sound of a man's voice speaking with a slight foreign accent and very angrily. A few words were meaningless for lack of what had gone before; then I heard clearly:

"Don't lie to me, woman! I know why you are here. But you shall not get away with it."

The response went straight to my vitals, for it was Miss Dee who spoke, the cool restraint of her tone making the man's violent utterance seem trivial.

"I am here for my own safety, and I shall remain. Oblige me by coming no nearer."

He would do well to heed that, but he responded with what seemed an oath in some outlandish tongue, and I heard a sound as of a piece of furniture pushed aside.

There followed a peculiarly heavy and crashing shot, as if several weapons were discharged at once. Then whoever had been hurt fell to the floor, and there came also a lighter fall mingled with the tinkle of breaking glass. At almost the same instant there arose an outcry behind me, from the upper hall, and I heard the word "Fire!" A draft seemed to sweep toward me an odor of smoke; and I was aware that the old man in the bath robe ran toward the stairs.

All but the sounds from within the room made faint impressions on my consciousness; they were memories afterward rather than objects of immediate attention. The whole time involved in all I have described was only a few seconds, but I might long since have broken down the door. Instead I had fumbled with a key that had been left in the lock. It turned properly at last, and I passed in.

There was a vestibule from which I saw, between curtains at either side of a broad doorway, only a portion of the room beyond—a great mahogany sideboard against the left-hand wall, the gilt stems and glittering pendants of three old candelabra on its top; an end of a center table, and some dark, ponderous chairs. I was so prepared for what the room must hold that these harmless things impressed and thrilled me with a counterfeit of the expected horror. They sprang into unnatural prominence, then vanished, and Miss Dee appeared between the curtains, checking herself suddenly at sight

of me. She was powerfully agitated but without loss of dignity or control.

"Ah!" she cried, and put out her hand to me. "You must have heard——"

"Yes; I heard him threaten you." I now stood beside her, and could see the whole room. A man's body lay on the floor, face downward; evidently he had stood near the large window in the wall at my right, and had fallen outward toward the middle of the room.

"Was he armed?"

"I don't know," she said. "Yes; I think he was."

I had knelt beside the body.

"Where did you get a weapon? Did you find one here?"

"I didn't have any. Nor he, as far as I know. I saw none."

"You didn't shoot him?"

"No; it was an accident."

I looked up at her, not consciously losing faith, but merely dazed by the too striking falsity to facts. The weapon with which this man had been killed was partly hidden, but I had seen it almost instantly. There was a flat-topped writing table just beyond the body, with an end close to the window. From it the man had dragged down in falling a metal reading lamp, of unusual size and weight. Fragments of electric bulbs were strewn about. The lamp's bronze shade, a flattened pyramid more than two feet square at the base, had not been broken from the standard. Its edge had struck the barrel of an automatic pistol whose butt alone was visible, protruding from under the shade's green-beaded fringe.

Taking the man by the shoulder, I turned him on his back, and the next instant had sprung to my feet, and was staring down at him. I am not afraid of the dead, no matter how they die, but to see an apparition of the same man slain a second time in the same way, is a shock to the nerves. This was not actually the precise image of Drakenfeld's dead body, but I thought it was, at the moment.

Light from the chandelier shone on the rigid face frozen in the same expression, and on the breast fire-blackened and torn with wounds. His coat lay open, the left side of it, in rags; his shirt was soaked with blood.

I had taken Miss Dee's hand, and had felt the sudden clasp of her fingers, very cold but steady. She spoke quietly:

"Mr. Drakenfeld's brother. He told me so; and one could hardly doubt it. He came a few minutes before you; he had been here earlier, I don't know at what hour. While he was away he had learned of his brother's death, and he was greatly excited. The situation gave him some excuse—finding me here, a stranger—but he went beyond reason, accusing me of I don't know what—of trying to steal some secret of his brother's. And there was a letter which he had written and left here, for the other Mr. Drakenfeld; he demanded that I give it to him."

"Is that it?" A sealed envelope lay on the writing table.

"Yes; I had hidden it under the lamp—after he came in, but he did not see me do it. His sight was very defective; he wore heavy spectacles." They were on the floor, broken.

"What did he do?" I asked.

"He spoke violently, but kept his distance at first. Then he grew more angry, and moved toward me. I was on the other side of the table. He pushed that chair aside, and we faced each other with the table between us. He put his hand into the breast of his coat; and there was a terrible explosion, and he fell."

I pulled the pistol from under the lamp shade, and was startled to find it still warm to the touch; then indescribably surprised by its condition, when I had drawn it into view. It was ripped from end to end, as if all the cartridges that could be stuffed into its magazine had exploded simultaneously.

Miss Dee did not see it; she had turned toward the door.

"It is strange no one comes," she said. "I have heard voices constantly."

I had heard them, too, no more than a distant babble with an occasional cry. There had been no trampling in the halls, no noise of gongs from the street, nor of invading firemen. And with some small part of my mind I had inferred that, if there had really been a fire in the house, the lodgers must have extinguished it.

"Mr. Drake, Mr. Drake!" a feeble, gentlemanly voice was calling. I ran to the vestibule, and met the pale old man whom I had seen already, checking him before he got a fair view into the room. Misinterpreting my haste, he said: "There's no danger now. Some of our young men have put out the fire. It started in a bureau; a revolver seems to have gone off with no pos-

sible cause. Most extraordinary occurrence. It was lying in a drawer and there was no one in the room."

"Are you sure of these facts?" said I.

"Certainly. I've just been looking at the revolver. It was loaded with five cartridges, and so far as I can make out they all went off at once. I never heard of such a thing. And, by the way, was there not some slight disturbance here? I'm far from a trouble maker, and, in fact, our landlady is hardly in a state to be addressed on such a topic; but I heard—persons quarreling, and then I——"

"A man has shot himself," said I; "accidentally, with his own pistol. I am a government officer——" it choked me more than usual. "I shall take charge of this matter; and I'll be obliged if you won't raise any alarm as yet."

"Is the man dead?" he asked. "Is it Mr. Drake?"

"His brother, we believe. Have you ever seen him?"

"Yes, several times; some months ago, however. He used to come here often, but I heard he had gone to Russia. I had no acquaintance with either of the gentlemen."

"I led him to the curtained doorway, and he stood for a few moments on the threshold, showing no agitation but looking fixedly and sadly at the dead, doubtless with such thoughts as might come to an aged man in the presence of the messenger who will call so soon for him. He raised his eyes at last to Miss Dee, and viewed her without recognition, as I observed, but with a strange, wistful smile. He stood with death, and looked across a misty desert of the years toward youth and beauty, once his dear companions. Miss Dee neither moved nor spoke; she merely looked at him kindly. He bowed his gray head, and then looked up at me.

"It is my neighbor's brother," he said, adding: "The young lady is perhaps associated with you."

"We are together in this case," said I.

"Oh," said he vaguely; and turned toward his own room, which was in the main part of the house, its window looking out along Drakenfeld's wall.

"Can it be true," Miss Dee whispered—"what he said of that revolver?"

"I think so."

"What does it mean?"

"It means," said I, "that Henry Draken-

feld had solved one of the world's great life-and-death problems."

CHAPTER V.

THE MESSENGER OF PEACE.

It has been several times mentioned, and abundantly proved, that I am a very poor investigator; but when facts become sufficiently pointed and insistent they will begin to drill their way into the solid ivory of my intellect. It had become impossible for me to escape the knowledge that the strange series of explosions which had cost two lives, and lacked only one little inch of getting a third, setting a house on fire besides, and burdening many minds, must all have had a single cause:

I took from my pocket the cartridge shell which I had removed from Angela's revolver; and I was not surprised to find the rim perfectly smooth. The hammer had never fallen on it; some other force more subtle had effected the detonation. We examined it together, and I told her what was implied. I learned that in her total ignorance of firearms she had twirled the cylinder, after pushing in the cartridge through the groove at the side, so that the bullet would go out through the barrel. She had not known that when the weapon was cocked the shell would move to the right, and the hammer descend on a vacant chamber. Except for this childish error the result of the discharge would, of course, have been entirely different, and must have been obvious on a single glance at the weapon.

"The thing that has done this is a detonating ray," said I; "and its source is in this room."

"The lamp," said she.

I took it by the stem, a metal tube more than an inch in diameter at the slenderest point, and held it upside down. It weighed something like forty pounds. Drakenfeld could be sure that no maid would ever exert herself to move it; and the shade came low to hide any mysteries in its upper part.

Certainly there was *something* under the shade that was no usual part of a lamp's design. The flaring, hollow base held mysteries also. It was half filled with mechanism, obscurely visible in the inverted position, through a glass plate set in with exquisite workmanship, and so strong that the fall had not broken it. An insulated wire ran through the plate, and took power from

an ordinary connection with a fixture beside the window. There was a good length of wire, so that the lamp could be moved freely by any one who cared to exert the strength.

The apparatus under the shade was in the form of a tube that seemed to be a lead alloy, set horizontally, but capable of delicate adjustment for direction; and along its top there ran a longer and more slender tube—a telescope for sighting. How this could be used I failed to understand till I discovered that the shade was set in springs—of Drakenfeld's contrivance—and could be lifted off by one who knew the trick. Removing it, and setting the lamp upright, I looked through the slender tube and saw the crossed threads used in sighting.

Back of the lead cylinder, and connected with one of the sockets of the lamp, was the wreckage of a part of the apparatus that had been mostly a delicate structure of glass. Though perfectly ignorant of the subject, I guessed rightly that this had been the projector or mechanism for throwing the energy out as a single beam—obviously a prime essential of any machine designed to throw a detonating ray. The object is to explode your enemies' ammunition, and not your own as well.

If there had been any doubt remaining in my mind as to the purpose of the whole contrivance, it would have been dispelled by the discovery that on the side of the larger tube was beautifully engraved, "The Peacemaker." Drakenfeld was an idealist and friend of man, it seemed, and perhaps not precisely an enthusiast as to the League of Nations. He had meant to take a short cut to peace by blowing up all the military high explosives in the world; and at least he could have made a very startling demonstration.

While making these investigations very hastily, I had heard Angela's story. No one came to disturb us. Only one person besides ourselves knew what had happened in those rooms, and the venerable gentleman had gone to bed. The landlady, I subsequently learned, was in mild hysteria, tended by such of the women lodgers as were behind with the rent. The men were in the room where the fire had been, discussing its mysterious origin, and drinking beerless beer to the health of the local fire department, themselves.

We had a dead man for our companion, but that must be endured. We must know

the facts before we summoned help. Miss Dee told me what only a natural dolt could have failed to guess, that Frank, the elevating Greek, had raised his first stake of the evening by selling to her the same information which he had subsequently sold to me. He had accepted from her my hundred-dollar bill, and as she was left penniless by the transaction he had kindly lent her three dollars for a cab, in which he himself rode to his appointment with the iceman.

Recognizing the importance of the information Angela had come straight to Montague Street. She had learned from Frank that Drakenfeld received many visits from women; at the house she had boldly asked for "Mr. Drake," and had been permitted to go up unattended. She had let herself into the rooms with the maid's keys, and had determined to stay on guard till I should come, in response to her message sent by Frank—much of which the wily Greek had of course suppressed.

Angela's dinner had consisted of a sandwich purchased with her last fifteen cents. The cabman took all the rest. That was why she had not tried to telephone to Duncan's from that house; the instrument was a slot machine, and she had not a nickel.

By this I was once more reminded of my promise to Detective Martin. It was far past the hour appointed, but he might be waiting. I told Angela of this necessity, and asked if she would prefer to go with me to the telephone rather than remain in that room.

"I should prefer to go with you, of course," said she, very sweetly, "but I will stay. We should not leave him here alone."

Martin was still at the Old Slip Station, though he had long since abandoned hope of hearing from me. He could conceal his surprise at the sound of my voice, but I shook his placidity very soon, with considerable satisfaction.

"I'm in the house where Drakenfeld lived," said I, and gave the address. "Come over here, and I'll tell you the whole insides of the case." And I let that sink in. "Miss Dee is with me, and will be glad to see you. Between us we've worked it all out." I gave him a few seconds to digest that. "Miss Dee found Drakenfeld's brother here, the one that went to Russia. He's dead, I'm sorry to say. Yes; he was shot. Miss Dee was present, and she tells me it was an accident."

"What!" Martin roared.

"Yes," said I. "Come right over."

"I sure will," said he.

He did, and was convinced; and behaved like the good fellow that he is. His experience and capacity sufficed to clear up the remaining points in the case, the most perplexing of which had altogether escaped my attention.

I knew, of course, that the top of the Waldo Building on William Street, across the river, would be visible by daylight from the window where the lamp had stood. That was the reason why he had chosen the location for an office—on the top floor by preference. It gave him a chance to make long-distance tests with his ray. His plan was to put small quantities of high explosives in thin-walled spheres which would leave no trace beyond a little blackening of a surface on which they should be detonated. He could conceal them on the roof of the Waldo Building, just before leaving. Then, at night, he could turn on his current, and, though he might not be able to observe the results, even with his telescope, he could satisfy himself in regard to them next day. The small explosions on the roof of that tall building at night would never attract attention.

He would doubtless aim the detonator by daylight. It could do no harm while the current was not turned on. His nocturnal experiments would entail little risk of blowing anything up. Whatever the effective circle of influence might be at that distance, he would so adjust the instrument that only the lower rim of that circle would touch the roof of the building. The remaining power would be dissipated in the sky.

On the day of his death he had pointed the detonator before leaving the Montague Street rooms, but the power was not turned on, of course. A veteran experimenter of such skill would never have made that mistake. How was it done? By the brother, beyond question; not intentionally, for he knew no more of the lamp's secrets than the maid. When Jacob Drakenfeld had left America for Russia the invention was an apparent failure. A month later there was a different story to tell, and an inkling of it got through by secret channels to Moscow where Jacob was; and he returned with all speed to the United States. Henry aimed to abolish war; Jacob wanted to make soviet Russia invincible.

The bolshevik brother reached New York

unheralded, on the day when these things came to pass. It was afternoon; he went at once to Montague Street, knowing nothing of the office in New York. He waited; Henry did not come, and it seemed likely that he might go first to the Hotel Lansing, perhaps pass the night there. Jacob decided to leave a letter, and then go to the hotel.

Because of his failing eyes—he was really half blind—Jacob could not see to write even at a western window. He tried to turn on one of the light bulbs in the desk lamp, and started the detonator by some freak of chance. A half blind man was the one to do it, by long continued soft fumbling under the shade, in the course of which he pulled every cord that was there. The ray produced neither audible nor visible effect, and he was unaware of what he had done. He kept on fumbling, got a light at last, and wrote the long missive which Miss Dee subsequently found. Then he went to the Hotel Lansing where, some hours later, he learned of his brother's death. He hurried back to Montague Street, desperate, for the secret of the invention must be there and he must have it first.

Meanwhile, at a few minutes past six, when Henry Drakenfeld, laden with his explosive spheres, started for the roof of the Waldo Building the detonating ray was in operation; and when he reached a certain point on the last stairs the explosion took place, and he was killed. At exactly the same elevation, a short while later, the cartridge exploded in Miss Dee's revolver from the same cause.

So much was clear enough. But the current had remained on, for the whole evening. When Miss Dee moved the lamp in hiding Jacob's letter under it, she directed the ray diagonally upward through the house, and set off the revolver in the bureau drawer in a room on the next floor at the front. And a minute later, when Jacob Drakenfeld advanced menacingly toward the girl, and tried to draw a pistol with which to intimidate her, the detonating wave struck the weapon, and its owner fell dead.

This being true, how did it happen that Martin's squad, all armed, ascended to the Waldo Building's roof without mishap? That riddle did not even occur to my simple mind.

Look for "Detached Duty," a complete novel of the Alaskan oil fields, by Frank Richardson Pierce, in the next number.

Jacob Drakenfeld must have moved the lamp when he put out the light after finishing his letter, or more probably just before leaving the room. The change in direction was perhaps very small, barely causing the ray to miss the roof.

Drakenfeld's method of projecting it in a straight line remains a complete mystery. It is known that he employed parabolic mirrors made of double glass—like a thermos bottle; but nothing which the experts have been able to construct has even promised to be effective. The present theory is that the action depends on a gas imprisoned between the two layers of glass. As to the nature of that gas, they are in total ignorance. There was apparatus in Drakenfeld's laboratory which could be used for generating gases of various kinds, but there were no chemicals from which to make anything of value in this line. That was why Drakenfeld seemed to use so little caution in guarding his discovery. As long as certain substances were never in the laboratory except when he was there, he rested secure. Nobody could steal his idea—which means that he felt certain that nobody could analyze the gas, for, of course, he left some of it in his projector when he was absent.

I have said that this is my best information, but there is a possibility, encouraging to all true patriots, that my informants are lying to me in the interests of the public welfare, and that the secret now reposes where it will do the most good. As evidence of this cheerful view, I seem to be the beneficiary of mysterious favor, as if I had served my country in a way that can't be mentioned even in a whisper. For example, when I told Mr. Bullard that I hoped to marry the daughter of Anne Dillon, he nearly had apoplexy; but before a month had passed, and without the slightest further effort on my part, the lady who will do me the honor to become my mother-in-law was pardoned and released. Moreover, her little estate which had been so tied up in the course of her ineffectual defense that the daughter nearly starved, disentangled itself as if by magic at the merest touch of my legal wand.

If these are evidences of anybody's gratitude to me, they are ample. I ask no more.

The Luckiest Punch

By Clarence L. Cullen

Author of "Bread Upon the Waters," "Butch and the Great Bernice," Etc.

A deaf-and-dumb prize fighter! It made Dennis Delaney shake his head in disbelief merely to hear the suggestion. But wait till you read about the wallops of this wordless wonder

YOU know how you feel when somebody who's got into the room without your being aware of it gives you a sharp tap on the shoulder from behind. Especially if, at the instant you're staked to this shoulder tap by the unknown party back of your chair, you're as sour on life as a slide trombonist with a split lip.

Sour, that forenoon, was the middle moniker of yours-for-the-money, Dennis Delaney, the present prattler. I was just off the train from Cleveland, where, a couple of nights before, the gaudiest lightweight in my garage, a boy unlicked up to then, had in six horrible rounds been smeared all over the State of Ohio and several of the Great Lakes by a grinny ganoop with practically no forehead at all who previously had been performing like a cheese of the very first cream and who had been carefully picked by me as a push-over for my lad.

Get me, then, when, huddled deep in the pivot chair in the cubby-hole office of my up-town training dump in New York, bent over my desk with my elbows on it and my sore bean supported by my two hands, and with the little lump of mayonnaise that I call my mind still murdering me with its jeering memory of the swatting my snappiest kid had just stood for in Cleveland—get me when, with that kind of a hangover, I felt this sudden finger dig poked at the back of my left shoulder by somebody that had kitty-hoofed into the office without my knowing anything about it.

I suppose I didn't jump any higher, nor make any more noise to go with the jump, than a twelve-foot alligator, lying at the bottom of its caged pool in Florida, that I once saw stirred into action by a pole in the hands of the man that owned it. My head didn't exactly hit the office ceiling nor did the bleat I gave entirely smother the roar of the mufferless Henrys passing by outside

in low gear or something. All I'm trying to do is to convey the idea that this wasn't what you'd call a salubrious moment for anybody whomsoever to slip me a tap on the shoulder or on any other part of me.

The young man who'd done it looked slightly surprised, yet far from stampeded, by my way of taking his tap. I mean to say that while his smile seemed a little strained over my conduct, still it stuck; it did not rub off. His bright pair of pleasant-gleaming brown lamps blinked a bit, as if blown upon by a strong wind; yet they kept their character of standing lights belonging to him and he bent them upon me steadily, if with increasing inquiringness, as time went on.

"Say, you, nix on that startle stuff!" I bellered at him in my polished way. It wasn't my usual way of greeting a stranger; but you're to remember that on this occasion, along of that Cleveland lose-out, I was being gnawed upon by neuritis of the pocket nerve.

The young fellow, his agreeable grin still working, shook his head with a shake that said "No savvy." This puzzled and peeved me, for if he wasn't an American by his looks then I knew all the available dope would make me an Armenian.

"Don't you know any better than to gamble on getting gunned—gumshoeing into a man's place like this, in these days when the stick-up Sams are shimmying with Death for a mere suit case stuffed with century notes, and clawing at a man's coat when his back is turned: don't you know any better than that, dummy?" I bawled at this silent invader of my lose-out gloom.

It wasn't till I'd let slip that word "dummy" that I noticed something, to wit: that the young fellow, instead of looking into my eyes, as us more lucky ones naturally look into the eyes of the man who's giving us our number, was watching my mouth. Not only that, but I saw the flush that

promptly overspread his face when I turned loose that "dummy" crack. It wasn't meant for a crack, of course, and it wouldn't have been one if he had been like you and me; but it had been tossed from my chops, and it, therefore, was too late, when, atop of that swift flush, he pointed to his ears and again shook his head pleasantly. He had been reading my lips. He had not heard my "dummy," but he had seen it.

One time in Washington, a good many years ago, I was standing at a street corner with a friend and his wife, waiting to board a car. A young man with big staring eyes and a sort of fixed smile, standing close to us three, seemed to my friend to be trying his best to make goo-goo eyes at his wife. So my friend strolled over to this young man with the staring eyes and, without saying a word, slapped the starrer with both hands on the man's two cheeks. They were pretty hard slaps, too, considering that my friend was a former prize fighter. The taker of this brace of heavy slaps, with the burning brand of the big fingers on his cheeks, still stared. But his stare had no direction; it was just a poor empty gaze. "I am blind," said the starrer, in a low tone, and that was all he said; and his attendant, who had gone into the drug store at the corner to get something for the blind man, came along then and took possession of the poor starrer. My friend, a strong and big-hearted man who I suppose had never cried since putting on long pants, fell to blubbering. I had to tuck him into a taxi and take him home, and he had two years of as nice a little case of nervous prostration as ever you saw in your life. He's a middle-aged man now, but to this hour those two slaps that he handed the blind man hurt him around the heart in the middle of the night.

Well, somehow I thought of this when I saw that my flushing visitor, taking that "dummy" from my fool lips, was deaf. It wasn't so bad, of course, as that slapping job; yet I'd have given quite a few pfennigs or something if somehow I'd been enabled to reabsorb that word into my system.

But he let me down light, with a decency that grabbed a hold of me at once, by scribbling something with a pencil on a little pad that he took from his pocket and handing the slip to me. The slip carried these words: "Mr. Delaney, I want you to manage me and to get me a fight as soon as you can."

Put yourself in my brogans at that mo-

ment and look the thing over. Fight. Deaf-and-dumb man wanted a fight. Wanted me to manage him and to get him a fight. Deaf-and-dumb man that I'd never seen before, nor, so far as I could recall just then, ever even heard of.

Say, the wallop wouldn't have stunned me half so much if William Jennings Bryan had strolled into my office and said to me in a thirsty, casual sort of a tone: "Dinny, I've been off the stuff so long that my shoes are crackin' and I posi-tive-ly require to become soused at once; so send out and get me ten or fifteen dozen Martini cocktails right away, will you—and have your messenger insist to the barkeep that I want maraschino cherries in half of 'em and olives in the rest."

So, before it occurred to me that I was expected to write something by way of reply on this deaf young man's pad, I gave him the north and south. The once-over thing has got to be a sort of eagle-eyed game with a picker of boxers, seeing that there are times when he's forced to size 'em when they've got their duds on. But it didn't take a picker to see that this fellow, barring his deafness, was or would be a fighter. If you've any eye at all for 'em you can't mistake the swing of their shoulders, the hang of their arms and hands, the slip of the upper trunk where it is fixed to the waist, the lay of the lower body where it is attached to the legs, the modeling of the flanks and thighs and such like; you can get those points even if your man is swaddled in a buffalo blanket. And if, in addition to being right in these respects, he's got the fighter's face—you might as well ask me to describe the flavor of an orange or the smell of a rose as to expect me to tell you just what the real fighter's face is like—then if you're a manager of mittists you know that you'd better get him to sign on the dotted line before somebody else grabs him.

This fellow, a welter, as, of course, I saw at once, had the look of a real one. He had the points that shine through any amount of clothes. And the uncovered part of him, his chart, conveyed the rest of it—a certain lay of the cheeks on the bones, a slight upthrust of the chin with the head held at rest, a bend of the brows toward one another, a quiet, steady, watchful gleam in the eye: but here I am, like a yap, trying to picture the sure-fire fighting face just half a minute after saying it can't be described! This fellow

with the useless ears had the right kind of a ring face, which isn't saying, either, that he wasn't better looking for just the ordinary purposes of life than there was any call for him to be. He wore a noiseless, non-skid suit of clothes built by a know-how builder, his coal-black hair was slicked straight back from the front roots, and there was such a general look about him as of a youngster of twenty-three or so who must have taken most of the jumps at a good education factory somewhere that it hurt to think how he had been cheated of the use of his voice and his ears.

Hurt, of course. But— That, it seemed, would about let me out—being hurt about it. A box fighter who'd never be able to hear a referee's opening instructions or the command to "Break!" let alone the clang of the gong? A ringman that I, as his manager, would have to write a letter to from my ringside seat whenever I wanted to tell him to play for the other fighter's pantry or to warn him in his corner to keep a wick burning for the other fellow's corkscrew left? I couldn't see it. I'd have writer's cramp and get nowhere at that. I'd seen a dummy get away with it as a big-league pitcher—get away with it all the better for not being able to hear, when he blew, the mob's roar to "Take him out!" But a box fighter is different.

But there he stood, still smiling and with the question in his eyes, waiting for me to scratch Yes or No to that question on his pad. Well, I shine more as a monologist than as a scratchist. When it comes to writing, I'm the original Alibi Abe; here in the home burg I bully Jim Mulroon, who helps me manage my string, into scratching my business letters, and when I'm on the road with my battlers I dictate my letters to my wife to the typewriter girl with the oh-you shirtwaist in the hotel lobby and then explain when I get back to the wife, who doesn't believe it, that the girl I did the dictating to was cross-eyed and had a hare lip.

So, being pocketed that way, I was just about to grab the deaf lad's pad and pencil and scrawl, "Sorry, kid, but nothing doing," or something like that on it, when Jim Mulroon, my right mitt at this fight-managing game, breezed into the office from my downtown training plant.

You know Jim. Jim's wireless is working all the time. He grabs the meaning of

a dead-new situation with the same speed he used to show when, ten years ago, he was the fastest middleweight out on the slope. Jim caught this upstanding slick-haired youngster's eye before he caught mine. Maybe he saw the pad and pencil, too. Anyhow, I could see that Jim instantly was jerry.

"Wants me to manage him and to get him a fight right away, Jim," said I, turning my face away from the youngster this time so he couldn't read my lips.

"Does, hey?" grunted Jim. "Well, your luck still holds, don't it? You've got something."

I stared at Jim. What was he handing me—a fighter who was deaf and dumb, and I'd "got something."

"I believe I know who this boy is," Jim, reaching out and taking the lad's pencil and pad, mumbled to me. "If I'm right there's a spot for him in your shed. I'll tell you how and why later."

Jim, scratching swiftly on the pad, asked the voiceless boy for his name. The lad wrote it down and handed the slip to Jim: Jack Fleming was the name.

"Thought so," said Jim, grinning at me as he read the name. "And," he went on, his grin deepening, "you were just about to give him the gate when I came along. Boss, you're getting old," and he handed me the slip with the deaf lad's name on it.

Jack Fleming: the name, slowly percolating into the old bean, sifted back to me. Then I remembered that I had, after all, heard of a dummy fighter, though I'd never seen one.

"Isn't he this here cozy-corner, parlor-social, deaf-and-dumb amateur welter that's been mopping up all the amateurs in his class over in New Jersey this last year or so?" I asked Jim. You'll be gathering from this that I ain't crazy over amateur mitteurs, and that's the correct gather. But an amateur, no matter how highly praised and plugged for in amateur circles, who had neither voice nor hearing! I couldn't make Jim's angle at all. But, since he'd told me he'd explain later, I was willing to become a piece of the office furniture while Jim went through with it, especially as there'd be writing to do.

I was looking over Jim's shoulder when he took the pad and scribbled again. "Care to put 'em on with me? My name's Mulroon," was what Jim wrote. The lad read it, and this time his smile spread halfway across his chops. The name Mulroon meant some-

thing to him. He and Jim gripped mitts. Jim showed him into a dressing room where there were trunks and gym shoes, and himself stripped to give this amateur a try-out. So I didn't have a chance to take Jim aside, as I wanted to, and ask him what he meant by trying to wish an amateur dummy on me, for just then some bird that I had a business date with came in. This business visitor had just gone out, five minutes later, when from my office I heard a queer "Plip-plop!" followed by a bump out in the gymnasium. "Jim has handed that kid the old one-two," said I to myself, and I went out to the gym to see how fast the youngster could pick himself up from the boards.

But it was Jim who, laughing a laugh that was really meant, was picking himself up.

"Soaked me, boss—did you hear it?" said Jim, lining up in front of the lad again. "And, say," Jim added to that, "watch the way the pup uses that left, will you? It's a cobra!"

Jim, though eight years out of the ring, kept himself in trim, and for four or five rounds, all that were ever needed to try out a candidate, he still was as fast as light. I'd seen him put perhaps five hundred men through their paces and none of them had come anywhere near flooring him. It astonished me that this dumb amateur lad had been able to do that to Jim. But when they crashed together for this final round nothing that either of them pulled would have surprised me. Jim, for all that cheero laugh of his on getting up after being knocked down, wasn't going to be showed up that way again by any candidate, especially an amateur, no matter how good, right in front of his boss' eyes. The deaf lad, for his part, saw at once that Jim was going to make that final try-out round a blazing session and he was taut, tuned up, and ready. It was the hottest finish to a work-out séance ever pulled in my gym or anybody else's. Jim tried, with all his inside stuff, to send over something—anything—that would put that deaf boy down in order to even up that part of it. But it was no go. The lad, just as determined not to take a floor squat, resisted Jim's tries like a high-jumping tarpon fighting the hook. The youngster, classed as an amateur for his own reasons, boxed like a ring-seasoned professional. They were both smeared quite a bit when Jim, pulling off his gloves, grinned at me through the red streaks on his face.

"Speed to burn," Jim, turning his face from the candidate's, said to me. "Got everything. Ain't much I could teach him. Bag of gravel in each mitt, if it's punch you're inquiring about. Get his handwriting to a contract, boss. He'll ornament your barn."

I threw an arm around Jim's shoulders and dragged him off into a corner so this deaf boy wouldn't be able to watch my lips.

"Look a-here, you bone dome," said I to Jim, "are you trying to ditch me by loading me up with dead ones? This afflicted kid's stuff may look all right in a gym—I ain't denying he kept you busy—but where would it get him in a ring? His record in the amateur ring doesn't make a dent in me; it wouldn't dent me up any if he'd kayo'd every amateur in New Jersey from Hoboken to Cape May. D'ye suppose any professional mug we'd match him against would have any sympathy for his affliction? Ye-eh he would—in his coffin! The mug would grab his percentage, meaning this deaf-and-dumb lad's infirmity, like a razor-back rooting up peanuts. Forget it, Jim. You want to shuck some of these romantic ideas you picked up when you were boxing for the movies in California. A deaf-and-dumb professional prize fighter who could clean a man of his class that could talk and hear in a regular ring hasn't been born yet, and isn't going to be. Write this clean kid a little billet-doux telling him we're much obliged for meeting him and let him go his way."

"You're making a mistake, boss," said Jim, dead in earnest.

When Jim dishes anything up to me in that tone, which he doesn't often use, I'm open to further argument.

"How do you make that?" I floundered. "Who'd we match this speechless and listenless welter boy against, for instance?"

"I've got his man all picked—man made to order for him," Jim, who gets cagy on me at times, surprised me by coming right back.

"Have, hey?" I tried to pin him. "Name this made-to-order oriole of yours for me, will you?"

"Tell you later, boss—it'll take a bit of explanation, and we've got to keep this kid on our staff by paying him a little attention." Jim, gone suddenly cunning on me as I thought at the moment, warded off my pinning stuff. "It's a wonder you wouldn't read the papers," he tacked to that, starting for his dressing room. "They've been full of

this fellow lately—not of his fighting but of other matters concerning him and his affairs. With all the advertising he's been getting he'd draw a cracking gate."

"What d'ye mean—'other matters?'" I demanded of Jim.

"Tell you later," he irritated me by parrotting again, and then he went into the dressing room to wash up and resume his duds. He came out, dressed, at the same instant the deaf lad, all cooled out and clean in his street clothes, appeared.

Jim wrote something on the lad's scratch-pad which, reading it swiftly, the mute instantly replied to with the stub of a pencil.

"Come on, boss," said Jim to me. "I asked him to name somebody who could act as interpreter, and we're going around to see her right away."

"Her?" I shot at him.

"Yep—his wife," answered Jim, dodging my lamps, which he knew were trying to bore holes in him. "Telephone for a taxi, will you? We're going immediately. If we're lucky we'll have this speedy cub's moniker to a contract by noon."

Well, when Jim Mulroon, who's generally a pretty tractable cuss in all his dealings with his boss, adopts that rough-stuff style with me, I always make it my business to let him get away with it, remembering as I do in time that Jim has acquired the fixed habit of making few mistakes. So, five minutes later, Jim and I were anchored in the back seat of a taxicab, with the fighting mute planted in front alongside the chauffeur.

"Boss," Jim handed me the prod when the taxi was on its way, "if you'd learned how to take an occasional peek at the headlines on the front page of the newspapers instead of turning right over to the page where the fight news is spraddled around, you'd have a better line on this fast deaf-and-dumb boy that you're going to sign in a few minutes for one fight at least."

The one way to duck that was to tell him that nobody could be blamed, these past few years, for taking great pains to avoid the page of the newspapers that carried, weary day after another weary one, the world-without-end League of Nations wrangle.

"Because this Jack Fleming and his wife," went on Jim, ignoring my sidestep, "made a lot of noise on the newspapers' front pages for some days a couple of weeks back."

"If there was all that noise," said I, sulking on Jim a little, "you must have carried

a vest-pocket microphone to hear Jack contributing his share of it."

"It was the boy's measly, coin-cootified dad, working in combination with the authorities, that made all the uproar," said Jim. "The old man had son Jack pinched under the terms of the Mann law—the white-slave act, you know."

That made me sit up while Jim told me about it. I'd missed it completely in my whirl of getting ready for that as-I-supposed clean-up Cleveland fight that came close to cleaning me.

"This old Fleming bird," said Jack, "doesn't ever know how he's going to eat from day to day or where he's going to roost two nights together, for the reason that he hasn't got anything except a factory of some kind that employs three or four thousand men over in one of those big New Jersey manufacturing towns. Meaning that money, to him, is just marbles. Son Jack, after his schooling—it was at college that he had started right in being Mop-up Monte with the gloves—was taken into the old man's factory to pick up the manufacturing game from the ground up. This was when the lad was just twenty. Two months after starting in, wearing the dungarees, at the factory, the young fellow went down with a bad dose of the scarlet fever that was sweeping the town. You know about the different things that scarlet fever can do and does do to a grown man, or a grown woman for that matter, who comes out of it with life. When this Fleming youngster came through his case of scarlet fever he was perfectly all right except that he no longer could speak or hear."

Jim was beginning to get me where I lived. With a bunch of cubs of my own coming along I jotted down scarlet fever, on the registering tablets of the old bean, as a game to be ducked by the D. Delaney home outfit, and I felt a little sorrier than ever for this Fleming lad, sitting quiet there alongside the taxi driver.

"The trained nurse who brought Jack through this illness," Jim went on, "was a girl he hadn't known very long; only twenty years or so, meaning all his life. He'd carried her school books and pulled her pigtails and rubbed snow down her neck when they were tikes growing up. Then, after dropping out of Jack's orbit for a number of years, here she comes back, a woman and a graduate nurse, to take care of Jack with his in-again out-again delirium of scarlet

fever. You know how that stuff would work out. This time it wasn't just the usual nurse-and-patient thing, because they'd known each other all their lives."

I was beginning to wonder if, after all, there wasn't some kind of a fight I could fix up for this Jack Fleming of Jersey.

"Jack, deaf and dumb, but no less determined for that, went after this girl with a grizzly gun and a slip noose, so to speak, as soon as he got on his feet," Jim went on. "He wanted her for hisn, and meant to have her, and that's all there was to it. She was interested in her nursing profession and tried to hold this young huntsman off, but it was no use. He kept rounding her up, interfering recklessly in her business no matter how important a case she was on, and he wore her down; this wearing process being all the worse because the girl herself, though, of course, she wouldn't let him know it, was for Jack as strong as a she-wolf from the start."

"Where'd you get all this dope on the case, young feller?" I demanded of Jim.

"Papers had acres about it after the blow-off," replied Jim. "Jack learned the deaf-and-dumb sign language right away, and he bullied the girl into mastering it, too, so's he could tell her right to her face where she stood with him and how he meant to have her whether she liked it or not. The girl, knowing that Jack's dad, a fiery old flamingo, had it all salted down that his boy was going to marry a society doll, the daughter of a fellow manufacturer in the town, stalled Jack for nearly three years. Then, about two weeks ago, something busted in Jack. He wasn't going to be stalled any longer and he ran amuck. His method of running amuck was to tuck that nurse of his under his arm and roll her to New York in his run-about and otherwise make arrangements to marry her smack-dab out of hand. The pup literally kidnaped her. But his pig-headed dad, a pretty fast worker himself, got the tip before son Jack and the bride-to-be were halfway on their motor ride to New York. The old man got in touch by phone with the Federal authorities in New York. When Jack took the girl to a New York hotel, in the early afternoon, leaving her there before she'd taken her hat off in order to go out and make the marrying arrangements, he was pinched outside the hotel by a brace of Federal agents, under a Federal warrant, for violation of the white-slave law—carrying a

girl from one State into another for illegal purpose: you know that Mann Act dope. Nice old buccaneer of a dad for a clean kid to have, eh?"

I pulled a really meant rumble or two from low down in the larynx, and Jim went on:

"Jack, without a voice to explain, and almost too rattled to write on his little old pad, was in pretty Dutch, sitting on the edge of his cell bunk. But he got word somehow to a gang of his college mateys in New York, and they rallied around Jack like sand-pipers on a clam beach at low tide. Whatever pull and power the boys lacked their fathers possessed. A Federal judge was dug up *pronto* and Jack and his bride elect were carried before him. It didn't take Jack and his friends two minutes to convince that level-headed judge that young Fleming had come to New York on a marrying expedition, and not to mess up the Mann law. The judge himself, after turning Jack loose, married 'em and God-blessed 'em in his chamber, with the groom's old college chumps, several of whom he'd boxed with and laid out cold, still rallying around. So that's the story, up to now, of this deaf-and-dumb lad you were going to shoot over the stile when I came along. I had a hunch he'd take to professional fighting, with the justifiable soreness he carries in his youngster's heart over the way his dad handled him and the girl. And he can fight, boss—don't make any mistake about that! And I s'pose he'll draw a lean gate in the fight we're going to get for him, after all the tons of high-priced newsprint paper that've been used up in stating his case!"

The wind sweeping through the taxi windows was giving me a cold in the head or something that made me use my handkerchief—phonily—a lot when the taxi stopped in front of a plain-looking apartment house away uptown a few doors from St. Nicholas Avenue. It was an elevatorless apartment house, and Jack, on his toes to give the girl the gist of the morning's doings, led the way, three steps at a clip, to the modest little flat on the fourth floor. In one of her nursing uniforms without the cap—I learned later that Jack liked her to wear around home the white he best knew her in—she was broiling the chops and making some soda biscuits at the kitchen range where we found her. Jim and I stood by while the swift talk of the fingers and the silent lips went on for a brief minute or so between the boy-man and his girl-wife. I'll say it hurt a little to watch

it, too, knowing as I now did that the lad had been able to speak and hear like anybody else only three years before. The young fellow, telling her his news as far as he knew it, was all smiles, his brown lamps gleaming. The girl was smiling, too—but I haven't got three grown girls of my own, let alone the slightly older girl known as my wife, without having learned when there are tears lying a very short distance back of the smiles of women.

But, held-back tears or no, you'd have needed just one look into the eyes of that girl, bo, to see that she was a right one! I say "right" before I mention her good looks, because the first means more in the long run. But this young Mrs. Fleming, ex-nurse, was there strong in both respects—a chestnut-haired girl with a skin like a Cherokee rose for all her cooping up in hospitals and sick rooms, and a pair of gray eyes that a man wouldn't want to lie to even if he thought he could.

"Name of Delaney, Mrs. Fleming—Dennis Delaney, manager of boxers; and this is Jim Mulroon, my assistant, who's after being knocked down this morning by somebody you know, and Jim's not so easy to knock down at that," said I, to ease the situation, sort o'.

She shook hands with the pair of us just as if she'd been used to meeting ring ruffians all her life and said, in as nice a voice as you'd want to listen to, that she really must put on the rest of the chops and make some more biscuits, now there was company for dinner, for, of course, we'd have to stay. I was going to act pretty and say, No, we couldn't think of staying, when Jim handed me a kick on the leg, his nostrils being filled with the fragrance of those baking biscuits.

So we sat down to that nice meal, cooked by a woman who knew how, and talked things over; three of us, that is, talked, while Jack, watching our lips, listened his way. The girl didn't want Jack to be a professional fighter, of course. She blamed herself for having come between Jack and his father—though she added, with her quiet smile, that even yet she couldn't think of any way she could have avoided that, seeing that she had been literally dragged from the bedside of a convalescent patient and out of the State of New Jersey to marry Jack. As for his fighting professionally, he insisted upon doing it, at least until he had a chance to look around—so what could she do? He was

going to make a living by fighting, the one game he really knew, until he could pick up some other way of taking care of a wife. As to picking up some other way, he was handicapped, of course, by the dreadful thing that had come upon him after his illness three years before; she said this last with her lips scarcely moving at all, so that Jack, on the other side of the table, could not read what she was saying. She had wanted to go back to her nursing for a while as a tide-over; but he would not hear of that, and only looked abused when she suggested it. Already she'd found him a pretty hard-headed husband—she didn't muffle or mask her lips when she said this with her smile but looked square at him. So, seeing he was bent upon fighting, fighting, she considered, was just about what Jack would do, despite any views she might possess on that subject.

"Can he really fight regular professional fighters?" she ended by inquiring of Jim and me, looking wonderingly from one to the other of us. Jim laughed.

"You'd think he could if you'd seen me sprawling, and in half a nap at that, in front of him an hour or so ago," said Jim.

The upshot of this talk and finger fest was that Jack, after reading, with his wife looking over his shoulder, the terms of the blank contract which Jim produced, signed on the dotted line. D. Delaney, by way of new stuff, was to be the manager of a mute mitteur.

"Jim," said I to my Mulroon rogue when we were shooting back downtown in another taxi, "if you can now make up your mind to endure the misery of a lucid interval for a minute or two, maybe you won't mind telling me what we're going to do, if anything—speaking prize-fightishly, if you get me—with this clean lad who can neither speak nor hear?"

"I told you, didn't I, that I've picked a stack-up for him?"

"I heard you—and there ain't no such animal as a stack-up in the pillow pastime, as you ought to know," said I. "But, be that as it may, put a name to this push-over of yours, will you?"

Whereupon Jim, brazener than brass about it, named a Northwestern welter who stood next in line to the welter championship. If you don't know the one I mean when I name him "Tip" Fogarty, which is far from it, it doesn't make any difference. But you know the one I'm talking about all right.

I gave Jim the nut-pick eye—two of 'em, in fact. I wanted to see if he had gone off his dip. Because it looked to me that if he hadn't, then I must have. The candidate for the welter belt a set-up for this deaf-and-dumb lad who'd done nothing but put away the amateurs of his weight over in Jersey? If Jim wasn't slipping, then I had slipped.

"Pipe," said Jim, with a hard grind of the jaws, chucking back my glare. "Skinch. Flawless, blue-white, first-water, pear-shaped, platinum-set push-over. You hear me, boss!"

I never interpose when they start to rave on me. There's no nutriment in that; it's never any use. But I was just about to ask the taxi driver to stand by with the net and to 'bout ship and steer for Bloomingdale when Jim stayed me by shooting me a foolish question.

"Boss, d'ye happen to know how this Fogarty four-carder has been winning all his fights?" was this question.

"I hope so, James," was my restrained reply, for I didn't want to intensify his mania till I got somebody to help me hog tie him. "He's been winning 'em, so to speak, with his hands. He may employ the knee occasionally when the referee isn't looking, but as to that I can't say. I can fairly state, however, comma, that I have yet to see him use his feet to win."

"He's been winning 'em," Jim soaked me right back, glowering as if I were the guilty party, "with his mouth!"

"Zat so?" I inquired, hoping to keep him quiet by kidding him along until I could call in a couple of traffic cops to smother him. "With his mouth, hey? What's the referee doing, then, while he's biting their ears off—playing checkers with the timekeeper?"

"With his mouth!" Jim shook that off with a snap of the teeth as he herded me close in my corner of the taxi. "With his low-down, dirt-daubing mouth—that's how Fogarty's got the winning ring around his number in his last seven fights!"

"Y'don't say!" said I, still bent on tranquilizing him. "His mouth must be considerable orifice. I didn't know it could be done. But 'scuse me. I've only been in the game thirty-two years. If it can be done with the mouth, just like that, maybe it's a good system—suppose we get the dope and teach it to our bunch?"

"The two last men that Fogarty trimmed,"

Jim went on, giving the go-by to my would-be placidizing persiflage, "went hunting for him with gats as soon as they got their duds on, and they'd have plugged him if they'd been able to find him. Not because he'd licked them. But because of the foul-faced line of talk that he tossed at them in the ring. If it's system you're talking about, that's the Fogarty system—suddenly pinning his man stiff in front of him with a swift cascade of the grimmest, grindingest chatter that ever issued from a supposedly human gash, and then, before his man can recover from the astonishment and the sore-butcher rage that for a moment—just long enough—sweeps him and makes him helpless, Fogarty puts over the haymaker and the trick is done; he's folded away another one mainly by the use of his face!"

Well, I knew all about this, of course. I'd seen and heard Fogarty do it, not once but several times. But that was part of the game—a dirty part, but still a part. I failed yet to get Jim's idea. But he still had the floor and my own ears are all right.

"You know better than I do," Jim went on, "that there's no use warning your man in advance that he's going up against a dirty ring talker. The suddenly pulled rough gab of a foul-faced fighter will pin and paralyze, for a short time anyhow, even an old-timer that's used to it. The measliest licking I ever took, a knock-out when I was at my best and when I was winning the fight at that, was handed me out yonder in San Francisco twelve years ago by a fellow who suddenly, without having up to then said one word during the scrap, turned loose on me the worst name that one man can call another, and then enlarged upon the name with details. His stuff, though I'd been long enough in the game to know better, drew me tighter than a snare-drum string before it occurred to me that this was exactly what he wanted, but it occurred too late; the next I knew I was in the dressing room, though I'd had the rough gabber four times on the ropes in the previous round. Well, that's the Fogarty method. Fogarty's a scientist at it. He knows to a split second just when to turn the foul faucet on and just what to say to dagger each man the deepest. He must keep a card index of the sensitive spots of the men he's going to fight, to know how to pucker 'em up the way he does with his poison-tipped blow-gun darts. And he knows how to wait like a jockey that lays back of

the leader on the rail with his own horse under wraps. I'll give all this to Fogarty. I'm not saying he isn't good at his own particular game."

"Scientist—card-index keeper—waiter like a jockey—blow-gunner—et cetera, et cetera; and he knows how to fight a little, too, doesn't he, Jim?" said I, to get at the nub of this thing.

"Yes, boss, Fogarty can fight," replied Jim, now perfectly cooled out and pitching his tone low enough to make it all the more convincing. "He can fight all right. But Jack Fleming can lick Fogarty on his merits on the best day or night that Fogarty'll ever see!"

I had thrown Jim Mulroon's opinion into the discard on just two previous occasions that concerned my bank roll heavily, and both times I was dead wrong. So, seeing something else coming, this time I listened.

"And when I say 'on his merits,' I mean just that, for Jack will have the edge, which the other Fogarty-trimmed ones didn't have, of not being able to hear, so there'll be no dirty stuff uncoiled on him by Fogarty to rattle him into rigidity. With the fight so rigged, Fleming, you take it from me that doesn't often prophesize, will slam seventeen different kinds of stuffing out of Fogarty or my feet never felt the feel of ring canvas!"

When Jack gets emphatic like that, which is the rarest possible number with him, I listen still harder. Still, I fumbled my chin with my fingers a little while thinking it over. Jack, seeing this fumbling, came at me with the final argument.

"If you don't like your contract with Fleming, boss," said Jim, "turn it over to me. I've got a little change tucked away—enough to finance a fight between Fleming and Fogarty. I'll stand a tap on my small roll that Fleming'll take Fogarty—and in the taking, with all the advertising Jack's been getting, the gate the scrap'll pull will make me cozy for a year or so, anyhow!"

Can you see the kale-crazy D. Delaney, as my knockers call me, turning over a contract that looked so good to so good a judge as Jim Mulroon?

"I'll go get Fogarty for this deaf-and-dumb boy, Jim," said I.

"Just my danged luck, to talk myself out of a wad," said Jim, and that ended the session.

It so happened that Chuck Cahill, the Seattle box-fighting impresario who was man-

aging Fogarty, was in New York at the time, trying to smoke out the welter champion for his man.

"Got something soft for your Fogarty fish, Chuck," I said to him in his hotel lobby that night.

"Lay off me, Dinny," was his come back. "We're not scouting for soft picking now. Nobody but the welter champeen—that's the bird I'm here to snag."

"I've got a welter for Fogarty that'll pull a bigger gate, either in New York or Philadelphia, than would a fuss between Fogarty and the welter champion in either of the big towns," I told him.

"Oh, y'have?" said Chuck, grinning incredulously. Then he started to kid me. "You don't happen to have the Orloff diamond in your jeans, and a coupla sea lions, do you?" he inquired of me.

"Deaf-and-dumb boy," I explained, watching him. "Name of Jack Fleming."

The way this coin-conscious Chuck Cahill sat forward on his hotel lobby seat justified Jim Mulroon's prediction about what the gate would be. Chuck, having been in New York for a month, had been reading the papers, even if I hadn't been.

"You signed that kid?" Chuck, his cagy eyes a gleam, asked me. "Say, if I'd really believed he'd turn professional, as I had a hunch he might at that, I'd ha' beat you to him. He's good, I hear. And sa-ay! you're right about the gate! It'd be a bumper gate, after all that front-page stuff your dummy got along of his marriage. Look a here, Dinny, you can have Fogarty for your heavy-advertised pup; I might as well eat up that gate while I'm hanging around waiting to trap the welter champeen for Fogarty."

"Fogarty," said I, "won't be in line for the welter championship when my boy gets through with him."

I like to furnish little laughs like these for people I'm negotiating with, if only to grease the cogs. Chuck's laugh was a merry one.

"Dummy boy, that's been puss-in-the-cornering with Jersey amateurs, is going to clean us, hey?" he chuckled, and then we got down to business details and signed the parchments.

"Will our Fleming boy be ready for Fogarty within a month?" I asked Jim Mulroon half an hour after leaving Chuck with the fight arranged for.

"He's ready now," said Jim, his eyes aglow. "Got Fogarty for him, have you?"

"They'll fuss in Phillie a month from tomorrow night," I told him. "Fogarty's training in Chicago for the fight he thinks he's going to get with the welter champion. Chuck, of course, says that Fogarty, preparing as he is for the big stuff, is better than ever. D'ye still like our deaf boy to beat Fogarty, Jim?"

"Like him?" growled Jim. "I wish now, instead of boosting, I'd knocked; if I'd done that I might have bunked you into letting me have that contract."

Jim took Jack, next day, over to a quiet little settlement on the far end of Long Island to put him through the road work. There was a breeze in the fight columns of all the papers when the fight was announced. The advertising the mute had got such a short time before had planted him in the public eye; his dad's behavior, the lad's honorable and swift release after the pinch, the marriage ceremony in the judge's chambers—the whole thing was gone over again. Some of the pugilistic writers lammed me for matching my mute against such a clean-up Carlo as Fogarty. There were a couple of righteously wrathful editorials to the effect that a deaf-and-dumb man should not be permitted to participate at all in a fight, but if such a thing had to be, why, a deaf-and-dumb opponent should be picked for him—as if fighting dummies were as frequent as firemen tilted back on chairs in front of an engine house! I let 'em wheeze. It was all grist for my mill. It all spelt g-a-t-e, gate.

Chuck and I had chosen Philadelphia for the scrap because there's a bigger box-fighting arena there than there is in New York, because the game was going stronger just then in Phillie than it was in New York, because they're keen for New Jersey boxers in the Penrose town, because there's a high-stepping gang of amateur boxers of class in Philadelphia that fan the fanatical flames and make business, and several other just as good because. Practically all of the Philadelphia pugilistic writers—than whom, as you'd say, there ain't any harder hitters in the pen-pushing pastime—pasted D. Delaney good and proper for his all-round ivoriness in matching a mute, and an amateur mute at that, against a bobcat of the Tip Fogarty species. Again, no damage done; on the contrary, just oil for the gate.

Jim brought Jack, weather-bronzed and

wire hard, up to town from Long Island on the forenoon of the night's fight, and the three of us went up to the dinky Fleming flat together. Jack talked so fast and happily to his wife about how fit he felt and the like that you could hear all his knuckles cracking at once. When it came for the three of us to point for the Philadelphia train, and when Jack had started to bid her good-by until the next morning, when, said he with his hands, he hoped to bring home the bacon—why, she just put on her hat and said she was ready.

"For Phillie?" I asked her. She nodded. "Not to see the fight?" I inquired, knowing that "not" to be superfluous.

"To see the fight," said she. "Why not? I have seen many fight for their lives, and some die. I have seen Jack himself fight for his life. Why should I not see him fight now—for me?"

It sounded like a good argument to me; to Jack, who grabbed the words from her lips with his eyes, it looked even better; so we were a quartet instead of a trio on that ride to Philadelphia. She sat in a ringside box with Jack and me. There were plenty of women there; wives with their husbands, nice girls with their beaus; yes, and daughters with their fathers! She's the unafraid old burg, is Phillie, despite all this yammer about her smuggy-wuggy slowness.

The gate, as per prognostications, was a gong-ringer. Two or three thousand couldn't get in at all. The Fleming family, it appeared, affiliated more with Philadelphia people of their kind than with New Yorkers of their rating. Besides that, Jack's dad, a member of Phillie's solid old Union League, had had to do a bit of explaining to that outfit over his treatment of his son in connection with the latter's perfectly legitimate efforts to get married; and the news of that flurry, leaking, helped to fatten the gate to bumper size.

Fogarty showed first in the ring after the flock of preliminary four-round fusses, and when he shucked his bath robe Jim and I could see with half a wick that his training in Chi hadn't been tiddledywinks, but training. The familiar crafty glitter sparkled in his shifty lamps, and he looked as confident as a lumberjack about to lay in a light lunch. Nor did his dead-sure air vanish when Jack appeared in the opposite corner and shuffled out of his swaddlings. Fogarty, a little taller and reachier and rangier generally than Jack,

who was of the close-coupled kind, of course was the bet with the ringsiders, and they offered two and a half for one, up in the thousands, against the amateur mute. When I saw Jim Mulroon, whose money doesn't come exactly easy, seeing that he works for me, take two thousand dollars' worth of this two and a half price from a man in the box back of us, I detached four thousand from my slender hoard and registered the same against another sure-thing bird's ten thousand. I like to maintain the morale of my employees when they're betting, even if I hate the thought of winning wagers of money.

Jack's wife, silent alongside me in the box, for the first time looked a little sorry for being there when a big rough neck laugh broke from the mob at the sight of a sporty newsdealer, a mute who'd learned the quiet language at a Philadelphia deaf-and-dumb institution, standing alongside the referee in the ring and translating, for Jack, the referee's instructions into the swift and jerky finger dialect. You'd never guess, until you saw it, how odd such orders as "Break when you're told to!" and "No clinch-walloping!" and "Nix on the kidney basting!"—how peculiar such referee's remarks look when they're carved on the air by the flickering fingers of a finger talker. The translating mute, for Jack's benefit, was planted among Jack's handlers to give our boy the gong signals, and so on, with his mitts.

The fighters flew together at Gong One like a pair of fish hawks battling for a pompano, and at the back-away Fogarty felt of something that was going to be a lump just above his right eye. But his sneer looked perfectly hearty as he mumbled something.

"Habit's pretty strong, isn't it?" said Jim in my ear. "That wallop over the lamp has made Fogarty forget already that Jack can't hear the stuff that he's uncoiling out of the sou'west corner of his chops."

They'd collided again before Jim finished his remark, and right away it became apparent that Fogarty, far from forgetting about his man's lack of hearing, was deliberately playing for Jack's ears. Fogarty's feints were all for Jack's middle, to be followed by lightning rip swings with first one mitt and then the other for Jack's ears. Even Jack's wife saw this, and shuddered.

"Don't mind," Jim, touching her on the sleeve, said to her. "I've spent a month warning Jack that Fogarty would play for his ears, and Fogarty misses 'em every time

by a foot. That's the way Jack made me miss 'em whenever I pointed for them in boxing practice. He knows how to protect his ears. Don't worry."

It was a sparkling Session One, perfectly even—Steve at the gong—so even that the betters in the boxes around us promptly cut the price against Jack to eight to five. And the price against our lad tightened to this figure despite the fact that everybody saw that Fogarty was going after the mute's ears and that the general opinion was that if Fogarty got to one of the ears with a heavy slam something would blow up inside Jack's head and he'd be through. The price was cut because to the eyes of the wisesters it already looked as if even the very-good Fogarty would have his work cut out for him to land that swat on either one of his man's ears.

If the initial inning was stylish, Séance the Second was a Circus Maximus number. Fogarty, finding that his feints for Jack's kitchenette were being disregarded, switched the cut and really sank 'em both, the old pluff-pluff one! two! smack dab into the center of J. Fleming's repository for nutrition, Jack being busy at the moment in erroneously fancying that that pair of feints, as per usual, really had been employed to screen Fogarty's designs on his ears. Well, that was where Jack's possession of the thing I've adverted to as the fighting face, and what lays back of the fighting face, came in. Jim and I caught both of Jack's grunts when those two heavy mitts plunged deep into his middle. Jim and I knew, from having taken that kind ourselves, how that brace of bread-box wallops must be hurting the kid, with the breath all out of him.

"I hope he stalls now till his wind comes back," I heard Jim mutter to himself. "Dammit, why can't he hear, so's I could roar that to him?"

"Stall, hell, bo!" was the glurgy old gloat that I had to blow then from the lump in my neck. "That pup don't have to stall—get that quick come-back, will you?—and get that Fitz look on his map while the gettin's good!"

Because this Jack lad, you see, being possessed of a stomach that he hadn't toyed with and a youthful bellows that didn't need much mending, was showing that he really didn't require to resort to the time-saving device known as stalling. Fogarty himself confidently expected Jack to try to weave

into a clinch in order to wait for a return of his breath, and was set for a clinch instead of for defense. But the mute, breath or no breath, and showing the topaz glitter that I like to see appear in the eyes of boys fighting for my money, wasn't thinking of the clinch stuff at all. He was thinking of battle, murder, and sudden death, with maybe a little personally conducted arson on the side. So that Fogarty, waiting for a clinch, was caught unawares by the uppercut that lifted him clear of the canvas and shot him to his haunches over in his corner by the ropes. Fogarty, sitting down that way, took six, not because he was hurt beyond recovery, but because he needed just ay-bout six to get over his surprise. Jack, waiting for Fogarty to rise in his own corner, was atop of him like the hall umbrella rack falling over on the ball-chasing pup, and they infought like a pair of Terrys with Fogarty's back to the ropes, Jack sending in two for one, and the house now one ear-splitting howl. Just a fraction of a second before the gong sounded Fogarty, his surprise now desperation, put a whole lot of stuff back of the right that he managed to swing against Jack's left ear. Then they backed apart at the gong.

Jack didn't go at once to his corner. He put his glove up to his left ear and looked sort o' puzzled. Then we saw his lips moving as if he were talking to himself. And that's what he was doing—talking out loud to himself to try out the voice, now back again, that had left him three years before. Then his chart broke into one great big all-hands-join-me grin as he called down to his wife and Jim and me in the box:

"Say, folks, I can hear! And you hear me talking, don't you!" and raced for his corner, where his amazed handlers gave him the good time of his life with their towels and stuff.

Jack, he told us later, hadn't felt the wallop from Fogarty's right that took him in the left ear; he didn't even know, till we told him, that he had been pasted there. All he knew at the close of that second round was that he was on earth again, a whole man with all of his senses once more, and with a man to lick in a box-fighting ring! The crowd's dope, as per usual, had gone wrong; the wallop on the ear that was to explode something inside Jack's head and finish him had reverse-Englished and made him new. You ask your doctor, next time you see him,

just what kind of an obstruction Fogarty's punch had opened up in the mute's dome works to make Jack Fleming an all-there man again. My own doctor talked learnedly about it to me, and I had to pretend that I understood him. But I didn't. I'm only telling you what I and some thousands of other people saw happen.

"Looks bad for us now," Jim leaned over and whispered to me. He didn't want Jack's wife to hear him. The girl, half hysterical in her delight over the miracle, was dabbing at her eyes.

"Bad!" I rumbled. "Why, you pinhead, how d'ye——"

Then I pulled up, having suddenly seen what Jim meant.

"Fogarty, knowing he's as good as licked at this stage of it, will start to daub the old dirt around now," lamented Jim, "knowing as he does that Jack'll hear what he says. And it'll be Miracle Number Two if Jack, especially in his lit-up state over getting back his voice and hearing, doesn't go up in the air over Fogarty's line of gutter gab and—well, blow the fight!"

There was pith in that, but there was no time to pro and con the chances. Gong Three clanged, and the two were in the center again.

Almost instantly Fogarty justified Jim. His lips were pulled away from his lips in a snarl as he leered over his guard at Jack. He didn't even take his usual pains to muffle his tone. Sitting close to the ring as we did, we heard his stuff.

"So you can hear now, hey?" was his opening.

There was an exchange of hot ones that didn't reach, and some fiddling, and they went into a clinch.

"Got your white-slaver doll in a box to lamp you getting licked, hey?" was Fogarty's next.

Never mind the rest of it. There was plenty more of it during that clinch, but I've given you a line on what the remainder of it would be. Jim and I heard every word of it. So did the little wife. So did anybody sitting within thirty feet off the ring.

There was a commotion in a box back of us, and the sound there of a heavy voice shouting. All three of us looked that way. A good-looking old iron-faced party of sixty or so, muscular and thickset, was standing on a chair in his box, expressing himself.

"Don't you let the dirty dog get away with

that, son!" the old boy, shaking a ponderous fist, bellowed in his rumbling bass. "If you don't knock hell out of him, I will!"

"Why, bless his old heart, it's Jack's father!" Jack's wife said to Jim and me with a catch in her voice.

Jack heard the old dad's rumble. But there was no need, for the purpose in hand, for him to hear it. For a fraction of a second, in that clinch, he turned his head to see his gov'nor bawling at him from the box chair. Jack grinned. But it was the kind of a grin I'd hate to see on the face of anybody I was in the same ring with. It was a grin that even the just-doubting Jim, now smiling himself, saw would win that fight. The boy, just emerging from three years of voicelessness and silence, had to endure for a few seconds only the kind of talk Fogarty gave him as his first-heard greeting back to the world of freedom. But to counter that, there rang in his ears the fine old bull voice of the old dad standing on the chair. Taking all of which in in his swiftly appraising way:

"We win, boss," said Jim in my ear.

Thirty-two years, as you know, fighter and manager, I've been rattling around at this old pillow-pasting pastime, and I never saw a fighter take such a beating as Fleming handed to Fogarty in that third and last round. There's no use trying to describe typhoon stuff like that. The knockout was ladled out after Jack had sent his man down for nine, four straight times. When Fogarty got up, groggier than a Gulf grouper at the end of a gaff, after that fourth stretch-out, Jack, reaching out both hands, steadied

him by the shoulders, pat-a-caking him and setting him straight for it like Little Launce- lot fixing his snow man in the front yard. He wasn't vindictive, get me, but the language he'd had to listen to from Fogarty, the first language of any kind addressed to him since he'd recovered the power to hear language, touched him pretty close to where he lived, bearing as the Fogarty talk did upon the plucky little woman sitting down there with us alongside the ring. So, after pat-a-caking him that way, Jack, giving the right he raised from the rug plenty of time to grow its crop of whiskers, sent it over; and when Fogarty was brought out of it half an hour later in his dressing room he had about as much nose left for profile or silhouette purposes as a partly grown Pekingese.

Of course I lost Jack right then and there, just when he'd showed the kind of a scrapper he'd have made if there'd been any chance to keep him in my shed. But there wasn't any such chance—you know it—with that iron-jowled but all-right-at-that old dad of his waiting, after that fight, to carry the boy and his wife to the Jersey home in an automobile the size of an Eagle boat and a good deal shinier. The boy got me one gilt-finished gate, won me a side bet of ten thousand, to say nothing of Jim's five thousand, and gave me a long-cherished chance to crow over Chuck Cahill.

I don't mind losin' 'em when they've behaved like that, and when the blow-off is in all ways as satisfactory as the "clinch" at the wind-up of a good movie show.

Cullen returns in the next number with "A Tale of the Early Village."



THE DIFFICULTIES OF GREATNESS

STATESMANSHIP," said Representative J. Thomas Heflin, of Alabama, "has become a tough proposition since the war. In the good old days, all a man had to know was a lot about his district and a good deal about the United States. Nowadays he has to know everything about every place in the world. His plight can best be described in the immortal words of Mrs. Partington:

"For my part, I can't deceive what on-airth eddication is comin' to. When I was young, if a gal only understood the rules of distraction, provision, multiplying, replenishing, and the common denominator, and all about the rivers and their obituaries, the covenants and their dormitories, the provinces and the umpire, they had eddication enough. But now they have to demonstrate suppositions about the sycophants of parallelograms, to say nothing of oxbides, assheads, cowsticks, and abstruse triangles."

The Beard of Jeremiah

By Raymond J. Brown

Author of "Mister Hoyle," "The Adelaide Thousand," Etc.

They objected to whiskers on this prophetic player, and Matt McCoy swore at 'em, but after a time the whole team was almost ready to swear by the beard of his new recruit

WHISKERS!" ejaculated Matt McCoy.

John K. Simmons, the huge, gaudily clad owner of the Red Legs, grinned appreciatively at the look of amazement which overspread the round face of the stout little man who managed his team.

"That's what he says," chuckled Simmons, "and he seems to be proud of them, too. He says——"

"But—whiskers!" repeated McCoy. "Whiskers on a big leaguer! It—it ain't bein' done. Why, the bunch of lilacs on the chin passed out of baseball about the time that Dan Brouthers was a rookie. I been in the game for twenty-five years myself, and the only guys with fringe I ever seen pastimin' on the diamond was when I was a little kid and used to see the games by hop-pin' the fence."

"I know it," laughed Simmons. "When I was a boy you could almost pick out a ball player by his resemblance to a seagoin' walrus. Too bad the vines went out of style."

"Too bad?" queried McCoy.

"It'd save you managers from many a mistake," explained Simmons with a sly smirk. "You wouldn't turn such a flock of future stars loose without a try-out if you had the foliage to guide you."

"Show me," McCoy dared him heatedly, "show me where I ever made a mistake in judgin' a ball player!"

"Sh-h!" soothed Simmons. "Can't you take a little joke? But, gettin' back to the subject of this lad with whiskers——"

"I suppose that's another joke," muttered McCoy by way of expressing his distaste for promiscuous jesting on the subject of his managerial acumen.

"On the contrary," said Simmons. "There is a man with whiskers, and he says he's a

ball player and wants to play with the Red Legs."

"There's a lot of fellers without whiskers that want to do the same thing," growled McCoy. "Who is this bird?"

"Jeremiah," said Simmons, smiling.

"What!"

"Jeremiah," repeated Simmons, his curling black mustache taking on the general shape of a festoon of Christmas greens as his smile widened.

"Jeremiah—who?" demanded McCoy. "What's his last name?"

"Well," sniggered Simmons, pretending to make a close examination of a letter which he lifted from his desk, "I don't know as he's got any. Jeremiah seems to cover it all—kind o' first and last name combined. Unless," he said, cocking his head to one side and squinting at the paper he held, "unless this is it—Prophet of Israel. Yes," he decided, "that must be right—Jeremiah, Prophet of Israel, is the way he signs it. Some handle to squeeze into a newspaper battin' order!" he guffawed.

"Aw, J. K.," begged McCoy, "I wish you wouldn't kid. I come here to talk over some base——"

"No kidding about it!" insisted Simmons. "This Jeremiah guy is serious—and so am I." Look," he bade, handing McCoy the letter.

The letter was typewritten on white paper of good quality at the top of which was a representation of a bearded angel with a flaming sword defending a handsome youth in flowing robes from being mobbed by a horde of ruffianly looking persons armed with bludgeons. Above the picture in large letters designed to resemble Hebrew characters was the legend, "Prophets of Israel, Inc." Beneath it in smaller letters was a scriptural quotation: "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon."

The letter was addressed to "The Mammoth Exhibition Company," which was the trade name of the ball club, and read:

BRETHREN: Out of the depths I cry, oh, hear my prayer. I am a mighty man, thewed like the laboring bullock, swift of foot as the bounding hart, bearded even as Moses, clear of eye as the hunter. From my hand flieth the ball swift and true as the stone from the sling of David. My bat is terrible as the ass' jaw in the grip of the angry Samson. I would don the raiment of your band, gay as the coat of Joseph, and I will not give sleep to mine eyes or slumber to mine eyelids until such shall come to pass. Tempt me not with gold, for the greed of lucre is forbidden, and I have coveted no man's silver. JEREMIAH, Prophet of Israel.

McCoy recovered much of his habitual good humor as he perused this strange missive, but he looked up at Simmons with a puzzled frown.

"Here," said Simmons, taking the letter; "I'll translate it for you. It kind o' had me wingin' for a while, but Billy Gray showed me it made pretty fair sense once you got the code. Listen: This bird Jeremiah says he's down in the dumps and wants us to give him a lift. He describes himself as a husky with swellin's on the arms, a wicked sprint on the bases, and an eye like a trap shooter. He says he's got a wing that whips them from the fence to the plate without an effort and that he can bat three hundred in any company. He's got a yen to play with us because he likes the color of our suits, and says he's layin' awake nights thinkin' about it. He's not like the regular ball player, because he's not a hog for the dough and ain't particular about how small a contract we hand him as long as we give him a chance to show how good he is. As an extra added attraction he throws in a set of whiskers which he insists are the goods."

"A nut!" McCoy described the applicant.

"Maybe," assented Simmons. "But we can use him."

"Use him!" exclaimed McCoy. "What for — to dust the plate with his whiskers?"

"I'm dead serious, Matt," declared Simmons, proving his assertion by leaning back in his swivel chair, hoisting his feet to his desk, thrusting his thumbs into the armholes of his vest and wiggling his fingers at McCoy. "This Jeremiah feller looks to me like the sweetest opportunity I've had since I got into baseball."

"The sweetest opportunity!" gulped McCoy. "Why, you don't even know whether he can play ball—and then his whiskers!"

"His whiskers," said Simmons solemnly, "sell him to me. I don't care whether he can play ball or not."

"You—you——" McCoy sputtered and struggled like a flivver in a sand pit as he vainly endeavored to catch up with Simmons' reasoning.

"Exactly," grinned Simmons. "You said a while back that the man with whiskers had passed out of baseball. That's the reason why we want one with the Red Legs. I should have thought of it before. I——"

"J. K.," interrupted McCoy desperately, "would you mind tellin' a stupid guy what you're talkin' about?"

"Sure!" grinned Simmons. "A man with whiskers would be just as valuable to us—more valuable, in fact—than the greatest battin' and fieldin' marvel that the game ever produced. Just a second," requested the club owner as McCoy gripped the arms of his chair and appeared about to leap to his feet to utter a spirited protest. "When I was in the circus business what do you think made the biggest hit with the mob—the bare-back riders?—the aerial artists? Not on your young life! It was the freaks—the congress of strange people, as we called them. We almost needed a derrick to haul the folks out of the side shows into the main tent. The three-legged boy, the man monkey, and the lady giant got 'em every time! It's human nature. Somethin' strange and unusual attracts where somethin' fine and valuable won't. Now, Jeremiah, the hairy ball tosser, the only one of his race in captivity——"

"But, J. K.!" broke in McCoy. "We ain't runnin' a circus! We——"

"We're runnin' a public spectacle," said Simmons. "It's up to us to get every attraction we can to draw the people. You're a good manager, Matt. I hand you that to begin with. And I'm with you when you want the Red Legs to be the crackiest little team that was ever assembled under one tent. But it costs money to keep the team goin', and our only way of gettin' money is through the four-bit pieces that jingle at the ticket windows. This Jeremiah feller will draw the crowds. I'm a showman, and I know."

"You tell me that?" blazed McCoy. "You put a dime museum freak above my team?"

"Offer him—well, use your own judgment. Tell him——"

"If I used my own judgment," growled McCoy, "I'd offer him a safety razor. No, I'm durned if I'll write to him: I won't have

anything to do with makin' a side show out of my ball club."

"Suit yourself," murmured Simmons agreeably, reaching for an electric button to summon a stenographer. "Take a letter, please," said Simmons when the girl arrived. "Jeremiah, Prophet of Israel—yes, that's right, Miss Parker," he laughed in response to the girl's astonished look. "Jeremiah, Prophet of Israel, 316 Morris Avenue, Bennington, Illinois." Simmons paused thoughtfully for a moment. Then a mischievous gleam came to his eyes. "Brother," he addressed Jeremiah through the stenographer. "Er—er——" He paused again and turned and faced McCoy. "Give me a line from the Bible, Matt," he requested.

"A fool and his money is soon parted!" snapped McCoy. "I don't know whether that's from the Bible or not, but it certainly fits some birds that I know!"

And an instant later the glass-paneled door of Simmons' office slammed violently as McCoy stalked out.

Four days later the Red Legs were in their dressing room donning their uniforms for the afternoon's game when the venerable gentleman named Mike who guarded the players' entrance rushed into the clubhouse wildly calling for Matt McCoy.

"Mr. McCoy!" breathed Mike in great agitation. "There's some kind of a bullsheviky outside. He says his name is Jerry Meyer. He talks queer, and I think he's cracked, but he's got a letter from Mr. Simmons and——"

"Let him in," commanded McCoy.

"But he's got a satchel," objected Mike. "Maybe there's bums in it. If I was you I'd——"

"Let him in, Mike," repeated McCoy. "I'm waitin' for him," he added grimly.

Trailed by the wondering, suspicious Mike, he stepped across the threshold the weirdest, most bizarre figure that any of the Red Legs had ever seen. Easily six feet in height and of heroic breadth, his was a figure that would have arrested the eye of an observer anywhere, even without the attention-compelling habiliments in which it was draped. A broadcloth Prince Albert coat of antique model, a garment such as an elderly dandy of the early 'eighties might have worn to a funeral, strained to inclose the broad shoulders and to fall within decorous reach of the knees. The trousers, frayed, green, shining, and baggy, were even more unsuccessful in

their effort to stretch down the lengthy legs to the ankles. Spats which had once been white but which had suffered from too close proximity to passing vehicles on muddy streets and which lacked alternate buttons, started an inch or two below where the trousers stopped. Full-size feet threatened to burst through the cracked patent-leather shoes. A collar and waistcoat of clerical type and a battered silk hat at which the most disreputable cabman of other days would have turned up his nose in scorn completed the attire.

But it was Jeremiah's beard which was his crowning glory. Matt McCoy, who, after his conversation with Simmons concerning Jeremiah, had expected the volunteer recruit to appear with a garland of hair that reached from his chin to his waist, was a little disappointed when the self-styled Prophet of Israel appeared. The other Red Legs, though, who did not share McCoy's previous knowledge of the newcomer, took one look at Jeremiah and howled.

The beard was not long. In fact, it was quite short. Think of the lightning change artist's usual impersonation of General Grant and you'll almost have it. Raven black, thick as a random handful snatched from a mattress stuffing, it obscured completely the lower part and sides of Jeremiah's countenance. Between the two tufts that hung from the temples along the cheek bones jutted out a sharp hooked nose from either side of which piercing black eyes, shaded by shaggy brows, gazed about the dressing room interestedly. Beneath the brim of the furry top hat Jeremiah's hair dropped unevenly over his collar. Substitute rags for the Prince Albert coat and Jeremiah was a shipwrecked sailor rescued after a year on a desert island, or give him a skull cap instead of the tall hat and he was an itinerant Syrian lace peddler.

Gene Welsh, the Red Legs' nifty third sacker, grabbed shortstop Al Blair by the wrist.

"Have I got 'em?" he asked. "Or do you see the same thing I do?"

"If I don't we've both got 'em. What is it?"

"It ain't," and Welsh grinned; "and, even if it is, I don't believe it!"

"Ah, there, Judas!" sang out Bill Madden, the big center fielder, waving a sock at the visitor.

Jeremiah removed his hat with a sweep of

his long right arm. He dropped his wicker suit case to the floor and bent forward from his hips in a low, slow bow.

"Hail, brethren!" he chanted in a rolling bass.

"Hail, yourself—and see how you like it!" returned Madden. "Open up the trunk, kid, and let's see what you're sellin'!"

Jeremiah gave no heed to the request. Three strides of his long legs brought him in front of Matt McCoy, who, hands on hips, was chewing on his lower lip and gazing side-wise at his bewhiskered caller with an expression which suggested that he hadn't quite made up his mind whether poison or the business end of a bat was likely to prove the best means of dealing with Jeremiah.

Jeremiah favored McCoy with one of his characteristic bows.

"Hail!" he saluted him. "Hail, mighty chief——"

"Hail—me eye!" yelped McCoy. "Go out and get a shave, you dirty-lookin' Turk! Then come back and I'll talk to you—may-be!"

"Shave!" cried Jeremiah in horror. "Shave!"

"Yes, you—you Rooshian!" barked McCoy. "What d'you think we're runnin' here—an anarchist club? You got us mixed up with the other kind of Reds!"

"But—brother!" protested Jeremiah. "I must not shave. I must not——"

"Must not?" echoed McCoy. "Why not? You got throat trouble?"

"It is so written," said Jeremiah. "Ye shall not round the corners of your heads, neither shalt thou mar the corners of thy beard—so was the word given."

"Word?" questioned McCoy, puzzled. "What's the idea—are you payin' a bet?"

Jeremiah looked hurt.

"I am a humble Prophet of Israel," he declared, but not at all humbly. "I——"

"Hey, fellers!" screeched Madden to the circle of Red Legs which had surrounded McCoy and Jeremiah. "The mystery's solved! This bird's a profiteer!"

"Let's murder him!" suggested Welsh.

"No," said Madden, "let's shave him! Who's got a razor?"

Jeremiah looked worried—but only for a moment. Then his big shoulders squared; his chest swelled. He ran his eye slowly around the cluster of ball players, and, shaggy head, weedy beard, outlandish get-

up and all, there was no misunderstanding the message of those flashing eyes.

Madden laughed sheepishly. A few other players, who had not spoken, but who had taken Madden's suggestion seriously, fidgeted uneasily.

Even Matt McCoy was impressed. "Get into your suits!" he ordered his players. "What're you standin' around here for?" Then he turned to Jeremiah.

"If you look like a ball player," he observed, studying the other closely, "I can fly like a bird! However—you get your chance—whiskers and all." He smiled faintly. "It is so written," he said, "by the man who pays my wages. See if you can find a suit."

"Why be solicitous after raiment?" quoth Jeremiah. "Consider the lilies of the field. They toil not——"

"If you're goin' to be a lily in our field," interrupted McCoy dryly, "you'll have to dress like the other lilies. It is so written—in the rules of the league. And, if you want my candid opinion," he said half seriously, "you'll try as hard as you can *not* to make good. That brush of yours would be an awful temptation to a couple of left-handed pitchers I know!"

Jeremiah's appearance on the diamond occasioned no more of a stir than a stray cat would cause at a dog show—or a bird show. When the Red Leg fans glimpsed him, they rubbed their eyes, wondering if it could be true. They saw that it was, arose in a body, and the field rang with their mocking cries of welcome. The baseball writers in the press box, who hadn't had a line of real live copy in a week, whistled, shouted, and beckoned to attract the attention of Matt McCoy and learn from him who Jeremiah was, and why.

"His name is Jeremiah," said McCoy in answer to their questions. "He's a Prophet of Israel and he wears the ivy because it is so written. He wrote in askin' for a try-out. He'll probably get one that he won't forget."

The reporters sought further information from Jeremiah himself. The bewhiskered spoke to them in parables, twisting scriptural quotations into apt replies to the volley of questions. He explained that the Prophets of Israel was a religious sect which held the razor and shears accursed. He denied that he had sought a career on the diamond to provide him with a larger audience for possible missionary work. He declined to admit that he had any other name but Jere-

miah, to relate his past history or to tell where he had learned to play baseball. When the reporters' questions became too pertinent, he fell back on a stock answer: "It is so written."

"Well, if you're never going to shave," said one reporter, "what'll you do when your brush gets so long it catches in your bat?"

"I shall twine it about my neck as the vine circles the fig tree," Jeremiah told him.

"You'll be some sight!" the reporter predicted. "On the level now, Jerry," he asked, winking wisely, "what are you advertising? You look like one of the cough-drop kings to me."

"Oh, ye of little faith!" reproved Jeremiah.

"That's all right, too," persisted the reporter, "but you can't make me believe you're just here to play ball—not with those tassels on your face. Get out there," he directed, nodding toward the diamond, "and let's see what you can do."

"Blessed are they," said Jeremiah, "who have not seen but who have believed."

"If you take my tip," returned the reporter, "you won't tell that to Matt McCoy. He's one gent that you'll have to *show!*"

"You have heard of me by the hearing of the ear, but now your eyes shall see me," promised Jeremiah, moving away to join the group of Red Legs skylarking along the edge of the grand stand.

Except for his whiskers, there was no denying that Jeremiah looked like a ball player. His big frame filled Rube Finn's uniform quite as satisfactorily as the giant first baseman himself could have done it, and he moved with an easy, swinging gait that bespoke loose, elastic muscles, the kind a ball player must have. Also, when he joined the go-as-you-please game of catch that was in progress in front of the grand stand he gave speedy indication that he was wide awake and alert—that he could handle himself like a player of half his size. Which facts the watchful Matt McCoy noted with no particular joy. McCoy had been hopeful that the unwelcome recruit would stamp himself as impossible in his first movements on the field so that he could be shipped back whence he had come without further ceremony.

Jeremiah, though, evidently had other plans. He unshipped a well-worn glove from his belt and trotted out to the vicinity of second base, where he proceeded to demonstrate. His exploits during that practice session did not cause any of the Red Leg in-

fielders to fear for their jobs, but the bearded rookie went about things in a way that made it most plain that his acquaintance with baseball was intimate. Probably their astonishment that a man with a beard could play ball at all made the fans consider the work of Jeremiah better than it really was, but the fact remained that the crowd liked Jeremiah and took no pains to hide it.

John K. Simmons in his grand-stand box observed with intense satisfaction the hit that Jeremiah was making. "I knew it!" he whispered gleefully to Billy Gray, club secretary. "The freaks get 'em every time! If McCoy gives this feller a chance to keep prominent, we'll have a drawin' card that will make 'Babe' Ruth look like a bat boy!" And Simmons dispatched Gray to the press box with instructions to "whoop 'er up for whiskers" with the reporters.

The baseball writers required little urging. One local paper heralded Jeremiah's arrival with a headline: "Real Busher Joins Red Legs—Jeremiah Brings His Own Bush On His Chin." Other papers played up Jeremiah's trick of citing Scripture for his purpose, the reporters writing their stores with copious use of such phrases as "and it came to pass" in imitation of the biblical style. Press associations sent the story out, photographic syndicates and producers of topical films dispatched their camera marksmen to snipe Jeremiah in uniform and without, and sport-page humorists and cartoonists seized upon the appearance of Jeremiah as the juiciest morsel that had fallen upon their plates in months. Within a week every baseball fan in the country had heard of Jeremiah and a majority of them were familiar with his appearance through the photographs which the newspapers reproduced.

"Well, Matt, does the old man know anything?" Simmons asked Matt McCoy, thrusting in his manager's face a sheaf of newspaper clippings—conclusive proof that Jeremiah had gone over.

"He's drawin' the crowd all right," McCoy admitted grudgingly.

"Yes," nodded Simmons, "and he's some mascot! We haven't dropped a game since we've had Jeremiah."

"Ain't I got nothin' to do with that?" demanded McCoy. "Ain't the fellers that've been winnin' the games got nothin' to do with it?"

"Sure you have," laughed Simmons, "but

the newspapers don't say so. They're givin' all the credit to Jeremiah."

"Without the whiskers," said McCoy shortly, "he'd be about as much use to us as a handful of tacks to a motor speedway."

"But I've seen him——"

"You've seen him goin' through the motions," interrupted McCoy. "And that's all there is to him—motions. I could dig up ten semipro players right here in the city who can do everything that Jeremiah can do—only ten times better. Except grow whiskers," he added as an afterthought.

"But what I was gettin' at, Matt——"

"I know what you're gettin' at, J. K.," cut in McCoy. "You want me to slip Jeremiah into the regular line-up—for advertisin' purposes."

"That's right," admitted Simmons, a little startled at the shrewdness of his manager's guess. "Why can't you do it?"

"Not a chance. Not while I'm called manager of this outfit. Just a second, J. K.," requested McCoy as Simmons attempted to interrupt. "Get me right. This ain't the circus—this game you're mixed up in now. If you'd remember that, you and me wouldn't have so many battles."

"But there's no use in *hidin'* him," insisted Simmons. "You could let him play for an innin' or two every now and then."

"That I'll do for you," promised McCoy.

And he did. His first opportunity to slip Jeremiah into the regular line-up came on the following afternoon. The ninth inning of the game found the Red Legs laughing at St. Louis to the tune of eight to one, and McCoy withdrew Al Blair and let Jeremiah play shortstop. The crowd hailed the substitution of the bearded one with loud acclaim, and Jeremiah arose to the occasion heroically. Luck was with him, just as it had been with the Red Legs since he joined the team, for the three St. Louis players who came to the bat in the inning whaled three consecutive balls toward the port side of second base and Jeremiah accepted the chances with avidity. Not one of the plays was actually spectacular, but all were difficult enough to arouse the fans to applause and Jeremiah strutted to the clubhouse with an air that indicated his belief that crashing brass and waving palm branches would fit in nicely along his line of march.

And when he reached the dressing room he raised his sonorous voice to inform his teammates: "The first is last, and the last

is first. The mighty have been put down from their seats, and the humble have been exalted."

"Meaning—what?" demanded Gene Welsh.

"Didn't you see what I did?" inquired Jeremiah.

"Those three chances you just took?" asked Welsh. "Do you think they were anything?"

"The people arose as one man," declared Jeremiah proudly. "I caused their hearts to sing with joy, and their cries were as the noise of many waters."

"You don't hate yourself, or anything like that!" muttered Welsh, turning away.

"So much is a man worth as he esteems himself," declared Jeremiah.

"Not in this game he ain't!" laughed Welsh. "And, if you don't believe it, try and get McCoy to raise your salary!"

The newspapers featured Jeremiah's first showing as a more or less regular player, and made a hero of him. Owner Simmons was greatly pleased, and he sought out Matt McCoy on the following afternoon to display the newspaper accounts of the event as vindication of his own judgment regarding the bearded player's worth.

"Horseshoes!" scoffed McCoy. "The guy was lucky. He just happened to get off with his right foot."

"You're an awful hard-headed feller, Matt," said Simmons, shaking his head impatiently. "You'll never admit you're wrong——"

"If I'm wrong about that bird," offered McCoy, "I'll work for you for the rest of my life—for nothin'!"

"Will you put that in writin'?" and Simmons grinned.

"In a minute!" declared McCoy. "Mark my words, J. K. You'll be beggin' me to give this Jeremiah the gate yourself. Wait and see."

That afternoon St. Louis became the turning worm and piled up an eight-run lead over the Red Legs in the first six innings. In the seventh inning McCoy yanked Joe Dixon, the left-handed twirler who was the third man to be knocked from the mound by the sluggish visitors during the afternoon, and sent Jeremiah in to bat for him.

The bewhiskered rookie made a terrific swing at the first ball presented for his approval by Lem Drake, the St. Louis pitcher. He caught it squarely and dropped

it into the left-field bleachers for as clean a home run as was ever seen at the Red Legs' ball park. The crowd went wild as Jeremiah trotted leisurely around the bases, and some of the fans' enthusiasm seemed to be communicated to the Red Legs, for they fell on Lem Drake and walloped his curves unmercifully. Also, they treated Ed McCann, who was sent to Drake's relief, in a similarly unkind manner, and the end of the game found the Red Legs on top by a score of ten to nine.

The fat little manager saw to it that the Prophet got his chances in the field and at bat only when there was nothing in particular at stake, but Jeremiah made his own opportunities, and it wasn't long before the baseball writers were hinting vaguely that certain veteran Red Legs had outlived their usefulness and that McCoy would do well to speed them on their way to the minors and let some young blood into the team.

Joe Tooker, second baseman and field captain, had been in baseball too long to be thin-skinned about newspaper articles, but he did not fail to see that the reporters were fashioning a cap with the intention of fitting it to his head. He spoke to McCoy about it, and the manager curtly bade him not to be a fool.

"But what do you think about his whiskers, anyways?" inquired Tooker.

"A flash in the pan," declared McCoy. "Playin' regular, he'd last about a week and a half. I've canned better men than him almost before I saw them in a uniform. I'm just keepin' him around as a decoration to please Simmons."

"Hm'm," grunted Tooker doubtfully. "You may be right, Matt, but he shapes up pretty good in——"

"You think them newspaper fellers are right, then?" queried McCoy sharply. "You think you ought to be sittin' on the bench and we ought to have a set of whiskers on second base?"

"Well, you couldn't blame me for not thinkin' that exactly," hedged Tooker. "Still, I've seen worse ones break into the big show—and stay there."

Jeremiah made just as big a hit on the road as he had at home. The Red Legs drew record crowds wherever they played. Moreover, the managers of at least two other teams on the circuit made diplomatic overtures to McCoy with a view to determining whether the Red Legs' manager could be in-

duced to part with Jeremiah. Charley Rogers, of the Beavers, offered five thousand dollars, and young Tom Nelson, a promising infield recruit, for Jeremiah.

"I can use him right now," declared Rogers, "and, as long as you're not playing him regularly, you can spare him. Nelson can fill in for you just as well as Jeremiah, and I need a regular first baseman—bad."

"Some argument!" laughed McCoy. "Why, Jeremiah's a star! I wouldn't take twenty-five thou for him. You're crazy, expectin' me to discover this guy and develop him and then hand him to you!"

So Rogers, with the sanction of the Beavers' owner, raised his bid to ten thousand dollars, and he was considerably exercised when McCoy rejected it scornfully.

Which action proved there was nothing at all the matter with McCoy's business sense, for two days later an emissary of the Cincinnati team doubled Rogers' best offer for the bearded player's release. McCoy laughed up his sleeve, but he declined the bid. Then he sent a telegram to Simmons informing the Red Legs' owner that Jeremiah had become a marketable commodity and asking permission to sell when the price became high enough. He estimated twenty-five thousand dollars as high dollar for Jeremiah, and laughed to himself at the thought of any such figure being paid for the release of a player who was really an untried recruit.

Simmons wired back asserting that he would take not a cent less than fifty thousand dollars for Jeremiah, and McCoy was disappointed. Nothing would have pleased McCoy more than to have wished Jeremiah on some rival manager for an absurd price and then to have had the bearded one turn out a bloomer. But the valuation which Simmons placed on Jeremiah McCoy considered prohibitive; and apparently it was, for subsequent negotiations conducted with managers of other teams brought two offers of thirty thousand dollars, but none higher.

Through some leak word of the bidding for Jeremiah's services became public, and the Prophet in consequence was thrown into even greater prominence than he had been enjoying. McCoy begged Simmons to authorize the sale of Jeremiah before it was too late. But Simmons was too well satisfied to risk parting with the goose that was laying so many golden eggs, and the Prophet stuck.

It was at the end of August, about two

months after Jeremiah had first appeared, that Rube Finn, the Red Legs' giant first sacker, essayed a slide to the plate in a game with Philadelphia and failed to rise from the ground. When a surgeon, who tumbled out of the grand stand after viewing the accident examined Finn, he announced that the first baseman had broken his right leg and was due to remain out of baseball for the balance of the season at least.

McCoy muttered an eloquent prayer as he sent Jeremiah in to cover first. He would have much preferred to crack the hairy one on the head with a bat, but Johnny Dodd, the only other Red Leg substitute for first, was on the sick list and McCoy was forced to play Jeremiah or one of his battery men, so he chose the lesser evil.

But immediately he had given Jeremiah his assignment, McCoy put the burden of managing the team temporarily on Joe Tooker's shoulders and retired to compose a telegram to Simmons. It took him fifteen minutes to write the message, brief though it was, for he endeavored to make it strong. The result of his labors was as follows:

Must lose whiskers right away or this is my resignation. Finn broke leg, and I won't stand for other party. Not while you can sell same for thirty thousand dollars and get first baseman to boot. Move quick or I leave team flat to-night.

MATTHEW MCCOY.

With this off his mind, McCoy returned to the field just in time to see Jeremiah give a kangaroo leap in the air and grab a wild throw of Gene Welsh's, retiring the Phillies with third and second occupied, and pulling Homer Allen, who was pitching, out of the tightest of holes. Welsh ran all the way across the diamond to throw his arm over Jeremiah's shoulder and walk with him to the bench.

"Chief," said Welsh when he reached McCoy's side, "of course, I'm sorry about Rube being hurt, but ain't our little whisker boy the goods?"

"Oh, sure," muttered McCoy with a sarcastic intonation which Welsh somehow missed.

The other Red Legs, as they came in from the field, added their praises, and the Prophet's bright eyes glowed with pleasure. McCoy was more or less pleased, especially after he had received a reply from Simmons informing him that the deal with Boston was being prosecuted and that the result of the negotiations would be telegraphed.

The Red Legs won the game that afternoon by a score of seven to three, and Jeremiah's bat was directly responsible for two of the runs. The bewhiskered substitute was patted on the back and lavishly praised by his teammates. He hurried to the clubhouse after the game as though walking on air, betraying the excitement which his actual debut as a leaguer caused him by dropping his habitual use of high-flown language flavored by biblical quotations and addressing his companions in the jargon they themselves talked and understood. McCoy grinned to himself while he dressed, reflecting on the shock it would be to the men of the team when they learned that Jeremiah was sold.

At nine o'clock that night McCoy received a telegram from Simmons. "Boston will buy whiskers," read the wire. "First-baseman Baker reports to you Thursday." And McCoy sought his bed well satisfied with his day's work. Hank Baker was a fancy first sacker and would just round out his team. The deal that made him a Red Leg would make Boston the laughingstock of the league.

When McCoy reached the ball grounds the following afternoon he found his whole team there, clustered in a corner of the dressing room, evidently intensely interested in the conversation of the tall man who occupied the center of the circle. Curious, McCoy pushed forward to join the group, and, as he did, some of those on the edge of the gathering saw him, whispered the word that he was coming, and abruptly the sound of voices ceased.

"Am I buttin' in?" inquired McCoy meaningly. "Come on," he bade briskly, "get into your suits. We don't play night games in this league."

The players separated slowly, and McCoy swung about to walk to his locker. Then suddenly he was seized from behind. He turned and found himself looking up into the grinning face of a tall young man, a young man in a suit of striking checks and wearing a clamorous necktie and a straw hat with a rainbow ribbon.

McCoy was conscious that there was something oddly familiar about that young man. Some place he had seen that heroic nose and those flashing eyes before. And, as he cudged his brain to recollect, the young man spoke.

"The stone which the builders refused,"

he boomed forth in a vibrant bass, "is become the head stone of the corner!"

"Whiskers!" gasped McCoy. "What——"

"They're gone," grinned Jeremiah.

"I see they are," muttered McCoy. "But what——"

"I just told you," laughed Jeremiah. "The stone which the builders——"

"What in blazes does that mean?" demanded McCoy.

Jeremiah took a step forward. He bent his back so that his face came within half a foot of McCoy's.

"Do you know me?" he asked.

"You're crazy!" barked McCoy. "Of course, I know you. You're the boob with the beard, the side-show freak, the——"

"Wrong!" broke in Jeremiah. "I'm Tim Winter."

"Who in Hades is Tim Winter?" yelled McCoy.

Momentarily Jeremiah lost the aplomb and the self-contained air which had been his since he first addressed McCoy. He seemed disappointed that the name he had mentioned did not knock the Red Legs' leader over.

"Why, Tim Winter——" he said at last. "He—I mean I went South with you—with the team last spring. You canned me and I——"

"Got you!" screeched McCoy so suddenly that the other leaped back a foot. "I remember you, all right—now I do!"

"Well," and Jeremiah smiled, "I thought you were making a mistake. I thought I was good enough for the Red Legs——"

"So you let your whiskers grow to prove it," interrupted McCoy dryly. "Then you ain't no Prophet? You ain't——"

"The hardest thing I had to do," said Jeremiah, "was to learn pieces from the Bible to spring on you. It was an advertising man out home that thought up the scheme. He said if I couldn't attract attention just as a ball player, maybe I could with the whiskers. And he was right!" and he chuckled. "You gave me a two-week trial before—this time you made me a regular!"

"Regular!" exclaimed McCoy. "Regular! Why, you poor fish, you're——"

McCoy stopped. He turned abruptly from Jeremiah, clasped his hands behind his back,

and, while Jeremiah and the accredited regulars of the team watched him in open-eyed amazement, he sank his chin upon his chest as though in deep thought and started to pace the dressing room. He had been on the point of telling Jeremiah that he had been sold, but suddenly he was not quite sure whether he wanted to part with the whiskered wonder. He found himself admiring Jeremiah for the ingenious way he had taken of getting back through the doorway from which he had once been kicked. McCoy liked a persistent man. The bulldog fighting spirit he had instilled in the Red Legs he knew had won many a game which would have been lost by a team which relied merely on the technical excellence of its baseball. Still, twice he had weighed Jeremiah in the balance and found him wanting—on the training trip a year before and ever since the whiskers and Simmons' instinct for showmanship had won the recruit a second trial. There was thirty thousand dollars for the club and a first baseman who already had proved himself on one side; on the other was this fellow whom everybody but McCoy himself considered a coming star——

McCoy straightened suddenly. He whirled about and leveled an ominous forefinger at the wondering Jeremiah.

"Young feller," he said, "I think you picked the wrong guy from the Bible to name yourself after. Jeremiah wasn't the feller you wanted—it was Samson."

"Samson?" repeated Jeremiah.

"Yeh. For I think without your fuzz you'll be about as much use to us as Samson was after that dame Delilah handed him over to the Filipino barbers. But I'm takin' a chance on you—get a suit on, and go out and play!"

And Jeremiah—no, Tim Winter—went out and played, and he's been holding down the first corner of the diamond for the Red Legs ever since, for the deal with Boston collapsed as soon as the word was flashed from the ball park that the noted Jeremiah was Jeremiah no longer, but a minor-league youth who already had been turned loose once by McCoy.

And to this day McCoy's most intimate friends can't get him to admit that he didn't know Winter had it in him all the time.

Another baseball story by Brown, "Dummy Dickinson's Home Run," in the next POPULAR.

The Daffodil Enigma

By Edgar Wallace

Author of "The Million-Dollar Story," "The Green Rust," Etc.

A strange death in a park in the heart of London, amid the scent of daffodils. A girl of beauty and refinement among the suspects. Investigators baffled by a web of circumstances which may involve one of themselves, and the charm of the girl such that instead of trying to prove her guilty—but this much will be sufficient to indicate what a fascinating mystery this famous writer has spun in this, his latest effort.

(A Four-Part Story—Part One)

CHAPTER I.

AN OFFER REJECTED.

I DON'T understand you, Mr. Lyne."

The girl who looked down at Thornton Lyne was something more than pretty. Her clear skin was tinted with the faintest pink, and there was in the sober depths of her gray eyes a light which would have warned a man less satisfied with his own genius and power of persuasion than the proprietor of Lyne's Stores.

He was not looking at her face. His eyes were running approvingly over her perfect figure, noting the straightness of the back, the fine poise of the lovely head, the shapeliness of the slender hands.

He pushed back his long black hair from his forehead and smiled. It pleased him to believe that his face was cast in an intellectual mold, and that the somewhat unhealthy pastiness of his skin might be described as the "pallor of thought."

Presently he looked away from her through the big bay window which overlooked the crowded floor of the stores. He had had this office built in the entresol, and the big windows had been put in so that he might at any time overlook the most important department of the great establishment which it was his good fortune to control.

"You don't understand, Odette," he said. His voice was soft and melodious, and held the hint of a caress. "Did you read my little book?" he asked suddenly. "I suppose

you thought it rather curious that a man in my position should bother his head to write poetry, eh?" he asked. "Most of it was written before I came into this beastly shop, my dear—before I developed into a tradesman!"

She made no reply and he looked at her curiously. "What did you think of them?" he asked presently.

Her lips were trembling and again he mistook the symptoms. "I did not want to discuss your book," she said, her indignation rising, "but since it was evidently given to me for a purpose, I will say that only a degenerate could have written it and only a diseased mind could enjoy reading it!"

He went red. The vanity of the man was touched in its tenderest spot.

"How very middle class you are, Miss Rider!" he sneered. "Those verses have been acclaimed by some of the best critics in the country as reproducing all the beauties of the old Hellenic poetry."

She started to speak, but stopped herself and stood with lips compressed.

"May I go now, Mr. Lyne?" she asked.

"Not yet," he replied coolly. "You said just now you didn't understand what I was talking about. I'll put it plainer this time. You're a very beautiful girl, as you probably know, and you are destined, in all probability, to be the mate of a very average suburban-minded person, who will give you a life tantamount to slavery. That is the life of the middle-class woman, as you probably know. And why would you submit to this

bondage? Simply because a person in a black coat and a white collar has mumbled certain passages over you—passages which have neither meaning nor, to an intelligent person, significance. I would not take the trouble of going through such a foolish ceremony, but I would take a great deal of trouble to make you happy."

He walked toward her slowly and laid one hand upon her shoulder. Instinctively she shrank back, and he laughed. "What do you say?"

She swung round on him, her eyes blazing. "I say I would sooner be the wife of a clean-minded laborer than be associated with a man like you!" she cried. "You have no right in the world to insult me because I am in your employ—nobody but a cad would make such a proposal!"

His face went livid. "Do you know whom you are talking to?" he asked, raising his voice.

"I am speaking to a man whose whole life is a reproach to the very name of man!" she went on, speaking rapidly. "A man who is sincere in nothing, who is living on the brains and reputation of his father, and the money that has come through the hard working of better men.

"You can't scare me," she continued scornfully, as he took a step toward her. "Oh, yes, I know I'm going to leave your employment, and I'm leaving to-night. There are other places in London where decency is respected and where men like you get the treatment they deserve!"

The man was hurt, humiliated, almost crushed by her scorn. He was incapable of speech and could only shake his head and point with unsteady fingers to the door.

"Get out," he whispered.

Odette Rider walked out of the room, but the man did not move. Presently, however, he crossed to the window and, looking down upon the floor, saw her trim figure move slowly through the crowd of customers and assistants and mount the three steps which led to the chief cashier's office.

"You shall pay for this, you little fool!" he muttered.

He was wounded beyond forgiveness. He was a rich man's son and had lived a sheltered life. He had been denied the advantage which a public school would have brought to him, and had gone to college surrounded by sycophants and poseurs—as bla-

tant as himself, and never once had the cold breath of criticism been directed at him.

He licked his dry lips and, walking to his desk, pressed a bell. After a short wait—for he had purposely sent his secretary away—a girl came in. "Has Mr. Tarling arrived?" he asked.

"Yes, sir, he's in the board room. He has been waiting a quarter of an hour."

He nodded. "Thank you," he said.

"Shall I tell him——"

"I will go to him myself," said Lyne.

He passed with quick steps along the corridor, which connected his private den with the board room, and came into that spacious apartment still seething with rage.

The man who turned to greet him may have been twenty-seven or thirty-seven. He was tall but lithe, rather than broad. His face was the color of mahogany, and the blue eyes, turned to Lyne, were unwinking and expressionless. That was the first impression which Lyne received.

He took Lyne's hand in his—it was as soft as a woman's. As they shook hands Lyne noticed a third figure in the room. He was below middle height and sat in the shadow thrown by a wall pillar. He, too, rose, but bowed his head.

"A Chinaman, eh?" said Lyne, looking at this unexpected apparition with curiosity. "Oh, of course, Tarling, I had almost forgotten that you've come almost straight from China. Won't you sit down?"

He followed the other's example, threw himself into a chair, and offered his cigarette case. "The work I am going to ask you to do I will discuss later," he said. "But I must explain that I was partly attracted to you by the description I read in one of the newspapers of how you had recovered the Duchess of Henley's jewels and partly by the stories I heard of you when I was in China. By the way, we're related, cousins or something, aren't we?"

"I believe we are—distantly," said the other quietly. He might have added that the relationship had not been particularly beneficial to himself.

Lyne nodded. "You're not attached to Scotland Yard, I understand?"

Tarling shook his head. "No," he said quietly. "I was regularly attached to the police in Shanghai, and I had intended joining up with Scotland Yard; in fact, I came

over for that purpose. But several things happened which made me open my detective agency, the most important of which happenings, was that Scotland Yard refused to give me the free hand I require!"

The other nodded quickly. China rang with the achievements of Jack Oliver Tarling, or, as the Chinese criminal world had named him in parody of his name, "Lieh Jen"—"the Hunter of Men." Lyne saw in this unemotional man a possible tool, and in all probability a likely accomplice.

The detective force in Shanghai did curious things by all accounts. There were even rumors that "the Hunter of Men" was not above torturing his prisoners, if by so doing he could elicit confessions which would implicate some greater criminal. Lyne did not and could not know all the legends which had grown around the name of "the Hunter" nor could he be expected in reason to differentiate between the truth and the fable.

"I pretty well know why you've sent for me," Tarling went on. He spoke slowly and had a decided drawl. "You gave me a rough outline in your letter. You suspect a member of your staff of having consistently robbed the firm for many years. A Mr. Milburgh, your chief manager."

Lyne stopped him with a gesture and lowered his voice. "I want you to forget that for a little while, Tarling," he said. "In fact, I am going to introduce you to Milburgh and maybe, Milburgh can help us in my scheme. I do not say that Milburgh is honest, or that my suspicions were unfounded. But for the moment I have a much greater business on hand, and you will oblige me if you forget all the things I have said about Milburgh. I will ring for him now."

He walked to a long table which ran half the length of the room, took up a telephone which stood at one end, and said to the operator: "Tell Mr. Milburgh to come to me in the board room, please."

Then he went back to his visitor. "That matter of Milburgh can wait," he said. "I'm not so sure that I shall proceed any further with it. Milburgh may be a thief——"

"Did you send for me, sir?"

He turned round quickly. The door had opened without noise, and a man stood on the threshold of the room, an ingratiating smile on his face, his hands twining and intertwinning ceaselessly as though he were washing them with invisible soap.

CHAPTER II.

THE HUNTER DECLINES HIS QUARRY.

"This is Mr. Milburgh," said Lyne awkwardly.

If Mr. Milburgh had heard the last words of his employer, his face did not betray the fact. His smile was set, and not only curved the lips but filled the large, lusterless eyes. Tarling gave him a rapid survey and drew his own conclusions. The man was a born lackey, plump of face, bald of head, and bent of shoulder, as though he lived in a perpetual gesture of abasement.

"Shut the door, Milburgh, and sit down. This is Mr. Tarling. Er—Mr. Tarling is—er—a detective."

"Indeed, sir?"

Milburgh bent a deferential head in the direction of Tarling, and the detective, watching for some change in color, some twist of face—any of those signs which had so often betrayed to him the convicted wrongdoer—looked in vain. "A dangerous man," he thought.

He glanced out of the corner of his eye to see what impression the man had made upon Ling Chu. To the ordinary eye Ling Chu remained an impassive observer. But Tarling saw that faint curl of lip, an almost imperceptible twitch of the nostrils, which invariably showed on the face of his attendant when he "smelled" a criminal.

"Mr. Tarling is a detective," repeated Lyne. "He is a gentleman I heard about when I was in China—you know I was in China for three months, when I made my tour round the world?" he asked Tarling.

Tarling nodded. "Oh, yes, I know," he said. "You stayed at the Bund Hotel. You spent a great deal of time in the native quarter, and you had rather an unpleasant experience as the result of making an experiment in opium smoking."

Lyne's face went red, and then he laughed.

"You know more about me than I know about you, Tarling," he said, yet with a note of asperity in his voice, and turned again to his subordinate.

"I have reason to believe that there has been money stolen in this business by one of my cashiers," he said.

"Impossible, sir!" said the shocked Mr. Milburgh. "Wholly impossible!"

Mr. Lyne smiled complacently. "It will interest you to know, Mr. Tarling," he said, "that I myself have some knowledge of and

acquaintance with the criminal classes. In fact, there is one unfortunate protégé of mine whom I have tried very hard to reform for the past four years, who is coming out of prison in a couple of days. I took up this work," he said modestly, "because I feel it is the duty of those of us who are in a more fortunate position to help those who have not had a chance in the cruel competition of the world."

Tarling did not seem impressed. "Do you know the person who has been robbing you?" he asked.

"I have reason to believe it is a girl whom I have summarily dismissed to-night, and whom I wish you to watch."

The detective nodded. "That is rather a primitive business," he said, with the first faint hint of a smile he had shown. "Haven't you your own shop detective who could take that job in hand? Petty larceny is hardly in my line. I understood that this was bigger work——"

He stopped, because it was obviously impossible to explain just why he had thought as much, in the presence of the man whose conduct, originally, had been the subject of his inquiries.

"To you it may seem a small matter. To me, it is very important," said Mr. Lyne profoundly. "Here is a girl, highly respected by all her companions and consequently a great influence on their morals, who, as I have reason to believe, has steadily and persistently falsified my books, taking money from the firm, and at the same time has secured the good will of all with whom she has been brought into contact. I want you clearly to understand, Tarling, that I have not sufficient evidence to convict her; otherwise, I would not have called you in."

"You want me to get the evidence, eh?" said Tarling curiously.

"Who is the lady, may I venture to ask, sir?" It was Milburgh who interposed the question.

"Miss Rider," replied Lyne.

"Miss Rider!"

Milburgh's face took on a look of blank surprise, as he gasped the words: "Miss Rider—oh, no; impossible!"

"Why impossible?" demanded Mr. Lyne.

"Well, sir, I meant——stammered the manager——"it is so unlikely——she is such a nice girl——"

Thornton Lyne shot a suspicious glance at him.

"You have no particular reason for wishing to shield Miss Rider, have you?"

"No, sir, not at all. I beg of you not to think that," protested the agitated Mr. Milburgh, "only it seems so——extraordinary."

"All things are extraordinary that are out of the common," snapped Lyne. "It would be extraordinary if you were accused of stealing Milburgh. It would be very extraordinary indeed, for example, if we discovered that you were living a five-thousand-pounds life on a nine-hundred-pounds salary, eh?"

Only for a second did Milburgh lose his self-possession. The hand that went to his mouth shook, and Tarling, whose eyes had never left the man's face, saw the tremendous effort which he was making to recover his equanimity.

"Yes, sir, that would be extraordinary," said Milburgh steadily.

Lyne had lashed himself again into the old fury, and if his vitriolic tongue was directed at Milburgh his thoughts were centered upon that proud and beautiful face which had looked down upon him in his office.

"It would be extraordinary if you were sent to penal servitude as the result of my discovery that you had been robbing the firm for years," he growled, "and I suppose everybody else in the firm would say the same as you——how extraordinary!"

"I dare say they would, sir," said Mr. Milburgh, his old smile back, the twinkle again returning to his eyes, and his hands rubbing together in ceaseless ablutions. "It would sound extraordinary, and it would be extraordinary, and nobody here would be more surprised than the unfortunate victim——ha, ha!"

"Perhaps not," said Lyne coldly. "Only I want to say a few words in your presence, and I would like you to give them every attention. You have been complaining to me for a month past," he said speaking with deliberation, "about small sums of money being missing from the cashier's office."

It was a bold thing to say, and in many ways a rash thing. He was dependent for the success of his hastily formed plan, not only upon Milburgh's guilt, but upon Milburgh's willingness to confess his guilt. If the manager agreed to stand sponsor to this lie, he admitted his own speculations, and Tarling, to whom the turn of the conversation had at first been unintelligible, began dimly to see the drift it was taking.

"I have complained that sums of money have been missing for the past month?" repeated Milburgh dully.

The smile had gone from lips and eyes. His face was haggard—he was a man at bay.

"That is what I said," said Lyne watching him. "Isn't that the fact?"

There was a long pause, and presently Milburgh nodded. "That is the fact, sir," he said in a low voice.

"And you have told me that you suspected Miss Rider of defalcations?"

Again the pause and again the man nodded.

"Do you hear?" asked Lyne triumphantly.

"I hear," said Tarling quietly. "Now, what do you wish me to do? Isn't this a matter for the police? I mean the regular police?"

Lyne frowned. "The case has to be prepared first," he said. "I will give you full particulars as to the girl's address and her habits, and it will be your business to collect such information as will enable us to put the case in the hands of Scotland Yard."

"I see," said Tarling, and smiled again. Then he shook his head: "I'm afraid I can't come into this case, Mr. Lyne."

"Can't come in?" said Lyne in astonishment. "Why not?"

"Because it's not my kind of job," said Tarling. "The first time I met you I had a feeling that you were heading me for one of the biggest cases I had ever undertaken. It shows you how one's instincts can lead one astray." He smiled again, and picked up his hat.

"What do you mean? You're going to throw up a valuable client and—and a relation!"

"I don't know how valuable you're likely to be," said Tarling, "and I don't think the fact that our fathers were cousins need come into account. I tell you I do not wish to be associated with this case, Mr. Lyne, and I think there the matter can end."

"You don't think it's worth while, eh?" sneered Lyne. "Yet when I tell you that I am prepared to give you a fee of five hundred guineas——"

"If you gave me a fee of five thousand guineas, or fifty thousand guineas, I should still decline to be associated with this matter," said Tarling.

"And I'll tell you why, here and now," he continued. "I decline to be associated

with so palpable a frame-up. I dare say you know what that means—I will put the matter more plainly and within your understanding. For some reason or other you have a sudden grudge against a member of your staff. I read your face, Mr. Lyne, and the weakness of your chin and the appetite of your mouth suggest to me that you are not overscrupulous with the women who are in your charge. I guess, rather than know, that you have been turned down with a dull, sickening thud by a decent girl, and in your mortification you are attempting to invent a charge which has no substance and no foundation.

"Mr. Milburgh," he turned to the other, "has his own reasons for complying with your wishes. He is your subordinate, and moreover, the side threat of penal servitude for life if he refuses, has carried some weight."

Thornton Lyne's face was distorted with fury.

"I will take care that your behavior is widely advertised!" His voice was trembling with passion. "You have brought a most monstrous charge against me, and I shall proceed against you for slander. The truth is that you are not equal to the job I intended giving you and you are finding an excuse for getting out."

"The truth is," replied Oliver Tarling, biting off the end of a cigar he had taken from his pocket, "that my reputation is too good to be risked in associating with such a dirty business as yours. I hate to be rude, and I hate just as much to throw away good money. But I can't take good money for bad work, Mr. Lyne, and if you will be advised by me, you will drop this stupid scheme for vengeance which your hurt vanity has suggested—it is the clumsiest kind of frame-up that was ever invented—and I suggest also you apologize to the young lady whom, I have no doubt, you have grossly insulted."

He beckoned to his Chinese satellite and walked leisurely to the door. Incoherent with rage, shaking in every limb with a weak man's sense of his own impotence, Lyne watched him until the door was half closed; then, springing forward with a strangled cry, he wrenched the door open and leaped at the detective.

Two hands gripped his arm and, lifting him bodily back into the room, pushed him down into a chair. A not unkindly face blinked down at him, a face relieved from

utter solemnity by the tiny laughter lines about the eyes.

"Mr. Lyne," said the mocking voice of Tarling, "you are setting an awful example to the criminal classes. It is a good job your convict friend is in jail."

Without another word he left the room.

CHAPTER III.

THE MAN WHO LOVED LYNE.

Two days later Thornton Lyne sat in his big limousine which was drawn up on the edge of Wandsworth Common facing the gates of the jail.

Poet and poseur he was, not the strangest combination seen in man. He was rich, he had opportunities, and life might have gone on being pleasant if every man and woman he had met had let him have his own way. Only there were at least two persons with whom Thornton Lyne's millions carried no weight.

It was warm in his limousine, which was electrically heated. But outside, on that raw April morning, it was bitterly cold, and the shivering little group of women who stood at a respectful distance from the prison gates, drew their shawls tightly about them as errant flakes of snow whirled across the open. The common was covered with a white powder, and the early flowers looked supremely miserable in their wintry setting.

The prison clock struck eight, and a wicket gate opened. A man slouched out, his jacket buttoned up to his neck, his cap pulled over his eyes. At sight of him, Lyne dropped the newspaper he had been reading, opened the door of the car, and jumped out, walked toward the released prisoner.

"Well, Sam," he said genially, "you didn't expect me?"

The man stopped as if he had been shot, and stood staring at the fur-coated figure. Then:

"Oh, Mr. Lyne," he said brokenly. "Oh, guvnor!" he choked, and tears streamed down his face, and he gripped the outstretched hand in both of his, unable to speak.

"You didn't think I'd desert you, Sam, eh?" said Mr. Lyne, all aglow with consciousness of his virtue.

"I thought you'd given me up, sir," said Sam Stay huskily. "You're a gentleman, you are, sir, and I ought to be ashamed of myself!"

"Nonsense, nonsense, Sam! Jump into the car, my lad. Go along. People will think you're a millionaire."

The man gulped, grinned sheepishly, opened the door, and stepped in, and sank with a sigh of comfort into the luxurious depths of the big brown cushions.

"Gawd! To think that there are men like you in the world, sir! Why, I believe in angels, I do!"

"Nonsense, Sam. Now you come along to my flat, and I'm going to give you a good breakfast and start you fair again."

"I'm going to try and keep straight, sir, I am, s'help me!"

It may be said in truth that Mr. Lyne did not care very much whether Sam kept straight or not. He might, indeed, have been very much disappointed if Sam had kept to the straight and narrow path. He "kept" Sam as men keep chickens and prize cows. Sam was his luxury and his pose. In his club he boasted of his acquaintance with this representative of the criminal classes—for Sam was an expert burglar and knew no other trade—and Sam's adoration for him was one of his most exhilarating experiences. And that adoration was genuine. Sam would have laid down his life for the pale-faced man with the loose mouth. He would have suffered himself to be torn limb from limb, if in his agony he could have brought ease or advancement to the man who, to him, was one with the gods.

Originally, Thornton Lyne had found Sam while that artist was engaged in burgling the house of his future benefactor. It was a whim of Lyne's to give the criminal a good breakfast and to evince an interest in his future. Twice had Sam gone down for a short term, and once for a long term of imprisonment, and on each occasion Thornton Lyne had made a parade of collecting the returned wanderer, driving him home, giving him breakfast and a great deal of worldly and unnecessary advice, and launching him forth again upon the world with ten pounds—a sum just sufficient to buy a new kit of burglar's tools.

After breakfast Lyne had his talk.

"It's no good, sir," said the burglar, shaking his head. "I've tried everything to get an honest living, but somehow I can't get on in the straight life. I drove a taxicab for three months after I came out, till a busy-fellow* tumbled to me not having a

*Detective.

license and brought me up under the prevention-of-crimes act. It's no use my asking you to give me a job in your shop, sir, because I couldn't stick it, I couldn't really! I'm used to the open-air life; I like being my own master. I'm one of those fellows you've read about—the word begins with A."

"Adventurers?" said Lyne with a little laugh. "Yes, I think you are, Sam, and I'm going to give you an adventure after your own heart."

And then he began a tale of base ingratitude—of a girl he had helped, had indeed saved from starvation, and who had betrayed him at every turn. Thornton Lyne was a poet. He was also a picturesque liar. The woman he had desired was now the most hateful creature in the world. He would have maimed her, torn her beauty from her, trampled her in the slime in his mortification.

His voice rose and his vehemence increased as he saw the eyes of the criminal blazing with the reflection of his rage. The lie came as easily to his lips as the truth, and easier, since there was a certain crudeness about truth which revolted his artistic soul. And as the tale was unfolded of Odette Rider's perfidy, Sam's responses grew more and more husky. Presently Thornton Lyne stopped, his eyes fixed on the other to note the effect.

"Show me," said Sam, his voice trembling. "Show me a way of getting even with her, sir, and I'll go through hell to do it!"

"That's the kind of stuff I like to hear," said Lyne, and poured out from the long bottle which stood on the coffee tray a stiff tot of Sam's favorite brandy. "Now, I'll give you my idea."

For the rest of the morning the two men sat almost head to head, plotting woe for the girl whose chief offense had been against the dignity of Thornton Lyne, and whose virtue had so incited his hate.

CHAPTER IV.

MURDER.

Jack Tarling lay stretched upon his hard bed, a long cigarette holder between his teeth, a book on Chinese metaphysics balanced on his chest, at peace with the world. The hour was eight o'clock, and it was the day that Sam Stay had been released from jail.

It had been a busy day for Tarling, for he was engaged in a bank-fraud case which

would have occupied the whole of his time had he not had a little private business to attend. This private matter was wholly unprofitable, but his curiosity had been piqued.

He laid the book flat on his chest as the soft click of the opening door announced the coming of his retainer. The impassive Ling Chu came noiselessly into the room, carrying a tray, which he placed upon a low table by the side of his master's bed. The Chinaman wore a blue silk pajama suit—a fact which Tarling noticed.

"You are not going out to-night, then, Ling Chu?"

"No, Lieh Jen," said the man.

They both spoke in the soft, sibilant, language of the Middle Kingdom.

"You have been to the Man with the Cunning Face?"

For answer the other took an envelope from an inside pocket and laid it in the other's hand. Tarling glanced at the address.

"So this is where the young lady lives, eh? 'Miss Odette Rider, twenty-seven, Carrymore Buildings, Edgeware Road.'"

"It is a clan house, where many people live," said Ling Chu. "I myself went, in your honorable service, and saw people coming in and going out interminably, and never the same people did I see twice."

"It is what they call in English a 'flat building,' Ling," said Tarling with a little smile. "What did the Man with the Cunning Face say to my letter?"

"Master, he said nothing. He just read and read, and then he made a face like this." Ling gave an imitation of Mr. Milburgh's smile. "And then he wrote as you see."

Tarling nodded. He stared for a moment into vacancy, then he turned on his elbow and lifted the cup of tea which his servant had brought him.

"What of Face-White-and-Weak man, Ling?" he asked in the vernacular. "You saw him?"

"I saw him, master," said the Chinaman gravely. "He is a man without a heaven."

Again Tarling nodded. The Chinese use the word "heaven" instead of "God," and he felt that Ling had very accurately sized up Mr. Thornton Lyne's lack of spiritual qualities. He finished the tea, and swung his legs over the edge of the bed.

"Ling," he said, "this place is very dull and sad. I do not think I shall live here."

"Will the master go back to Shanghai?"

asked the other, without any display of emotion.

"I think so," nodded Tarling. "At any rate, this place is too dull. Just miserable little taking-money-easily cases, and wife-and-lover cases, and my soul is sick."

"These are small matters," said Ling philosophically. "But the master"—this time he spoke of the great Master, Confucius—"has said that all greatness comes from small things, and perhaps some small-piece man will cut off the head of some big-piece man, and then they will call you to find the murderer."

Tarling laughed. "You're an optimist, Ling," he said. "No, I don't think they'll call me in for a murder. They don't call in private detectives in this country."

Ling shook his head. "But the master must find murderers, or he will no longer be Lieh Jen, the Hunter of Men."

"You're a bloodthirsty soul, Ling," said Tarling, this time in English, which Ling imperfectly understood, despite the sustained efforts of eminent missionary schools. "Now, I'll go out," he said with sudden resolution. "I am going to call upon the small-piece woman whom White-Face desires."

"May I come with you?" asked Ling.

Tarling hesitated. "Yes, you may come," he said, "but you must trail me."

Carrymore Mansions is a great block of buildings sandwiched between two more aristocratic and more expensive blocks of flats in the Edgeware Road. The ground floor is given up to lockup shops which, perhaps, cheapened the building, but still it was a sufficiently exclusive habitation for the rents, as Tarling guessed, to be a little too high for a shop assistant unless she was living with her family. The explanation, as he was to discover, lay in the fact that there were some very undesirable basement flats which were let at a lower rental.

He found himself standing outside the polished mahogany door of one of these, wondering exactly what excuse he was going to give to the girl for making a call so late at night. And that she needed some explanation was clear from the frank suspicion which showed in her face when she opened the door to him.

"Yes, I am Miss Rider," she said.

"Can I see you for a few moments?"

"I'm sorry," she said, shaking her head, "but I am alone in the flat, so I can't ask you to come in."

This was a bad beginning. "Is it not possible for you to come out?" he asked anxiously and, in spite of herself, she smiled.

"I'm afraid it's quite impossible for me to go out with somebody I have never met before," she said, with just a trace of amusement in her eyes.

"I recognize the difficulty," and Tarling laughed. "Here is one of my cards. I'm afraid I am not very famous in this country, so you will not know my name."

She took the card and read it. "A private detective?" she said in a troubled voice. "Who has sent you? Not Mr.——"

"Not Mr. Lyne," he said.

She hesitated a moment, then threw open the door. "You must come in. We can talk here in the hall. Do I understand Mr. Lyne has not sent you?"

"Mr. Lyne was very anxious that I should come," he said. "I am betraying his confidence, but I do not think that he has any claim upon my loyalty. I don't know why I've bothered you at all, except that I feel that you ought to be put on your guard."

"Against what?" she asked.

"Again the machinations of a gentleman to whom you have been——" he hesitated for a word.

"Very offensive," she finished for him.

"I don't know how offensive you've been, but I gather you have annoyed Mr. Lyne for some reason or other, and that he is determined to punish you. I do not ask your confidence in this respect, because I realize that you would hardly like to tell me. But what I want to tell you is this, that Mr. Lyne is probably framing up a charge against you—that is to say, inventing a charge of theft."

"Of theft?" she cried in indignant amazement. "Against me? Of theft? It's impossible that he could be so wicked!"

"It's not impossible that anybody could be wicked," said Tarling of the impassive face and the laughing eyes. "All that I know is that he even induced Mr. Milburgh to say that complaints have been made by Milburgh concerning thefts of money from your department."

"That's absolutely impossible!" she cried emphatically. "Mr. Milburgh would never say such a thing. Absolutely impossible!"

"Mr. Milburgh didn't want to say such a thing, I give him credit for that," said Tarling slowly, and then gave the gist of the argument, omitting any reference, direct

or indirect, to the suspicion which surrounded Milburgh.

"So you see," he said in conclusion, "that you ought to be on your guard. I suggest to you that you see a solicitor and put the matter in his hands. You need not move against Mr. Lyne, but it would strengthen your position tremendously if you had already detailed the scheme to some person in authority."

"Thank you very, very much, Mr. Tarling," she said warmly, and looked up into his face with a smile so sweet, so pathetic, so helpless, that Tarling's heart melted toward her.

"And if you don't want a solicitor," he said, "you can depend upon me. I will help you if any trouble arises."

"You don't know how grateful I am to you, Mr. Tarling. I didn't receive you very graciously!"

"If you will forgive my saying so, you would have been a fool to receive me in any other way."

She held out both her hands to him; he took them, and there were tears in her eyes. Presently she composed herself, and led him into her little drawing-room.

"Of course, I've lost my job," and she laughed; "but I've had several offers, one of which I shall accept. I am going to have the rest of the week to myself and take a little holiday."

Tarling stopped her with a gesture. His ears were superhumanly sensitive. "Are you expecting a visitor?" he asked softly.

"No," said the girl in surprise.

"Do you share this flat with somebody?"

"I have a woman who sleeps here," she said. "She is out for the evening."

"Has she a key?"

The girl shook her head. The man rose, and Odette marveled how one so tall could move so swiftly and without so much as a sound across the uncarpeted hallway. He reached the door, turned the knob of the patent lock, and jerked it open. A man was standing on the mat, and he jumped back at the unexpectedness of Tarling's appearance. The stranger was a cadaverous man, in a brand-new suit of clothes, evidently ready-made, but he still wore on his face the curious yellow tinge which is the special mark of those recently liberated from jail.

"Beg pardon," he stammered, "but is this No. 87?"

Tarling shot out a hand and, gripping him by the coat, drew the helpless man toward him. "Hullo, what are you trying to do? What's this you have?"

He wrenched something from the man's hand. It was not a key but a flat-toothed instrument of strange construction.

"Come in," said Tarling, and jerked his prisoner into the hall.

A swift turning back of his prisoner's coat pinioned him, and then with dexterousness and in silence he proceeded to search. From two pockets he took a dozen jeweled rings, each bearing the tiny tag of Lyne's Store.

"Ah," said Tarling sarcastically, "are these intended as a loving gift from Mr. Lyne to Miss Rider?"

The man was speechless with rage. If looks could kill, Tarling would have died.

"A clumsy trick," said Tarling, shaking his head mournfully. "Now go back to your boss, Mr. Thornton Lyne, and tell him that I am ashamed of an intelligent man adopting so crude a method," and with a kick he dismissed Sam Stay to the outer darkness.

The girl, who had been a frightened spectator of the scene, turned her eyes imploringly upon the detective.

"What does it mean?" she pleaded. "I feel so frightened. What did that man want?"

"You need not be afraid of the man, or any other man," said Tarling briskly. "I'm sorry you were scared."

He succeeded in calming her by the time her servant had returned, and then took his leave.

"Remember, I have given you my telephone number and you will call me up if there is any trouble. Particularly," he said emphatically, "if there is any trouble tomorrow."

But there was no trouble on the following day, though at three o'clock in the afternoon she called him up. "I am going away to stay in the country," she said, "I got scared last night."

"Come and see me when you get back," said Tarling, who had found it difficult to dismiss the girl from his mind. "I am going to see Lyne to-morrow. By the way, the person who called last night is a protégé of Mr. Thornton Lyne's, a man who is devoted to him body and soul, and he's the fellow we've got to look after. By Jove! It almost gives me an interest in life!"

He heard the faint laugh of the girl.

"Must I be butchered to make a detective's holiday?" she mocked, and he grinned sympathetically.

"Anyway, I'll see Lyne to-morrow," he said.

The next morning, in fulfillment of his promise, he walked to the mammoth building which housed Lyne's Stores. His route brought him to Oxford Street, and he noted idly that the newsboys were unusually busy. Then his eye caught the staring black letters of a bill.

THE
DAFFODIL
MURDER.

"Daffodil murder?" he repeated to himself, and bought a newspaper.

The news, widely spaced, was brief. An early worker, taking a short cut through Hyde Park, had found the body of a man lying by the side of a carriage drive. He was fully dressed, save that his coat and waistcoat had been removed. Wound about his body was a woman's silk nightdress, stained with blood. The hands of the figure were crossed on the breast and upon them lay a handful of daffodils.

Tarling read the short paragraph again, then turned to the stop-press column for any later news. There were two lines in the space, but they were sensational.

DAFFODIL MURDER.

Body identified as Mr. Thornton Lyne,
Well-known Millionaire.

CHAPTER V.

FOUND IN LYNE'S POCKET.

Under the headlines, Tarling read:

The London police are confronted with a new mystery, which has features so remarkable that it would not be an exaggeration to describe this crime as the murder mystery of the century. A well-known figure in London society, Mr. Thornton Lyne, head of an important commercial organization, a poet of no mean quality, and a millionaire renowned for his philanthropic activities, was found dead in Hyde Park in the early hours of this morning, in circumstances which admit of no doubt that he was most brutally murdered.

At half past five Thomas Savage, a bricklayer's laborer employed by the Cubitt Town Construction Company, was making his way across Hyde Park en route to his work. He had crossed the main drive which runs parallel with the Bayswater Road, when his attention

was attracted to a figure lying on the grass near to the sidewalk. He made his way to the spot and discovered a man, who had obviously been dead for some hours. The body had neither coat nor waistcoat, but about the breast, on which his two hands were laid, was a silk garment tightly wound about the body, and obviously designed to stanch a wound on the left side above the heart.

The extraordinary feature is that the murderer must not only have composed the body, but had laid upon its breast a handful of daffodils. The police were immediately summoned and the body was removed. The police theory is that the murder was not committed in Hyde Park, but that the unfortunate gentleman was killed elsewhere, and his body conveyed to the Park in his own motor car, which was found abandoned a hundred yards from the scene of the discovery. We understand that the police are working upon a very important clew, and an arrest is imminent.

Tarling knew nothing of Lyne's private life, despite the fact that the man had been a distant relative of his. He had been too busy in China to bother his head about the vagaries of a tourist, even a cousin, but he remembered dimly some sort of scandal which had attached to the visitor's name, and puzzled his head to recall all the circumstances. He put down the newspaper with a little grimace, indicative of regret. If he had only been attached to Scotland Yard, what a case this would have been for him! Here was a mystery which promised unusual interest.

His mind wandered to the girl, Odette Rider. What would she think of it? She would be shocked, he thought—horrified. It hurt him to feel that she might be indirectly, even remotely associated with such a public scandal, and he realized with a sudden sense of dismay that nothing was less unlikely than that her name would be mentioned as one who had quarreled with the dead man.

"Pshaw!" he muttered, shrugging off the possibility as absurd, and, walking to the door, called his Chinese servant.

"Ling Chu," he said, "the white-faced man is dead."

Ling Chu raised his imperturbable eyes to his master's face.

"All men die some time," he said calmly. "This man quick die. That is better than long die."

Tarling looked at him sharply. "How do you know that he quick die?" he demanded.

"These things are talked about," said Ling Chu without hesitation.

"But not in the Chinese language," replied Tarling, "and, Ling Chu, you speak no English."

"I speak a little, master," said Ling Chu, "and I have heard these things in the streets."

Tarling did not answer immediately and the Chinaman waited. "Ling Chu," he said after a while, "this man came to Shanghai while we were there, and there was trouble—trouble. Once he was thrown out from Wing Fu's tea house where he had been smoking opium. Also there was another trouble—do you remember?"

The Chinaman looked him straight in the eyes. "I am forgetting," he said. "This white face was a bad man. I am glad he is dead."

"Humph!" said Tarling, and dismissed his retainer.

Ling Chu was the cleverest of all his sleuths, a man who never lifted his nose from the trail once it was struck, and he had been the most loyal and faithful of Tarling's native trailers. But the detective never pretended that he understood Ling Chu's mind, or that he could pierce the veil which the native dropped between his own private thoughts and the curious foreigner. Even native criminals were baffled in their interpretation of Ling Chu's views, and many a man had gone to the scaffold puzzling the head which was soon to be snicked from his body, over the method by which Ling Chu had detected his crime.

Tarling went back to the table and picked up the newspaper, but had hardly begun to read when the telephone bell rang. He picked up the receiver and listened. To his amazement it was the voice of Cresswell, the assistant commissioner of police, who had been instrumental in persuading Tarling to come to England.

"Can you come to the Yard for five minutes, Tarling?" said the voice. "I want to talk to you about this murder."

"Surely," said Tarling, "I'll be with you in ten minutes."

In five minutes he was at Scotland Yard and was ushered into the office of Assistant Commissioner Cresswell. The white-haired man who came across to meet him with a smile of pleasure in his eyes disclosed the object of the summons.

"I'm going to bring you into this case, Tarling," he said. "It has certain aspects which seem outside the humdrum experi-

ence of our own people. It is not unusual, as you know," he said, as he motioned the other to a chair, "for Scotland Yard to engage outside help, particularly when we have a crime of this character to deal with. The facts you know," he went on, as he opened a thin folder. "These are the reports, which you can read at your leisure. Thornton Lyne was, to say the least, eccentric. His life was not a particularly wholesome one, and he had many undesirable acquaintances, among whom was a criminal and ex-convict who was only released from jail a few days ago."

"That's rather extraordinary," said Tarling, lifting his eyebrows. "What had he in common with the criminal?"

Commissioner Cresswell shrugged his shoulders. "My own view is that this acquaintance was rather a pose of Lyne's. He liked to be talked about. It gave him a certain reputation for character among his friends."

"Who is the criminal?" asked Tarling.

"He is a man named Stay, a petty larcenist, and in my opinion a much more dangerous character than the police have realized."

"Is he——" began Tarling. But the commissioner shook his head.

"I think we can rule him out from the list of people who may be suspected of this murder," he said. "Sam Stay has very few qualities that would commend themselves to the average man, but there can be no doubt at all that he was devoted to Lyne body and soul. When the detective temporarily in charge of the case went down to Lambeth to interview Stay, he found him lying on his bed prostrate with grief, with a newspaper containing the particulars of the murder by his side. The man is beside himself with sorrow, and threatens to 'do in' the person who is responsible for this crime. You can interview him later. I doubt whether you will get much out of him, because he is absolutely incoherent. Lyne was something more than human in his eyes, and I should imagine that the only decent emotion he has had in his life is this affection for a man who was certainly good to him, whether he was sincere in his philanthropy or otherwise. Now, here are a few of the facts which have not been made public."

Cresswell settled himself back in his chair and ticked off on his fingers the points as he made them.

"You know that around Lyne's chest a silk nightdress was discovered?"

Tarling nodded.

"Under the nightdress, made into a pad, evidently with the object of arresting the bleeding, were two handkerchiefs, neatly folded, as though they had been taken from a drawer. They were ladies' handkerchiefs, so we may start on the supposition that there is a woman in the case."

Tarling nodded.

"Now, another peculiar feature of the case, which happily has escaped the attention of those who saw the body first and gave particulars to the newspapers was that Lyne, though fully dressed, wore a pair of thick felt slippers. They were taken out of his own store yesterday evening, as we have ascertained, by Lyne himself, who sent for one of his assistants to his office and told him to get a pair of very soft-soled slippers.

"The third item is that Lyne's boots were discovered in the deserted motor car which was drawn up by the side of the road a hundred yards from where the body was lying.

"And the fourth feature—and this explains why I have brought you into the case—is that in the car was discovered his bloodstained coat and waistcoat. In the right-hand pocket of the latter garment," said Cresswell, speaking slowly, "was found this."

He took from his drawer a small piece of crimson paper two inches square, and handed it without comment to the detective.

Tarling took the paper and stared. Written in thick black ink were four Chinese characters—"Tzu chao fan nao"—he brought this trouble upon himself."

CHAPTER VI.

THE MOTHER OF ODETTE RIDER.

The two men looked at one another in silence.

"Well?" said the commissioner at last.

Tarling shook his head. "That's amazing," he said, and looked at the little slip of paper between his finger and thumb.

"You see why I am bringing you in," said the commissioner. "If there is a Chinese end to this crime, nobody knows better than you how to deal with it. I have had this slip translated: It means 'He brought this trouble upon himself.'"

"Literally, 'self look for trouble,'" said

Tarling. "But there is one fact which you may not have noticed. If you will look at the slip, you will see that it is not written, but printed."

He passed the little red square across the table, and the commissioner examined it.

"That's true," he said in surprise. "I did not notice that. Have you seen these slips before?"

Tarling nodded. "A few years ago," he said. "There was a very bad outbreak of crime in Shanghai, mostly under the leadership of a notorious criminal whom I was instrumental in getting beheaded. He ran a gang called 'the Cheerful Hearts'—you know the fantastic titles which these Chinese gangs adopt. It was their custom to leave on the scene of their depredations, the *Hong* or sign manual of the gang. It was worded exactly as this slip, only it was written. These visiting cards of the Cheerful Hearts were bought up as curios, and commanded high prices until some enterprising Chinaman started printing them, so that you could buy them at almost any stationer's shop in Shanghai—just as you buy picture post cards."

The commissioner nodded. "And this is one of those?"

"This is such a one. How it came here, Heaven knows. It is certainly the most remarkable discovery."

The commissioner went to a cupboard, unlocked it, and took out a suit case, which he placed upon the table and opened. "Now," he said, "look at this, Tarling."

"This," was a stained garment, which Tarling had no difficulty in recognizing as a nightdress. He took it out and examined it. Save for two sprays of forget-me-nots upon the sleeves it was perfectly plain and was innocent of lace or embroidery.

"It was found 'round his body, and here are the handkerchiefs." He pointed to two tiny squares of linen, so discolored as to be hardly recognizable.

Tarling lifted the flimsy garment, with its evidence of the terrible purpose for which it had been employed, and carried it to the light. "Are there laundry marks?"

"None whatever," said the commissioner.

"Or on the handkerchiefs?"

"None," replied Mr. Cresswell.

"The property of a girl who lived alone," said Tarling. "She is not very well off, but extremely neat, fond of good things but not extravagant, eh?"

"How do you know that?" asked the commissioner, surprised.

Tarling laughed. "The absence of laundry marks shows that she washes her silk garments at home, and probably her handkerchiefs also, which places her among the girls who aren't blessed with too many of this world's goods. The fact that it is silk, and good silk, and that the handkerchiefs are good linen, suggests a woman who takes a great deal of trouble, yet whom one would not expect to find overdressed. Have you any other clew?"

"None," said the commissioner. "We have discovered that Mr. Lyne had rather a serious quarrel with one of his employees, a Miss Odette Rider——"

Tarling caught his breath. It was, he told himself, absurd to take so keen an interest in a person whom he had not seen for longer than ten minutes, and who a week before was a perfect stranger. But somehow the girl had made a deeper impression upon him than he had realized. This man, who had spent his life in the investigation of crime and in the study of criminals, had found little time to interest himself in womanhood, and Odette Rider had been a revelation to him.

"I happen to know there was a quarrel. I also know the cause," he said, and related briefly the circumstances under which he himself had met Thornton Lyne. "What have you against her?" he asked, with an assumption of carelessness which he did not feel.

"Nothing definite," said the commissioner. "Her principal accuser is the man Stay. Even he did not accuse her directly, but he hinted that she was responsible, in some way which he did not particularize, for Thornton Lyne's death. I thought it curious that he should know anything about this girl, but I am inclined to think that Thornton Lyne made this man his confidant."

"What about the man?" asked Tarling. "Can he account for his movements last night and early this morning?"

"His statement," replied the commissioner, "is that he saw Mr. Lyne at his flat at nine o'clock and that Mr. Lyne gave him five pounds in the presence of Lyne's butler. He said he left the flat and went to his lodgings in Lambeth, where he went to bed very early. All the evidence we have been able to collect supports his statement. We have interviewed Lyne's butler, and his account

agrees with Stay's. Stay left at five minutes past nine, and at twenty-five minutes to ten—exactly half an hour—Lyne himself left the house, driving his two-seater. He was alone, and told the butler he was going to his club."

"How was he dressed?" asked Tarling.

"That is rather important," nodded the commissioner. "For he was in evening dress until nine o'clock—in fact, until after Stay had gone—when he changed into the kit in which he was found dead."

Tarling pursed his lips. "He'd hardly change from evening into day dress to go to his club," he said.

He left Scotland Yard a little while after this, a much puzzled man. His first call was at the flat in Edgewater Road which Odette Rider occupied. She was not at home, and the hall porter told him that she had been away since the afternoon of the previous day. Her letters were to be sent on to Hertford. He had the address because it was his business to intercept the postman and send forward the letters.

"Hillington Grove, Hertford."

Tarling was worried. There was really no reason why he should be, he told himself, but he was undoubtedly worried. And he was disappointed, too. He felt that, if he could have seen the girl and spoken with her for a few minutes, he could have completely dissociated her from any suspicion which might attach. In fact, that she was away from home, that she had "disappeared" from her flat on the eve of the murder, would be quite enough, as he knew, to set the official policemen nosing on her trail.

"Do you know whether Miss Rider has friends at Hertford?" he asked the porter.

"Oh, yes, sir," said the man nodding. "Miss Rider's mother lives there."

Tarling was going, when the man detained him with a remark which switched his mind back to the murder and filled him with a momentary sense of hopeless dismay.

"I'm rather glad Miss Rider didn't happen to be in last night, sir," he said. "Some of the tenants upstairs were making complaints."

"Complaints about what?" asked Tarling, and the man hesitated.

"I suppose you're a friend of the young lady's, aren't you?" and Tarling nodded.

"Well, it only shows you," said the porter confidentially, "how people are very often blamed for something they did not do. The

tenant in the next flat is a bit crotchety; he's a musician, and rather deaf. If he hadn't been deaf, he wouldn't have said that Miss Rider was the cause of his being wakened up. I suppose it was something that happened outside."

"What did he hear?" asked Tarling quickly, and the porter laughed.

"Well, sir, he thought he heard a shot, and a scream like a woman's. It woke him up. I should have thought he had dreamed it, but another tenant, who also lives in the basement, heard the same sound, and the rum thing was they both thought it was in Miss Rider's flat."

"What time was this?"

"They say about midnight, sir," said the porter; "but, of course, it couldn't have happened, because Miss Rider had not been in, and the flat was empty."

Here was a disconcerting piece of news for Tarling to carry with him on his railway journey to Hertford. He was determined to see the girl and put her on her guard, and, though he realized that it was not exactly his duty to put a suspected criminal upon her guard, and that his conduct was, to say the least of it, irregular, such did not trouble him very much.

He had taken his ticket and was making his way to the platform when he espied a familiar figure hurrying as from a train which had just come in, and apparently the man saw Tarling even before Tarling had recognized him, for he turned abruptly aside and would have disappeared into the press of people had not the detective overtaken him.

"Hullo, Mr. Milburgh!" he said. "Your name is Milburgh, if I remember aright?"

The manager of Lyne's Stores turned, rubbing his hands, his habitual smile upon his face.

"Why, to be sure," he said genially, "it's Mr. Tarling, the detective gentleman. What sad news this is, Mr. Tarling! How dreadful for everybody concerned!"

"I suppose it has meant an upset at the Stores, this terrible happening?"

"Oh, yes, sir," said Milburgh in a shocked voice. "Of course, we closed for the day. It is dreadful—the most dreadful thing within my experience. Is anybody suspected, sir?" he asked.

Tarling shook his head. "It is a most mysterious circumstance, Mr. Milburgh," he said. And then: "May I ask if any provi-

sion has been made to carry on the business in the event of Mr. Lyne's sudden death?"

Again Milburgh hesitated, and seemed reluctant to reply. "I am, of course, in control," he said, "as I was when Mr. Lyne took his trip around the world. I have received authority also from Mr. Lyne's solicitors to continue the direction of the business until the court appoints a trustee."

Tarling eyed him narrowly. "What effect has this murder had upon you personally?" he asked bluntly.

Milburgh smiled. "Unhappily," he said, "it enhances my position, because it gives me a greater authority and a greater responsibility. I would that the occasion had never arisen, Mr. Tarling."

"I'm sure you do," said Tarling dryly, remembering Lyne's accusations against the other's probity. After a few commonplaces the men parted.

At Hertford, Tarling jumped into a cab and gave the address. "Hillington Grove, sir? That's about two miles out," said the cabman. "It is Mrs. Rider you want?"

Tarling nodded.

"You ain't come with the young lady she was expecting?" said the driver.

"No," replied Tarling in surprise.

"I was told to keep my eyes open for a young lady," explained the cabman vaguely.

A further surprise awaited the detective. He expected to discover that Hillington Grove was a small suburban house, bearing a grandiose title. He was amazed when the cabman turned through a pair of impressive gates, and drove up a wide drive of some considerable length, turning eventually on to a graveled space before a large mansion. It was hardly the kind of home he would have expected for the parent of a cashier at Lyne's Stores, and his surprise was increased when the door was opened by a footman.

He was ushered into a drawing-room, beautifully and artistically furnished. He began to think that some mistake had been made, and was framing an apology to the mistress of the house, when the door opened and a lady entered. Her age was nearer forty than thirty, but she was still a beautiful woman and carried herself with the air of a grand dame. She was graciousness itself to the visitor, but Tarling thought he detected a note of anxiety both in her mien and in her voice.

"I'm afraid there's some mistake," he began. "I have probably found the wrong Mrs. Rider—I wanted to see Miss Odette Rider."

The lady nodded.

"That is my daughter," she said. "Have you any news of her? I am quite worried about her."

"Worried about her?" said Tarling quickly. "Why, what has happened? Isn't she here?"

"Here?" said Mrs. Rider, wide-eyed, "of course she is not."

"But hasn't she been here?" asked Tarling. "Didn't she arrive here two nights ago?"

Mrs. Rider shook her head. "No, but she promised to come and spend a few days with me, and last night I received a telegram—wait a moment, I will get it for you."

She was gone a few moments and came back with a little buff form, which she handed to the detective. He looked and read:

My visit canceled. Do not write to me at flat. I will communicate with you when I reach my destination.

The telegram had been handed in at the general post office, London, and was dated nine o'clock—three hours, according to expert opinion, before the murder was committed!

CHAPTER VII.

THE WOMAN IN THE CASE.

"May I keep this telegram?" asked Tarling.

The woman nodded. He saw that she was nervous, ill at ease, and worried. "I can't quite understand why Odette should not come," she said. "Is there any particular reason?"

"That I can't say," said Tarling. "But please don't let it worry you, Mrs. Rider. She probably changed her mind at the last moment and is staying with friends in town. I haven't seen her for several days."

"Is anything wrong?" Her voice shook for a second, but she recovered herself. "You see"—she made an attempt to smile—"I have been in the house for two or three days, and I have seen neither Odette nor—nor anybody else," she added quickly.

Whom was she expecting to see, wondered Tarling, and why did she check herself? Was it possible that she had not heard of the murder? He determined to test her.

"Your daughter is probably detained in town owing to Mr. Lyne's death," he said, watching her closely.

She started and went white. "Mr. Lyne's death?" she stammered. "Has he died? That young man?"

"He was murdered in Hyde Park yesterday morning," said Tarling, and she staggered back and collapsed into a chair.

"Murdered! Murdered!" she whispered. "Oh, God! Not that, not that!"

Her face was ashen white, and she was shaking in every limb, this stately woman who had walked so serenely into the drawing-room a few minutes before. Presently she covered her face with her hands and began to weep softly, and Tarling waited.

"Did you know Mr. Lyne?" he asked, after a while.

She shook her head.

"Have you heard any stories about Mr. Lyne?"

She looked up.

"None," she said listlessly, "except that he was—not a very nice man."

"Is there any necessity for your daughter working for a living?" he asked bluntly, and she dropped her eyes.

"It is her wish," she said in a low voice. "She does not get on—with people about here," she added hastily.

There was a brief silence, then he rose and offered his hand. "I do hope I haven't worried you with my questions," he said, "and I dare say you wonder why I have come. I will tell you candidly that I am engaged in investigating this murder, and I was hoping to hear that your daughter, in common with the other people who were brought into contact with Mr. Lyne, might give me some thread of a clew which would lead to more important things."

"A detective?" she asked, and he could have sworn there was horror in her eyes.

"A sort of detective," he laughed, "but not a formidable one, I hope, Mrs. Rider."

She saw him to the door, and watched him as he disappeared down the drive, then walked slowly back to the room and stood against the marble mantelpiece, her head upon her arms, weeping softly.

Jack Tarling left Hertford more confused than ever. He had instructed the fly driver to wait for him at the gates, and this worthy he proceeded to pump. Mrs. Rider had been living in Hertford for four years, and was greatly respected. Did the cabman know

the daughter? Oh, yes, he had seen the young lady once or twice, but "She don't come very often," he explained. "By all accounts she don't get on with her father."

"Her father? I did not know she had a father," said Tarling in surprise.

Yes, there was a father. He was an infrequent visitor, and usually came up from London by the late train and was driven in his own brougham to the house. He had not seen him—indeed, very few people had, but by all accounts he was a very nice man, and well connected in the City.

Tarling had telegraphed to the assistant who had been placed at his disposal by Scotland Yard, and Detective Inspector Whiteside was waiting for him at the station.

"Any fresh news?" asked Tarling.

"Yes, sir, there's rather an important clew come to light," said Whiteside. "I've got the car here, sir, and we might discuss it on the way back to the Yard."

"What is it?" asked Tarling.

"We got it from Mr. Lyne's manservant," said the inspector. "It appears that the butler had been going through Mr. Lyne's things, acting on instructions from headquarters, and in a corner of his writing desk a telegram was discovered. I'll show it you when I get to the Yard. It has a very important bearing upon the case, and I think may lead us to the murderer."

On the word "telegram" Tarling felt mechanically in his pockets for the wire which Mrs. Rider had given him from her daughter. Now he took it out and read it again. It had been handed in at the general post office at nine o'clock exactly.

"That's extraordinary, sir." Detective Inspector Whiteside, sitting by his side, had glanced over the message.

"What is extraordinary?" asked Tarling with an air of surprise.

"I happened to see the signature to that wire—Odette, isn't it?" said the Scotland Yard man.

"Yes," nodded Tarling. "Why? What is there extraordinary in this?"

"Well, sir," said Whiteside, "it is something of a coincidence that the telegram which was found in Mr. Lyne's desk, and making an appointment with him at a certain flat in the Edgeware Road, was also signed 'Odette' and"—he bent forward, looking at the wire still in the astonished Tarling's hand—"and," he said in triumph, "it was handed in exactly at the same time as this!"

5A P

An examination of the other telegram left no doubt in the detective's mind that Whiteside had spoken nothing but the truth. An urgent message was dispatched to the general post office, and in two hours the original telegrams were before him. They were both written in the same hand. The first to her mother, saying that she could not come; the second to Lyne, running:

Will you see me at my flat to-night at eleven o'clock?
ODETTE RIDER.

Tarling's heart sank within him. This news was stunning. It was impossible, impossible, he told himself again and again, that this girl could have killed Lyne. Suppose she had? Where had they met? Had they gone driving together, and had she shot him in making the circuit of the park? But why should he be wearing list slippers? Why should his coat be off, and why should the nightdress be bound around and around his body? He thought the matter out, but the more he thought, the more puzzled he became. It was a very depressed man who interviewed an authority that night and secured from him a search warrant.

Armed with this and accompanied by Whiteside, he made his way to the flat in the Edgeware Road, and, showing his authority, secured a pass-key from the hall porter, who was also the caretaker of the building. Tarling remembered the last time he had gone to the flat, and it was with a feeling of intense pity for the girl that he turned the key in the lock and stepped into the little hall, reaching out his hand and switching on the light as he did so.

There was nothing in the hall to suggest anything unusual. There was just that close and musty smell which is peculiar to all buildings which have been shut up, even for a few days.

But there was something else. Tarling sniffed and Whiteside sniffed. A dull, "burned" smell, some pungent "scorched" odor, which he recognized as the stale stench of exploded cordite. He went into the tiny dining room; everything was neat, nothing displaced.

"That's curious," said Whiteside, pointing to the sideboard, and Tarling saw a deep glass vase half filled with daffodils. Two or three blossoms had either fallen or had been pulled out, and were lying, shriveled, and dead, on the polished surface of the sideboard.

"Humph!" said Tarling. "I don't like this very much."

He turned and walked back into the hall and opened another door, which stood ajar. Again he turned on the light. He was in the girl's bedroom. He stopped dead, and slowly examined the room. But for the disordered appearance of the chest of drawers, there was nothing unusual in the appearance of the room. At the open doors of the bureau a little heap of female attire had been thrown pell-mell upon the floor. All these were eloquent of hasty action. Still more was a small suit case, half packed, on the bed, also left in a great hurry.

Tarling stepped into the room, and if he had been half blind, he could not have missed the last and most damning evidence of all. The carpet was of a biscuit color, and covered the room flush to the wainscot. Opposite the fireplace was a big, dark, red, irregular stain.

Tarling's face grew tense. "This is where Lyne was shot," he said.

"And look there!" said Whiteside excitedly, pointing to the chest of drawers.

Tarling stepped quickly across the room and pulled out a garment which hung over the edge of the drawer. It was a nightdress—a silk nightdress with two little sprays of forget-me-nots embroidered on the sleeves. It was the companion to that which had been found about Lyne's body. And there was something more. The removal of the garment from the drawer disclosed a mark on the white enamel of the bureau. It was a bloody thumb print!

The detective looked round at his assistant, and the expression of his face was set in its hardest mask. "Whiteside," he said quietly, "swear out a warrant for the arrest of Odette Rider on a charge of willful murder. Telegraph all stations to detain this girl, and let me know the result."

Without another word he turned from the room and walked back to his lodgings.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SILENCING OF SAM STAY.

There was a criminal in London, who was watched day and night. It was no new experience to Sam Stay to find an unconcerned-looking detective strolling along behind him; but for the first time in his life, the burglar was neither disconcerted nor embarrassed by these attentions.

Thornton Lyne was dead! Dead, dead, dead. Every footfall echoed the horrible, unbelievable word. The man was incapable of feeling—every other pain was deadened in this great suffering which was his. And who had been the cause of it all? Whose treachery had cut short this wonderful life? He ground his teeth at the thought. Odette Rider! He remembered the name. He remembered all the injuries she had done to this man, his benefactor.

He walked aimlessly westward, unconscious of and uncaring for his shadow, and had reached the end of Piccadilly when somebody took him gently by the arm. He turned, and as he recognized an acquaintance, his thick lips went back in an ugly snarl.

"It's all right, Sam," said the plain-clothes policeman with a grin. "There's no trouble coming to you. I just want to ask you a few questions."

"You fellows have been asking questions day and night since—since that happened," growled Sam. Nevertheless, he permitted himself to be mollified and led to a seat in the park.

"Now, I'm putting it to you straight, Sam," said the policeman. "We've got nothing against you at the Yard, but we think you might be able to help us. You knew Mr. Lyne; he was very decent to you."

"Here, shut up!" said Sam savagely. "I don't want to talk about it. I don't want to think about it! D'y'e hear? He was the grandest fellow that ever was, was Mr. Lyne, God bless him! Oh, my God! My God!" he wailed, and to the detective's surprise this hardened criminal buried his face in his hands.

"That's all right, Sam. I know he was a nice fellow. Had he any enemies—he might have talked to a chap like you where he wouldn't have talked to his friends. Do you see? Did anybody hate him?"

Sam nodded.

"Was it a woman?" asked the detective with studied indifference.

"It was," replied the other with an oath. "Damn her, it was! He treated her well, did Mr. Lyne. She was broke, half starving; he took her out of the gutter and put her into a good place, and she went about making accusations against him! That's the kind of girl she was, Slade," he went on, addressing the detective, as criminals will,

familiarly by their surnames. "She ain't fit to walk the earth——"

His voice broke.

"Might I ask the name of this party?" demanded Slade.

Again Sam looked suspiciously about. "Look here," he said, "leave me to deal with her. I'll settle with her, and don't you worry!"

"That would only get you into trouble, Sam," mused Slade. "Just give us her name. Did it begin with an R?"

"How the 'ell do I know!" growled the criminal. "I can't spell. Her name was Odette."

"Rider?" said the other eagerly.

"That's her. She used to be cashier in Lyne's store."

"Now, just quiet yourself down and tell me all Lyne told you about her, will you, my lad?"

Sam Stay stared at him, and then a slow look of cunning passed over his face.

"If it was her!" he breathed. "If I could only put her away for it!"

Nothing better illustrated the mentality of this man than the fact that the thought of "shopping" the girl had not occurred to him before. That was the idea, a splendid idea! Again his lips curled back, and he eyed the detective with a queer little smile.

"All right, sir," he said. "I'll tell the head split. I'm not going to tell you."

"That's as it ought to be, Sam," said the detective genially. "You can tell Mr. Tarling or Mr. Whiteside, and they'll make it worth your while."

The detective called a cab and together they drove, not to Scotland Yard, but to Tarling's little office in Bond Street. It was here that the man from Shanghai had established his detective agency, and here he waited with the phlegmatic Whiteside for the return of the detective he had sent to withdraw Sam Stay from his shadow.

The man shuffled into the room, looked resentfully from one to the other, nodded to both, and declined the chair which was pushed forward for him.

"Now, Stay," said Whiteside, whom, at least, the criminal recognized, "we want to hear what you know about this murder."

Stay pressed his lips together and made no reply.

"Sit down," said Tarling, and this time the man obeyed. "Now, my lad," Tarling went on—and when he was in a persuasive

mood his voice was silky—"they tell me that you were a friend of Mr. Lyne's."

Sam nodded.

"He was good to you, was he not?"

"Good!" The man drew a deep breath. "I'd have given my heart and soul to save him from a minute's pain, I would, sir! He was an angel on earth—my Gawd, if ever I lay me hands on that woman, I'll strangle her. She's been robbing him and robbing him for years," he shouted. "He looked after her and protected her, and she went and told lies about him, she did. She trapped him!"

His voice rose to a scream, and he made a move forward toward the desk, both fists clenched till the knuckles showed white. Tarling sprang up, for he recognized the signs. Before another word could be spoken, the man collapsed in a heap on the floor, and lay like one dead. Tarling was round the table in an instant, turned the unconscious man on his back, and, lifting one eyelid, examined the pupil.

"Epilepsy or something worse," he said. "This thing has been preying on the poor devil's mind—phone an ambulance, Whiteside, will you?"

"Shall I give him some water?"

Tarling shook his head. "He won't recover for hours, if he recovers at all. If Sam Stay knows anything to the detriment of Odette Rider, he is likely to carry his knowledge to the grave."

And in his heart of hearts J. O. Tarling felt a little sense of satisfaction that the mouth of this man was closed.

CHAPTER IX.

WHERE THE FLOWERS CAME FROM.

Where was Odette Rider? Every police station in the country had been warned; all outgoing ships were being watched; tactful inquiries had been made in every direction where it was likely she might be found; and the house at Hertford was under observation day and night.

Tarling had procured an adjournment of the inquest; for, whatever might be his sentiments toward Odette Rider, he was, it seemed, more anxious to perform his duty to the State, and it was very necessary that no prurient-minded coroner should investigate too deeply into the cause and the circumstances leading up to Thornton Lyne's death, lest the suspected criminal be warned.

Accompanied by Inspector Whiteside, he re-examined the flat to which the bloodstained carpet pointed unmistakably as being the scene of the murder. The red thumb prints on the bureau had been photographed and were awaiting comparison with the girl's the moment she was apprehended.

Carrymore Mansions, where Odette Rider lived were a block of flats of good class, the ground floor being given over to shops. The entrance to the flats was between two of these, and a flight of stairs led down to the basement. Here were six sets of apartments. The center of the basement consisted of a large concrete storeroom, about which were set little cubicles or cellars in which the tenants stored such of their baggage and furniture as they did not need. It was possible, he discovered, to pass from the corridor of the basement flat, into the storeroom, and out through a door at the back of the building into a small courtyard. Access to the street was secured through a fairly large door, placed there for the convenience of tenants who wished to get their coal and heavy stores delivered. In the street behind the block of flats were about a dozen shut-up stables, all of which were rented by a taxicab company, and now used as a garage.

If the murder was committed in the flat, it was by this way the body would have been carried to the narrow rear street and here, too, a car would attract little attention. Inquiries made among employees of the cab company, some of whom occupied little rooms about their garages, elicited the important information that "the car had been seen in the mews on the night of the murder"—a fact, it seemed, which had been overlooked in the preliminary investigations.

The car was a two-seated Daimler with a yellow body and a hood. This was an exact description of Thornton Lyne's machine which had been found near the place where his body was discovered. The hood of the car was up when it was seen in the mews and the time apparently was between ten and eleven on the night of the murder. But though he pursued the most diligent inquiries, Tarling failed to discover any human being who had either recognized Lyne or observed the car arrive or depart.

The hall porter of the flats, on being interviewed, was very emphatic that nobody had come into the building by the main entrance between the hours of ten and half

past. It was possible, he admitted, that they could have come between half past ten and a quarter to eleven, because he had gone to his "office," which proved to be a stuffy little place under the stairs, to change from his uniform into his private clothes before going home. He was in the habit of locking the front door at eleven o'clock. Tenants of the Mansions had pass-keys to the main door, and of all that happened after eleven he would be ignorant. He admitted that he may have gone a little before eleven that night, but even as to this he was not prepared to swear.

"In fact," said Whiteside afterward, "his evidence would lead nowhere. At the very hour when somebody might have come into the flat—that is to say, between half past ten and a quarter to eleven—he admits he was not on duty."

Tarling nodded. "Of one thing I am satisfied," he said; "if Odette Rider committed this murder she had an accomplice. It was impossible that she could have carried or dragged this man into the open and put him into the car, carried him again from the car and laid him on the grass."

"The daffodils puzzle me," said Whiteside. "Why should he be found with daffodils on his chest? And why, if he was murdered here, should she trouble to pay that tribute of her respect?"

Tarling shook his head. He was nearer a solution to the latter mystery than either of them knew. His search of the flat completed, he drove to Hyde Park and, guided by Whiteside, made his way to the spot where the body was found. It was on a graveled sidewalk, nearer to the grass than to the road, and Whiteside described the position of the body. Tarling looked round, and suddenly uttered an exclamation.

"I wonder," he said pointing to a flower bed.

Whiteside stared, then laughed. "That's curious," he said. "We seem to see nothing but daffodils in this murder!"

The big bed to which Tarling walked, was smothered with great feathery bells that danced and swayed in the light spring breezes.

"Humph!" said Tarling. "Do you know anything about daffodils, Whiteside?"

Whiteside shook his head with a laugh. "All daffodils are daffodils to me. Is there any difference in them? I suppose there must be."

Tarling nodded. "These are known as Golden Spurs," he said; "a kind which is very common in England. The daffodils in Miss Rider's flat are a variety known as the Emperor."

"Well?" said Whiteside.

"Well," said the other slowly, "the daffodils I saw this morning, which were found on Lyne's chest, were Golden Spurs."

He knelt down by the side of the bed and began pushing aside the stems, examining the ground carefully. "Here you are," he said.

He pointed to a dozen jagged stems.

"This is where the daffodils were plucked. I'd like to swear to that. Look, they were all pulled together by one hand. Somebody leaned over and pulled a handful."

Whiteside looked dubious. "Mischievous boys sometimes do these things."

"Only in single stalks," said Tarling, "and the regular flower thieves are careful to steal from various parts of the bed so that the loss should not be reported by the park gardeners."

"Then you suggest——"

"I suggest that whoever killed Thornton Lyne found it convenient, for some reason best known to himself or herself, to ornament the body as it was found, and the flowers were got from here."

"Not from the girl's flat at all?"

"I'm sure of that," replied Tarling emphatically. "In fact, I knew that this morning when I'd seen the daffodils which you had taken to Scotland Yard."

"It was a woman's act to put flowers on the man," said Whiteside quietly. "Those daffodils tell me of pity and compassion, and perhaps repentance."

A slow smile dawned on Tarling's face. "My dear Whiteside," he said, "you are getting sentimental! And here," he added, looking up, "attracted to the spot, is a gentleman I seem to be always meeting—Mr. Milburgh I think."

Milburgh had stopped at the sight of the detective and looked as if he would have been glad to fade away unobserved. But Tarling had seen him, and Milburgh came forward with his curious little shuffling walk, a set smile on his face, the same worried look in his eyes which Tarling had seen once before.

"Good morning, gentlemen," he said with a flourish of his top hat. "I suppose, Mr. Tarling, nothing has been discovered?"

"At any rate, I didn't expect to discover *you* here this morning!" and Tarling smiled. "I thought you were busy at the store."

Milburgh shifted uneasily.

"The place has a fascination for me," he said huskily. "I—I can't keep away from it."

He dropped his eyes before Tarling's keen gaze and repeated the question: "Is there any fresh news?"

"I ought to ask you that," said Tarling quietly.

The other looked up. "You mean Miss Rider?" he asked. "No, sir, nothing has been found to her detriment, and I cannot trace her present address, although I have pursued the most diligent inquiries. It is very upsetting."

There was a new emphasis in his voice. Tarling remembered that when Lyne had spoken to Milburgh before and had suggested that the girl had been guilty of some act of peculation, Milburgh had been quick to deny the possibility. Now his manner was hostile to the girl—indefinitely so, but sufficiently marked for Tarling to notice it.

"Do you think that Miss Rider had any reason for running away?" asked the detective.

Milburgh shrugged his shoulders. "In this world," he said unctuously, "one is constantly being deceived by people in whom one has put one's trust."

"In other words, you suspect Miss Rider of robbing the firm?"

Up went Mr. Milburgh's plump hands. "I would not say that," he said. "I would not accuse a young woman of such an act of treachery to her employers, and I distinctly refuse to make any charges until the auditors have completed their work. There is no doubt," he added carefully, "that Miss Rider had the handling of large sums of money, and she of all people in the business, and particularly in the cashier's department, would have been able to rob the firm without the knowledge of either myself or poor Mr. Lyne. This, of course, is confidential." He laid one hand appealingly on Tarling's arm and that worthy nodded.

"Have you any idea where she would be?"

Again Milburgh shook his head. "The only thing——" he hesitated, and looked into Tarling's eyes.

"Well?" asked the detective impatiently.

"There is a suggestion, of course, that she may have gone abroad. I do not offer that suggestion, only I know that she spoke French very well and that she had been to the Continent before."

Tarling stroked his chin thoughtfully. "To the Continent, eh?" he said softly, "well, in that case I shall search the Continent; for on one thing I am determined, and that is to find Odette Rider," and, beckoning to his companion, he turned on his heel.

CHAPTER X.

THE WOMAN AT ASHFORD.

Tarling went back to his lodgings that afternoon, a puzzled and baffled man. Ling Chu, his impassive Chinese servant, had observed those symptoms of perplexity before, but now there was something new in his master's demeanor—a kind of curt irritation, an anxiety, which he had not observed in the Hunter of Men before.

The Chinese went silently about the business of preparing his chief's tea and made no reference to the tragedy or to any of its details. He had set the table by the side of Tarling's bed, and was gliding from the room in that catlike way of his when Tarling stopped him.

"Ling Chu," he said, speaking in the vernacular, "you remember in Shanghai when the Cheerful Hearts committed a crime, how they used to leave behind their *hong*?"

"Yes, master, I remember it very well," said Ling Chu calmly. "They were certain words on red paper, and afterward you could buy them from the shops, because people desired to have these signs to show to their friends."

"Many people carried these things," said Tarling slowly, "and the sign of the Cheerful Hearts was found in the pocket of the murdered man."

Ling Chu met the other's eyes with imperturbable calmness. "Master," he said, "may not the white-faced man who is now dead have brought such a thing from Shanghai? He was a tourist, and tourists buy these foolish souvenirs?"

Tarling nodded again.

"That is possible," he said. "I have already thought that such might have been the case. Yet why should he have this sign of the Cheerful Hearts in his pocket on the night he was murdered?"

"Master," said the Chinaman, "why should he have been murdered?"

Tarling's lips curled in a half smile. "By which, I suppose, you mean that one question is as difficult to answer as the other," he said. "All right, Ling Chu, that will do."

He turned impatiently on the couch and reached out his hand for his tea, when there came a soft tap at the door and Ling Chu slipped into the room.

"The Bright Man is here," he said, and in these words announced Whiteside, who brought into the room something of his alert, fresh personality, which had earned him the pseudonym which Ling Chu had affixed.

"Well, Mr. Tarling," said the inspector, taking out a little notebook, "I'm afraid I haven't done very much in the way of discovering the movements of Miss Rider, but so far as I can find out by inquiries made at Charing Cross Booking Office, several young ladies unattended have left for the Continent in the past few days."

"You cannot identify any of these with Miss Rider?" asked Tarling in a tone of disappointment.

The detective shook his head. Despite his apparent unsuccess, he had evidently made some discovery which pleased him, for there was nothing gloomy in his admission of failure.

"You have found out something, though?" suggested Tarling quickly, and Whiteside nodded.

"Yes," he said "by the greatest of luck I've got hold of a very curious story. I was chatting with some of the ticket collectors and trying to discover a man who might have seen the girl—I have a photograph of her taken in a group of Stores employees, and this I have had enlarged, as it may be useful."

Tarling nodded.

"While I was talking with the man on the gate," Whiteside proceeded, "a traveling ticket inspector came up and he brought rather an extraordinary story from Ashford. On the night of the murder there was an accident to the Continental Express."

"I remember seeing something about it," said Tarling, "but my mind had been occupied by this other matter. What happened?"

"A luggage truck which was standing on the platform fell between two of the car-

riages and derailed one of them. The only passenger who was hurt was a Miss Stevens. Apparently it was a case of simple concussion, and when the train was brought to a standstill she was removed to the Cottage Hospital, where she is to-day. Apparently the daughter of the traveling ticket inspector is a nurse at the hospital, and she told her father that this Miss Stevens, before she recovered consciousness, made several references to a 'Mr. Lyne' and a 'Mr. Milburgh.'

Tarling was sitting erect now, watching the other through narrowed lids. "Go on," he said quietly.

"I could get very little from the traveling inspector, except that his daughter was under the impression that the lady had a grudge against Mr. Lyne, and that she spoke even more disparagingly of Mr. Milburgh."

Tarling had risen and slipped off his silk dressing gown before the other could put away his notebook. He struck a gong with his knuckles, and when Ling Chu appeared gave him an order in Chinese, which Whiteside could not follow.

"You're going to Ashford? I thought you would," said Whiteside. "Would you like me to come along?"

"No, thank you," said the other. "I'll go myself. I have an idea that Miss Stevens may be the missing witness in the

case and may throw greater light upon the happenings of the night before last than any other witness we have yet interviewed."

He found he had to wait an hour before he could get a train for Ashford, and he passed that hour impatiently walking up and down the broad platform. Here was a new complication in the case. Who was Miss Stevens, and why should she be journeying to Dover on the night of the murder?

He reached Ashford, and with difficulty found a cab, for it was raining heavily, and he had come provided with neither mackintosh nor umbrella. The matron of the Cottage Hospital reassured him on one point.

"Oh, yes, Miss Stevens is still in the hospital," she said, and he breathed a sigh of relief. There was just a chance that she might have been discharged, and again the possibility that she would be difficult to trace. The matron showed him the way through a long corridor terminating in a big ward. Before reaching the door of the ward there was a smaller door on the right.

"We put her in this private ward, because we thought it might be necessary to operate," said the matron and opened the door.

Tarling walked in. Facing him was the foot of the bed, and in that bed lay a girl whose eyes met his. He stopped as though he were shot.

"Miss Stevens" was Odette Rider!

TO BE CONTINUED.



NEW FIELDS FOR INSURANCE

Of late new insurance plans have been spreading at a rate which would have surprised people when there were only life and fire insurance. We have now various kinds of accident, burglary, workers' health, automobile, and many other kinds of insurance, resulting chiefly from the development of our industrial system. Singers insure their voices, and musicians their fingers.

The newest kind is weather insurance, planned by the head of a large insurance company, and a campaign has been started to make weather insurance popular. The policies among other things provide cash compensation for damage to clothing by rain during sea-shore and other trips, especially during Sunday outings and trips on the Fourth of July and other holidays.

The head of the company says he has recently written a policy protecting the proprietor of a gasoline station on the Boston Post Road on every Sunday and holiday. Even a swimming pool has been covered by a policy.

The weather insurance plan has been borrowed from England, where it has been an institution for years. There the sky may be cloudless when a party starts on a trip any time in the summer or fall and in an hour or two it may be suddenly clouded and those in the party drenched with rain.

The Boomerang Ballad

By Hamish McLaurin

Author of "Making It Hot for Mowrey," "The Burglar and the Butterfly," Etc.

There is such a thing as writing better than one knows
he is writing, especially when it comes to popular songs

TONY COSTELLO was undergoing the salutary, though somewhat exasperating, experience of being helplessly in love with a girl who appeared to have no notion of loving him in return. The situation was baffling and unprecedented, so far as Tony was concerned, for he was distinctly a personable young chap and, if you sat him down at a piano, he usually could play his way into any girl's heart in a single evening, if he had a mind to. But neither the harmonies he coaxed out of the piano nor the vibration of his own heartstrings seemed to induce any responsive disturbance in the bosom of Bijou Hollister, The Girl From Your Old Home Town. (See billing and program copy.)

Not that Bijou didn't appreciate music—vaudeville audiences the country over could have testified that her selection of ballads was consistently pleasing—but she somehow failed to appreciate Tony, a circumstance rendered all the more irritating to that temperamental artist by her quite unconcealed appreciation of a certain Mark Hymer, one of the energetic young tune molders who gave Tin Pan Alley its nickname. Hymer had written several songs for Bijou, and at the time when we make her acquaintance she was introducing his two latest compositions at the Hudson Hill Theater, a favorite try-out house on the Jersey side, just across the river from the foot of West Forty-second Street.

Tony Costello was on the same bill that week, playing accompaniments for Ada Milburn, an established entertainer whose acknowledged lack of vocal gifts was more than overcome by the drollest of manners and a positive genius for restrained but significant gesture. She had won her place in the hearts of vaudeville patrons two or three seasons earlier, but just at this time there were new songs to be "set," new laughs to be felt out,

and new costumes to be criticized by the booking managers before she would be ready to give the two-a-day the pleasure of her hearty personality for another forty weeks or so.

She gave no thought to her accompaniments; with Tony at the piano they would take care of themselves. The previous season had demonstrated that. He had been with her some three months and knew her peculiarities of technique down to the finest fraction of a pause. When she humored a laugh he knew intuitively the instant at which she would resume singing and his fingers descended upon the keys with an unerring sense of the tempo at which she would launch into the next line of the song. Hers was a tricky method of delivery, and she varied it cleverly to suit the mood of each new audience, but Tony was always alert to the fine shades of expression which she introduced, and his accompaniments went far to make her act the finished piece of artistry it had grown to be. Nobody knew this better nor conceded it more openly than Ada herself, for which reason, among others, she and Tony were quite fond of one another and got along most harmoniously, week in and week out.

In addition to the sympathetic support of his accompaniments, Tony could be depended upon to hold the audience with his piano solo while Ada changed her costume. His natural musicianship and youthful training had been supplemented by conscientious schooling abroad and, had Tony seen fit to apply himself, there might have been a place for him in the concert field. In his immaturity, however, he found life filled with far too many alluring interests to make long hours of rigorous training seem worth the effort, so he blithely culled what roses came his way, the while he helped Ada along with her career and satisfied the real musician in-

side him by playing his solos with a brilliancy no other pianist in vaudeville could equal.

In the fervid appreciation of his not-too-cultured audiences he found his reward. What more could one ask of life, thought Tony? He was young, he was making a pleasant living, he was always traveling and meeting new people, and the world to him seemed ever filled with girls whose beauty constantly approached nearer and nearer to perfection. At least, so it had seemed until the last three weeks or so. Then the world quite rapidly became filled with nothing but Bijou Hollister.

Bijou was pretty, yes; but had Tony seen more girls like Bijou he would have learned to interpret more shrewdly those faint lines about her mouth and to have diagnosed more accurately the symptoms disclosed by the shape and expression of her lips. To one who knew them, they spelled an ingrained, carefully nurtured, insoluble selfishness in which all generous impulses died before they sprouted, but Tony, like many another lover, never looked for character below his lady's eyes. Bijou's eyes were undeniably worth looking at and, when she beaded their long lashes and amplified her mouth to a luscious Cupid's bow by the expert employment of her lip stick, it needed only the two long braids of hair and the quaint, old-fashioned costume to justify her singing the familiar ballads which formed the distinctive feature of her performance.

She chose the songs which her hearers associated with hay rides and steamboat excursions and moonlight nights on the shady veranda, sentimental stuff, to be sure, but unerringly effective. She sang them in a pretty garden setting, with imitation moonlight and magnolias for atmosphere, and because her voice was well above the average encountered nowadays among variety artists, she found it quite easy to keep booked up for as long each year as she cared to work.

In order that she might be able to "close in 'One'" when the exigencies of the bill demanded it—and they almost invariably did—Bijou removed her sunbonnet and her simple frock at the conclusion of her old-time songs and, appearing before the olio drop in the mode of the moment, concluded her performance with one or another of the peculiar compositions turned out by Mr. Mark Hymer.

Mr. Hymer was an expert in sentiment.

He dealt in it with the same calculating acumen which his progenitors must have displayed when they dealt in scrap iron, "gents' suitings," or first mortgages, as the case may have been. He was sensitive to the slightest symptom of public preference for any specific type of song, and he supplied the demand forthwith. Did some one make a hit with "My Carolina Queen?" Mr. Hymer at once got out his atlas, to make sure he was right, and gave birth to "My Sweet Virginia Rose." Had people decided to whistle "Anna from Savannah," Mr. Hymer straightway gave them a chance to pucker their lips around "Lassie from Tallahassee," followed perhaps by "Dolly from Raleigh," if the market held up. When "Navaho" swept the country Mr. Hymer rang the changes on everything from Arapahoe to Zuni, trying in vain to duplicate the success of that popular composition.

In no case did he ever succeed in producing anything but an imitation of a popular success, but inasmuch as there are vast numbers of people who never can tell an imitation from the original—songs or anything else, for that matter—he managed to make a living. At present he had fallen back upon the good old "heart stuff," without atmosphere, without locale, without anything, except the grand passion in its staple, commercial, popular ballad form, as exemplified in the two songs Bijou was introducing that week: "I Long for You As I Longed Long, Long Ago" and "The Tale of a Broken Vow."

"Of all the blasted bunk!" Tony protested to Bijou as they crossed to New York on the Weehawken ferry after the Thursday night's performance; "I don't see how you can sing that stuff."

"You mean Mr. Hymer's compositions?"

"Compositions! You're giving him all the best of it. Anthologies would hit it closer."

Bijou had no conception what an anthology might be, but she knew from Tony's manner that he used the word disparagingly.

"I think Mr. Hymer is very gifted," she declared.

"His memory is a gift; I'll give him credit for that. He can remember the best parts of all the hits anybody else ever wrote, but if 'June' hadn't happened to rhyme with 'moon' and 'heart' with 'part' and 'near' with 'dear' he'd have gone broke long ago."

Tony may have been unduly bitter, but he had just asked Bijou for the third time if she would be his wife, and Bijou had refused

without wavering in the slightest from her accustomed air of complacent self-satisfaction. Her "no" had been delivered with the same amount of feeling she might have displayed had Tony chanced to ask her if she wanted a box of candy, at some moment when she was not specially hungry for it. Having disposed of his question, she had at once remarked with hardly a change of voice that "The Tale of a Broken Vow" had gone a little better that night than hitherto. It was then that her suitor had burst forth as recorded.

"Well, 'June' *does* rhyme with 'moon,' doesn't it?" countered Bijou, in response to Tony's last remark.

"Sure it does, and the boys who used to write the songs for the colored stereopticon slides found it out years ago. That's what Hymer is, at heart—he's an 'ulcerated song' writer; his stuff just fits in with green moonlight and pink Easter lilies and department-store dummies making love among the purple sunflowers."

"I think you're perfectly horrid, and, besides, some of those illustrated songs were beautiful; I used to sing them myself before I broke into vaudeville."

"They may have been all the chocolate in their day, girlie, but they're cold now and your friend Hymer hasn't found it out. 'The Tale of a Broken Vow!' Har! Har! Excuse my sneering snicker, but that's honestly the worst song I ever heard."

Bijou drew her brows together and prepared to be as nasty as she knew how. "If I was a cheap accompanist," she said deliberately, "and hadn't the brains to do anything else but play other people's music for somebody else to sing to, I don't think I'd be knocking anybody who was talented enough to get one song after another published, no matter whether I thought the songs were any good or not."

The shot went well home, deeper than she knew, for Tony had always felt he could compose original melodies and was forever chiding himself secretly because he had never worked up enough ambition to put forth the requisite effort. He turned hot all over and reached angrily for his package of cigarettes.

"Is that *so*?" he blurted, with rare originality, spoiling two matches before he got his cigarette lighted. "Well, if you want to know what I think about that song, I think I could write a better one with one hand and eat a cheese sandwich with the other—and

you can make it any kind of cheese you want to."

"I'm glad to know what you think of my judgment in songs, Mr. Costello," returned Bijou biting. "And now you know what I think of *you*. Don't talk to me any more about Mark Hymer. Mark is delivering the *goods*."

"Just for that I'll *write* a song, then," announced Tony with sudden determination. "And I'll write it just as near to your friend's style as I can. I want to show you how perfectly easy it is for anybody with half a musical education to cook up that kind of mush. When I finish it you can have it. I just want to show you, that's all."

"I'm not interested."

"You will be. If I'm not as good as any of these Tin Pan Alley song carpenters I'll give up the piano and go to twisting the tail of a hurdy-gurdy. Good *night!*"

And it was in this mood that Tony went to his room and wrote "The Heart That Was Cast Aside," a mood of bitter humor, wounded affections, and punctured self-esteem. The combination amounted to a singular sort of inspiration, and he set about his task with a grim smile, his mind busy with the burlesque lyrics he intended to fabricate, his fingers feeling out saccharin chords to go with them. As the composition progressed he smiled still more; it was turning out better than he had hoped. That line, "With lying tongue my heart you won," for instance. "Hymer himself couldn't have written it rottener," reflected Tony; "Tongue" and "won" is a regular Hymer rhyme. I could use "wring," of course, but that would violate all the rules of the profession. Now, let's see——" and on he went, far into the night, until the work was finished to his satisfaction.

"It will hand Ada an awful laugh, anyhow," he said to himself as he settled down on his pillow at last, "I must sing it to her to-morrow before I show it to Bijou."

The song did hand Ada a laugh. He went around to her hotel in the morning and played it for her on the piano in the parlor, singing the lyrics with his throat full of sobs and his eyes full of mischief. Ada's lively sense of humor was tickled through and through.

"Oh, Tony, that's delicious," she said. "That's as clever as it can be, especially the last part of the chorus. Let's see; how does that go, again?"

She slid onto the bench with him, put her arm over his shoulder, and playing the air with one hand, up in the treble, she sang the closing lines of the song, Tony joining in with a sirupy tenor part improvised on the spur of the moment:

"My soul you trampled in the dust, in manner
most unkind,
But still my heart cries out for you; ah, truly
love is blind!

With lying tongue my heart you won,
Then left me to my shame,
But I forgive you, cruel one; I hope God does
the same."

"My dear, that's funny!" giggled Ada when they had drawn out the final melting harmony with lingering exaggerated pathos. "It's a scream. 'I hope God does the same'—Tony, *that* line was inspired, no less. And the funny part of it is that the music is really kind of pretty. I mean it, dear; you've got some harmonies in there that are wonderful."

"I know I have, darn it. I tried to write it as punk as possible, but the melody wouldn't come any other way. It lends itself well to the sob stuff, though, don't you think?"

"Perfectly; just perfectly. I'd like to sing that song myself, Tony. I could do a ballad singer—burlycue it, you know—that would make 'em laugh their heads off."

"Well, I'll see. I've got to show it to Bijou first. Maybe when she hears it she will wake up to the kind of rot that guy Hymer is putting over on her. She's a great girl, Ada. I'm crazy about her."

"All right, old dear; just as you like. I'd make her a clean copy, though; she could never read this."

"Oh, I'm going to. I'll do it before lunch."

"That's it—and let me have the original when you're through with it, will you? I'd love to have it, just for fun, even if we never use it in public."

"Sure. I'll bring it over to the theater. So long. See you on the ferry, maybe."

On reaching the theater that afternoon Tony hunted up Miss Hollister, waving the manuscript of the song triumphantly.

"Here it is," he announced.

"Here what is?" The young woman's manner was one of cold disdain.

"The song I wrote for you. It's a gem. I called it 'The Heart That Was Cast Aside.'"

"Very touching, I'm sure."

"Don't you want to hear it?"

"I do not. I'm off of you, Mr. Costello, from this on. I've been thinking over what you said last night, and the more I think of it the less I like it."

"But, Bijou, I wrote this song specially for *you*, don't you understand? Look—I dedicated it to you, too, right here at the top of the page. See? Here—'Dedicated to Bijou Hollister, The Girl from Your Old Home Town.'"

"Thanks, frightfully, but I'm doing very nicely with the songs I'm using."

"You don't want to even hear it?"

"Can't be bothered."

"All right, girlie, if you say so. I was just trying to do you a good turn, that's all. You don't need to *use* the song, you know; I just wanted you to hear it once. I think it would open your eyes."

"Maybe I will, some other time. Not today."

"Oh, very well. I guess I'll let Ada use it, after all. She wants it bad enough."

Bijou looked up quickly.

"She does?" She thought that it might be just as well not to go too fast. Ada Milburn was a pretty good picker when it came to new material for her act.

"She wanted it the minute she heard it. Says she can put it across for a hit."

"With that voice? Don't make me laugh."

"Never mind her voice; you know what she can do with a sing. There's none better in the business."

Tony's quick defense of his employer was just enough to turn the scales against him. Bijou's momentary hesitation vanished, and she definitely resumed her former attitude.

"Let her do it with this one, then. As I told you last night, I'm not interested."

Tony withdrew. What was the use? The more he tried to ingratiate himself the more disheartening were the results. For the first time in months he felt stirring within him a temptation he knew must be repressed—the desire to go out and link arms with John Barleycorn. John, he was aware, was no friend of his. The last time they had for-gathered in New York John had stolen his memory from him early in the proceedings and when he got it back he found himself in a day coach approaching Billings, Montana, bewildered, bedraggled, and broke. No, he must steer clear of that sort of thing. It didn't pay.

As he stood moodily in the corridor, turn-

ing the manuscript of the song around and around in his hands, Ada Milburn came breezing past on the way to her dressing room.

"Hello, Tony. What are you laughing at?" said she, with cheerful sarcasm. "You look as if you'd hocked your overcoat the day before a blizzard."

"Bijou won't even listen to the song," responded Tony, his voice clouded with gloom.

"Well, what of it? You aren't going to jump off the ferry just on that account, are you?"

"No, I suppose not, but I wish she hadn't been so rough about it. I seem to be less of a hit with her every time I show up."

"My idea of nothing to fret about. Anyhow, don't let her see that you feel cut up. I'll sing that song, Tony, and I'll get it over, too."

"Sure enough, Ada? Do you really want to try it? I told her you did, but, of course, I was just four-flushing."

"I'll back your bluff for you, don't worry. I don't think we better try it to-day—I know of at least two men from the booking office who will be out front—but we can run over it a few times to-morrow and try it out to-morrow night, in place of that second encore of mine. If any one from the office happens to be in the house to-morrow night I can explain that it was just a little experiment and isn't part of my regular act, see? What do you say?"

Tony cheered up perceptibly and said he was quite satisfied. They rehearsed the song the following morning, and Ada devoted considerable time to getting the words thoroughly memorized that afternoon. Shortly before they were due to appear at the evening performance Tony sought out Bijou Hollister as she was heading for her dressing room after taking her final curtain call.

"Ada's going to sing that song of mine to-night," he informed her, "in case you'd like to come down and hear it."

"Thanks," said Bijou curtly, "I may do that."

Tony went away without further words, not at all certain whether Bijou meant to be in the wings during his song, but as he took his seat at the piano he saw to his satisfaction that her curiosity had got the better of her indifference. She was in her street clothes, standing in the first entrance, right where Ada had to pass her when she came on the stage.

He played a few bars of the entrance music and Ada strode briskly into view, with the compelling smile which always created such a favorable first impression on her audiences. A Saturday-night crowd is usually keyed to a more generous pitch of appreciation than those of other nights, and Ada's impersonations, topical songs, and interpolated patter went off with gratifying sparkle. Tony, with the stimulus of Bijou's presence in the wings, surpassed himself with his piano solo and had to rise and bow repeatedly before Ada could appear for the second half of her offering. When the audience had demonstrated its liking for the song which followed her change of costume, she gave Tony a whimsical glance.

"Ladies and Gentlemen," she announced, "I next wish to offer for your approval my impression of a popular ballad singer giving her interpretation of a sentimental song. For this purpose I shall use a new song which has never before been heard in public. It is entitled, 'The Heart That Was Cast Aside,' and the composer is the little boy at the piano."

She indicated Tony with a comical inclination of her head, and Tony found himself unexpectedly flustered. The electrician was grinning at him from the switchboard; the boys in the orchestra were doing likewise. Even Bijou permitted a faint smile to flicker momentarily on her face as she noticed Tony's confusion. He coughed nervously, straightened out his music on the rack, turned up a lower corner of it, and rubbed his hands up and down his knees, waiting for the chuckles in the audience to subside. There had been a little applause mingled with the chuckles, he noted subconsciously. The audience evidently remembered his solo and was prepared to like his song.

When all was quiet again Ada nodded to him. He struck the elaborate chords of the introduction and she began to sing. Just what her reasons were we cannot be quite sure, but before she had sung four lines it became amusingly evident that the ballad singer she had chosen to impersonate was Bijou Hollister. She had Bijou's pathetic poise of the head and Bijou's tearful break in the voice as she drew in her breath at the end of a line. She drew up her eyebrows at the inner corners just as Bijou did when she wanted to indicate mental agony, only Ada's agony was much, much more agonizing than Bijou's.

She gulped and gargled, and clutched at her bosom, and quavered and sobbed and flung out her arms, until part of the audience was in spasms of delight and the other part was profoundly puzzled. This latter part, oddly enough, seemed to include a majority of those present. Ada was funny, right enough, their manner seemed to say, but why couldn't she be funny with some old song they knew and were tired of instead of taking a brand-new song like this one? Pretty song, too; lots of heart in it. They resented her treating it flippantly, that way. Always quick to sense how her audiences were receiving her efforts, Ada hastily decided that one verse and the chorus would be enough. She had meant to sing both verses, but at the last choking syllable of 'I hope God does the same' she bowed herself off.

There was a little applause, hearty and spontaneous where it broke out at all, but not by any means general. Tony watched the singer to see whether she would elect to repeat the chorus. To his amazement he saw Bijou say something rapidly and angrily to her as she came off the stage and saw Ada reply promptly and hotly. Then the conductor stood up in the pit and Tony had to join the orchestra in the final noisy selection with which Ada brought her act to a close. She came out and put the song over with all her customary spirit, and a few moments later they were bowing themselves off at opposite sides of the stage.

The minute he had taken his final bow Tony hastened across to where he had last seen Bijou. He got there just in time. Bijou and Ada were almost nose to nose, each telling the other what she thought of her. Precisely what amenities had been exchanged prior to his arrival Tony never found out, but, as he drew near, Bijou was saying: "It's a shame, that's what it is! The idea of ruining a song like that! And just to get a cheap laugh by imitating an artist who happens to have a little individuality. Anybody could do that."

"Ruin a song?" repeated Tony. "What song?"

"Your song—the one you tried out to-night. I told you she didn't have the voice to get it over."

Tony swallowed hard and tried to catch his mental balance.

"You mean you *like* the song?" he gasped.

"I mean that *I* could take that song and make the people eat it up. I wouldn't clown

it all over the place. I could make 'em cry with it. You said that was my song, didn't you, Tony? Didn't you say I could have it?"

"Why, sure, I—I—— But do you really think it's good—the lyrics and all, I mean?"

"It's got real heart interest in it, and that's what I want. The music is pretty, too. I didn't know you could do it, Tony. Don't tell me you're going to let her have that song, to murder the way she done just now."

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, let her have it!" cried Ada. "Goodness knows I don't want it. It don't seem to be nearly so funny as I thought it was."

"There, you see?" Bijou quickly took advantage of Ada's position in the matter. "She doesn't want it, Tony. Let me have it, won't you, dear? I think it's great. Honest I do."

Tony looked at her long and steadily. So this was her mental caliber, was it? Great Pearly Gates, why hadn't he realized it before? What, indeed, was the use of wasting his devotion any longer on one whose heart could be moved even slightly by such clap-trap rubbish as those lyrics were composed of. It was a sad and bitter revelation, but it was complete and instantaneous.

With a queer smile he fished the music out of the bundle under his arm and handed it over to her.

"There you are, kid. I hope it brings you luck."

"Oh, thank you ever so much, Tony. You're a darling. Honest you are."

"Aw, that's all right. Forget it," replied Tony, and he made his way thoughtfully to his dressing room.

When Ada Milburn descended a little while later to see if the transfer man had taken care of her trunk, she found Tony nowhere about. His suit case was packed, his music was in order, he had signed for his salary when she handed it in to him at his dressing-room door, but now he was gone. That wasn't like him on a Saturday night, when there were things to be attended to. Ada was sincerely concerned. The only response she got to her inquiries was that the doorman thought he had seen Tony leave the theater and cross the street right after he had turned in the key of his dressing room. That was all. Nobody had seen him come back. Nobody did see him come back. Ada waited a while and then made her way back

to town alone, still feeling instinctively apprehensive.

Her apprehensions had ample foundation, could she have but known it, for on leaving the stage door Tony had seen a familiar figure beckoning to him from a brightly lighted corner down the street, the figure of his old companion J. Barleycorn. The day before he had shrunk at the thought of this evil comrade; now he eagerly welcomed his company. On leaving the brightly lighted place down the street, Tony turned south toward the harbor, instead of north toward the ferry, and by devious routes which his ancient crony selected for him he made his way at daybreak to the Hoboken water front. That was the last dawn he remembered for some days, and when the next one penetrated his consciousness it was through the porthole of a tramp steamer bound for the Argentine.

His experiences during the next few months have no place in this narrative. They were unpleasant and unromantic. He was not fitted for the work he had to do aboard ship, and both his physical condition and his state of mind made each task seem a debasing piece of drudgery. It was only when he reached Buenos Aires that his spirits rose to somewhere near their accustomed level. He found that there were cafés in Buenos Aires where a good piano player with a knowledge of the latest New York hits was hailed as an acquisition, so he deserted the ship and in no time at all had established himself as a popular favorite with the pleasure-loving South Americans. His wages, however, had been based upon his abject necessity at the time he presented himself to the proprietor of the café, and for that reason he found it difficult to save money.

At one of the ports touched by his ship on the voyage south, Tony had written a note to Ada, explaining what had happened, assuring her that no one need worry over his disappearance, and abasing himself to the ground in his apologies for leaving her without warning. He gave her no address—having none to give—and from then on he communicated with nobody at all. It was early September when he disappeared. It was March when New York saw him again.

Not infrequently a March day in New York can be as warm and as springlike as the days which come many weeks later. When this happens the parks suddenly

swarm with nursemaids and children; a few daring souls fare forth without their overcoats; and windows from one end of town to the other are thrown wide open to the sunshine.

The day when Tony landed was just such a day. As he came uptown from the pier he stuck his head out of the taxi and breathed deep with delight. Glory, but it was good to be back! A hurdy-gurdy on the corner was filling the air with blithesome melody and Tony unconsciously caught up the air and hummed it to himself for some moments after the source of it had been left far behind in the rattle of the traffic. All at once he caught his breath in wonderment. What was that tune? Surely it couldn't have been—no, not that. Something like it, maybe, but not that. He smiled a bit sourly at the recollections called up by the resemblance. What a thoroughgoing imbecile a fellow could make of himself sometimes. Oh, well; that was all over now, thank the stars.

But the matter was not to be dismissed so easily. As Tony was unpacking his suit case in a boarding house which had known his patronage many times in the past, he heard a woman's voice in the next room, singing that same melody. She was "la-la-la-ing" most of the words, to be sure, but her emotions seemed to be fully wrapped up in her interpretation. There could be no mistake this time; it was "The Heart That Was Cast Aside."

The puzzled composer stuck his head out in the hall. The door of the adjoining room was open, so he walked along to it and looked in. The singer proved to be the chambermaid, a girl whose soul was not above her lot in life, apparently, and who could lift her voice in song even though her hands were engaged in stripping soiled linen from a rickety wooden bed.

"What's that you're singing?" inquired Tony, without preface.

"Are you trying to kid somebody?" responded the girl. One could never trust these actors to be sensible, she had found.

"No, not at all. I want to know the name of that song."

"Where have you been this winter—in jail?"

"No. South America."

"Oh!" The girl's manner became serious as she saw that her questioner was in earnest. "Why, I forget the right name of it exactly—something about somebody's heart being

tossed away—but it's a swell song, all right. Anybody can tell you the name of it. Mrs. Prewitt has it on the phonograph."

"The phonograph!"

"Yes—phonograph. What's the matter; didn't you ever hear one?"

But Tony had vanished down the stairs. Mrs. Prewitt was the landlady and he had known her for years. He knocked at her door. Would she let him look at her record of "The Heart That Was Cast Aside?" Certainly she would, if that was all he wanted. She would put it on the machine for him if he said so. It was a little worn; the boarders had played it all the time at first, but— She placed the disk in his hands and he took it over to the window.

There it was, sure enough; and right below the title, in little gold letters he read, "By Tony Costello." The singer was some one he had never heard of.

"I declare, Mr. Costello; you look sick. What is it?" exclaimed the landlady, watching his face.

"Sick? Rats! I'm feeling great. I've just discovered that I'm the author of a popular song."

"What—that song? Did you write that?"

Tony handed her the record. "Well, of all things. So you did. I never noticed your name on there before; but then, land sakes, I never pay any attention to who writes these things. Excuse me; no reflection on you, Mr. Costello. It's just that I don't, that's all. It would be the same if George Cohan or Mendelssohn or any of those composers wrote it. Wouldn't you like to hear it?"

Without waiting for his reply she cranked up the little phonograph and adjusted the needle. Tony sat through the piece in silence.

"Well, it's too much for me," he said, shaking his head thoughtfully as the song came to an end. "She sang it absolutely on the level—just as if she meant it. And the orchestration they've given it! Sweet cookie! You'd think the song had been written by Ethelbert Nevin." He rose to go. "Much obliged, Mrs. Prewitt," he said as he started for his room, "I think it's time I went around and had a little talk with those phonograph people."

He started out in the afternoon with that intention, but as he passed Porter's Vaudeville Palace he saw a name on the billboards which brought him to a halt. It was a name which once had held the power to set his

heart beating with delightful irregularity. Now it only made him curious.

"My old friend Bijou, eh?" he said to himself, "Well, well. Wonder how she's making out," and he bought himself an orchestra seat.

The show had not commenced so he leaned against the rail at the back of the house and gazed with lively interest upon the once familiar scene. He saw nobody he knew, aside from the house manager, but that did not surprise him. The Monday matinée was the one which attracted the professionals. This was Thursday. They had all seen the show by that time. It was great just to be there, though, even all by himself.

He had reached this point in his thoughts when an eager hand was laid on his arm and a voice which tried hard not to tremble said, close to his ear, "Tony! Oh, Tony, dear, I'm so glad to see you back!"

It was Ada Milburn, and there were tears in her eyes. Tony's heart performed a violent acrobatic feat which neither Bijou Hollister nor any one else had ever prompted it to attempt before.

"Ada!" he cried, taking her in his arms right there before the eyes of the ushers and all the incoming patrons. "Of all the glorious good luck! What are you doing here?"

"I'm laying off this week, and I just dropped in to kill the afternoon, but never mind about me—where have you been and why didn't you write to me, and when did you get back and——" but she saw that Tony was paying no attention whatever to her words. He was just standing there, holding her hands in his and devouring her with his eyes. There was something in his gaze which made her droop her eyelashes and turn away her head.

"Gee," he was saying, "I never knew how much I missed you until this minute, Ada. Never till just now. Let's get out of here. You don't want to see the old show, do you?"

"But Bijou? Don't you want to hear Bijou? I supposed that was what you came in for."

For answer he gave her a look which said as plain as words: "I'm cured of the Bijou trouble. Please let's forget it. With a smile of happy satisfaction on her face she took him tightly by the arm and they bent their steps toward a near-by hotel, where the tea room was almost impenetrably shrouded in shadow in certain corners, and where the

waiters stayed away a long time, once they had delivered an order.

"You may have to pay for this," remarked Tony, indicating the check which the waiter had deposited on the table before departing, "I had just enough money to get home on and that's all."

Ada replied by producing a bank book from her hand bag and tossing it into his lap.

"Cast your eye over that," she said loftily, and thereupon Tony got the third shock which came to him on that eventful day, for the name on the cover of the bank book was his own and the total to his credit inside was more thousands than he had ever hoped to accumulate in his life.

"Your royalties up to date," explained Ada, beaming like a good-natured angel. "I guess the check won't bother you much." Then as Tony remained staring stupidly at the little row of figures on the ruled page, she proceeded to enlighten him further.

"That fool song caught on overnight, dear. God only knows why. I've decided there must be a lot more betrayed ladies around than I had suspected up to that time. Anyhow, something in it seems to get them. The other day I heard Billy Jason cursing you something fierce for ever writing the song in the first place. He's the entertainer out at a roadhouse on Long Island, you know, and he says there isn't a night goes by but what he gets half a dozen requests for 'The Heart That Was Cast Aside,' and he's so sick of singing it he could shoot you on sight. Of course, there's been newspaper men that thought it was funny and there's been cartoons based on it, and all that, but the dear old public takes it dead serious.

"The first thing Mark Hymer knew, the cabaret crowd began calling him up and asking for professional copies. They knew

Bijou sang his stuff so they thought he was publishing this one. I got a tip that he was going to publish it, too, after he heard that you had dropped out of sight, so I got a lawyer and we went around and had a little talk with the gentleman.

"He tried to tell me that you had given Bijou the song outright, but I flashed my original copy on him and told him I was representing you in every way and that you had simply given her the right to sing it exclusively until the matter of publication was decided on.

"Don't try to hog it all," I says to him; 'I'm willing to let you publish the song and make all you can on it, only I'm here to tell you that if Tony doesn't get his royalties you'll find yourself in a sweet mess of trouble. Now, be a good boy, Mark, and keep yourself out of court.' He did some quick thinking and decided to take my advice.

"I had to dig up a new accompanist, of course, and fill out my contracts, but my lawyer looked after your royalties and the records and the rolls and everything, so now all you have to do is sit back and ride easy. The market is ready for anything you turn out."

Once more she became aware that Tony was not listening to what she was saying.

"There's something else I want to do first," he informed her softly as he drew her head down on his shoulder and held her with all the strength of his new-found happiness; "something much more important. When is it going to be, darling? It's all up to you."

Over at Porter's Vaudeville Palace an hour later, Bijou Hollister sobbed her way through "The Heart That Was Cast Aside" and took three encores. Ada and Tony, in their shadowy corner, pictured her doing it and laughed softly to themselves. They didn't care if the waiter *never* came back.

McLaurin returns in the next issue with "One on the Booking Office."



A STORY BY PRESIDENT WILSON

PRESIDENT WILSON tells a story of the most embarrassed man he ever saw. It was when Mr. Wilson was campaigning for the governorship of New Jersey. One evening at a small-town banquet, where both men and women were guests, the toastmaster leaned over to the candidate and asked:

"Shall we begin the speaking now—or let the people enjoy themselves a little longer?"

Pay Dirt, and Tailings

By Henry Herbert Knibbs

Author of "The Ridin' Kid from Powder River," "Waring of Sonoratown," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Jim Houston, an old placer miner of Palmas County, in California, having seen a cuckoo clock for the first time, decides that life is incomplete without such a thing, and procures one. His old friend, Sam Osborne, thinks otherwise, and, one night, after having imbibed rather freely, he shoots up the cuckoo irretrievably, and leaves old Jim to brood over revenge.

(A Two-Part Story—Part II)

CHAPTER III.

IT is noteworthy that a man can have no greater enemy than he who has once been his friend. Yet old Jim did not hate Sam Osborne because of Sam's peculiarities of temperament—his inclination to take too much occasionally; his cocksureness, his optimism. Old Jim was honest enough to admit that Sam had been a pretty decent citizen until he had blown the sprightly cuckoo into the vale of oblivion. Old Jim did not go back along the trail of twelve years and rake up the buried skeletons of their former differences and disputes. Old Jim simply and methodically looked forward to the day when Sam Osborne should realize that no man could enter *his* cabin and shoot up the furniture with impunity.

Dwelling alone, with no mediator, no channel through which to express his unprintable opinions of Sam, old Jim banked the fires of his wrath until such time as he could blow them into a flame that would scorch the unsuspecting hide of his erstwhile friend. Though Sam had a vague recollection the morning after the shooting that he had conducted himself boisterously, he knew nothing about the actual enormity of his offense, or he would have gone straightway to his friend and made overtures of peace. Sam recalled having said something about the cuckoo, and he recalled having jokingly pulled Chet's gun. He did not know just what he had done, after that, except that he had left Jim's cabin in haste, and that one wheel of the buckboard did not track straight—but then, the yellow paint on his own gatepost explained the condition of the wheel, to

say nothing of a fairly clear recollection of having tried to keep Chet from drinking too much by drinking too much himself.

Not until several days later did Sam realize that he might have committed a breach of etiquette. That was when he discovered Chet's gun, with an empty cartridge in the cylinder. He remembered having taken the gun from Chet, but for the life of him he could not remember having shot at anything or any one. Yet, the empty shell might have been in the gun when he took it from Chet. With his head in one hand and indecision in the other, Sam pondered the situation. Old Jim had not been over for several days. It might be well to hitch up and drive to town. Then, casually, he could stop by and see old Jim. Sam rose from his pondering and picked up a rope.

He climbed to the hill pasture back of his cabin. The pintos were not there. Sam walked along the fence. He knew they had not been gone long. They had been there the previous evening. Halfway down the fence Sam stopped and stared, first at the tracks of the pintos and then at the three strands of wire, neatly severed and drawn aside. Some one had cut the fence.

The tracks of the horses were fresh. The sun had not yet crumbled the clean-cut edges. And to add to Sam's disgust, the pinto tracks led toward the high hills. Feed was plentiful up there, and water. The horses might travel for weeks, or he might find them in a day or so.

Sam could not believe that old Jim would have played him such a vile trick. Old Jim invariably came out in the open to say his

say. But who, in that thinly inhabited country, would do such a thing? Sam had no enemies that he was aware of. Yet the severed wires and the tracks were mighty plain evidence that the deed had been done.

Sam returned to his cabin, packed some food and a rope in a gunny sack, saw that his goat, Kicker, was all right in the smaller pasture, and that Blackie, the hen, had feed enough to last a few days. Blue was a good hunter and could rustle for himself. With his canteen and sack of food over his shoulder, Sam set out to track the strayed horses. After he had climbed an hour, he knew without question, that they had taken to the high country. On a rise he stopped and gazed back at his cabin below. He could see the white goat in the pasture and the hen in the cabin yard. With a foreboding that all was not well in Palmas County, he turned and followed the pinto tracks.

Over on old Jim's claim a bearded figure sat behind a screen of buckthorn and leveled a pair of field glasses, following Sam's ascent until a ridge hid him from view. "I'll learn him to shoot up cuckoo clocks!" muttered old Jim as he rose and plodded down the hill. And knowing that Sam would not return within an hour or so, as the horses were not in sight, old Jim threw a few handfuls of pay dirt into a sack, as an excuse for appearing at Sam's place should Sam return unexpectedly, and slinging the sack over his shoulder, old Jim trudged along the short-cut trail toward the Osborne placer.

Ordinarily Blackie, the hen, was exceedingly tame. Many a time old Jim had coaxed her up to him, picked her up, and smoothed her blue-black feathers while she clucked amicably. But this day, Blackie was filled with suspicion from the first. Old Jim pretended indifference as Blackie cackled and paced nervously about the cabin yard. She disdained the grain that old Jim scraped up and offered her. Finally old Jim became exasperated, stopped and picking up a good-sized rock, he shied it. The instant his arm went up, Blackie screeched and ran. She met the rock quartering—and that was the end of that.

Jim left her where she had fallen, but he threw the rock into the arroyo below the cabin.

"A bird for a bird!" he said as he trudged back to his own habitation.

But that was not the end of that. Blackie was far from being worth thirty-two dollars,

and an insult thrown in. That evening as he sat and smoked and gazed at the place where the cuckoo clock had hung, old Jim unburdened himself to Squib, the tomcat. "I ought to 'a' hung her up by one laig, to his cabin door, and stuck a note on her sayin', 'Do unto others as you would be done by.' But he might 'a' knowed my hand-writin'. I reckon he'll know I settled her hash, but, by Jasper, he kain't prove it! And mebby he thinks I cut his fence, eh, Squib? But who would ever say old Jim Houston ever cut a man's fence, and make folks believe it? And he kain't prove it. Between you an' me an' the stove, there, mebby I did. But he kain't prove it! And if he don't ketch up them pot-bellied pintos afore tomorrow night, he may have to do some goat huntin'. I'll learn him to shoot up the clocks of law-abidin' citizens. Him backin' me down with a gun in my own wikiup! Huh! I was packin' iron when he hadn't learned to buttin his own shirt yet!"

Squib purred comfortably and worked his claws gently. Squib liked to be confided in, especially when he could sit on old Jim's knee and doze and have his back smoothed.

Next morning old Jim was up and out early, prospecting the distant ranges with his field glass. He could see nothing of Sam or the horses. Old Jim thought of taking his excuseful ore sack and paying Sam's claim another visit, but that would be too easy. "Let it sink in," was old Jim's idea. "And first time he drives to town I'll put a blight on that there goat of his'n. Say the goat is worth ten dollars and the hen two, that leave twenty dollars' worth of trouble comin' to him—and I always pay my bills. And if that ornery, low-bellied, grub-snatchin' tomcat comes a-prowlin' down to visit with my Squib, I reckon that'll be the end of that!"

That afternoon, Sam returned with the pintos, riding one and leading the other. Old Jim, who worked with his glass handy, saw Sam top a distant ridge. "Now mebby he thinks he's in luck to ketch 'em up so quick. But he's got a hen funeral comin', if the coyotes ain't packed her off."

The coyotes had not packed Blackie off, but Blue, the tomcat, had done his best in that direction. There were bones and feathers in abundance, and Blue up on the cabin roof, taking a siesta in the sun. Even at that distance, Blue looked larger than common. Sam came upon the scattered remains of Blackie suddenly. Sam eyed Blue's ro-

tund meridian suspiciously. "I hate to think you done it," he told Blue. "But you look guilty—and too darn' comfortable. I sure learned you to leave her alone, and you ain't been starvin'. Seems like everything is goin' wrong." Sam thought so when he found Blackie's head, which show evidence of having been mashed by some blunt instrument which the jury could not name. "But you didn't mash her head like that," said Sam, addressing the cat. "Somebody else done that. Wonder what'll be the next jolt? Fence cut, Blackie murdered. Guess I'll go see if Kicker is all right." Kicker was alive and active. Sam scratched his head. "Huh! If somebody didn't finish off Blackie, for spite, wonder how her head got mashed? They could jest as easy fixed the goat. Mebby it's jest bad luck—but it's gittin' a'mighty reg'lar."

That afternoon Sam dug a hole and buried the bones and feathers. He did not miss the hen so much, just then. But next day, when he heard no complacent clucking about the cabin yard, he realized that Blackie had filled a large place in his affections. He recalled how she used to come and perch on his hand or his knee, and try and peck the buttons off his shirt and eat them; how talkative and contented she had seemed, stepping about the yard, clucking and scratching busily. True she had been old-maidish and querulous, at times, but she had been a constant companion for over five years. Sam was puzzled. He could not believe that old Jim would deliberately murder a hen. That was pretty small. If the old man had a grievance, why didn't he come right out and say so? If there had been anything said or done, that night, it was high time that such saying or doing should be explained and adjusted. Sam thought of going over to old Jim's place and asking him if anything had been done to fracture their friendship. But two days of horse hunting had put Sam behind in his work. He delayed making the visit, promising himself that he would call the next time he drove to town.

But the next time Sam drove to town old Jim was not at the cabin, and the outer gate to the yard was locked with a chain and padlock. Old Jim had never before locked that gate. Sam became more puzzled than ever.

Sam drove to Mike's Place, left Chet's gun with Dan Patterson, and learned that the last seen of Chet was on the roof of a box car in the local freight headed for the city.

Dan Patterson casually mentioned, as he laid the gun on the shelf back of the bar, that old Jim had stopped in that morning, and that the old man was packing iron, something he had not done for years. "The old man acts as though he meant to get somebody, or expected somebody to get him," declared Patterson. "He won't talk. Anything happened up your way, Sam?"

"Dog-goned if I know. Last I seen of Jim was over a week ago, and he didn't say much. That is, I don't remember him sayin' much."

"You don't know of anybody he's got it in for?" queried Patterson.

"Nope. But I got it in for the fella what cut my fence and murdered my hen. I ain't sayin' I know who done it, but I got my idea."

And straightway Sam unburdened himself. Patterson listened, but made no comment. If old Jim and Sam had quarreled they were just the kind to say nothing about it.

Patterson's very silence had set Sam to thinking. Burdened with suspicion, he strode out, got his mail and supplies, and drove homeward. So old Jim was packing a gun. Mighty strange! Jim Houston had declared against gun toting more than once, as a habit inviting trouble in the old days, and as a tenderfoot trick in these days of law and order. Well, old Jim was no tenderfoot. And by a process of elimination, which process occupied the hours driving from Palmas to his placer, Sam finally arrived at the conclusion that Jim Houston was looking for trouble. That was according to Jim's own creed relative to the packing of firearms. Sam shook the reins over the pintos, although they were doing a good clip—an almost too good clip for horses that had never been on a race track. Sam also shook his head, which was not doing such a good clip. He was perplexed. He was almost willing to admit to himself that none other than old Jim had cut his fence and killed Blackie. But the habit of friendship enduring for twelve years, fought stubbornly against any such conclusion.

The more Sam tried to solve the problem, the more perplexed he became. He had always liked old Jim. Could it be possible that he had gravely offended Jim Houston by some careless remark inspired by alcohol? Sam again thought of the severed fence and the defunct Blackie. "Danged if I'll go soft-

soapin' up to him and ast him what's bitin' *him*. Mebby he didn't cut my fence and kill Blackie. If he didn't, why don't he come over and say so? And I'll be double danged if I'll go near him, if he didn't!"

Sam's logic was of the kind that admits of but one side to a question. "If old Jim didn't cut the fence and kill the hen, why didn't he come over and say so?"

Sam could think of no one in the valley who hated him, or even disliked him enough to make him trouble. With but few and isolated exceptions, old Jim Houston and Sam were the only individuals who traveled the Gulch Road, which passed old Jim's place and ended at Sam's gate.

As he passed old Jim's claim, Sam gazed down the fence. Susan, the little thoroughbred pig, was rooting about the cabin yard. Sam drew rein and sat looking across the fence at Susan. He shook his head. "It would serve him right—but he'd sure suspicion me, with my wagon tracks fresh from town. Anyhow, danged if I'll steal any one's stock to git even, no matter what he done to me."

Sam eased the reins. The pintos, with a rear and swerve, clattered down the road and stopped at Sam's gate.

Ordinarily the pintos were well behaved. Whether it was because of their recent run in the hills, or because Sam jerked the wire gate open savagely and startled the horses, is known only to themselves, and they did not stop to explain. Before Sam could climb to the seat to drive into the yard, the pintos reared, swung round, and hesitated. Sam grabbed for the reins. The high pinto shied into his mate and the mate shied into space. They had their excuse. With that charming perverseness characteristic of range-bred stock they started for nowhere in particular at a gait that promised to land them there long before Sam arrived. Sam knew better than to waste his energy in running. He stood and watched the buckboard hit the first hump in the road. Then he strode deliberately to the spot and picked up his first consignment of provisions. At the bend, just below old Jim's place, he picked up the next—and his newspaper. He tallied up and found that he was short a five-pound sack of sugar. A half mile farther along he found the sugar, but it was not sacked.

He again tallied up. All he needed now was the team and the buckboard to make his tally complete. He left his provisions

in a pile beside the road and started out after his team. He swore not, neither did he curse. But he confided to himself that this sort of thing was getting altogether too frequent to be a joke.

Far out and across the valley floor the team kept the road at a wild gallop. Occasionally the buckboard hit a hummock and jumped clear of the ground, as though it were anxious to beat the pintos to town. As the horses left the road and took a short cut across country, where the road swung round to avoid a series of washes and hummocks, Sam groaned. "She's been a stout little ole wagon, but I reckon she's done gone, this trip."

Then Sam stopped. In the far distance he saw a familiar figure—old Jim plodding along behind his pack burro, on the way home. Sam forgot their recent estrangement in his anxiety for the safety of his team and wagon. "Old Jim'll stop 'em!" Sam watched the flying horses and the slowly oncoming Jim. Sam saw the pintos swerve as *they* saw Jim. But the old man made no effort to stop them. Instead, he hazed the burro off the road and gave the pintos full right of way, hardly lifting his head as those speeding harbingers of wreck and destruction flew past.

"That settles it!" declared Sam, and he did not refer to the buckboard. "Any man what would let a runaway team pass him and not even raise a hand to stop 'em ain't worth tellin' what he is." Sam quickened his stride. Possibly the pintos, through habit, would stop at Mike's Place. But that did not matter now. Nothing mattered. They would stop somewhere, somehow. He hoped their eventual stop would not entail any further expense. What really mattered, was that old Jim Houston had showed himself to be of kin to that little black-and-white striped animal, of unsavory reputation, known as a "high-behind" among the untutored naturalists of Palmas County, and elsewhere. Sam was disgusted, enraged, insulted. His feelings were hurt, his pride was wounded, and there was a large dent in his soul. The friend of twelve years had at last shown what he really was!

Sam kept on down the desert road, his stride long and heavy, his mouth set and his eyes straight ahead. He passed old Jim as unconcernedly as though his erstwhile friend had been a soap weed or a Joshua tree. And as they drew apart, each going about his own business as though the other were a ghost

and neither believed in ghosts, the gap in their former friendship widened proportionately. Sam's stride quickened. Old Jim stopped and picked up a stone. He missed the burro by a scant inch, but the hint was sufficient. The burro straightened to a good fast walk. Old Jim saw a chance to put the finishing touch on his revenge—and according to his reckoning he still had about twenty dollars' worth of revenge overdue on the books.

Old Jim hazed the burro into the yard, unpacked him, and turned him loose. Leaving the kyacks packed—an unusual proceeding, considering his methodical ways—he trudged up the trail toward Sam's place. About an hour later he came back. Squib, the tomcat, rubbing against old Jim's boots as a hint that it was about supper time, jumped as a little brass cylinder tinkled on the stones of the doorstep. Squib arched his back, eyed the empty cartridge, and approaching stealthily, smelt of it. He sneezed. There was a fresh, acrid smell connected with that shiny brass thing that he did not like. Old Jim carefully cleaned his six gun and thrust it back into the holster before he carried the kyacks into his cabin.

CHAPTER IV.

When Sam returned to his cabin that night, driving a thoroughly disciplined team attached to the original buckboard by the regulation harness, plus some baling wire, he was in no mood to subscribe to indiscriminate charities. The pintos *had* stopped in front of Mike's Place, and there was where Sam found them, and the buckboard. At first he could not account for the bits of plate glass scattered generously about the bottom of the buckboard, as he was too absorbed in examining the team and wagon. Mike's Place was next to the corner drug store.

Sam was still examining his rig when the druggist touched him on the arm and solemnly pointed to the place where his front window had been. Sam's feelings had long since passed that stage when he would have gladly committed murder or set fire to an orphans' home—so he laughed, with a bitter intonation that suggested that Fate could no longer evoke his wrath. He was fed up on Fate. If he had said: "Huh! merely a plate-glass window!" the druggist might have forgiven him. But he had laughed. The druggist was not a profane man; but he had imagination. He assured Sam that he had

tried to catch the team as it rounded the corner. That he did stop the pintos, but that they had deliberately backed into his window, before they finally decided to be led up to Mike's Place and tied to the rail.

"Well," said Sam, smiling like a gargoyle, "if you didn't want 'em to back into yore window, what in hell did you stop 'em for. Couldn't you leave well enough alone?"

The druggist was not a florid person, but he paled. He informed Sam clearly, that any team that would act as the pintos had, was maliciously and everlastingly unregenerate, and that nothing this side of utter extinction could bring either the pintos or their owner up to the level of total depravity. Sam listened quietly, and then told the druggist to make out his bill for repairs, replacements, and hospital service. The druggist did not quite catch the significance of the latter item until Sam explained that while no one had been injured so far on account of the runaway, some one would be if some one didn't get back behind the soda-water fountain where he belonged in about ten seconds.

To add to Sam's peace of mind, it became quickly rumored about Palmas that Sam Osborne, who was old enough to know better, had been drinking again. That his team had run away with him and had pitched him out, and had backed into the bay window of one of the most prominent citizens of Palmas, behaving in a manner quite in keeping with that of their irresponsible owner. The scandal was of feminine origin, and therefore uncontroversial—so Sam decided that instead of shooting some one, he would merely set fire to Palmas some windy night. He came to this interesting conclusion while imbibing three drinks in Dan Patterson's, in quick succession. Patterson even suggested a fourth at his own expense, but Sam declined, stating that another drink would probably make him feel natural, and that he didn't want to fool himself into thinking that he would be immune from hard luck for the next century or so.

Sam had entered Palmas wondering what was going to happen next. When he drove out of Palmas that evening, he wondered what was not going to happen next. He surmised that the spell of the fateful cuckoo was upon him. Things had not been going right since the advent of the cuckoo clock. Had Sam known that the cuckoo, as an entity, was extinct, he might have felt better. But he did not know that.

As has been intimated, when Sam arrived at his diggings that night, he was anything but pleased with himself and the world at large. Yet through it all, and after it was all over he retained his innate good will toward animals. Why, after all, the pintos did not run away often. Their spree in the hills had affected them—and they were not to blame for that. When he fed them that night, the pintos nickered in a friendly way, and rubbed their noses against him quite as though nothing untoward had happened. Sam felt mollified—but he could not forget that plate glass was expensive.

Sam's optimism sagged heavily in the middle but it had not quite touched bottom yet. His fence had been cut and Blackie had been blotted from the face of the earth, and the pintos had run away. Well, worse things had happened. What bothered Sam was that sinister something back of the almost uninterrupted sequence of calamities, that seemed, even then, to be hovering about him in the starlight as he trudged from the stable to his cabin. Sam was not overly superstitious, for a prospector. Yet he allowed that some kind of hard-luck spook had been camping on his trail pretty persistently of late.

Sam trailed up to the pasture to see if the little white goat was all right. He intended to fetch the goat in from the pasture to the shelter of the stable, as was his custom. But there was no Kicker waiting at the pasture gate. No friendly, sensitive nose was thrust into his hand as he undid the gate loop. Sam did not want to believe that anything had happened to Kicker: but he was willing to bow to the inevitable. Kicker was not there. With a cold foreboding, Sam returned to the cabin for a lantern. He spent an hour prowling about the pasture and calling Kicker—searching behind every bush and in every arroyo. Finally he gave it up and returned to the cabin, cooked his supper, and turned in. He could not sleep, and his reflections were not pleasant as he lay and looked at the stars through the open window. "But it ain't like ole Jim to go sneakin' around doin' such things," he muttered. "And somethin'll git Blue, next," he declared. Sam was well on the way toward becoming a pessimist.

In spite of a poor night, he was out early, searching for the goat. He would not have found him, had it not been for the coyote that slunk across a ridge back of the pasture

as Sam approached the south fence. The goat pasture was inclosed with rabbit wire. Sam saw where the coyote had actually dug under the wire and where he had dragged something through the hole. A white hair here and there told him more than he cared to know.

Sam climbed the fence and stepped down into the arroyo back of the ridge. In the bottom of the arroyo was a white patch. Sam knew what it was. He turned away. It would be just as well to let the coyotes finish their job. Yet, against his will, he retraced his steps. The coyotes had eaten all of Kicker but a shoulder and part of the hide. Yet no coyote had killed Kicker. Through the shoulder was a round hole such as a forty-five makes. Sam's forehead prickled with sweat. His Nemesis was no wraith of misfortune, no accidental acolyte of hard luck, but a human being, performing with deliberate malice. "I'd like to git my two hands on him," he said slowly and without heat, "jest onct." And judging by the way Sam's fingers closed down as he said it, "just once," would have been sufficient for all parties concerned.

When old Jim Houston began his crusade of revenge, he had had no idea of putting fear into Sam's soul. Old Jim simply determined to annoy and irritate Sam into argument, tell him what he thought of him, and warn him that he was to keep out of his sight in town or abroad. Then, if Sam had sand enough to take up the feud, old Jim would see to it that Sam would either have to back down in public, or get shot. Old Jim rather hoped that Sam would come over and accuse him of having cut the fence; of having quelched Blackie with a rock; of having slain the innocent and frisky Kicker. Then they could have it out. To have one's pet timepiece blown into the Great Beyond, was bad enough. But to be backed down in one's own stronghold by an irresponsible and wild-eyed gentleman who was unaccustomed to handling a gun, was an insult that could only be wiped out in gore. It was quite plain to Jim that Sam Osborne's performance that memorable evening had been premeditated, maliciously and sinfully planned and carried out. Heretofore, old Jim had not associated low cunning and Sam Osborne as bedfellows. But Sam Osborne had shown what he was, when it came to a show-down. And that was the end of that! Or, at least, old Jim thought so.

Sam, the erstwhile whistling, vigorous, buoyant Sam, began to doubt the worthwhileness of playing an open game himself. He dreaded to awaken in the morning, fearful that he would find some fresh evidence of his enemy's handiwork. When he had been uncertain as to who had been secretly attacking him and his happy family, he had hesitated to confront old Jim and accuse him. Now, that there was no doubt about it, he still hesitated, because he did not want to kill old Jim, and he did not want to get killed, and he reasoned that this might happen if they came together. If he only knew what had started old Jim on the warpath—but it was too late in the game to make inquiry. Sam had buried his dead. It would henceforth be war to the knife.

So Sam set about to even up the score secretly, that old Jim might experience the unwelcome surprise of finding some of *his* pet animals expurgated from the pleasant pages of their existence. There was not much to expurgate, save the pig Susan and the tomcat Squib. But they would do, to begin with.

Sam thought he could hardly put Squib out of the way. Sam had fetched Squib from town when Squib was a kitten, not much bigger than a ball of yarn, and had given Squib to old Jim, allowing him to choose between Squib and Blue as they arched their tiny backs and spat bravely at old Jim's whiskers brushing the edge of the basket. No, Sam could not put the eternal quietus on Squib. But there was Susan. Old Jim *did* brag a lot about that pig. And, as pigs go, Susan was worth a brag or two. But it would be a waste of good meat to finish off Susan and leave her to the coyotes. It would be much more satisfactory to kidnap Susan, and eventually eat her, and so fatten upon the discomfiture of his enemy.

Young pigs on the hoof, are not easy to catch. But Sam managed to do it, waiting until old Jim went to town and then descending upon the unsuspecting Susan, who all but trotted right into the gunny sack Sam fetched along to facilitate matters. Susan seemed to think there was something good to eat in the gunny sack—and there was, after Sam had helped her in and tied the sack. Susan kicked and squealed all the way to Sam's place. But when Sam pulled her out of the sack and set her down on the cabin floor, she grew quiet and became interested.

She snuffed along the crack of the closed

door while Sam put an edge on his butcher knife. Then, just to show that she had not taken umbrage at Sam for manhandling her, and that her only concern in this world was to keep her bellyband tight, Susan trotted round the cabin, seeking solid sustenance. Finding none, she trotted up to Sam and blinked at him. Her immature "*Oof, Oof,*" sounded more like "*If, If,*" than Sam could have believed possible. Susan knew there were apples in that cabin. She could smell them. Sam swore. But he gave her an apple. And that was the end of that. Susan's face was suffused with a moist joy as she chewed the apple down hurriedly. Sam put his butcher knife back in the rack. Susan rubbed her back against the table leg.

But he could not keep the pig in the cabin, and he dared not keep her about the yard. If old Jim should happen to come over and find Susan on the premises, it would give old Jim more than a reason to start something. No, that would not do. It would be much more subtle and satisfactory to cause old Jim to worry as to what had become of his pig; to cause him sleepless nights and nightmarish days. And just let old Jim accuse him of having stolen the pig—with no evidence in sight!

Aided and abetted by night and the pinto team, Sam conveyed Susan to a rancher who lived just outside of Palmas and kept pigs. Just what passed between them that dark and sinister night—aside from Susan—is not on record. But Susan became a denizen of a pig colony, and while there was strenuous competition at feeding time, she kept up her end—in fact, both of them—and grew fat and prospered. Sam had "boarded her out" until such time as he should claim her. The rancher would say nothing about the transaction. And Susan, so far as being an individual pig was concerned, became literally lost in the shuffle.

When old Jim, hazing his pack burro from town that afternoon, drew near his claim, he hummed an ancient range tune. He had got the best of Sam Osborne—had him guessing. True, a hen valued at two dollars and a goat at ten, hardly offset the cost of a cuckoo clock. But there was the wear and tear on Sam Osborne's mental machinery to help balance the account. Dan Patterson had mentioned casually that afternoon, that Sam seemed to be off his feed. Old Jim had smiled a Machiavellian smile.

Nor was old Jim displeased to learn that Sam's team had backed into the drug-store window. Jim had made no attempt to stop that team, and he was glad he had not. Old Jim felt that things were more than evened up—that his vengeance was satisfied. Now let Sam Osborne accuse him of anything. That was all he wanted!

Old Jim unpacked the burro, trudged over to the stable, and mixed Susan's evening meal. He lugged the feed round to the trough, expecting to see Susan emerge from the seclusion of her small but select living room—and Jim was a trifle surprised that she had not already done so. The feed slopped into the trough, but even that mellifluous sound did not draw Susan from her retirement. Old Jim straddled the low side of the pen, and stepping round the mud, stooped and peered into Susan's boudoir. He called to her. He shut out the side light with his hands and peered into the unresponsive interior. He rose and examined the pen. It was intact. Susan could not have gotten out by herself. Evidently somebody had helped her.

Old Jim's own guilty conscience urged him to the quick and dire conclusion that Susan was no more. That Sam Osborne, the low, mean, shiftless hoss thief had stolen Susan and had eaten her. Sam Osborne had often remarked that when a bit more mature, Susan would make a dandy roast, all in one piece. Old Jim could almost smell the bristles singeing on Susan's tender little carcass. And old Jim could almost smell his own bristles singeing as he thought of the individual who was responsible for Susan's disappearance. "I'd like to git my two hands on him—jest onct!" declared old Jim. And, judging by the way he said it, and by the way his gnarled fingers closed down on the top rail of the pen, Sam Osborne was fortunate in being some two miles away, sitting comfortably in his cabin and telling Blue what a low-down hoss thief old Jim Houston was.

And old Jim, shuffling rejectedly to his cabin, admitted that there were no more Osborne animals left to wreak his vengeance upon, except the tomcat, Blue. "And if that sneakin', blue-bellied, grub-snatchin' china-eyed tom comes prowlin' round these here diggin's, why, he don't go back! And that's the end of that!"

A little more hard-bitted than Sam, old Jim would not admit that the stealing of Su-

san had been a master stroke. Yet Sam Osborne could not have hit him a shrewder blow. Old Jim had been proud of the pig—proud of Susan because she was so tame and funny, and because she had given promise of becoming a fine, large animal, capable of raising many litters of Susans and he pigs of her kind. Jim had boasted of his pig to the folk of Palmas, who decided among themselves that old Jim Houston's thoroughbred must be some pig, as old Jim seldom boasted of anything.

But Susan was gone! Never again would her friendly little "Oof, Oof, and the patter of her tiny feet be heard round the cabin. "Somebody's goin' to git shot up!" declared old Jim as he prepared supper that evening.

Late that night he was awakened by the unaccustomed sound of a wagon rattling past his place. He raised up in bed. Yes, it was Sam Osborne's wagon. He knew every squeak and rattle in it. No doubt Sam Osborne was on his way to town to celebrate his triumph. Later, old Jim was again awakened by the sound of wheels on the road. Yes, it was Sam Osborne returning. The ponies were hitting a steady pace and Sam was not singing. Then Sam had not gone to Palmas to celebrate. But what had he driven to town for, at that hour of night?

But the big mills keep grinding right along, despite human differences. Time, that reliable old physician, either heals or administers an opiate to those who suffer, often in spite of the patient's own wish.

Old Jim had his work to do, and to think of Sam Osborne and defunct goats and hens and pigs distracted him. So old Jim philosophically made up his mind that seeing Susan was gone—that was the end of that, when Blue, Sam's tomcat strolled into Jim's cabin yard one morning, evidently to parley with Squib and find out how he was faring as to food and lodging. Old Jim was just starting the work. He stopped and watched the two cats. They met, touched noses, looked each other over, puffed their tails a bit, just to show that each was unwilling to take any back talk from the other, and then they seemed to recall the fact that they were brothers and had been packed from town in the same basket.

Old Jim stepped back in the doorway and reached for his rifle. Squib and Blue were too close together for a safe shot—and, besides, the morning sun was shining in old Jim's face. Presently Squib, who had evi-

dently invited Blue to make himself at home, turned and padded toward old Jim. Blue followed. Old Jim drew down and centered the bead on Blue. Old Jim could shoot—and Blue's chances of survival were a little less than the cube root of minus nothing, when the old man lowered the rifle and peered at the cat. Blue's head seemed swollen and puffed out strangely. Old Jim was curious. He stood the rifle carefully by the door and stepped out. Blue came up to him and mewed plaintively. Old Jim reached down to stroke the cat and examined him. Blue jumped back. Heretofore they had been good friends. "Come 'ere, I ain't goin' to kill ye—jest yit!" growled Jim. And Blue knew that he spoke the truth.

There was a needle of the Spanish Bayonet sticking through Blue's jaw, just below the eye. The cat could not close its mouth. It could hardly eat or drink in that condition. Carefully old Jim carried Blue to the cabin, got a pair of nippers and pulled out the barb. Blue made no effort to escape, but stood to his guns like a veteran, mewing plaintively meanwhile but keeping still on old Jim's knee. Jim cleaned the wound, cut the hair away from it, and washed it with castile soap and hot water. Then he gave Blue some condensed milk. Blue drank feverishly. The cat seemed all but famished. Suddenly it occurred to old Jim that Sam Osborne must either be dead or sick, or he must be absent. Otherwise the cat would not have been allowed to suffer. "Most like he's drunk!" snorted old Jim, although he did not believe what he said. "And if you hadn't been spiked, I'd 'a' fixed you—only different!" said old Jim. "Any man that'll let an animal starve to death is worse than a pig stealer."

Because old Jim had done one good turn for Blue, he did another. He fed him and washed the sore until it all but healed. Frequently the two big tomcats would follow the old man up to the placer and bask in the desert sun while he swung his pick, or packed dirt down to the sluice box. And to save himself, old Jim could not but help like Blue. The cat had shown confidence in him—knew that he was a friend. Then old Jim began to wonder what had become of Sam. Jim would not admit that he cared—but he was curious. If Sam had got into trouble, or was sick—it served him danged well right. Yet, old Jim actually worried because he did not know just *what* had hap-

pened to Sam. A few days later old Jim meandered over to Sam's cabin, cautiously, in case he saw Sam first. In such event, Jim would retreat unobserved. Sam's cabin was locked and the horses and buckboard were gone. Old Jim plodded back to his claim and went to work. About noon he stopped, filled a bucket at the spring, and started down the trail. He noticed a team standing near the gate—Sam's team. So Sam had at last decided to stop by and confess his evildoing. It never occurred to old Jim that he himself had anything to confess. But perhaps Sam had come with his scalp lock up and ready to do battle. Well, old Jim was quite willing to oblige, either way.

Sam was standing near the cabin porch, looking at the road. Old Jim was glad that Sam had come. He wanted to have done with the whole sorry business—and make a fresh beginning. But when Sam turned, it was not Sam, but a man about Sam's age and build, a citizen of Palmas, who waved a greeting. Old Jim set down his bucket of water and strode up, prepared to hear that Sam Osborne had broken his neck or had left the country in haste.

"I drove over to see you, account of Dan Patterson," stated the man. "Borrowed Sam's team, seeing as he ain't using it, these days."

"Uh-uh. Did Dan send for me?"

"Well, not exactly that. But I knew you and Dan was right good friends, and I thought you'd like to know."

"Know what?"

"Why, Dan was monkeying with a new-fangled lamp for the saloon—one of them gasoline lamps—when it blew up and burned him pretty bad."

"Burned dangerous?"

"Well, pretty bad. They got to take him to the hospital, in town."

"Uh-uh? Dan's in Palmas, now?"

"Yes. Doc Anson is doing what he can for Dan. Says somebody's got to volunteer some skin to patch up Dan with."

"Funny that Sam Osborne don't step in and offer some of his. He and Dan is great friends."

"I guess he would, Jim, but you see, Sam has been hitting it up on the quiet, the last week. He took a room over to the Antelope House, and most of the time he sticks in that room. Acts like he was scared, or something. He won't see nobody, and folks say he sent to the city and got a case of High

Life, which is keeping him company. I guess a drinking man ain't the kind they want to graft skin from."

"Uh-uh? Had yore dinner?"

"Nope. I figured to get back to town right soon."

"You jest fetch them pintos in and feed 'em. I'll rustle some grub. Whose team did you say you was drivin'?"

"Why Sam's. You ain't forgot Sam's pintos, have you?"

"My eyesight ain't what it used to be. So Sam is loafin' in town, eh?"

The citizen of Palmas nodded. "I don't know just what ails Sam. He has been liquoring up some. Not bad, but steady."

Old Jim shook his head.

Presently the two had dinner, after which old Jim changed his clothes, locked the cabin, and told the two cats that they would have to rustle for a living until he returned. The burro was in pasture, and could take care of himself.

"You figure to go to the city when they take Dan in?" queried the visitor.

"Dunno." Old Jim climbed into the buckboard, where he sat in moody silence as they drove to town.

Every one in Palmas knew that Dan Patterson and Sam Osborne were close friends. Folk said that Sam knew why Dan Patterson came to Palmas and went into the saloon business. And if Sam did know why, he was the only person, save Dan Patterson himself. So when it became known of Dan's accident, all Palmas expected Sam to come to the front and proffer his assistance in the shape of a patch or two of skin, needed to cover the badly burned areas of Dan's person. But Sam did not appear. This seemed strange, to say the least. Then it became public news that old Jim Houston, crusty old Jim, had shown up, eager to do all he could to make Patterson comfortable. Sam's stock went down as Jim's went up. It was a sort of public test of friendship—and old Jim had proven himself to be a true friend.

That evening old Jim accompanied the local doctor and Dan to the city. Next day the local doctor returned. But old Jim stayed on. They could skin him alive, but he would show Sam Osborne what it meant to be called a friend.

When he was told that spectators were not allowed in the operating room old Jim snorted. "Then I'd like to know how the hell yo're goin' to graft some of my hide onto

Dan. Do you slice her off and carry it in to him on a plate, mebby?"

"You are willing to contribute?" queried the surgeon.

"Yo're whistlin', doc! Me and Dan's been friends ever since he hit Palmas. We was never rarin' friends, but I reckon we understood each other. You see Dan's been regulatin' the whisky business, out there to Palmas, and she needed regulatin'. Said he knowed he couldn't stop it, but he could handle it. Dan's got brains—and if he's shy a leetle hide, why, I got plenty. I ain't as young as I was onct, but no disease ever ketched holt of me like it does some young fellas, so you ain't takin' chances on that there hide for Dan."

"All right. Step in here and my assistant will examine you. No. You needn't worry about Patterson. We gave him a pretty stiff shot to quiet the pain."

"Well, you needn't to give me no shot. Jest go ahead and peel her off, as much as you need. All I want is a good chew, and somewhere to spit without sp'ilin' this here white floor."

CHAPTER V.

Two weeks later Dan Patterson was back in Palmas and able to supervise the running of his place. Palmas County newspapers made a hero of old Jim, much to his disgust. Coincident with the account of Patterson's painful accident and successful operation appeared an article anent those who toil not, neither do they spin, evidently aimed at Sam Osborne, whom, the article concluded, "seems to have located the source of wealth and the headwaters of Barleycorn River at the same time. Placer mining must be looking up."

Old Jim, back in his cabin, read the article, and immediately penned a brief letter to the editor, canceling his subscription. And old Jim did not cancel his subscription because he disliked the mushy article about his heroism, but because of the unanswerable thrust at Sam Osborne. Sam's name had not been mentioned, yet every one would know who was meant.

"Yes!" snorted old Jim as he stamped the letter. "Why didn't that glass-eyed, newspaper dude come out square and say he meant Sam—and give Sam a chanct to git back at him?"

And then, as plainly as though he had ut-

tered the words himself, an inner voice said: "And why didn't you?"

That question followed old Jim to bed, and hung around his heels all the next day. Finally he decided that he had business in Palmas.

Next morning he was there, early. He showed the scurrilous newspaper article to Dan Patterson. "And if Sam comes around askin' you for booze, you send him home," said Jim.

"I'll be glad to, but Sam is old enough to know what he wants."

"When he's sober. But I hear he's been drinkin' kind of steady, recent."

"Why don't you see what you can do with him?" queried Patterson. "I thought you two were almost blood brothers."

"No, we ain't. But you might say that you and me was," and old Jim grinned. "I'm askin' you to herd Sam home, as a special favor to me. But don't you let him know I ever said a word to you. I kain't talk to Sam, jest now."

Patterson nodded. "Thought there was something wrong between you two. I don't want to know what it is—but it might save time and trouble if I knew just what broke up your friendship, after twelve years of steady going."

Old Jim hesitated. To explain would involve the confession of having bought the cuckoo clock. And for some reason, old Jim was beginning to feel ashamed of having sent for that clock. A cuckoo clock was a "danged, furrin' doo-dink, anyhow," as Sam had once said. And old Jim was one-hundred-and-one-per-cent American. Finally old Jim told Patterson the whole sorry story. Patterson did not smile. Nor did he proffer advice. And old Jim felt a heap better after having confided in Patterson, who, in turn, promised that he would have a talk with Sam.

"Understand, I ain't askin' you to patch this here thing up," declared old Jim. "You talk to him jest like it was comin' from you. And you might say that if he don't git home pretty poco dam' quick, his cat is like to starve to death."

Old Jim found Squib and Blue installed in the front porch when he returned to his cabin. The cats hopped down and rubbed against his boots as he unlocked the door. They got an extra large helping of milk and crackers that evening.

Next day old Jim set to work to make up

for lost time. No, he didn't take his pick, pan, and shovel and go to placering the first thing. There was bread to bake, wood to be chopped, water to lug, the cabin floor to be swept, washing to do, picks to be sharpened, and a few other minor details hardly worth mentioning. When a man is hotel proprietor, chambermaid, cook, housekeeper, laundryman, blacksmith, wood chopper and wage earner for even a family of one, he has both hands full, and he is lucky if his suspenders stand the strain. Old Jim made bread and set a pot of beans on the stove. Then he touched up his ax and took a turn at the wood pile.

As he progressed from one job to another, he occasionally glanced toward the distant road as though expecting some one. But no one appeared on the road that day.

The day following, old Jim expected to see Sam show up. But Sam did not appear. Old Jim drudged along mechanically, wondering, meanwhile, just what Sam would have to say when he did show up, and how in tarnation their tangle could ever be straightened out. Of course, he would pay Sam for the goat and the hen. And no doubt Sam would offer to pay for Susan and the cuckoo clock. Then they would agree to forget the recent unpleasantness by saying nothing further about it. If Sam acted ornery, that would be different. But old Jim surmised that Sam would not act ornery. And the more old Jim thought about the whole miserable mistake, the more he realized that he had been dirt mean to kill Sam's goat and hen, no matter what Sam had done. A cuckoo clock could possibly be mended. But a hen could not, nor could a defunct goat. Not mended, but — Then came the Big Idea.

Old Jim wished for once in his life that he possessed a team and wagon. He had a big plan, calling for quick and secret transportation. But if he stepped out right smart, he could be in Palmas by noon. That afternoon he could rent a team, and the following morning he could carry out the Big Idea.

Thursday morning, as the desert sun rounded above the buttes, old Jim left Palmas with a team and light wagon. He drove north several miles. Then he stopped at the rancho of Pedro Alivar. Pedro kept goats, whole platoons of goats—pure white, black and white, brown, white and brown, black, in fact every ancestral combination possible. Pedro was not a fancy breeder, but was all for utility. Did Pedro happen to have a

white goat with a splash of black on its off hind leg? No. But Pedro had a pure white goat, a young goat, most beautiful to look upon, and of a pleasing disposition. The young goat was the blood brother to the one that the Señor Sam had at his rancho. Surely Señor Jim had seen such a goat?

Old Jim frowned and asked to see the blamed critter. The blamed critter looked so like his late brother, that old Jim closed the deal right there, had the goat crated in a high box, and Jim himself tied a square of canvas over the box, and was about to depart when he spied a hen in Pedro's yard. "Ketch that there black critter," he commanded.

"The señor would also buy a very good hen?" queried Pedro politely.

"Yes. Ketch her. And box her up. I don't want her tied in no sack."

"*Si, señor!* I feex heem."

"It's a her, ain't it?"

"Si! Her is the hen, señor."

"All right. Git a move on!"

Old Jim was evidently excited. Pedro could not understand such indiscriminate purchasing, made in such haste. But he understood money. And old Jim paid his price without a quiver.

"And don't you open your bean trap about me buyin' these here critters off you, or I'll make you wish you been dead and buried a hundred years. Sabe?"

Pedro averred politely that his bean trap was sealed forever, so far as the transaction went. Old Jim departed, swearing to himself. He was swearing, and he felt guilty, although he had done nothing wrong. He did not drive back through Palmas, but directly across the mesa to the Sawtooth road. Always deliberate, stubborn as a pine stump, and of a slow habit of mind, this day he hurried, and thought fast. It was late when he arrived at his place that night. He fed the hen and the goat, and after feeding the hired team, he drove back to Palmas in the starlight, munching cold bread and corned beef. He wanted to arrive in Palmas before midnight and save a dollar and four bits. The rent for the team for another day would begin Friday morning. As he had hoped that Sam would return each day, now he hoped that Sam would be detained a day or two longer. The Big Idea had worked out so far.

Old Jim trudged back to his cabin that night, or really, Friday morning, arriving just before daybreak. He did not go to bed, but

made hot coffee, and had his breakfast. Then he trudged over to Sam's place. Sam had not returned.

Three hours later the white goat and the black hen were getting used to their new environment—the goat in Kicker's pasture and the hen in Sam's dooryard, and old Jim was back at his cabin washing ink from his fingers. He had managed to paint a black splotch on the new goat's off hind leg. Old Jim was nothing if not thorough. He could hardly be blamed for having overlooked the fact that Blackie's legs had been white, and that the new hen's legs were a rich orange hue—almost red.

Meanwhile, over in Palmas, a depressed and repentant Sam was learning for the first time—and from Dan Patterson—something about old Jim's stanchness and heroism, and also that the cuckoo had come to an untimely end by his own hand. Sam allowed that it was sure news to him. "Which," he concluded, "come to me tryin' to do a good turn by takin' Chet's gun away from him."

Patterson nodded. "I appreciate that Sam. And if Chet hadn't been full, it wouldn't have happened."

That was Patterson's way. He had not even suggested that Sam had been drunk.

Dan Patterson left Sam to think it over, neither urging nor arguing. Sam contrasted his own recent behavior with that of old Jim's. Sam's reflections were not sprightly.

Late that afternoon old Jim saw Sam's pintos round the bend and trot down the road, and Sam held the reins. Jim was chopping wood, and he kept on chopping, but he peered sideways at the long, high box lashed to the back of the buckboard.

Sam pulled up at the gate and got down and opened it. Then he climbed back to the seat and drove in.

Even as a horse or a dog or a cat knows whether or not it is to be war or peace when it sees another of its kind approaching, so old Jim knew by Sam's manner as he strode up the path to the cabin that Sam had shaved off his scalp lock. Not that Sam acted repentant. Sam whistled and swung along jauntily. But old Jim was shrewd and wary. He had been reckoned pretty good with a gun, in his younger days. He knew the signs of an enemy—and this was no enemy that approached.

"'Bout time you quit cantelopin' around and come back," growled old Jim. "I'm git-

tin' tired of lopin' over to yore diggins every day and feedin' yore blame' stock."

"'Bout as sick of it as I be, lookin' after yore blame pig," countered Sam, and he smiled.

"Pig! Which pig?"

"Oh, any one you like. But I was referin' to Susan, in the box, there, on the buckboard."

"Oh, on the buckboard. Uh-uh."

Sam waved his hand as one making noble restitution. "If you was to give me a hand, I reckon we could lift her down. She's grown a pow'ful sight since I ketched her runnin' loose on the mesa."

"Did you ketch her to-day?" queried old Jim suspiciously.

"Shucks, no! 'Bout a month or two ago. I was goin' to town, so I left her at Enderly's Ranch. She's sure done fine."

Just then Susan grunted. Old Jim started, stared at the box, and frowned. "She's got kind of hoarse."

"Yes. I seen that her voice had changed some. She's about eight sizes bigger, like-wise."

Old Jim climbed slowly onto the buckboard and peered down into the box. Yes, there was Susan, in the flesh, all right. But how she had grown! Together the two old-timers let the box down and released Susan. Susan made straight for her pen. She had not forgotten.

Then came a deadlock of silence. Finally old Jim gestured toward Blue and Squib curled down asleep on the porch bench. "Yore tomcat come over, knowin' I wouldn't let him starve to death. He had the p'int of a Spanish Bayonet stickin' through his jaw so he couldn't shet his mouth. I took it out, and saved his eye, which was right sore. He's been hangin' round here ever since."

"And feedin' good," said Sam. "He's plumb fat."

Then Sam gazed at old Jim curiously. Old Jim seemed to be telling a yarn that was half truth and the other half fiction. "Kicker ain't doin' bad, considerin'," stated old Jim. "The leetle cuss like to butted me into the crick this mornin' when I went over to feed him. Reckon he ain't got used to— to me, yit. Him and that Blackie hen sure

is good comp'ny for each other, seein' as you—as nobody was around."

Sam studied old Jim's face, which was grave, and a bit troubled. Sam wondered how old Jim could lie like that, even to patch up a friendship.

"Blackie and Kicker, eh?" queried Sam.

"Uh-uh."

"Uh-uh." And Sam's grunt rather indicated that he had done more than pass through the State of Missouri.

"I was jest goin' over to yore shack to feed them critters," said old Jim. "And then you drove up. It's gettin' clost to sundown."

"That's right. We kin drive over."

They drove over, neither speaking a word. When Sam got down and saw the imitation Kicker and the resurrected Blackie, his face was a study. Sure enough, there was a Blackie and a Kicker, but Blackie's legs seemed to have suffered from the sun. They were a deep golden yellow—and once they had been white. And Kicker was not so tame as he had been. He seemed a trifle heavier, and had a deeper voice than the original Kicker, and the black mark on his off hind leg seemed to have run and spread some. Sam almost said something, but caught himself in time, as he realized old Jim's strategy. Instead, Sam thrust out his hand. Old Jim grasped it. The desert moon showed a thin edge over the eastern hills.

"Seein' as the stock is all fixed for the night, what do you say to finishin' that there game of pinochle?" queried Sam.

Old Jim thought that that game had been pretty well finished as it was, and he, too, was about to say something, when he be-thought himself. "I recollect you did quit, kind of sudden. Let's go finish her. But we're goin' to eat, first."

The two old-timers plodded silently across the moonlit ridges. From behind them came the faint bleating of the new Kicker. Sam put his hand on old Jim's shoulder in a friendly way. Old Jim was afraid Sam might apologize, or say something sentimental, so he headed him off. "I done had a accident with that there cuckoo clock, Sam. She got busted, so I took her down and put her in the stove. A everyday alarm clock is good enough for me, any time."

"For me, too!" said Sam heartily.

THE END.

Another Knibbs story in the next number.

Yin Sip Tan

By Roy Norton

Author of "The Dam," "David and Goliath," "The Secret City," Etc.

The strangely assorted partners go to the aid of a mistreated Chinese this time. Somehow, these men are always doing good, though they seem to have no conscious intention of that, and perhaps that is why they are so likable

FROM the window of the cabin on the hillside Goliath, so called because of his great size, looked down the gulch to the river that ran like a black ribbon between snowbanks, and then lifted his gaze to the tops of the mountains where the forests rested lifeless and still as if sleeping until spring. Behind him, in the warmth, his partner David, so called because he was more or less of a pocket size by comparison with the man at the window, played interminable games of patience with a dirty pack of cards, and at intervals growled because they had received no word from Miss Martha Sloan, whose claim they were watching until they could get advices from her. Being active men, accustomed to out-of-door life, and habituated to wandering whenever restlessness gnawed them, the partners were not happy. The camp was deserted after its prodigious activity, and its Chinese miners, white timber men, and lumberjacks had long since drawn their pay and scattered.

"I'm so dodgasted tired of loafin' and playin' this durned game that I'm goin' loco," David remarked. "Nothin' ever happens up here!" And he slammed the cards down at his twenty-seventh consecutive failure to beat himself.

Goliath's heavy fingers, that had been drumming on the windowpane, never lost a tap, and he yawned.

"Well, we just naturally can't leave Miss Marthy's property unwatched, until she hears from that sick brother of hers," he rumbled. "And that, too, after she whacked up the takin's when the dam went out and the season closed. Why, man, we got nigh onto ten thousand dollars out of this job, and— Hello! Wonder what that is?"

His restless fingers suddenly stopped their tattoo, and David came behind him and looked downward toward the trail that was barely discernible by the river's bank. Trav-

ersing it an ungainly thing, like a wounded animal, was teetering along for a distance, then resting, then striving again, and making weird drunken plunges and struggles before coming to another rest.

"Man with a mighty big pack on his back," said David. "And—say, Goliath! There's somethin' the matter with that feller. Let's go down and have a look at him."

And then, without further wait, he trudged hurriedly to the door, and, with the giant at his heels, ran down the path that led to the trail. Goliath, traveling more lazily, was twenty or thirty paces behind when he heard David exclaim: "Why, I'll be hanged if that don't look like old Yin Sip Tan, the chink that's been workin' the old diggin's up at the Canada Queen and—hello!— He's fallen, and is layin' quiet in the snow."

Together they now ran, and when they reached the fallen man David, who was first to arrive, shouted: "It's him, all right."

They bent over the fallen Chinese, discovered that a bloodstained bandage was swathed round his head above his loosened queue that lay in the snow, and as the giant thrust an arm beneath his body and lifted him, pack and all, the big, loose sleeve of his denim blouse fell back, exposing an arm that was bruised and wounded as if it had been ground beneath a boot with metal spikes.

"Good Lord!" rumbled the giant. "Looks as if somebody had started in to kill him and then gave up the job before it was finished. Poor old cuss! Here, Dave, I'll hold him up while you unfasten the pack. It's a full mule load."

"No wonder he couldn't get up when he fell with this thing on him," David remarked as his fingers worked at rope knots. "Humph! Guess I'll cut it off. That's quickest," and an instant later the pack lay beside the trail. "Ain't dead, is he?" he inquired.

"Nope. Just three-quarters," replied his partner. "You bring his pack and I'll tote the old feller up the hill to the cabin. Here goes."

As easily as if picking up a child the giant caught the limp body in his arms and carried it, with dangling pigtail, dangling legs, and dangling arms quite as if it were but a grotesque rag roll, while David repaired the pack ropes sufficiently to get the huge bundle up on his sturdy shoulders, and they climbed to the cabin.

At last, with a cough and splutter that distorted his wrinkled old face, Yin Sip struggled to sit up, painfully opened his eyes, and for an instant stared at the faces above him as if bewildered and in terror. He was lying on Goliath's bed.

"It's all right, old feller. You're all right now. You're in our cabin," Goliath drawled in what was intended to be a soothing voice but that sounded like the low growling of distant thunder.

"Ah!" exclaimed the old man in a long-drawn sigh. "Me sabe you! M-m-m-h! *Gin ho pan gu!* Velly good fends! Velly good mens!" and then relaxed and lay quietly as if vastly relieved.

As dumb and patient as a mule, the old Cantonese sat up and submitted to their crude surgery, never betraying pain save by an occasional distortion of his face as the needle was forced through the lacerated edges of his wound. And then they gave him another drink of brandy to stimulate him, laid him back on the pillow, pulled the blankets up about his neck until nothing but his wrinkled face and bright eyes were exposed, like some grotesque yet pitiable image, and David, sitting on the edge of the bunk while Goliath carefully cleansed their surgical implements, inquired: "Well, old Yin, who did this for you? Get into an argyment with a grizzly bear up there at the head of the gulch? Who was it mixed you up this way?"

"Mohave Joe," Yin answered weakly. "He come my cabin. Take claim. Bleak my head. Kliok me allee same boots when fall. Thlow my stuff out in snow. Say killee me if I come back cabin again. Say glound now his and he allee same keepum."

"'Mohave Joe' Brown, eh?" said David, glancing up at his partner who scowled and shook his head as he remembered the unsavory reputation of the half-bred Portuguese ruffian who bullied and swaggered

when drunk, and was a snarling, surly, vindictive, and dishonest brute when sober. "So he took a fancy to that claim of your'n, eh, and just naturally took it! Well, I'll be damned." He looked up at Goliath who, with big hands on his lithe hips, looked his indignation, and, addressing him, said: "Sounds like a pretty dirty deal, don't it?"

"Couldn't expect anything else from Mohave, could you?" growled the giant. "Must have thought the ground was some good, and as Yin ain't nothin' but a poor hardworkin' old chink, thought he could get away with it. Wonder is he didn't kill him and dump him down an old shaft? When did this happen, Yin?"

"Smornin'. Me bleed on snow. Make pack. Try come here. Been all day. Floget where am some time. Allee same no think. But know you good mens, so kleep tlyin' find you."

"Well, you're here and safe and all right," David remarked. "And you just go to sleep now and, when you're better, we'll talk this over some more and see if we can do anything with this Mister Mohave Joe. The dirty, murderin' half-breed!"

And Yin Sip Tan, with a big tremulous sigh, turned his head obediently and closed his eyes, while the partners looked after the fire, and then trudged outside as if they could better commune and think in the open air. On two points they were convinced, and those were concerning Yin Sip's veracity and his inoffensiveness. He had worked for them in the early part of the previous season when they employed a considerable number of Chinese laborers, and had been one of their most trusted men. They knew that he was patiently and laboriously stripping some land on a long-abandoned mining claim that had been worked out by the early miners in the profligate fashion then prevalent, and he had made no secret to their friendly ears that he hoped some day to make much better than day wages for his work. But they also knew that he was in no sense the owner of the ground and that his security of possession had rested solely in the fact that no white man would regard such an ancient and worked-out claim as being worth staking or working. All over the Big Divide were such patches of ground, worked out in the 'fifties or "roaring 'forties" that would content none less industrious and painstaking than the occasional Chinese miners. Once only, when restlessly wandering as such adventurous

and inquiring spirits must wander when curious to know "what's over that big hill," or "how things look up at the head of this here durned stream," the partners had ventured as far as Yin Sip's abode, a full twelve miles away. They recalled its isolation in a place where it was perhaps five or six miles to the nearest neighbor. They remembered the homely but comparatively clean old cabin that he had repaired, the little vegetable patch on the hillside, the few scraggly fowls that scratched and clucked around his door, and their amazement at the marks of his industry.

Being true Westerners of the mines, and prospectors of the old-time type, they were liberal in their views of the real Chinese miner, and inclined to like him if he proved himself a real man. Hence for Yin Sip they had a rather special regard. And on the contrary they had nothing but angry contempt for Mohave Joe whom they had known farther south until that character had found Arizona a trifle "fed up" with him and a few nimble citizens thoughtfully preparing ropes with nooses that might be conveniently kept for reasonable pretexts to use them as neckties for such as him. And Mohave Joe had disappeared from the ken of the partners until they rediscovered him in the back areas of the Big Divide.

"Well, I reckon as far as we can dope it out," said Goliath, after they had discussed the situation for some time without achieving any results, "poor old Yin ain't got no more claim than a rabbit, and the ground belongs to who grabs it, and this here Joe has got it grabbed all right. He must have got an idea through that thick skull of his that it was worth somethin'."

"Of course," David grunted scornfully. "He just about found out, somehow, that Yin had banked a neat little lump of money down in Auburn. Remember, Yin didn't draw any wages at all from us till he quit work after the dam went out? Asked us to keep it for him. So this Mohave Joe person, probably not knowin' that Yin worked for us some months, jumped at the conclusion that Yin's ground is right good and says to himself: 'Nothin' but a chink, any how, so I'll just go down there and give him the boots and work that ground myself. If I have to kill him, it won't make any difference.' But what gets me, is where he come from to do the job. Thought he was supposed to be workin' some ground off over in

the old New York Gulch country. S'pose that was no good?"

"Humph! He don't know enough about minin' to sabe whether it was or not," said Goliath. "And, besides, maybe if it was promisin' and was his claim, what was the matter with his keepin' not only that, but swipin' Yin's as well? He's a hog, and it'd be like him to hog it wherever he could, wouldn't it?"

But David did not answer, and Goliath, staring at him, discovered that the shrewd eyes were fixed absently on space. David suddenly removed his hat and with the tips of his capable, practical fingers scratched the red stubble on his head, which was a further sign that he had an idea.

"By Gosh!" he exclaimed with a grin. "I wonder if—if— Ummh! I got to do a little thinkin'. Wonder if you'd mind if I went down to Auburn to-morrow and left you to take care of what's left of Yin? No? Well, I'll go then. No use in my tellin' you what I'm thinkin' about. Most like as not I'm just a plain dam' fool; but—we'll see. We'll see. Guess we'd better go back inside and begin to get the chuck ready. I'm right hungry. I am."

At dawn on the following morning he trudged away down the trail to catch the stage at the passing point. But he was whistling cheerfully when he returned late that night, and Goliath insisted on preparing his meal for him.

"Well, Yin, I see you allee samee well man again, eh? How ketchum head, plenty good?"

And old Yin, who was up and about although distressingly stiff, sore, and bruised, grinned and assured David that he was still alive; but watching him, David saw that the old man was brooding and despondent, as if all the underpinning had been knocked from beneath his little world.

"Now, Yin, you just cheer up," David with a mouthful of food admonished him. "You leave it to my pardner and me. You think you can get along alone all right for a few days? Yes? Well, to-morrow Goliath and me is goin' to take a trip, and—we may be gone quite a while. If anybody asks for us, you tell 'em we've gone to the camp and will be back bimeby. Sabe?"

"But—but where are we goin', Dave?" demanded the puzzled giant, eying him expectantly.

David had turned his face away from the

Chinese and gave a significant scowl and gesture for silence, winked solemnly, nodded, and went on eating. Likewise his partner asked no further questions when, after finishing his meal, David proceeded to dig out two sets of pack straps and some blankets, and began to parcel out supplies.

And before dawn they were off. "Now," said Goliath, "I reckon you can tell me what fool notion you've got in your head. I reckon it's somethin' unlawful, because I see you got down both your and my guns and oiled 'em up."

"Reckon I can," cheerfully replied David. "But maybe it ain't unlawful. We'll see. Maybe we won't need them guns, unless we meet a bear or a deer or—Mohave Joe."

And then he explained that he had learned in Auburn exactly where Mohave Joe had been prospecting.

"Then I goes to the county recorder's office and finds out that Mohave Joe ain't staked no claim, and ain't bought no claim, and so we're goin' up to this ground of his and look her over and see if she's promisin'. If she is, we stake her in our own names. That comes first. Then if she don't show none to the good, we'll have to sort of think matters over, and——"

He stopped and Goliath grunted derisively and finished for him with, "And just naturally kick ourselves for bringin' these big packs, and tote 'em back home again."

"Maybe, pardner, maybe," David assented without the least show of irritation. "Anyhow, it beats hangin' and loafin' around that cussed cabin week in and out without never goin' anywhere or doin' anything, don't it?"

All day long they climbed upward, stopping at noon to eat a lunch and to smoke, and then took across the hills and into the forests where the snow was deep and still and unsmirched by so much as a spot of blown earth, and where they had to wear snowshoes. Save for the jays there was never a sound in that vast space to betoken life. Once a great eagle, startled, soared upward into the blue and circled around above them as if astonished by their invasion. David was beginning to fear that he had not taken the right direction but was relieved when, as the afternoon waned, Goliath shouted: "Hey, pardner! Look at this!"

They scanned the tracks of showshoes and with trailer's lore decided that they were but two days old. They went in one direction only.

7A P

"Mohave Joe made those," David declared. "That was when he was goin' over to pay his nice, friendly visit to Yin Sip. So we'll just back track 'em and they'll take us to where he came from, if I'm not makin' a bad bet."

Another hour's travel proved that he had not; for they descended a valley and found, in a sheltered hollow, a quite comfortable cabin.

"This is his, all right!" asserted David, throwing off his pack and pointing to the padlock on the door. "Nobody but a dishonest man would think of lockin' his cabin away off up here."

Without ceremony of any sort or sign of hesitancy he picked up an ax lying on a convenient woodpile and broke the padlock off. The proof that he had made no mistake was found in the addresses on some old envelopes they discovered on the mantel above the fireplace, and they started a fire and made themselves comfortable.

On the following morning they observed a dump and a tunnel, and proceeded to inspect it.

"Well, he's got a ledge here, of sorts," commented Goliath. "Of course, he ain't done a whole heap of work openin' it up, but hard work and Mohave Joe never did pal together such an all-fired lot. Looks to me as if she was worth drivin' in on for a while longer. Might carry values, I should say. How does she look to you, David?"

"Just the same," answered the stocky one, chipping off a piece of ore with a pick that he found on the floor of the drift. "I'm goin' to take a few samples of this and work her down, if we can find a mortar and pestle, to see if there's anything showin'."

By noon they had decided that the ledge was worth working on, and David fished some regulation location notices from his pocket and with Mohave Joe's own pen and ink filled them in, after which the partners sedately measured off two claims following the run of the ledge as near as they could decide it from occasional outcroppings, and tacked their notices in secure places, after which they packed all of Mohave Joe's meager belongings into two packs and wrote and tacked on the outside of the door a warning to trespassers to keep away from the cabin which they now claimed as their own.

They were off again on the following morning, but now they trailed the snowshoes of Mohave Joe as relentlessly as a pair

of Apaches on the warpath. It was not yet noon when they came out on a high hill and saw, far below them, Yin Sip's late cabin. Smoke curled lazily from its chimney. The few scraggly fowls stood one-legged on bare spots of earth, dejectedly, as if bewildered by the change of ownership.

"That's the biggest pile of firewood ever Mohave Joe had," commented David.

"Didn't see no great supply up at his place," said Goliath.

"You mean the place that was his," David corrected him. "The place that now belongs to one James O. Leath and one certain party, David Field—meanin' me!"

They reached the door, and then David boldly rapped, and, without waiting for an invitation, turned the handle and entered. Mohave Joe, who had evidently been cooking some bread in a Dutch oven, straightened up and scowled at them, appearing tall and sinewy as he stood beneath the low rafters.

"Hello," he said. "What do you want?" And then, as he identified them, added a little more respectfully: "Oh, it's you two, is it? At first I was afraid it was——"

David, who had casually divested himself of his pack, finished for him: "Afraid it was some sheriff, I sort of expect, Joe. Sheriffs and you ain't never been on good visitin' terms, have you?"

Mohave Joe sneered, and his thin lips shone red and cruel between his black beard and mustache with something suggesting a snarling, cornered wolf. He scowled, but made no retort.

"Where'd you two come from?" he asked, pretending to interest himself in his baking.

"Oh, we've just been meandering about in the hills," David replied, his restless eyes scanning the cabin as if seeking something and then pausing as if satisfied when they rested upon a rifle, as well as a pistol in a cartridge belt and scabbard hanging on two pegs. Immediately afterward he began casually edging in their direction and in the meantime kept up a running, half-jesting series of comments until he was between the firearms and their owner. He glanced significantly at Goliath, who, unblinking, stood near the doorway ready to prevent the half-breed from leaving the room, and with something of smooth alertness and readiness in his poise. David saw that he had shifted his belt around his lean hips until his gun was convenient for quick action.

"Joe, how long you been here?" asked

David with assumed carelessness. "Thought old Yin Sip Tan had this place."

The half-breed's eyes suddenly lifted and flared at him inquiringly, but befooled by his interlocutor's placidity he again pretended to be unalarmed.

"Oh, I been here about a month—goin' on six weeks," he said. "Believe there was a chink had this ground; but he pulled his stakes, so I located her, and—now she's my claim."

"Didn't you have some ground off in the hills behind here, somewhere?"

"Oh, I got that yet," said the ruffian, and then as there was a moment's odd and perplexing silence, again looked up and said, with an assumption of directness: "Why? What do you want to know for?"

"Me? Oh, nothin'. Just was curious to see how long you'd keep on lyin', Joe," replied David, entirely unperturbed; but the effect on Mohave Joe was instantaneous.

"So you two came buttin' in here because ——" He suddenly leaped across the room to gain reach of his firearms, but with equal suddenness stopped and poised on his toes, drawing his body backward in abrupt restraint; for with the quickness of light David had drawn his gun and its muzzle was as steady as a rock while it pointed directly in line with Mohave Joe's eyes.

"Yes, Joe, that's why we came," said David, in the same quiet, unperturbed drawl that now had a menacing quality. "You sort of thought that poor old cuss hadn't any friends, I reckon, from the stuff you pulled. It takes a brave man to beat up a poor old chink the way you did him!" he ended scornfully.

"Well, what business is it of yours? What are you goin' to do about it?" snarled the half-breed, with an attempt at bravado. "You can't do nothin'! It's my claim. I've got her staked and recorded now."

"You're a liar!" retorted David in that same calm voice. "I came from Auburn myself day before yesterday, and I know you ain't been down the trail since you came, because the snow outside proves it. And, besides, it's a pretty good job for you that you haven't recorded it, because it saves Goliath and me from a somewhat unpleasant job."

"What's that?" demanded Mohave Joe, as if wondering what other steps they might have taken.

"Saves us the trouble of killin' you. That's all. Because either one way or the other my pardner and me are handin' this claim back to the chink you stole it from."

"You can't bluff me!" shouted Joe, shaking his clenched fists in fury.

"Bluff you? Good Lord!" exclaimed Goliath, leaning against the door that he had closed. "Bluff? Did you ever know us to bluff? Think it over, you lousy desert rat! For a ten-cent piece I'd shoot you myself. I'd like to. Dave, let's snuff him out. It's a decent man's duty to kill a sidewinder whenever he can, and I reckon nobody'd shed any tears if they ever found out we did it. What do you say? Shall I plug him?"

There was something in the giant's voice that sounded sincerity.

"When I think of the way he beat up old Yin, I'm half minded to kill him myself," said David thoughtfully, "but I can't shoot an unarmed man, and—wish I hadn't got between him and his guns. Here! Tell you what I'll do. I'll get out of his way so he can make a jump for 'em. That'll be good enough." And he calmly walked across to the opposite side of the cabin keeping his bright, cold eyes meanwhile on the half-breed. Goliath made no movement of hand toward his own pistol.

Suddenly David thrust his gun in its holster, and then deliberately stepped across the room and gave the half-breed a mighty kick that sent him reeling across a chair to the floor, where he sat, rubbing himself and shrieking oaths and obscenities. David indicated the overturned chair with his foot, and when the thoroughly terrified ruffian had risen, righted the chair and dropped into it, stepped across the room, took the rifle from the pegs, and with the poker broke off the lock with one smashing blow and then threw the useless weapon through the door. He casually inspected the pistol, and handed it to his partner.

"Keep that to give to old Yin," he said. "When he comes back he'd maybe like to have it handy. By heck! That bread's burnin'! Shame to waste flour that way,"

and then, as if Mohave Joe were unworthy of any further observation, hastily moved the Dutch oven and its contents to a cooler place.

"Well, what are you goin' to do with me?" muttered Mohave Joe, twisting restlessly in his seat. "I suppose you've got no objections to my pullin' out for my own mine, have you?"

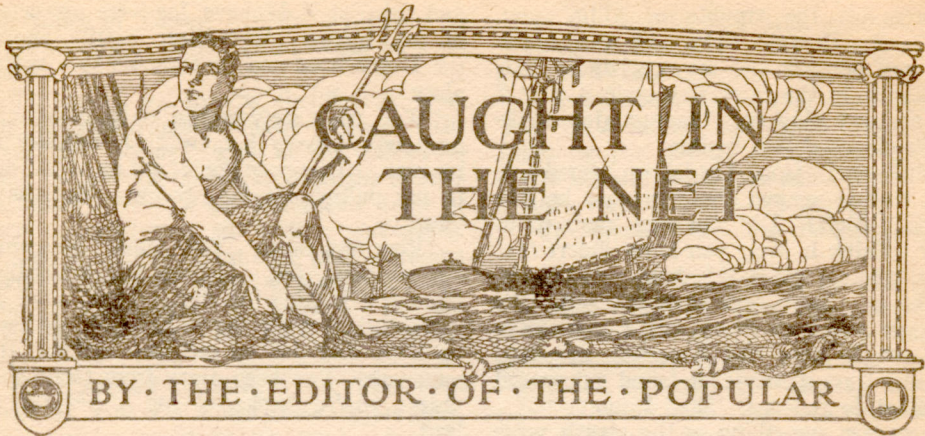
"Your own mine? Your mine? You ain't got no mine, Joe. Goliath and me rather liked the lookin's of that ground, and, as you'd sort of neglected to locate it, we went up there and put up our own stakes. It's ours now. You keep away from there, son, unless you're hankerin' for a bellyful of lead."

He turned toward the crestfallen and amazed half-breed, and added, "No, Joe, you ain't goin' to stop around here no more. See them two packs? Well, all your stuff is in them. As soon as we've had a bite to eat you're goin' to get the biggest one of 'em on your back. Goliath and me'll be kind enough to tote the other one. Then we're goin' to hit the trail down the gulch because we reckon old Yin Sip'll sort of want to come back home to look after his chickens and things; but, Joe, you're goin' to keep right on goin', hittin' the trail hard and fast; because if ever you show up here again, or anywhere else where either my pardner or me is, I'm afraid we might lose our tempers. You're on your way, right now, and you know it. Goliath, I've done all the talkin', and 'm tired and hungry. Suppose you go out and kill a hen. I've been hankerin' for hen for a whole month and didn't guess till just now what it was I wanted. I'll keep an eye on this tamed lion we've got here."

And Goliath, with a dry chuckle, and convictions of his partner's capabilities and wisdom, obediently opened the door and disappeared to perform his part of the day's work. The casualties were ultimately confined to but a single, unsuspecting hen. But Yin Sip Tan, for the spiritual welfare of his benefactors, still burns reams of scented paper at the feet of his favorite joss.

Another story in this series in the following issue.





YOUR AEROPLANE IS WITHIN YOU

ONCE upon a time every one dreamed of owning a bicycle. After we had had our bicycles we began to dream of owning automobiles. We have had our automobiles, and now we dream of owning airplanes. But the latter are, generally speaking, figuratively as well as actually out of our reach.

But each one of us has an airplane in the brain. It is called the Imagination. It can carry us to places where no bicycle, automobile, or airplane can reach. Children invented this marvelous machine; many grown-ups have lost it.

It is the imagination that lifts us toward the gods. With Reason alone man would still be but a highly evolved animal—nothing more.

In the house of the soul, reason is the stairway, imagination the elevator. The images in the brain are so many electric buttons that summon the car to the clouds or at least to a big sight-seeing tower. Sometimes Puck runs this elevator of the Imagination; sometimes "Huck" Finn; sometimes Hamlet—there are three shifts in the healthy imagination.

That man can imagine things that do not exist, put them on canvas, in books, in sound, in dreams, is a good excuse for his existence on the planet, as the perpetual logic grouch doesn't know, but ought to. Digging ditches, building Eiffel and Woolworth towers is useful; but as a mechanic the beaver and the ant and the bee can beat us. But that man can conceive "Iliads," a "Venus de Milo," a "Tristan and Isolde," or a "Mona Lisa" puts him in the class with the gods.

He confronts the terrors of Reality with the sublime creations of his Imagination—and Reality drops its bugaboo mask. One need not be ashamed of life when he remembers that he lived on the same star with Beethoven and Victor Hugo.

If at times we seem to be a kind of lunatic asylum among the stars, the Imagination redeems us from the slur. It is through that gate that we take on a kind of immortality right here. It allies us to the Great Musician, whose hidden fingers improvise worlds on the keyboards of the atoms and create that "music of the spheres" that no Einstein theory can hush.

Give us this day our daily fiction is as important as our daily bread. Many beings have traded the latter for the former. There was Poe.

So long as there remains a great fantastic story-teller I care not who makes our wars.

SURPRISING TRADE FIGURES

DURING the latter years of the war it was frequently said that the alliance of the English-speaking peoples would mean their domination of the world's trade after the war. It was interesting as a general statement, but no generalization is convincing unless supported by facts. Some surprising totals are now revealed in the figures for this country's foreign commerce for the first five months of this year, and Great Britain's trade for the same period.

Despite the exchange handicap on foreign buyers, and its incentive to foreign sellers, our May exports at \$739,000,000, a record for that month, are exceeded only by the \$820,000,000 shown last March, and the peak figure of \$928,000,000 on June of 1919. They are \$153,000,000 above the April figure, and \$135,000,000 above May of last year. They are \$80,000,000 above the monthly average of last year. Price developments explain part of the high mark of exports, but not the major part of the increase of near a billion for the year which is forecast by present conditions. Central Europe and South America in particular are taking more and more of American goods.

Also notable in the latest figures is the recession in imports. Perhaps what has happened in silk and other trade developments in the Orient will explain this. But for eleven months we have a trade balance of \$2,788,000,000 against the rest of the world, with about 130 per cent of it against Europe—that is to say, the rest of the world outside Europe has a credit against us. Figures for the full fiscal year will show about three billions of trade balance in our favor.

Great Britain's commerce is expanding with ours, and seemingly at the same rate, and peculiarly enough, her excess of imports over exports is about what our excess of exports over imports now amounts to. But British capital invested in foreign lands, services performed in transportation, insurance, banking, and so forth, all contribute toward a credit which in normal times wipes out the debit on exchange of goods. The fact that Great Britain has restored her productive activities to such an extent that the exportable surplus is proportionately as great as before the war would seem to indicate that she is once more on a self-supporting basis. Her exports are increasing faster than her imports.

But the thing of peculiar interest seems to be that Britain's imports for May were about \$700,000,000, almost balancing our export figures of \$739,000,000, and that her exports of about \$490,000,000, at current exchange rates, almost balance our imports of \$431,000,000.

WATER POWER

PRESIDENT WILSON'S signature to the water-power act will result in the development of four million horse power, to be transmitted by electricity for the upbuilding of the country's business. It unlocks the possibilities of energy in rivers and streams under Federal control, including seventeen that are navigable. About half of the power will come from nonnavigable streams.

Senator Jones, of Washington, is so optimistic as to estimate the ultimate development of American rivers as translatable into sixty-one million horse power, which would be equivalent to an annual consumption of seven hundred and eighty million tons of coal, and that is more than the total coal consumption of the country for a year. Thus the layman may understand the importance of a policy that electrical experts hail with great satisfaction.

It is in the Western States that the use of water power means most to the people, and it is in the West that the greatest potential water power is to be found. The per capita consumption in nine States of the West, of the energy produced from rivers and streams, is six and seventy-five hundredths times that consumed in all other States. Washington has the greatest possibilities in this field, estimated at fifteen per cent of the total, or nine and a half millions of horse power. California is second, and Oregon third. But in farming alone California uses more energy of this kind than all the rest of the country together.

The importance of this great force to the country at large can be understood when it is stated that the rice industry of California, which has been entirely developed since 1912, now amounts to twenty-seven millions a year, and it is altogether dependent on electric pumping for its existence. Cities are built or retarded in their growth by the supply or lack of supply of water power. In a district surrounding Fresno, two thousand applicants for power for farm development cannot be connected on power lines because of insufficient installation. For every farm delayed in the country, two homes in the city are prevented from being built in the city. The average home in that vicinity has a value of five thousand dollars. Therefore, ten million dollars in construction work is held up because of the inability of the power companies to furnish the energy needed.

There are electrified mines in Montana, Idaho, and Utah. In the Northwest, paper mills find the electric drive indispensable, and the electrification of sawmills is becoming general. Such power is replacing steam on many railways, and there is a hint of a further use of the power of Niagara Falls, but one-fourth of which is now changed into electricity.

LATIN-AMERICAN BOSSES

THIS year has marked the passing of the Latin-American dictator—old style. President Cabrera, of Guatemala, had been the sole survivor of a picturesque and high-handed group of rulers, which included Diaz, of Mexico; Castro, of Venezuela, and Zelaya, of Nicaragua. After running his country for twenty-two years, he was overthrown in a seven-day revolution. President Carranza, of Mexico, also deposed within the past few months, may have aspired to be a dictator. But he was a mere tyro, serving his first term, when the end came.

The twenty-one republics south of the Rio Grande have probably had their fill of decorative tyrants of military origin. They have learned to enjoy, as heartily and noisily as we do, their free-for-all presidential campaigns at regular intervals. It is not to be supposed, however, that they have graduated overnight into democracy pure and undefiled. They have become more sophisticated, that is all; and show signs of exchanging the army for the party machine, the perpetual president for the party "boss." The student of tropical politics must in future take account of the Latin Murphys, Penroses, and Colonel Houses who are now forging to the front.

The present curious and, on the whole, beneficent régime in Venezuela will serve as an illustration. When Castro was removed from office in 1908, Juan Vicente Gomez, the vice president, was recognized as his successor under the constitution. In June, 1910, Gomez was inaugurated for a full term, having been duly elected president. He served tranquilly and instituted a number of reforms. There was no protest against his re-election. But at this point Gomez took a novel step. He asked Congress to allow him to retire temporarily and to appoint a provisional president. One of his followers, Doctor Bustillos, was chosen and is still in office. Naturally, Gomez remained the power behind the throne; but for years his official title has been "president elect," while Bustillos has been "provisional president." Though the former can at any time claim his job, he lets it be understood that he is not likely to do so. He is due to be "president elect" for the rest of his natural life. If the public grows tired of Bustillos, some one else can be elevated as "provisional president." But Gomez will be there—a political boss if ever there was one—pulling the strings to make the puppet of the moment dance.

No such compromise is conceivable in an Anglo-Saxon country. But in Venezuela it has its advantages. When Gomez took charge, the treasury was depleted as a result of an organized system of plunder. To-day the republic's finances are in a flourishing condition. Revolutions are no longer in good form. Anti-American propaganda, encouraged by Castro, has been suppressed. Instead, English is now taught in the public schools and commercial travelers are received with open arms.

CANADA'S ENTRANCE INTO DIPLOMACY

WHEN it was announced recently that Canada proposed to have a minister plenipotentiary at Washington, the average "man in the street" probably had a very hazy idea as to what the duties of such a minister would be. Many questions may come up between two great countries having a boundary line bordering each other that extends four thousand miles. Besides matters of pure trade, such things as the salmon-fisheries dispute, and the matter of defining the boundary waters indicate the importance to Canada of direct dealings with Washington instead of dependence on the reports of commissions appointed in London.

Although it may be generally known that the larger part of Canada's foreign trade is with the United States, it is not so well understood that Canada is our second largest customer. More surprising still is the fact that the United States has a larger trade

with the Dominion than with all the republics of South and Central America combined. These figures are eloquent:

	Total Canadian trade with the United States	Total United States trade with Spanish America
900-1904.....	\$ 932,168,502	\$ 764,804,782
1905-1909.....	1,261,878,611	1,114,618,167
1910-1914.....	2,317,800,456	1,639,429,623
1915-1919.....	4,482,852,984	3,585,497,659

When the announcement was made in the Canadian House of Commons that the Canadian minister would represent Canada in Washington, it was also stated that he would take charge of the British embassy during the absence of the British ambassador. In the latter event he would be responsible to the British government while acting in that capacity, but while acting as minister for Canada he would be responsible only to the Canadian government. The possibility of his receiving instructions in one capacity diametrically opposed to his instructions in the other capacity is scoffed at by Sir George Foster, Canadian minister of trade and commerce.

But the appointment opens up a world of new possibilities. It is another indication of the possession of political initiative, perhaps political genius, by the Canadians, whose Parliament has recently passed some most progressive laws, and whose political leaders have shown that they are abreast of the times in questions of international as well as of local importance. Will others of the imperial dominions in various parts of the world follow Canada's example and send representatives to Washington—especially Australia and New Zealand? And will far-away India hear of the innovation and point to it as another indication that she, with her three hundred millions, is not receiving her share of representation? Canada has taken a step which no subordinate country in all history took before—but she is taking it with the approval and coöperation of the home government.



POPULAR TOPICS

THE National Retail Dry Goods Association announces that there is a serious shortage in glasses. The cost of manufacture compels an increase in price to the retailer—who, as usual, will pass the buck to the public. But where are all the glasses from the saloons of yesteryear?



PERHAPS some of our saloons will be exported entire to China, which is already buying machinery for breweries. Two representatives of Chinese commercial interests recently arrived in New York to purchase machinery for a brewery in Shanghai to compete with Japanese beer makers. The capital will be Chinese, but the technical department will be under charge of experienced Americans.



THERE is enough coal in China to supply the world for a thousand years, and this is but one of the undeveloped resources of a country that has been richer for ages than it has dreamed of being. Copper and other metals exist in large amounts, and foreign capitalists are now planning to develop some of the mines, but Americans are waiting until the repeal of the law taxing excess profits in this country.



THE American cow is invading foreign markets to an extent unthought of before the war. The tremendous increase in the export of condensed milk now represents a trade of a hundred and twenty million dollars a year, against a trifle more than two million at the beginning of the war. More than six hundred thousand pounds were exported in 1919.

INVENTIVE genius is active in Germany in spite of political and military upheavals. The postal administration in Berlin has ordered two hundred and fifty sets of a new telephone apparatus which enables sixteen different conversations to be carried on at the same time on one wire.



AS the peak of high prices has been passed, so also, it seems, has the peak of labor troubles. The disposition of a large conservative labor element to frown on continued radical agitation is an important factor. The inability of radical leaders to get the entire or even a substantial part of the labor body to go along with them has had a decidedly depressing effect on their programs.



THE lowly washtub, after ages of plebeian service, is now cutting quite a figure as one of the chief mainstays of a great industry. The four-dollar-a-day laundress, hard to find and fussy when found, has driven tens of thousands of housewives to buy washing machines, and the makers of such machines have become, next to automobile makers, the greatest consumers of copper.



FFUEL oil is now one of the principal products of the petroleum industry as a result of increasing use in shipping and industrial centers. A few years ago it sold for less than one dollar a barrel, or at a smaller cost than crude oil. It now commands a price above crude. It is nominally quoted on the gulf coast market at four dollars a barrel, while the posted price for crude is three dollars. In 1919 the production of fuel oil was 7,627,000,000 gallons.



THOUSANDS of people in this country ought to put their automobiles in storage and their gasoline money into government bonds," says John W. Barron, the financial authority. "If they don't, they will send up still higher the price of gasoline and the cost of goods. Factories making pleasure cars should be making tractors for farmers instead. Michigan is growing up in weeds, and the railroads are unable to deliver all the steel required to keep the motor factories going."



SINCE 1890 the West has been coming up educationally, while the East has been going down. Statistics compiled by Doctor Leonard P. Ayres, of the Russell Sage Foundation, show that Montana now has the best public school system, and that after Montana the States of California, Arizona, and New Jersey rank in the order named, with Washington fifth. Up to 1900 Massachusetts held first place.



SOMETIMES we hear that twenty thousand millionaires were made by the war, and sometimes the figure mentioned is as high as thirty thousand. The income-tax figures studied and audited by Washington experts show that not one millionaire was created after this country actually entered the war, although there are three times as many citizens in that class as there were prior to 1914, the new wealth resulting largely from contracts with the Allies. Only one State, Nevada, is not represented in the present list of six thousand six hundred and fifty-four millionaires.



THE greatest degree of unemployment in Germany is in the hotel and restaurant business. This indicates that foreign travelers, who used to add greatly to the revenues of the German Boniface, are leaving that country off their itineraries. Besides the feeling of hostility toward a people who wrought so much havoc in the world, there is doubtless the still greater reason that Germany herself was almost untouched by the ravages of war and hence is less interesting to tourists than Belgium, France, and other ravaged lands.

Pursuit

By Roy W. Hinds

Author of "Try, Try Again," "The Automatic Prisoner," Etc.

Here are two men hiding in a forest and pursued by the law for different reasons. One of them was kind to a dog, and the other was not

THE open country lay ahead as far as he could see. At his back and rolling away from each hand were the wooded foothills. He emerged from the gentle shadows and stood in the morning sunlight, gazing uncertainly; dreading to quit the seclusion afforded by the dense defiles of brooding trees. The day had come on without a tremor of breeze, and birds, unmindful of his presence, beat their wings close at hand.

Early morning mist lay low and peacefully upon the prairie. The grass at his feet and the tree leaves above glistened splendidly with lingering dew. The earth in the forest was still quite damp, and moistened grass blades clung to his heavy shoes. The sun, yet too low upon the horizon to dazzle the eye, glowed red with promise. Even as he looked, the mist shriveled until only its heavier filaments lay here and there upon the vast expanse.

"It's going to be hot," he muttered. "That grass will be scorched in an hour—and it's a long way to a water hole."

He seemed to be seeking argument against a journey he knew he must take.

Again he fell to contemplating the scene which repelled him. He hugged the darker aisles behind; instinctively he clung to the curb of the forest. Very slowly he pulled off the heavy coat that incased his upper body. He flung the coat to the ground and contemplated its tattered and huddled shape.

"I guess I don't need that no more," he thought. "It'll be too hot to wear—and I don't care much about lugging it, across there," and his worried eyes swept the whole range.

His hand stole thoughtfully to the left bosom of his shirt. His finger tips clutched impulsively at what he felt there, and his jaws came together sharply. His eyes glared with renewed fear.

For a full minute the hand held the crum-

pled mass of shirt front—the cloth into whose texture yellow paint had soaked; yellow paint now dried stiff and forming the figures "2896." He realized then the necessity of wearing the heavy coat—an old garment he had stolen from a "trusty" in the big prison twenty miles behind. Those numbers must be hidden. How could he ever have forgotten that? The cool morning air and the song of birds had exhilarated him. For a moment he had vainly imagined himself a free man. He was at large, but he was not free.

Then a hopeful thought thrust itself uppermost. It was no strange thing for a man to go coatless in such weather and in this rough country. Perhaps he could turn his shirt.

In a twinkling he stripped the garment from his back, but a hurried glance at its nether side dispelled his hope. The paint of the numbers had soaked through the shirt, and their reverse forms, more ragged of outline, were plainly incriminating.

There was nothing to do but wear the coat. His undergarments, too, were stamped with the hateful numbers—"2896." His shoes, while not numbered, were prison shoes—but they were of a coarse variety and sufficiently worn to pass for the footwear of a workingman, a farmer—or, for the matter of that, a tramp. His trousers, with the coat, had been stolen from the "trusty"—and there was nothing about them to suggest the terrible place from which he had fled. He wore a slouch hat, limp and soiled, in keeping with his general appearance of a laborer—a hat he had found hanging on a peg in a sheltering barn. He had come hatless from the prison. He felt safer bareheaded than he did with the stiff cap he had worn inside; a cap worn nowhere else but inside, and known to the surrounding population for what it was.

He must wear the coat. He snatched it

up, almost angrily, and got into it. He was relieved when the hated numbers—the visible link between himself and the place he dreaded—were covered. But somehow he couldn't yet bring himself to plunge into the open.

He sat down, his back against a tree trunk. He was strong and vigorous. He had breakfasted heartily on food begged, the night before, at a farmhouse. The farm wife was generous. Perhaps she knew whence he came. She had not asked him to work. Her whole manner had indicated a subtle understanding that he wished to be on his way as quickly as he ate. For miles around that prison the inhabitants instinctively thought of fugitives when strangers came among them, ill-clothed and hungry. Women have a habit of helping a man in distress, without bothering much as to the cause of the distress or the worth of those they help.

She gave him supper, while the husband looked on askance, but said nothing. He knew it was dangerous to assist escaped convicts, and there was a probability that this man was a fugitive. Two small boys and a wee girl hugged the wall of the kitchen and gazed silently and steadily upon the man while he ate. At the end of the meal the girl child came to the man's side and confidently laid her hands on his knee. He patted her head and smiled into her wide-open blue eyes, and she was not frightened at all by his unshaved face and rough aspect.

Then, with sudden thought, he hastened away.

The woman had given him a parcel of food. He had drunk deeply at a forest spring. A night of peaceful sleep in the warm outdoors had made him fit for the day's ordeal.

But he dreaded the open country. Across the prairie lay a city. It was a day's tramp. Halfway between the wooded hills and the city was a water hole. Even now, with the last trailing bits of mist vanishing from the air, the man could see, at the very point the sky lifted from the earth, a black spot no bigger than his hat. He knew this to be the grove of jack oaks at the water hole. He would have to march half a day without water. He had nothing in which to carry it.

He had spent two nights in the open. Until now he had had the woods in which to roam. His progress had been slow. He didn't like the idea of waiting in the woods until darkness came again and then setting

out to cross the prairie. He would be without food all day. He would have plenty of water, for the spring was near by, but he would have no food. At night he would be faint—and he still would have to tramp through the night without food. He would be half starved when he reached the city.

If he sought to lay a course that would keep him within the shades of the forest, and handy to deep ravines and caves in case of hot pursuit, it would take three days to reach another city which lay far to the south. And then there grew up within him a dread of the city—any city. The telegraphed news of his flight had long since sped into the cities. The police would be awaiting him. Particularly would the police of near-by cities be awaiting him.

There was danger for him in the open country. There was danger for him in the city. The woods were safer, but he couldn't subsist for long in the woods. Where, then, could he go?

He thought of the "Bootleg Swamp." He knew the place—a low-lying, tangled stretch of forest; a day's tramp to the northeast. For the most part, the Bootleg Swamp was uninhabitable; but there *were* spots within its ragged confines which were habitable. The swamp was, roughly, shaped like a boot—a generous mile from one end to the other and at a few points a quarter mile wide. There was much marshy ground within the Bootleg, but there was also high ground; and at the moment he could recall three caves—two quite close together and another at the far end of the swamp. These caves were high and dry. The pathless woods came up to their very mouths. Huge rocks abounded at hand. All around the caves were moats of swampland.

Not very far away—but far enough—were habitations. He could forage for food. Perhaps he could contrive to steal firearms and ammunition. He could hide, he guessed, for a month in the Bootleg Swamp. By the end of that time the "noise" of his escape would have died down.

With steadily mounting hope, the fugitive got to his feet and, keeping within the forest, set out for the Bootleg Swamp.

At about noon of the same day there emerged from the outskirts of the city across the prairie a small automobile driven by a man who now and then turned nervous glances over his shoulder. At each of these glances the man was reassured, for there

was no sign of pursuit—but he drove the car as swiftly as he dared, once he had gained the open road.

This man was, plainly, a man of business. His smooth, florid face bore the stamp of gentility. He was a large man, fleshy—and the cut of his clothing marked him at once as a man of scrupulous taste and one who had had no light turn of prosperity. There was a nervous flutter in his keen gray eyes, and his necktie was twisted slightly out of adjustment.

He drew a long breath of relief when the automobile turned into the road through the woods—and sighed happily; as though he, too, dreaded the open country.

"That was a narrow squeak," he muttered. And then: "But I wonder where I shall go from here?"

His agile mind was not ready with an answer, so he continued to drive along the forest road.

The road was bad, and curled in and out among the hills and trees seemingly without design or destination. At places it ran back almost upon itself. The automobile crashed into a rock at a turn in the road. The radiator was smashed. The fenders were jammed into a hopeless mass, and both front tires were blown out and torn beyond repair. The crash catapulted him out of the car, but he landed upon a soft, grassy slope—and was uninjured. His faultless garb was scarcely ruffled—and yet he stood there and cursed his luck.

He removed from the automobile a traveling bag. By an almost superhuman effort he pushed the machine back into the roadway and upon an embankment overlooking a tangled ravine. In another moment the automobile plunged downward—and was hidden from view in the depths of the forest below. He sat by the roadside, breathing heavily and wiping perspiration from his red face. Soon he took measures to obliterate the tracks in the road and at the spot of the wreck—and then, traveling bag in hand, set out upon the road.

At nightfall he was very hungry. He emerged into a clearing and saw the lights of a farmhouse ahead. He must have food. A dog growled. A gruff voice from the porch silenced the dog, but the animal from the darkness kept up a relentless vigil, and never took its eyes off the stranger until he disappeared, with the farmer, into the house.

"I hired a man in Torrey to drive me over

to Barstow," the fugitive explained glibly. "His machine broke down in the woods, so I decided to walk the rest of the way. How far is it to Barstow?"

"Twenty miles," said the farmer.

"Twenty miles!" exclaimed the stranger. "Twenty miles! Why he told me it was only twenty miles from where I left him, and I've walked all afternoon."

"It's a good twenty miles from here," the farmer declared. "He told you wrong, stranger. But set up to the table."

"Yes, do set up," seconded the farmer's wife.

The stranger was hungry and he ate of the coarse fare in silence. Finally he inquired: "Can you drive me over to Barstow?"

"I ain't got nothing but an old mule," the farmer replied, "and he's about fagged out. I don't like to take him out on a twenty-mile haul. I couldn't make that trip, stranger; I wouldn't get back here with that mule till late to-morrow."

"I'll pay well," the stranger argued.

"Maybe you can get a rig in the settlement, four miles up the road. It ain't exactly a town—but there's half a dozen farmhouses close together, and we call it a settlement."

"I'll try them."

"And," the farmer warned him, "be careful when you come to the forks three miles up the road. The road to the left runs into the settlement, and the other one runs through the woods to the prairie—and comes out across from Bootleg Swamp."

"What is Bootleg Swamp?"

The host described the swamp. He finished: "It's a bad place. Most all water and bogs, with a cave in the rocks here and there."

By adroit questioning, the stranger learned all about Bootleg Swamp. He finished his meal, and his sharp eyes rested upon a small girl who, throughout, had clung to her mother's skirts. He spoke to the child, and she huddled closer to her mother. His smiles and simple talk failed to induce the child to approach. The man handed the woman a five-dollar bill—at which she stared incredulously—and then he departed, traveling bag in hand.

The moon came up out of the black woods, and the night songs of insect life swelled higher and higher. Tired as he was, the food had soothed the fugitive's nerves. His

thoughts fell into a more orderly and coherent array. He realized, grimly, the extreme danger he ran by knocking at farmhouse doors. Soon the whole State would know of his flight, and not a man who saw him along this road but would remember him. He was leaving a plain trail.

A sudden idea brought him up sharply. Very carefully he set the traveling bag down in the road. He took off his hat and mopped his brow. It was a hazardous idea—but supposing it worked?

He recalled the poverty of the farmhouse he had left behind. He recalled the pinched faces of the father, mother, and child. Those homesteaders were very poor. The stranger was very rich. In the traveling bag was close to one hundred thousand dollars. He was a man of quick decision—a man used to taking long chances; and he picked up the traveling bag and retraced his steps to the farmhouse. The more he thought of the idea, the better he liked it.

He paid but little attention to the renewed growlings of the dog. In a few minutes, walking along the road, the fugitive and farmer were in conversation. The fugitive had guessed aright. The farmer, with nose ground into the earth by poverty, had his price. It was five thousand dollars, and it was paid on the spot.

The homesteader conducted the fugitive to a cave at the north end of Bootleg Swamp. He provided him with a blanket. The next day he was to bring food and clothing—rough clothing. For a month he would maintain a supply system for the man in hiding.

That was the agreement. It was past midnight when the farmer got back home. There was a question in the eyes of his wife, but she uttered no word—and he chose to keep silent for the time.

About this time the man from the big prison far across the hills approached a farmhouse outlying from the group known as a settlement. He begged for food, and got it. The man of the house asked him a few simple questions, for which the escaped convict had ready answers. He was tired but not disposed to tarry, and left as soon as he had eaten. That woman, too, gave him a parcel of food. Despite his rough garb and an aspect made fiercer by the day's toilsome trudge, the children there had not been frightened of him. When he walked away a friendly dog trotted at his heels. He stopped, patted the animal's head, and then

waved him back to the house. An hour later, the man crawled into a cave at the south end of Bootleg Swamp and, exhausted, slept the night through.

The morning papers in the city across the prairie carried, among other things, two accounts—one with a big head on the first page and the other a small item on an inside page. Said the first:

Just as the police were about to swoop down on the office of Wilfred Towers in the Nagel Building, as the last move in closing the net on a gigantic swindle in oil lands, Towers made his escape from the city with the proceeds of his alleged fraudulent transactions. In some way Towers learned of the activities of the police, obtained the money, said to be nearly one hundred thousand dollars, and got out of the city. It is known that he fled in a small automobile, and that he carried nothing but a traveling bag supposed to have contained the money. It is not known which road he took.

There followed a lengthy account of Mr. Towers' peculations. The police, according to the newspaper, were wholly in the dark as to his whereabouts. Read the other story:

The police have as yet found no trace of Rufus Mapes, the life prisoner who escaped from Traverse Prison a few days ago. Mapes is supposed to have fled into the hills, and in all likelihood will turn up here or in Barstow within a few days, as it is regarded as impossible for him to subsist in the woods. Mapes has always maintained his innocence of the murder for which he was imprisoned six years ago, and at times doubt has been expressed in official circles as to his guilt. All efforts to obtain a parole or pardon have failed, however. Having no money, Mapes, no doubt, will be starved out of the woods. The farmers in the vicinity of the prison deny having seen the fugitive—but prison authorities declare the settlers have never given information about escaped prisoners, even when they are known to have fled through their very dooryards.

Wilfred Towers awakened early. His cave at the north end of Bootleg Swamp was high and dry, but the trees thereabouts were so thick that the hiding place was gloomy even in bright sunlight. A hasty survey of the cave assured him that it could be made habitable, with the help of some few things.

He had determined to remain in hiding a month. By the end of a month the search for him would be conducted in far-away places. Never by any chance would the police suspect that Wilfred Towers, whose life always had been one of luxury, would seek refuge in Bootleg Swamp. For Wilfred Towers Bootleg Swamp was safe as Hindustan.

His next concern was for the money. He deliberated upon this for an hour, walking about among the trees on the mound. He gazed into the black depths of stagnant swamp water below. He recalled the devious and slender path of dry land by which he had reached this haven. The farmer came with food and clothing about eight o'clock. He did not linger. He seemed in a hurry to get away. He received his instructions in stolid silence, and departed. By that time Towers had made a definite plan for disposal of the stolen fortune.

He took from the traveling bag packages of bills ranging upward from twenties. In the bag was a stout metal box. He put the money in this box and buried it deeply at the highest point of the mound. He marked the spot well in his mind. If the police *should* come up on him now, there would be five thousand dollars they wouldn't get. He would bargain with the rest of the money for a reduced sentence.

He had made arrangements with the homesteader for the disposal of the remainder of the money. The man was to hide the traveling bag somewhere on his farm. If Towers left the swamp a free man he would get the money and depart. If he left a captive, and was led away to jail, he would send his lawyer after the money. When he faced, in court, the people he had fleeced he would have something to trade on. Perhaps he could hammer the sentence down almost to nothing, by returning most of his ill-gotten gains.

Having breakfasted and drank from a jug of water, Towers lay at the mouth of the cave and sought to pass dull time in meditation. He soon realized that he must have reading matter. Next morning he would instruct the homesteader to bring newspapers and whatever magazines he could find. A month in this cave with nothing to read was unthinkable. He passed part of the day in fixing up the cave. He cleared jutting rocks from the floor and gathered moss upon which to spread his blanket.

He took off the fashionable clothing and dressed in rough garments brought by the homesteader. His sleek, white hands contrasted oddly with the coarse garb. A stubble of black beard had sprung out on his face. As the beard grew the appearance of his face would change.

Wild flowers, that morning, had lifted their heads modestly from grassy spots between

the rocks. At nightfall the flowers were uprooted by his boots. He spent another restless night. At times he awakened, and cursed the police for nipping his plans.

At the south end of Bootleg Swamp Rufus Mapes, escaped convict, put in the day around the cave he had chosen. He had a parcel of food, but that was all. He drank sparingly of water from the swamp. That night he would go foraging. He would attempt to get a bucket of fresh water. He couldn't drink the swamp water for long. It might lay him low in sickness. He had nothing to read, but he spent the day as quietly as he could. He studied the trees about him. He fed, with crumbs from his parcel of food, a squirrel which he enticed almost to his feet. The squirrel was meat, but he didn't attempt to kill it. The animal had too much confidence in him. Wild flowers grew in grassy spots around his cave. He studied them thoughtfully. One flower stem was bent, and the blossom was about to die. He loosened the earth about its roots and sprinkled the place with water.

At night he stole out of the swamp, across the strip of prairie and through the forest. He returned to the cave with a jug of fresh water. He found the jug in a farmyard. He brought back a fowl he had picked off a roost. His pockets were filled with vegetables and garden stuff. He had begged matches. He dressed the fowl and roasted it. He roasted potatoes. With these he ate onions and radishes. Next day he would live on the remains of the fowl and vegetables.

Five days the fugitives, each thinking himself the sole occupant of the swamp, spent in hiding.

Abner Huckins, a farmer in the settlement, became convinced that some one was hiding in Bootleg Swamp. He had missed chickens from his coops and garden stuff from his farm. In a patch of sand at the edge of the woods he saw the tracks of heavy shoes. The man who had made those tracks had been headed for the swamp.

But the farmer had no idea of going into the swamp. Instead he went home and read, studiously, a three-day-old newspaper. In time he came to the story of Rufus Mapes. He decided at once that Rufus Mapes, escaped convict, was in Bootleg Swamp. He had heard a neighbor tell of a strange man who came begging a few nights ago. Suspicion became fact with Huckins. He notified

the police of Torrey. In the settlement he kept his mouth shut. There might be a reward.

The posse, led by the sheriff from Torrey, descended upon Bootleg Swamp on the sixth day. Rufus Mapes, having walked almost to the edge of the trees in the process of killing time, saw the formidable array of men scattered over the prairie and slowly closing in. He saw that they kept spreading farther and farther apart, with evident intention of surrounding the swamp. He saw their Winchesters. He crept back to his cave,

Hope seemed to have fled. The stark walls of Traverse Prison rose before him. That prison would be his tomb. No, he would die in the swamp. He would let them shoot him to death. For the first time in many years he fell upon his knees and uttered a prayer. It was an incoherent plea to a force with which he felt himself to have been long out of touch. Then he lay in the cave and waited.

Wilfred Towers was taking a nap in his cave at the north end of Bootleg Swamp. He was awakened by a noise at the mouth of the cave. He sprang to his feet, his heart beating furiously. Perspiration beaded his face. He was smitten with nervous tremors. In the uncertain light he made out the form of a dog standing at the mouth of the cave.

He crashed his heavy boot against the dog's ribs. The animal rolled down the mound into the swamp water, scrambled back to dry land, and, howling mournfully, made off through the woods.

Bootleg Swamp, from east to west, was bisected by a narrow strip of dry ground, and it was upon this that the sheriff and three deputies made their entrance. Half-way through they stopped, peering cautiously into the tangled growth about them. Their Winchesters were ready for instant use.

"We can't cover this whole swamp at once," said the sheriff. "We can get through to the ends of it, by winding about and watching our ground; but which way will we go first?"

Just then they heard a dog yelping at the north end of Bootleg Swamp. They searched the north end of Bootleg Swamp and found a man hiding in a cave.

"Well, I declare!" the sheriff exclaimed,

when the fugitive had been secured. "It's Wilfred Towers. I never thought you'd come to a place like this, Towers. We came here looking for a fellow that ran away from Traverse Prison." The sheriff laughed gleefully, for the capture of Towers was a far better stroke than he had dared hope. "But I guess we're satisfied—eh, boys?"

"Yes, indeed," chorused the deputies.

Rufus Mapes, in his cave at dusk, saw a dog slink from the forest and crouch fearfully upon the earth. After a time he emerged from the cave. There was no sight nor sound of man. He went to the dog's side. He saw blood. He bathed the wound with water and gave the animal scraps and bones of chicken meat. The man and dog spent the night in the cave. Next morning, very much bewildered because the posse hadn't closed in, Mapes crept to the rim of the swamp. Not a man was visible over the wide expanse of prairie.

His mind groped for an explanation of this surprising development. Spurred by an intense curiosity, he decided to explore the swamp. He kept the dog at his heels, and very cautiously picked his way about. In the late afternoon he came to the cave at the north end. There he found food which he shared with the dog. They ate ravenously.

The dog sought to bury a meat bone. Mapes, still wondering what had become of his apparent pursuers, studied the animal thoughtfully. He noticed, suddenly, that the dog was pawing at a spot which plainly had been dug up before. Curious, he investigated.

In a few minutes he had uncovered a metal box. He broke it open with a jagged rock, and pulled out five thousand dollars in bills. He sank upon the ground, sobbing; fearing his reason had fled. Then he became calm, and thought of the prayer he had uttered in the cave when the posse drew near. He knew himself to be the beneficiary of a miracle, but he couldn't hope to explain the miracle.

Late that night, with the dog trotting at his heels and with a small fortune in his pockets, Rufus Mapes, escaped convict, crept out of Bootleg Swamp. In time he made his way safely into the city; and, eventually, to a distant region.

Poor Man's Rock

By Bertrand W. Sinclair

Author of "Burned Bridges," "One Good Turn," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Jack MacRae comes home to Vancouver, from the war, to find his father dying, and to learn that the acres on Squitty Island, which would have been his inheritance, had come into the hands of Horace Gower, head of the Folly Bay salmon cannery. Years ago, Gower, a power in the salmon industry, had been able to force the sweetheart of Jack's father to marry him, and had harassed Jack's father ever since. At his father's death, MacRae decides to go into the salmon industry himself, as an independent buyer from the salmon fishers. He does so, both to make a living and to fight Gower's grinding methods with the fishermen. To this end he forms an alliance with his old friend, "Stubby" Abbott, now head of the Crow Harbor Canning Company—Abbott chartering him a boat with which to collect the salmon which his cannery needs. Meanwhile, somewhat to his embarrassment, because of his hatred of her father, MacRae has once or twice met Gower's daughter Betty. MacRae, by prompt dealings and paying fair prices to the fishermen, gets a good share of the salmon crop to deliver to Abbott's cannery. Later, Gower makes his influence felt, and Abbott is forced to stop paying MacRae what the fish are worth. Abbott, however, sells MacRae two boats, and the latter arranges with American canning interests, at Bellingham, to take his fish at a fair price. In the fall, while running back to Squitty Cove, with a cargo of salmon, one of MacRae's boats, the *Blackbird*, is wrecked in a collision by Gower's boat, the *Arrow*. MacRae's man, Steve Ferrara, is killed, and MacRae himself is injured getting Steve's body ashore. Previously, MacRae had learned from Steve's cousin, Dolly Ferrara, that, since the start of the war, she had been engaged to Gower's son, Norman, who is unpopular because of his war record, and who cannot marry her until freed from a reckless marriage entered into in England during the war.

(A Four-Part Story—Part III)

CHAPTER XIII.

BETWEEN SUN AND SUN.

WALKING when he could, crawling on hands and knees when his legs buckled under him, MacRae left a blood-sprinkled trail over grass and moss and fallen leaves. He lived over and over that few minutes which had seemed so long, in which he had been battered against broken rocks, in which he had clawed over weedy ledges armored with barnacles that cut like knives, hauling Steve Ferrara's body with him so that it should not become the plaything of the tides. He knew that Steve was dead when he dragged him at last out of the surf, up where nothing but high-flung drops of spray could reach him. He left him there on a mossy ledge, knowing that he could do nothing more for Steve Ferrara and that he must do something for himself. So he came at last to the end of that path which led to his own house, and crept and stumbled up the steps into the deeper darkness of those hushed, lonely rooms.

He was sick and dizzy. But he could still think and act. He felt his way to matches on a kitchen shelf, staggered into his bedroom, lit a lamp. Out of a dresser drawer he took clean white cloth; out of another, carbolic acid. He got himself a basin of water.

He sat down on the edge of his bed. As he tore the first strip of linen things began to swim before his eyes. He sagged back on a pillow. The room and the lamp and all that was near him blended in a misty swirl. He had the extraordinary sensation of floating lightly in space that was quiet and profoundly dark—and still he was cloudily aware of footsteps ringing hollow on the bare floor of the other room.

He became aware—as if no interval had elapsed—of being moved, of hands touching him, of a stinging sensation of pain which he understood to be the smarting of the cuts in his flesh. But time must have gone winging by, he knew, as his senses grew clearer. He was stripped of his sodden, bloody undershirt and overalls, partly covered by a blanket. He could feel bandages on his legs,

on one badly slashed arm. He made out Betty Gower's face with its unruly mass of reddish-brown hair and two rose spots of color glowing on her smooth cheeks. There was also a tall, young man, coatless, showing a white expanse of flannel shirt with the sleeves rolled above his elbows. MacRae could only see this out of one corner of his eye, for he was being turned gently over on his face. Weak and passive as he was, the firm pressure of Betty's soft hands on his skin gave him a curiously pleasant sensation.

He heard her draw her breath sharply and make some exclamation as his bare back turned to the light.

"This chap has been to the wars, eh, Miss Gower?" he heard the man say. "Those are machine-gun marks, I should say—close range, too. I saw plenty of that after the Argonne."

"Such scars! How could a man live with holes like that, through his body?" Betty said. "He was in the air force."

"Some Hun got in a burst of fire on him, then," the man commented. "Didn't get him, either, or he wouldn't be here. Why, two or three bullet holes like that would only put a fellow out for a few weeks. Look at him." He tapped MacRae's back with a forefinger. "Shoulders and chest and arms like a champion middleweight ready to go twenty rounds. And you can bet all your pin money, Miss Gower, that this man's heart and lungs and nerves are away above par, or he would never have got his wings. Takes a lot to down those fellows. Looks in bad shape now, doesn't he? All cut and bruised and exhausted. But he'll be walking about day after to-morrow. A little stiff and sore, but otherwise well enough."

"I wish he'd open his eyes and speak," Betty said. "How can you tell? He may be injured internally."

The man chuckled. He did not cease work as he talked. He was using a damp cloth, with a pungent medicated smell. Dual odors, familiar to every man who has ever been in hospital, assailed MacRae's nostrils. Wherever that damp cloth touched a cut it burned. MacRae listened drowsily. He had not the strength or the wish to do anything else.

There was an air of unreality about the whole proceeding, in MacRae's mind. He wondered if he would presently wake up in his bunk opposite Steve and find that he had been dreaming. Yet those voices, and the

hands that shifted him tenderly, and the pajama coat that was slipped on him at last, were not the stuff of dreams. He opened his eyes when they turned him on his back.

"Well, old man, how do you feel?" Betty's companion asked genially.

"All right," MacRae said briefly. He found speech to require effort. His mind worked clearly enough, but his tongue was uncertain, his voice low-pitched, husky. He turned his eyes on Betty. She tried to smile. But her lips quivered in the attempt. MacRae looked at her curiously. But he did not say anything. In the face of accomplished facts, words were rather futile.

He heard Betty speak. "Can we do anything more?"

"Um—no," the man answered. "Not for some time, anyway."

"Then I wish you would go back to the house and tell them," Betty said. "They'll be worrying. I'll stay here."

"I suppose it would be as well," he agreed. "I'll come back."

"There's no need for either of you to stay here," MacRae said wearily. "You've stopped the bleeding and you can't do any more. Go home and go to bed. I'm as well alone."

There was a brief interval of silence. MacRae heard footsteps crossing the floor, receding, going down the steps. He opened his eyes. Betty Gower sat on a low box by his bed, her hands in her lap, looking at him wistfully. She leaned a little toward him.

"I'm awfully sorry," she whispered.

"So was the little boy who cut off his sister's thumb with the hatchet," MacRae muttered. "But that didn't help sister's thumb. If you'll run down to old Peter Ferrara's house and tell him what has happened, and then go home yourself we'll call it square."

"I have already done that," Betty said. "Dolly is away. The fishermen are bringing Steve Ferrara's body to his uncle's house. They are going to try and save what is left of your boat."

"It is kind of you, I'm sure, to pick up the pieces," MacRae gibed.

"I am sorry," the girl breathed.

"After the fact. Belting around a point in the dark at train speed, regardless of the rules of the road. Destroying a valuable boat, killing a man. Property is supposed to be sacred—if life has no market value. Were you late for dinner?"

In his anger he made a quick movement with his arms, flinging the blanket off, sending intolerable pangs through his bruised and torn body.

Betty rose and bent over him, put the blanket back silently, tucked him in like a mother settling the cover about a restless child. She did not say anything for a minute. She stood over him, nervously plucking bits of lint off the blanket. Her eyes grew wet.

"I don't blame you for feeling that way," she said at last. "It was a terrible thing. You had the right of way. I don't know why or how Robertson let it happen. He has always been a careful navigator. The nearness when he saw you under his bows must have paralyzed him. And with our speed—oh, it isn't any use, I know, to tell you how sorry I am. That won't bring that poor boy back to life again. It won't—"

"You killed him—your kind of people—twice," MacRae said thickly. "Once in France, where he risked his life—all he had to risk—so that you and your kind should continue to have ease and security. He came home wheezing and strangling, suffering all the pains of death without death's relief. And when he was beginning to think he had another chance you finish him off. But that's nothing. A mere incident. Why should you care? The country is full of Ferraras. What do they matter? Men of no social or financial standing, men who work with their hands and smell of fish. If it's a shock to you to see one man dead and another cut and bloody, think of the numbers that suffer as great pains and hardships that you know nothing about—and wouldn't care if you did. You couldn't be what you are and have what you have if they didn't. Sorry! Sympathy is the cheapest thing in the market, cheaper than salmon. You can't help Steve Ferrara with that—not now. Don't waste any on me. I don't need it. I resent it. You may need it all for your own before I get through. I—I am—"

MacRae's voice trailed off into an incoherent murmur. He seemed to be floating off into those dark, shadowy spaces again. In reality he was exhausted. A man with his veins half emptied of blood cannot get in a passion without a speedy reaction. MacRae went off into an unconscious state which gradually became transformed into natural, healthy sleep, the deep slumber of utter exhaustion. At intervals thereafter he was

hazily aware of some one beside him, of soft hands that touched him.

He awakened at last, alert, refreshed, free of that depression which had rested so heavy on him. And he found that weariness had caught Betty Gower in its overpowering grip. She had drawn her box seat up close beside him. Her body had drooped until her arms rested on the side of the bed, and her head rested on her arms. MacRae found one of his hands caught tight in both hers. She was asleep, breathing lightly, regularly. He twisted his stiffened neck to get a better look at her. He could only see one side of her face and that he studied a long time. Pretty and piquant, still it was no doll's face. There was character in that firm mouth and round chin. Betty had a beautiful skin. That had been MacRae's first impression of her, the first time he saw her. And she had a heavy mass of reddish-brown hair that shone in the sunlight with a decided wave in it which always made it seem unruly, about to escape from its conventional arrangement.

MacRae made no attempt to free his hand. He was quite satisfied to let it be. The touch of her warm flesh against his stirred him a little, sent his mind straying off into strange channels. He began to think what every normal man begins to think, or rather, to feel, soon or late—that he is incomplete, insufficient, without some particular woman to love him, upon whom to bestow love. It was like a revelation. He caught himself wishing that Betty would wake up and smile at him, bend over him with a kiss. He stared up at the shadowy roof beams, feeling the hot blood leap to his face at the thought.

"It isn't *her* fault," MacRae said to himself. "But, Lord, I wish she'd kept away from here, if *this* sort of thing is going to get me."

What *this* was he did not attempt to define. He did not admit that he was hovering on the brink of loving Betty Gower. It seemed an incredible thing for him to do. But he was vividly aware that she had kindled an incomprehensible fire in him, and he suspected—indeed he feared with a fear that bordered on spiritual shrinking—that it would go on glowing after she was gone. And she would go presently. This spontaneous rushing to his aid was merely what a girl like that, with generous impulses and quick sympathy, would do for any one in dire need. She would leave behind her an

inescapable longing, an emptiness, a memory of sweetly disturbing visions. MacRae seemed to see with remarkable clarity and sureness that he would be penalized for yielding to that bewitching fancy. By what magic had she so suddenly made herself a shining figure in a golden dream? Some necromancy of the spirit, invisible but wonderfully potent? Or was it purely physical? The soft, reddish-brown of her hair? Her frank, gray eyes, very like his own? The marvelous smooth clearness and coloring of her skin? Her voice, that was given to soft cadences? He did not know. No man ever quite knows what positive qualities in a woman can make his heart leap. MacRae was no wiser than most. But he was not prone to cherish illusions, to deceive himself. He had imagination. That gave him a key to many things which escape a sluggish mind.

"Well," he said to himself at last, with a fatalistic humor, "if it comes that way, it comes. If I am to be the goat, I shall be, and that's all there is to it."

Under his breath he cursed Horace Gower deeply and fervently, and he was not conscious of anything incongruous in that. And then he lay very thoughtful and a little sad, his eyes on the smooth curve of Betty's cheek swept by long brown lashes, the corner of a red mouth made for kissing. His fingers were warm in hers. He smiled sardonically at a vagrant wish that they might remain there always.

A tremulous sigh warned him. He shut his eyes, feigned sleep. He felt rather than saw Betty sit up with a start, release his hand. Then very gently she moved that arm back under the blanket, reached across him and patted the covers close about his body, and stood looking down at him.

And MacRae stirred, opened his eyes. "What time is it?" he asked.

She looked at a wrist watch. "Four o'clock." She shivered.

"You've been here all this time without a fire," he told her. "You're chilled through. Why didn't you go home? You should go now."

"I have been sitting here dozing," she said. "I wasn't aware of the cold until now. But there is wood and kindling in the kitchen and I am going to make a fire. Aren't you hungry?"

"Starving," he said. "But there is nothing to eat in the house. It has been empty for months."

"There is tea," she said. "I saw some on a shelf. I'll make a cup of that. It will be something warm, refreshing."

MacRae listened to her at the kitchen stove. There was the clink of iron lids, the smell of wood smoke, the pleasant crackle of the fire. Presently she came in with two steaming cups.

"I have a faint recollection of talking wild and large a while ago," MacRae remarked. Indeed, it seemed hazy to him now. "Did I say anything nasty?"

"Yes," she replied frankly, "perhaps the sting of what you said lay in its being partly true. A half truth is sometimes a deadly weapon. I wonder if you do really hate us as much as your manner implied—and why?"

"Us. Who?" MacRae asked.

"My father and I," she put it bluntly.

"What makes you think I do," MacRae asked. "Because I have set up a fierce competition in a business where your father has had a monopoly so long that he thinks this part of the gulf belongs to him? Because I resent your running down one of my boats? Because I go about my affairs in my own way, regardless of Gower interests?"

"What do these things amount to?" Betty answered impatiently. "It's in your manner, your attitude. Sometimes it even shows in your eyes. It was there the morning I came across you sitting on Point Old, the day after the armistice was signed. I've danced with you and seen you look at me as if—as if"—she laughed self-consciously—"you would like to wring my neck. I have never done anything to create a dislike of that sort. I have never been with you without being conscious that you were repressing something, out of—well, courtesy, I suppose. There is a peculiar tension about you whenever my father is mentioned. I'm not a fool," she finished, "even if I happen to be one of what you might call the idle rich. What is the cause of this bad blood?"

"What does it matter?" MacRae parried.

"There is something, then?" she persisted.

MacRae turned his head away. He couldn't tell her. It was not wholly his story to tell. How could he expect her to see it, to react to it as he did? A matter involving her father and mother, and his father. It was not a pretty tale. He might be influenced powerfully in a certain direction by the account of it passed on by old Donald MacRae, he might be stirred by the back-

wash of those old passions, but he could not lay bare all that to any one—least of all to Betty Gower.

"Was the *Arrow* holed in the crash?" he asked.

Betty stood staring at him. She blinked. Her fingers began again that nervous plucking at the blanket. But her face settled presently into its normal composure and she answered evenly.

"Rather badly up forward. She was settling fast when they beached her in the bay. And then," she continued after a pause, "Doctor Wallis and I got ashore as quickly as we could. We got a lantern and came along the cliffs. And two of the men took our big lifeboat and rowed along near the shore. They found the *Blackbird* pounding on the rocks, and we found Steve Ferrara where you left him. And we followed you here by the blood you spattered along the way."

A line from the "Rhyme of the Three Sealers" came into MacRae's mind as befitting. But he was thinking of his father and not so much of himself as he quoted:

"Sorrow is me in a lonely sea, and a sinful fight, I fall."

"I'm afraid I don't quite grasp that," Betty said. "Although I know Kipling, too, and could supply the rest of those verses. I'm afraid I don't understand."

"It isn't likely that you ever will," MacRae answered slowly. "It is not necessary that you should."

Their voices ceased. In the stillness the whistle of the wind and the deep drone of the seas shattering themselves on the granite lifted a dreary monotone. And presently a quick step sounded on the porch. Doctor Wallis came hurriedly in.

"Upon my soul," he said apologetically, "I ought to be shot, Miss Gower. I got everybody calmed down over at the cottage and chased them all to bed. Then I sat down in a soft chair before that cheerful fire in your living room. And I didn't wake up for hours. You must be worn out."

"That's quite all right," Betty assured him. "Don't be conscience-stricken. Did mamma have hysterics?"

Wallis grinned cheerfully.

"Well, not quite," he drawled. "At any rate, all's quiet along the Potomac now. How's the patient?"

"I'm O. K.," MacRae spoke for himself,

"and much obliged to you both for tinkering me up. Miss Gower ought to go home."

"I think so myself," Wallis said. "I'll take her across the point. Then I'll come back and have another look over you."

"Good night, or perhaps it would be better to say good morning," and Betty gave him her hand. "Pleasant dreams."

It seemed to MacRae that there was a touch of reproach, a hint of the sardonic in her tone and words.

Then he was alone in the quiet house, with his thoughts for company, and the distant noises of the storm muttering in the outer darkness.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN INTERLUDE.

At daybreak Peter Ferrara came to the house. MacRae had tried his legs and found them wanting.

"It was a bad night all round, eh, lad?" Peter rumbled in his rough old voice. "Some of the boys got a line on the *Blackbird* and hauled what was left of her around into the cove. But she's a ruin. The engine went to pieces while she was poundin' on the rocks. Steve lays in the house. He looks peaceful—as if he was glad to be through."

"I couldn't save him. It was done like that," and MacRae snapped his fingers.

"I know," old Peter said. "You're not to blame. Perhaps nobody is. Them things happen. Manuel'll feel it. He's lost two sons now. But Steve's better off. He'd 'a' died of consumption or something, slow an' painful. His lungs was gone. I seen him set for weeks on the porch wheezin' after he come home. He didn't get no pleasure livin'. He said once a bullet woulda been mercy. No, don't worry about Steve. We all come to it soon or late, John. It's never a pity for the old or the crippled to die."

"You old Spartan," MacRae muttered.

"What's that?" Peter asked—but MacRae did not explain.

An hour or so later Dolly Ferrara brought him a steaming breakfast on a tray. She sat talking to him while he ate. "Gower will have to pay for the *Blackbird*, won't he?" she asked. "The fishermen say so."

"If he doesn't in one way he will another," MacRae answered indifferently. "But that doesn't help Steve. The boat doesn't matter. One can build boats. You can't bring a man back to life when he's dead."

"If Steve could talk he'd say he didn't care," Dolly declared sadly. "You know he wasn't getting much out of living, Jack. There was nothing for him to look forward to but a few years of discomfort and uncertainty. A man who has been strong and active rebels against dying by inches. Steve told me—not so very long ago—that if something would finish him off quickly he would be glad."

If that had been Steve's wish, MacRae thought, then fate had hearkened to him.

Dolly went away. After a time Wallis came over from the cottage at Cradle Bay. He was a young and genial medico from Seattle, who had just returned from service with the American forces overseas, and was holidaying briefly before he took up private practice again. He had very little more than a casual interest in MacRae, however, and he did not stay long once he had satisfied himself that his patient had little further need of professional services. And MacRae, who was weaker than he expected to find himself, rested in his bed until late afternoon brought bars of sunlight streaming through openings in the cloud bank which still ran swift before the wind.

Then he rose, dressed, made his way laboriously and painfully down to the cove's edge and took a brief look at the hull of the *Blackbird* sunk to her deck line, her rail and cabins broken and twisted. After that he hailed a fisherman, and engaged him to go across to Solomon River and apprise the *Bluebird*. That accomplished, he went back to the house.

Thereafter he spent days lying on his bed, resting in a big chair before the fireplace while his wounds healed and his strength came back to him, thinking, planning, chafing at inaction.

MacRae carried insurance on both his carriers. There was no need for him to move against Gower in the matter. The insurance people would attend efficiently to that. The adjusters came, took over the wreck, made inquiries. MacRae made his formal claim, and it was duly paid.

But long before the payment was made he was at work—he and Vin Ferrara together on the *Bluebird*, plowing the gulf in stormy autumn weather. The season was far gone, the salmon run slackening to its close. It was too late to equip another carrier. The cohoes were gone. The dog salmon, great toothed, slimy fish which are canned for Eu-

ropean export—for cheap trade which, nevertheless, returned much profit to the canneries—were still running.

MacRae had taken ninety per cent of the Folly Bay bluebacks. He had made tremendous inroads on Folly Bay's take of coho and humpback. He did not care greatly if Gower filled his cans with "dogs." But the Bellingham packers cried for salmon of whatsoever quality, and so MacRae drove the *Bluebird* hard in a trade which gave him no great profit, chiefly to preserve his connection with the American canners, to harass Folly Bay, and to let the fishermen know that he was still a factor and could serve them well.

He was sick of the smell of salmon, weary of the eternal heaving of the sea under his feet, of long, cold tricks at the wheel, of days in somber, driving rain, and nights without sleep. But he kept on until the salmon ceased to run, until the purse seiners tied up for the season, and the fishermen put by their gear. He had done well—far better than he expected. His knife had cut both ways. He had eighteen thousand dollars in cash and the *Bluebird*. The Folly Bay pack was twelve thousand cases short. How much that shortage meant in lost profit MacRae could only guess, but a pretty sum. Another season like that—he smiled grimly. The next season would be better, for him.

He came home to the house at Squitty Cove with some odds and ends from town shops to make it more comfortable, flooring to replace the old, worn boards, a rug or two, pictures that caught his fancy, new cushions for the big chairs old Donald MacRae had fashioned by hand years before, a banjo to pick at, and a great box of books which he had promised to read some day when he had time. And he knew he would have time through long winter evenings when the land was drenched with rain, when the storm winds howled in the swaying firs and the sea beat clamorously along the cliffs. He would sit with his feet to a glowing fire and read books.

He did, for a time. When late November laid down a constant barrage of rain and the cloud battalions marched and counter-marched along the coast, MacRae had settled down. He had no present care upon his shoulders. Although he presumed himself to be resting he was far from idle. He found many ways of occupying himself about the old place. It was his pleasure that the

old log house should be neat within and without, the yard clean, the garden restored to order. It had suffered a season's neglect. He remedied that with a little labor and a little money, wishing, as the place took on a sprightlier air, that old Donald could be there to see. MacRae was frank in his affection for the spot. No other place that he had ever seen meant quite the same to him. He was always glad to come back to it; it seemed imperative that he should always come back there. It was home, his refuge, his castle. Indeed, he had seen castles across the sea from whose towers less goodly sights spread than he could command from his own front door, now that winter had stripped the maple and alder of their leafy screen. There was the sheltered cove at his feet, the far sweep of the gulf—colored according to its mood and the weather—great mountain ranges lifting sheer from blue water, their lower slopes green with forest and their crests white with snow. Immensities of land and trees. All his environment pitched upon a colossal scale. It was good to look at, to live among, and MacRae knew that it was good.

He sat on a log at the brink of the cove one morning, in a burst of sunshine as grateful as it was rare. He looked out at the mainland shore shading away from deep olive to a faint and misty blue. He cast his gaze along Vancouver Island, a three-hundred-mile barrier against the long roll of the Pacific. He thought of England, with its scant area and its forty million souls. He smiled. An empire opened within range of his vision.

From this perch, in the idle wandering of his gaze, his eyes at length rested upon Peter Ferrara's house. He saw a man and a woman come out of the front door and stand for a minute or two on the steps. He could not recognize the man at the distance, but he could guess. The man walked presently away around the end of the cove. MacRae perceived that his guess was correct for Norman Gower came out on the brow of the cliff that bordered the south side of the cove. He appeared a short distance away, walking slowly, his eyes on the cove and Peter Ferrara's house. He did not see MacRae till he was quite close, and glanced that way.

"Hello, MacRae," he said.

"How d' do," Jack answered. There was no cordiality in his tone. If he had any desire at that moment it was not for speech

with Norman Gower, but rather a desire that Gower should walk on.

But the other man sat down on MacRae's log.

"Not much like over the pond, this," he remarked.

"Not much," MacRae agreed indifferently.

Young Gower took a cigarette case out of his pocket, extended it to MacRae who declined with a brief shake of his head. Norman lighted one. He was short, and stoutly built, a compact, muscular man somewhat older than MacRae. He had very fair hair and blue eyes, and the rose-petal skin of his mother had in him taken on a masculine floridity. But he had the Gower mouth, and determined chin. So had Betty, MacRae was reminded, looking at her brother.

"You sank your harpoon pretty deep into Folly Bay this season," Norman said abruptly. "Did you do pretty well yourself?"

"Pretty well," MacRae drawled. "Did it worry you?"

"Me? Hardly," young Gower smiled. "It did not cost *me* anything to operate Folly Bay at a loss while I was in charge. I had neither money nor reputation to lose. You may have worried the governor. I dare say you did. He never did take kindly to anything or any one that interfered with his projects. But I haven't heard him commit himself. He doesn't confide in me, anyway, nor esteem me very highly in any capacity. I wonder if your father ever felt that way about you?"

"No," MacRae said impulsively. "By God, no!"

"Lucky. And you came home with a record behind you. Nothing to handicap you. You jumped into the fray to do something for yourself, and made good right off the bat. There is such a thing as luck," Norman said soberly. "A man can do his best—and fail. I have, so far. I was expected to come home a credit to the family, a hero, dangling medals on my manly chest. Instead, I've lost caste with my own crowd. Girls and fellows I used to know, sneer at me behind my back. They put their tongues in their cheek and say I was a crafty slacker. I suppose you've heard the talk?"

"No," MacRae answered shortly—he had forgotten Nelly Abbott's questioning almost the first time he met her. "I don't run much with your crowd anyway."

"Well, they can think what they damn

please," young Gower grumbled. "It's quite true that I was never any closer to the front than the Dover cliffs. Perhaps at home here in the beginning they handed me a captain's commission on the family pull. But I tried to deliver the goods. These people think I dodged the trenches. They don't know my eyesight killed my chances of going into action. I couldn't get to France. So I did my bit where headquarters told me I could do it or go home. And all I have got out of it is the veiled contempt of nearly everybody I know, my father included, for not killing Germans with my own hands."

"Why tell all this to me?" MacRae asked quietly.

Norman rose from the log. He chucked the butt of his cigarette away. He looked directly, rather searchingly at MacRae.

"Really, I don't know," he said in a flat, expressionless tone.

Then he walked on.

MacRae watched him pass out of sight among the thickets. Young Gower had succeeded in dispelling the passive contentment of basking in the sun. He had managed to start buzzing trains of not too agreeable reflection. MacRae got to his feet before long and tramped back around the cove's head. He went on to Peter Ferrara's house.

He walked in through a wide open door, unannounced by aught save his footsteps, as he was accustomed to do, and he found Dolly Ferrara and Betty Gower laughing and chatting familiarly in the kitchen over teacups and little cakes.

"Oh, I beg pardon," said he. "I didn't know you were entertaining."

"I don't entertain, and you know it," Dolly laughed. "Come down from that lofty altitude and I'll give you a cup of tea."

"Mr. MacRae, being an aviator of some note," Betty put in, "probably finds himself at home in the high altitudes."

"Do I seem to be up in the air," MacRae inquired dryly. "I shall try to come down behind my own lines, and not in enemy territory."

"You might have to make a forced landing," Dolly remarked.

Her dusky eyes rested upon him with a singular quality of speculation. MacRae wondered if those two had been talking about him, and why.

There was an astonishing contrast between these two girls, MacRae thought, his mind and his eyes busy upon them while his tongue

uttered idle words and his hands coped with a teacup and cakes. Certainly either one would quite justify a man in seeking her for his mate, if he found his natural instincts urging him along ways which MacRae was beginning to perceive no normal man could escape traveling. It seemed strange that he should be considering such intimately personal things in the very act of carrying on an impersonal triangular conversation. As if there were two of him present, one being occupied in the approved teacup manner while the other sat by speculating with a touch of moroseness upon distressingly important potentialities. This duality persisted in functioning even when Betty looked at her watch, and said:

"I must go."

He walked with her around to the head of the cove. He had not wanted to do that—and still he did.

Curiously enough before they were well clear of the Ferrara house they had crossed swords. Courteously, to be sure. MacRae could not afterward recall clearly how it began. Something about the war, and the after effect of the war. B. C. nowise escaped the muddle into which the close of the war and the wrangle of the peacemakers had plunged both industry and politics. There had been a recent labor disturbance in Vancouver in which demobilized soldiers had played a part.

"You can't blame these men much. They're bewildered at some of the things they get up against, and exasperated by others. A lot of them have found the going harder at home than it was in France. A lot of promises and preachments don't fit in with performance since the guns have stopped talking. I suppose that doesn't seem reasonable to people like you," MacRae found himself saying. "You don't have to gouge and claw a living out of the world. Or, at least, if there is any gouging and clawing to be done you are not personally involved in it. You get it done by proxy."

Betty flushed slightly. "Do you always go about with a chip on your shoulder?" she asked. "I should think you did enough fighting in France."

"I learned to fight there," he said. "I was a happy-go-lucky kid before that. Rich and poor looked alike to me. I didn't covet anything that anybody had, and I didn't dream that any one could possibly wish to take away from me anything that I happened to

have. I thought the world was a kind and pleasant place for everybody. But things look a little different to me now. They sent us fellows to France to fight Huns. But there are a few at home, I find. Why shouldn't I fight them whenever I see a chance."

"But *I'm* not a Hun," Betty said with a smile.

"I'm not so sure about that."

The words leaped out before he was quite aware of what they might imply. They had come to a point on the path directly in front of his house. Betty stopped. Her gray eyes flashed angrily. Storm signals blazed in her cheeks, bright above the delicate white of her neck.

"Jack MacRae," she burst out hotly. "You are a—a—a first-class idiot!"

Then she turned her back on him and went off up the path with a quick, springy step that somehow suggested extreme haste.

MacRae stood looking after her fully a minute. Then he climbed the steps, went into the front room and sat himself down in a deep, cushioned chair. He glowered into the fireplace with a look as black as the charred remains of his morning fire. He uttered one brief word after a long period of fixed staring.

"Damn!" he said.

Dark came down at last. MacRae went out on the porch. The sea spread duskily mysterious from dusky shores. It was very lonely, empty, depressing.

The knowledge that just across a narrow neck of land the Gowers, father, daughter, and son, went carelessly, securely, about their own affairs, made him infinitely more lonely, irritated him, stirred up a burning resentment against the lot of them. He lumped them all together, despite a curious tendency on the part of Betty's image to separate itself from the others. He hated them, the whole profiteering, arrogant, butterfly lot. He nursed an unholy satisfaction in having made some inroad upon their comfortable security, in having "sunk his harpoon" into their only vulnerable spot.

But that satisfaction did not give him relief or content as he stood looking out into the clear, frost-tinged night. Squitty had all at once become a ghostly place, haunted with sadness. Old Donald MacRae was living over again in him, he had a feeling, reliving those last few cheerless, hopeless years, which, MacRae told himself savagely,

Horace Gower had deliberately made more cheerless and hopeless.

And he was in a fair way to love that man's flesh and blood? MacRae sneered at himself in the dark. Never to the point of staying his hand, of foregoing his purpose, of failing to strike a blow as chance offered. Not so long as he was his father's son.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SWING OF THE PENDULUM.

MacRae did himself rather well, as the English say, when he reached Vancouver, where he had gone for a holiday. He put up at the Granada. He made a few calls, and presently found himself automatically relaunched upon Vancouver's social waters. There were a few maids and more than one matron who recalled pleasantly this straight, upstanding youngster with the cool, gray eyes who had come briefly into their ken the winter before. There were a few fellows he had known in squadron quarters overseas, home for good now that demobilization was fairly complete. MacRae danced well. He had the faculty of making himself agreeable without effort. He found it pleasant to fall into the way of these careless, well-dressed folk whose greatest labor seemed to be in amusing themselves, to keep life from seeming "slow." Buttressed by revenues derived from substantial sources: mines, timber, coastal fisheries, land, established industries, these sons and daughters of the pioneers, many but one degree removed from pioneering uncouthness, were patterning their lives upon the plan of equivalent classes in older regions. If it takes six generations in Europe to make a gentleman, western America quite casually dispenses with five—and the resulting product seldom suffers by comparison.

As the well-to-do in Europe flung themselves into revelry with the signing of the armistice, so did they here. It was a fairly vigorous pace, MacRae discovered. He liked it, gave himself up to it gladly—for a while. It involved no mental effort. These people seldom spoke of money, nor of work, nor politics, the high cost of living, international affairs. If they did it was jocularly, sketchily. Their talk ran upon dances, clothes, motoring, sports indoors and afield, on food—and sometimes genially on drink, since the dry wave had not yet drained their cellars. MacRae floated with this tide.

He had surrendered Nelly Abbott to a claimant and stood watching the swirl and glide of the dancers in the Granada one night. His eyes were on the brilliance a little below the raised area at one end of the floor, and so was his mind, inquiringly, with the curious concentration of which his mind was capable. Presently he became aware of some one speaking to him, tugging at his elbow.

"Oh, come out of it," a voice said derisively.

He looked around at Stubby Abbott.

"Regular trance. I spoke to you twice. In love?"

"Uh-uh. Just thinking," MacRae laughed.

"Deep thinking, I'll say. Want to go down to the billiard room and smoke?"

They descended to a subterranean chamber where, in a pit lighted by low-hung, shaded globes, men in shirt sleeves clicked the red and white balls on a score of tables. Rows of leather-upholstered chairs gave comfort to spectators. They commandeered seats and lighted cigarettes. "Look," Stubby said. "There's Norman Gower."

Young Gower sat across a corner from them. He was in evening clothes. He slumped in his chair. His hands were limp along the chair arms. He was not watching the billiard players. He was staring straight across the room with the sightless look of one whose mind is far away.

"Another deep thinker," Stubby drawled. "Rather rough going for Norman these days."

"How?" MacRae asked.

"Funked it over across," Stubby replied. "So they say. Careful to stay on the right side of the Channel. Paying the penalty now. Girls rather rub it in. Fellows not, too—well, cordial. Pretty rotten for Norman."

"Think he slacked deliberately?" MacRae inquired.

"That's the story. Lord, I don't know," Stubby answered. "He stuck in England four years. Everybody else went up the line. That's all I know. By their deeds ye shall judge them—eh?"

"Perhaps. What does he say about that himself?"

"Nothing, so far as I know. Keeps strictly mum on the war subject," Stubby said.

"Let's get back," Stubby suggested. "I've got the next dance with Betty Gower. I don't want to miss it."

"Is she here to-night? I haven't noticed her."

"Eyesight affected?" Stubby bantered. "Sure she's here. Looking like a dream."

MacRae felt a pang of envy. He stood watching Stubby, knowing that Stubby would go straight to Betty Gower. Presently he saw her, marked the cut and color of her gown, watched them swing into the gyrating wave of couples that took the floor when the orchestra began. Indeed, MacRae stood watching them until he recalled with a start that he had this dance with Etta Robbin-Steele, who would, in her own much-used phrase, be "simply furious" at anything which might be construed as neglect. Only Etta's fury would consist of showing her white, even teeth in a pert smile and a challenging twinkle in her very black eyes.

He went to Betty Gower as soon as he found opportunity. He took her program.

"I don't see any vacancies," he said. "Shall I create one?"

He drew his pencil through Stubby Abbott's name. Stubby's signature was rather liberally inscribed there, he thought. Betty looked at him uncertainly.

"Aren't you a trifle—sweeping?" she inquired.

"Perhaps. Stubby won't mind. Do you?" he asked pointedly.

"I seem to be defenseless," Betty shrugged her shoulders. "What shall we quarrel about this time?"

"Anything you like," he made reckless answer.

"Very well, then," she said as they got up to dance. "Suppose we begin by finding out what there is to quarrel over. Are you aware that practically every time we meet we nearly come to blows? What is there about me that irritates you so easily?"

"Your inaccessibility."

MacRae spoke without weighing his words. Yet that was the truth, although he knew that such a frank truth was neither good form nor policy. He was sorry before the words were out of his mouth. Betty could not possibly understand what he meant. He was not sure he wanted her to understand. MacRae felt himself riding to a fall. As had happened briefly the night of the *Blackbird's* wrecking, he experienced that feeling of dumb protest against the shaping of events in which he moved helpless. This bit of flesh and blood swaying in his arms in effortless

rhythm to sensuous music was something he had to reckon with powerfully whether he liked or not. MacRae was beginning dimly to see that. When he was with her—

"But I'm not inaccessible." She dropped her voice to a cooing whisper. Her eyes glowed as they met his with steadfast concern. There was a smile and a question in them. "Whatever gave you that idea?"

"It isn't an idea. It's a fact."

The resentment against circumstances that troubled MacRae crept into his tone.

"Oh, silly."

There was a railing note of tenderness in Betty's voice. MacRae felt his moorings slip. A heady recklessness of consequences seized him. He drew her a little closer to him. Irresistible prompting from some well-spring of his being urged him on to what his reason would have called sheer folly, if that reason had not for the time suffered eclipse; which is a weakness of rational processes when they come into conflict with a genuine emotion.

"Do you like me, Betty?"

Her eyes danced. They answered as well as her lips:

"Of course I do. Haven't I been telling you so plainly enough? I've been ashamed of myself for being so transparent—on such slight provocation."

"How much?" he demanded.

"Oh—well—"

The ballroom was suddenly shrouded in darkness, saved only from a cavelike black by street light reflected through the upper windows. A blown fuse. A mispulled switch. One of those minor accidents common to electric-lighting systems. The orchestra hesitated, went on. From a momentary silence the dancers broke into chuckles, amused laughter, a buzz of exclamatory conversation. But no one moved, lest they collide with other unseen couples.

Jack and Betty stood still. They could not see. But MacRae could feel the quick beat of Betty's heart, the rise and fall of her bosom, a trembling in her fingers. There was a strange madness stirring in him. His arm tightened about her. He felt that she yielded easily, as if gladly. Their mouths sought and clung in the first real kiss Jack MacRae had ever known. And then as they relaxed that impulse-born embrace the lights flashed on again, blazed in a thousand globes in great frosted clusters high against the

gold-leaf decorations of the ceiling. The dancers caught step again. MacRae and Betty circled the polished floor, silently. She floated in his arms like thistledown, her eyes like twin stars, a deeper color in her cheeks.

Then the music ceased and they were swept into a chattering group, out of which presently materialized another partner to claim Betty. So they parted with a smile and a nod.

But MacRae had no mind now for dancing. He went out through the lobby and straight to his room. He flung off his coat and sat down in a chair by the window and blinked out into the night. He had looked, it seemed to him, into the very gates of paradise—and he could not go in. It wasn't possible. He sat peering out over the dusky roofs of the city, damning with silent oaths the coil in which he found himself inextricably involved. History was repeating itself. Like father, like son.

There was a difference though. MacRae, as he grew calmer, marked that. Old Donald had lost his sweetheart by force and trickery. His son must forgo love—if it were indeed love—of his own volition. He had no choice. He saw no way of winning Betty Gower unless he stayed his hand against her father. And he would not do that. He could not. It would be like going over to the enemy in the heat of battle. Gower had wronged and persecuted his father. He had beaten old Donald without mercy in every phase of that thirty-year period. He had taken Donald MacRae's woman from him in the beginning and his property in the end. Jack MacRae had every reason to believe Gower merely sat back awaiting a favorable opportunity to crush him.

So there could be no compromising there. No intermarrying and sentimental burying of the old feud. Betty would tie his hands. He was afraid of her power to do that. He did not want to be a Samson shorn. His ego revolted against love interfering with the grim business of everyday life. He bit his lip and wished he could wipe out that kiss. He cursed himself for a slavish weakness of the flesh. The night was old when MacRae lay down on his bed. But he could find no ease for the throbbing ferment within him. He suffered with a pain as keen as if he had been physically wounded, and the very fact that he could so suffer filled him with dismay. He had faced death many times

with less emotion than he now was facing life.

He had no experience of love. Nothing remotely connected with women had ever suggested such possibilities of torment. He had known firsthand the pangs of hunger and thirst, of cold and weariness, of anger and hate, of burning wounds in his flesh. He had always been able to grit his teeth and endure; none of it had been able to wring his soul. This did. He had come to manhood, to a full understanding of sex at a time when he played the greatest game of all, when all his energies were fiercely centered upon preservation for himself and certain destruction for others. The flame Betty Gower had kindled in him made him look at women out of different eyes. Desire had been revealed to him not as something casual, but as imperative. As if nature had pulled the blinkers off his eyes and shown him his mate and the aim and law of the mating instinct all in one blinding flash.

He lay hot and fretful, cursing himself for a fool, yet unable to find ease, wondering dully if Betty Gower must also suffer as he should, or if it was only an innocent, piquant game that Betty played. Always in the background of his mind lurked a vision of her father, sitting back complacently, fat, smug, plump hands on a well-rounded stomach, chuckling a brutal satisfaction over another MacRae beaten.

MacRae wakened from an uneasy sleep at ten o'clock the next morning. He rose and dressed, got his breakfast, went out on the streets. But Vancouver had all at once grown insufferable. The swarming streets irritated him. He conceived himself to crave hushed places and solitude, where he could sit and think.

By mid-afternoon he was far out in the Gulf of Georgia, aboard a coasting steamer sailing for island ports. If it occurred to him that he was merely running away from temptation, he did not admit the fact.

CHAPTER XVI.

HEARTS ARE NOT ALWAYS TRUMPS.

If MacRae reckoned on tranquillity in his island seclusion he failed in his reckoning. A man may fly from temptation, run from a threatening danger, but he cannot run away from himself. He sought relief in action. He cleared away all the underbrush to the outer limits of his shrunken heritage. He

built a new inclosing fence of neatly split cedar, installed a pressure system of water in the old house.

"You goin' to get married?" old Peter inquired artlessly one day. "You got all the symptoms—buzzin' around in your nest like a bumble bee."

And Dolly smiled her slow, enigmatic smile.

Whereupon MacRae abandoned his industry and went off to Blackfish Sound with Vincent in the *Bluebird*. The salmon run was long over, but the coastal waters still yielded a supply of edible fish. There were always a few spring salmon to be taken here and there. Ling, red, and rock cod knew no seasons. Nor the ground fish, plaice, sole, flounders, halibut. Already the advance guard of the great run of mature herring began to show. For a buyer there was no such profit in running these fish to market as the profit of the annual salmon run. Still it paid moderately. So MacRae had turned the *Bluebird* over to Vin to operate for a time on a share basis. It gave Vin, who was ambitious and apparently tireless, a chance to make a few hundred dollars in an off season.

Wherefore MacRae, grown suddenly restless beyond all restraining upon his island, made a trip or two north with Vin—a working guest on his own vessel—up where the Gulf of Georgia is choked to narrow passages through which the tidal currents race like a mountain stream pent in a gorge—up where the sea is a maze of waterways among wooded islands. They anchored in strange bays. They fared once into Queen Charlotte Sound and rode the great ground swell that heaves up from the far coast of Japan to burst against the rocky outpost of Cape Caution. Then they doubled on their tracks and gathered their toll of the sea from fishing boats here and there until the *Bluebird* rode deep with cargo, fresh fish to be served on many tables far inland.

But MacRae soon had enough of that and came back to Squitty, to his fireplace and his books. Winter was a dull inaction, a period of discontent, in which thought gnawed at him like an ingrowing toenail. Everything seemed out of joint. He found himself feverishly anxious for spring, for the stress and strain of another tilt with Folly Bay. Sometimes he asked himself where he would come out at, even if he won, all along the line, if he made money, gained

power, beat Gower ultimately to his knees, got back his land. He did not try to peer too earnestly into the future.

Christmas came again, and with it the gathering of the Ferraras for their annual reunion. Old Manuel and Joaquin, young Manuel and Ambrose and Vincent. Steve they could speak of now quite casually. He had died in his sea boots like many another Ferrara. It was a pity, of course, but it was the chance of his calling. And the gathering was stronger in numbers even with Steve gone. Ambrose had taken himself a wife, a merry, round-cheeked girl whose people were coaxing Ambrose to quit the sea for a more profitable undertaking in timber. And also Norman Gower was there.

MacRae did not quite know how to take that young man. He had had stray contacts with Norman the last few weeks. For a rich man's son he was not running true to form. He and Long Tom Spence had struck up a partnership in a group of mineral claims on the Knob, that conical mountain which lifted like one of the pyramids out of the middle of Squitty Island. There had been much talk of those claims. Years ago Bill Munro—he who died of the flu in his cabin beside the cove—had staked those claims. Munro was a young man then, a prospector. He had inveigled other men to share his hopes and labors, to grubstake him while he drove the tunnel that was to cut the vein. MacRae's father had taken a hand in this. So had Peter Ferrara. But these informal partnerships had always lapsed.

Old Bill Munro's prospects had never got beyond the purely prospective stage. The copper was there, ample traces of gold and silver. But he never developed a showing big enough to lure capital. When Munro died the claims had been long abandoned. Long Tom Spence had suddenly relocated them. Some working agreement had included uncle Peter and young Gower. Long Tom went about hinting mysteriously of fortunes. Peter Ferrara even admitted that there was a good showing. Norman had been there for weeks living with Spence in a shack, sweating day after day in the tunnel. They were all beginning to speak of it as "the mine."

MacRae found it quite impossible to muster up any abiding grudge against young Gower on his own account. So he let matters stand and celebrated Christmas with them. Afterward they got aboard the *Blue-*

bird and went to a dance at Potter's Landing, where for all that Jack MacRae was the local hero, both of the Great War and the salmon war of the past season, both Dolly and Norman, he privately conceded, enjoyed themselves a great deal more than he did. Their complete absorption in each other rather irritated him.

They came back to the cove early in the morning. The various Ferraras disposed themselves about Peter's house to sleep, and MacRae went on to his own place, from whence about an hour after daybreak he saw Norman Gower pass up the bush trail to the mine with a heavy pack of provisions on his back. And MacRae wondered idly if Norman was bucking the game in earnest, strictly on his own, and why?

The southern end of Squitty was not of such vast scope that two people could roam here and there without some time coming face to face, particularly when these two were a man and a woman driven by a spirit of restlessness to lonely wanderings. MacRae went into the woods with his rifle one day in search of venison. He wounded a buck, followed him down a long cañon, and killed his game within sight of the sea. He took the carcass by a leg and dragged it through the bright green salal brush. As he stepped out of a screening thicket on to driftwood piled by storm and tide he saw a row-boat hauled on the shingle above reach of short steep breakers, and a second glance sidewise showed him Betty sitting on a log close by.

"Storm bound?" he asked her.

"Yes. I was rowing and the wind came up."

She rose and came over to look at the dead deer.

"What beautiful animals they are," she said. "Isn't it a pity to kill them?"

"It's a pity, too, to kill cattle and sheep and pigs, to haul fish by the gills out of the sea," MacRae replied. "To trap marten and mink and fox and beaver and bear for their skins. But men must eat and women must wear furs."

"How horribly logical you are," Betty murmured. "You make a natural sympathy appear wishy-washy sentimentalism."

She reseated herself on the log. MacRae sat down beside her. He looked at her searchingly. He could not keep his eyes away. A curious inconsistency was revealed to him. He sat beside Betty wishing pet-

tishly that she were a thousand miles away, so that he would not be troubled by the magic of her lips and eyes and unruly hair, the musical cadences of her voice. There was a subtle quality of expectancy about her. As if she sat there waiting for him to say something, do something, as if her mere presence was powerful to compel him to speak and act as she desired. MacRae realized the fantasy of those impressions. Betty sat looking at him calmly, her hands idle in her lap.

"There are times," she said, at last, "when you live up to your nickname with a vengeance."

"There are times," MacRae replied slowly, "when that is the only wise thing for a man to do."

"And you, I suppose, rather pride yourself on being wise in your day and generation."

There was a gentle raillery in her tone.

"I don't like you to be sarcastic," he said.

"I don't think you like me sarcastic or otherwise," Betty observed after a moment's silence.

"But I do," he protested. "That's the devil of it. I do—and you know I do. It would be a great deal better if I didn't."

Betty's fingers began to twist in her lap. The color rose faintly in her smooth cheeks. Her eyes turned to the sea.

"I don't know why," she said gently. "I'd hate to think it would."

MacRae did not find any apt reply to that. His mind was in an agonized muddle, in which he could only perceive one or two things with any degree of clearness. Betty loved him. He was sure of that. He could tell her that he loved her. And then? Therein arose the conflict. Marriage was the natural sequence of love. And when he contemplated marriage with Betty he found himself unable to detach her from her background, in which lurked something which to MacRae's imagination loomed sinister, hateful.

He stared out at the white-crested seas that came marching up the gulf before a rising wind, until his eyes grew misty. Then he slid down off the log and laid his head on Betty's knee. A weight of dumb grief oppressed him. He wanted to cry, and he was ashamed of his weakness.

Betty's fingers stole caressingly over his bare head, rumbled his hair, stroked his hot cheek.

"Johnny boy," she said at last, "what is

it that comes like a fog between you and me?"

MacRae did not answer.

"I make love to you quite openly," Betty went on. "And I don't seem to be the least bit ashamed of doing so. I'm not a silly kid. I'm nearly as old as you are, and I know quite well what I want—which happens to be you. I love you, Silent John. The man is supposed to be the pursuer. But I seem to have that instinct myself. Besides," she laughed tremulously, "this is leap year. And, remember, you kissed me. Or did I kiss you? Which was it, Jack?"

MacRae seated himself on the log beside her. He put his arm around her and drew her close to him. That disturbing wave of emotion which had briefly mastered him was gone. He felt only a passionate tenderness for Betty, and a pity for them both. But he had determined what to do.

"I do love you, Betty," he said. "Your hair and your eyes and your lips and the sound of your voice and the way you walk and everything that is you. Is that plain enough? It's a sort of emotional madness."

"Well, I am afflicted with the same sort of madness," she admitted. "And I like it. It is natural."

"But you wouldn't like it if you knew it meant a series of mental and spiritual conflicts that would be almost like physical torture," he said slowly. "You'd be afraid of it."

"Are you?" she demanded.

"Yes," he said simply. "I am."

"Then you're a poor sort of lover," she flung at him, and freed herself from his arms with a quick twist of her body. Her bosom heaved. She moved away from him.

"I'll admit being a poor lover, perhaps," MacRae said. "I didn't want to love you. I shouldn't love you. I really ought to hate you. I don't, but if I were consistent, I should."

"You mean that for some reason which I do not know and which you will not tell me, there is such bad blood between you and my father that you can't—you won't—won't even take a chance on me?"

"Something like that," MacRae admitted. "You'd either tie my hands, which I couldn't submit to, or you'd find yourself torn between two factions, and life would be a pretty sad affair."

"I asked you once before, and you told me it was something that happened before either

of was born," Betty said thoughtfully. "I am going to get to the bottom of this somehow. I wonder if you do really care—or if this is all camouflage—if you're just playing with me to see how big a fool I *will* make of myself?"

That queer mistrust of him which suddenly clouded Betty's face, and made her pretty mouth harden, roused Jack MacRae to a kind of fury. She jumped, warned by the sudden blaze in his eyes. But he caught her, and held her by the arms with fingers that gripped like iron clamps. He shook her.

"You wonder if I really care," he cried. "My God, can't you see? Can't you feel? Must a man grovel and weep and rave?"

Betty whitened a little at this storm which she had evoked. But she did not flinch. Her eyes looked straight into his fearlessly.

"You are raving now," she said. "And you are hurting my arms terribly."

MacRae released his hold on her. His hands dropped to his sides.

"I suppose I was," he said in a flat, lifeless tone. "But don't say that to me again, ever. You can say anything you like, Betty, except that I'm not in earnest. I don't deserve that."

Betty retreated a little. His eyes were turned to the sea, to hide the blur that crept into them in spite of his will.

"You don't deserve anything," Betty said distinctly. She moved warily away as she spoke. "You have the physical courage to face death. But you haven't the moral courage to face a problem in living, even though you love me. You take it for granted that I'm as weak as you are. You won't even give me a chance to prove whether love is strong or weak in the face of trouble. And I will never give you another chance—never!"

She sprang from the beach to the low pile of driftwood, and from that plunged into the thicket. MacRae did not try to follow. He sat down on the log again. There was a sense of finality in this thing which made him flounder desperately.

After a little he got up. There was a trail behind that thicket, an old game trail widened by men's feet, that ran along the seaward slope to Cradle Bay. He went up now to this path. His eye, used to the practice of woodcraft, easily picked up tiny heel marks, toe prints, read their message, me-

chanically. Betty had been running. She had gone home.

He went back to the beach. The rowboat, and a rising tide, caught his attention. He hauled the boat up on the driftwood so that it should not float away. Then he busied himself on the deer's legs with a knife for a minute, and shouldered the carcass.

It was a mile and a half across country to the head of Squitty Cove. He had intended to hang his deer in a tree by the beach and come for it later with a boat. Now he took up this hundred-pound burden for the long carry over steep hills and through brushy hollows. An hour or so later he came out on a knoll overlooking all the southeastern face of Squitty. Below, the wind-harassed gulf spread its ruffled surface.

About the time Jack MacRae with his burden of venison drew near his own doorway Betty Gower came out upon the winter-sodden lawn before their cottage and having crossed it ran lightly up the steps to the wide porch. From there she saw her father standing on the point. She called to him. At her hail he came trudging to the house. Betty was piling wood in the living-room fireplace when he came in.

"I was beginning to worry about you," he said.

"The wind got too much for me," she answered. "So I put the boat on the beach a mile or so along and walked home."

Gower drew a chair up to the fire.

"Blaze feels good," he remarked. "There's a chill in this winter air."

Betty made no comment.

"Getting lonesome?" he inquired after a minute. "It seems to me you've been restless the last day or two. Want to go back to town, Betty?"

"I wonder why we come here and stay and stay, out of reach of everything and everybody?" she said, at last.

"Blest if I know," Gower answered casually. "Except that we like to. It's a restful place, isn't it? You work harder at having a good time in town than I ever did making money. Well, we don't have to be hermits unless we like. We'll go back to mamma and the giddy whirl to-morrow, if you say so."

"We might as well, I think," she said absently.

For a minute neither spoke. The fire blazed up in a roaring flame. Raindrops slashed suddenly against the windows out

of a storm cloud driven up by the wind. Betty turned her eyes on her father.

"Did you ever do anything to Jack MacRae that would give him reason to hate you?" she asked bluntly.

Gower shook his head, without troubling to look at her. He kept his face steadfastly to the fire. "No," he said. "The other way about, if anything. He put a crimp in me last season."

"I remember you said you were going to smash him," she said thoughtfully.

"Did I?" he made answer in an indifferent tone. "Well, I might. And then again I might not. He may do the smashing. He's a harder proposition than I figured he would be, in several ways."

"That isn't it," Betty said, as if to herself. "Then you must have had some trouble with his father—long ago. Something that hurt him enough for him to pass a grudge on to Jack. What was it, daddy? Anything real?"

"Jack, eh?" Gower passed over the direct question. "You must be getting on. Have you been seeing much of that young man lately?"

"What does that matter?" Betty returned impatiently. "Of course I see him. Is there any reason I shouldn't?"

Gower picked up a brass poker. He leaned forward, digging aimlessly at the fire, stirring up tiny cascades of sparks that were sucked glowing into the black chimney throat.

"Perhaps no reason that would strike you as valid," he said slowly. "Still—I don't know. Do you like him?"

"You won't answer my question," Betty complained. "Why should I answer yours?"

"There are plenty of nice young fellows in your own crowd," Gower went on, still poking mechanically at the fire. "Why pick on young MacRae?"

"You're evading, daddy," Betty murmured. "Why *shouldn't* I pick on Jack MacRae if I like him—if he likes me? That's what I'm trying to find out."

"Does he?" Gower asked point-blank.

"Yes," Betty admitted in a reluctant whisper. "He does—but—why don't you tell me, daddy, what I'm up against, as you would say? What did you ever do to old Donald MacRae that his son should have a feeling that is stronger than love?"

"You think he loves you?"

"I know it," Betty murmured.

"And you?" Gower's deep voice seemed harsh.

Betty threw out her hands in a quick, impatient gesture. "Must I shout it out loud?" she cried.

"You always were different from most girls, in some things," Gower observed reflectively. "Iron under your softness. I never knew you to stop trying to get anything you really wanted, not while there was a chance to get it. Still—don't you think it would be as well for you to stop wanting young MacRae—since he doesn't want you bad enough to try and get you? Eh?"

He still kept his face studiously averted. His tone was kind, full of a peculiar tenderness that he kept for Betty alone.

She rose and perched herself on the arm of his chair, caught and drew his head against her, forced him to look up into eyes preternaturally bright. "You don't seem to understand," she said. "It isn't that Jack doesn't want me badly enough. He could have me, and I think he knows that, too. But there is something, something that drives him the other way. He loves me. I know he does. And, still, he has spells of hating all us Gowers—especially you. I know he wouldn't do that without reason."

"Doesn't he tell you the reason?"

Betty shook her head. "Would I be asking you, daddy?"

"I can't tell you, either," Gower rumbled deep in his throat.

"Is it something that can't be mended?" Betty put her face down against his. "Think, daddy. I'm beginning to be terribly unhappy."

"That seems to be a family failing," Gower muttered. "I can't mend it, Betty. I don't know what young MacRae knows nor what he feels, but I can guess. I'd make it worse if I meddled. Should I go to this hot-headed young fool and say, 'Come on, let's shake hands, and you marry my daughter?'"

"Don't be absurd," Betty flashed. "I'm not asking you to do anything."

"I couldn't do anything in this case if I wanted to," Gower declared. "As a matter of fact, I think I'd put young MacRae out of my head, if I were you. I wouldn't pick him for a husband, anyway."

Betty rose to her feet.

"You brought me into the world," she said passionately. "You have fed me and clothed me and educated me and humored all my whims ever since I can remember. But you

can't pick a husband for me. I shall do that for myself. It's silly to tell me to put Jack MacRae out of my head. He isn't in my head. He's in my—my—heart. And I can keep him there, if I can't have him in my arms. Put him out of my head! You talk as if loving and marrying were like dealing in fish."

"I wish it were," Gower rumbled. "I might have had some success at it myself."

Betty did not even vouchsafe reply. Probably she did not even hear what he said. She turned and went to the window, stood looking out at the rising turmoil of the sea, at the lowering scud of the clouds, dabbing surreptitiously at her eyes with a handkerchief. After a little she walked out of the room.

Gower bent to the fire again. He resumed his aimless stirring of the coals. A grim twisted smile played about his lips. But his eyes were as somber as the storm-blackened winter sky.

CHAPTER XVII.

EN FAMILLE.

Horace Gower's town house straddled the low crest of a narrow peninsula which juts westward into the gulf from the heart of the business section of Vancouver. The tip of this peninsula ends in the green forest of Stanley Park which is like no other park in all North America either in its nature or its situation. It is a sizable stretch of ancient forest, standing within gunshot of skyscrapers, modern hotels, great docks where China freighters unload tea and silk. Hard on the flank of a modern seaport this area of primitive woodland broods in the summer sun and the winter rains not greatly different from what it must have been in those days when only the Siwash Indians penetrated its shadowy depths.

The place was only three blocks from Abbott's. The house itself was not unlike Abbott's, built substantially of gray stone and set in ample grounds. But it was a good deal larger, and both within and without it was much more elaborate, as befitted the dwelling of a successful man whose wife was socially a leader instead of a climber—like so many of Vancouver's newly rich. There was order and system and a smooth unobtrusive service in that home. Mrs. Horace P. Gower rather prided herself on the noiseless, superefficient operation of her domestic machinery.

Upon a certain March morning, however, Mrs. Gower seemed to be a trifle shaken out of her usual complacency. She sat at a rather late breakfast, facing her husband, flanked on either hand by her son and daughter. There was an injured droop to Mrs. Gower's mouth, a slightly indignant air about her. The conversation had reached a point where Mrs. Gower felt impelled to remove her pince-nez and polish them carefully with a bit of cloth. This was an infallible sign of distress.

"I cannot see the least necessity for it, Norman," she resumed in a slightly agitated, not to say petulant tone. "It's simply ridiculous for a young man of your position to be working at common labor with such terribly common people. It's degrading."

Norman was employing himself upon a strip of bacon.

"That's a mere matter of opinion," he replied at length. "Somebody has to work. I have to do something for myself some time, and it suits me to begin now, in this particular manner which annoys you so much. I don't mind work. And those copper claims are a rattling good prospect. Everybody says so. We'll make a barrel of money out of them yet. Why shouldn't I peel off my coat and go at it?"

"By the way," his father asked bluntly, "what occasioned this flying trip to England?"

He referred to Norman's brief transatlantic trip of a few weeks previous—as yet unexplained to them.

Norman pushed back his chair a trifle, thrust his hands in his trousers pockets, and looked straight at his father.

"My own private business," he answered as bluntly. "You and mother seem to think I'm still in knee breeches."

But this did not serve to turn his mother from her theme. "It is quite unnecessary for you to attempt making money in such a primitive manner," she observed. "We have plenty of money. There is plenty of opportunity for you in your father's business, if you must be in business. Haven't you any regard for our position?"

"I'm fed up with our position," Norman retorted. A sullen look was gathering about his mouth. "What does it amount to? A lot of people running around in circles, making a splash with their money. You, and the sort of thing you call our position, made a sissy of me right up till the war came

along. There was nothing I was good for but parlor tricks. And you and everybody else expected me to react from that and set things afire overseas. I didn't. I didn't begin to come up to your expectations at all. But if I didn't spit Germans with a sword or do any heroics I did get some horse sense knocked into me—unbelievable as that may appear to you. I learned that there was a sort of satisfaction in doing things. I'm having a try at that now. And you needn't imagine I'm going to be wet-nursed along by your money. I've been frost-bitten enough by the crowd I grew up with, since I came home, to appreciate being taken for what I am, not for what I may or may not have done. Since I have discovered myself to have a funny sort of feeling about living off your money it behooves me to get out and make what money I need for myself—in view of the fact that I'm going to be married quite soon. I am going to marry," Norman rose and looked down at his mother with something like a flicker of amusement in his eyes as he exploded his final bombshell, "a fisherman's daughter. A poor but worthy maiden," he finished with unexpected irony.

"Norman!" His mother's voice was a wail. "A common fisherman's daughter. Oh, my son, my son." She shed a few tears.

"A common fisherman's daughter. Exactly," Norman drawled. "Terrible thing, of course. Funny the fish scales on the family income never trouble you."

Mrs. Gower glared at him through her glasses. "Who is this—this woman?" she demanded to know.

"Dolly," Betty whispered under her breath.

"Miss Dolores Ferrara of Squitty Cove," Norman answered imperturbably.

"A foreigner besides. Great heavens! Horace," Mrs. Gower appealed to her husband. "Have you no influence with your son, whatever?"

"Mamma," Betty put in, "I assure you, you are making a tremendous fuss about nothing. I can tell you that Dolly Ferrara is really quite a nice girl. I think Norman is rather lucky."

"Thanks, Bet," Norman said promptly. "That's the first decent thing I've heard in this discussion."

Mrs. Gower turned the battery of her indignant eyes on her daughter. "You, I presume," she said spitefully, "will be thinking of marrying some fisherman next?"

"If she did, Bessie," Gower observed harshly, "it would only be history repeating itself."

Mrs. Gower flushed, paled a little, and reddened again. "There is a downright streak of vulgarity in you, Horace," she said, "which I am sorry to see crop out in my children."

"Thank you, mamma," Betty remarked evenly.

Mrs. Gower whirled on Norman.

"I wash my hands of you completely," she said imperiously. "I am ashamed of you."

"I'd rather you'd be ashamed of me," Norman retorted, "than that I should be ashamed of myself."

"And you, sir," he faced his father, speaking in a tone of formal respect which did not conceal a palpable undercurrent of defiance. "You also, I suppose, wash your hands of me?"

Gower looked at him for a second. His face was a mask, devoid of expression. "You're a man grown," he said. "Your mother has expressed herself as she might be expected to. I say nothing."

Norman walked to the door and went out. Betty looked after him with a wistful sort of astonishment.

Gower first found occasion for speech. "While we are on the subject of intimate family affairs, Bessie," he addressed his wife casually, "I may as well say that I shall have to call on you for some funds. About thirty thousand dollars. Forty thousand would be better."

Mrs. Gower stiffened to attention. She regarded her husband with an air of complete disapproval slightly tinged with surprise. "Oh," she said. "Really."

"I shall need that much to properly undertake this season's operations," he stated calmly, almost indifferently.

"Really?" she repeated. "Are you in difficulties again? I really do not see how I can possibly let you have such a sum," she said. "You already have twenty thousand dollars of my money tied up in your business."

"You have an income of twelve thousand a year from the Maple Point place," Gower recited in that unchanging even tone. "You have over twenty thousand cash on deposit. And you have eighty thousand dollars in Victory Bonds. You mean you don't want to, Bessie."

"You may accept that as my meaning," she returned.

"There are times in every man's career," Gower remarked dispassionately, "when the lack of a little money might break him."

"That is all the more reason why I should safeguard my funds," Mrs. Gower replied. "You are not as young as you were, Horace. If you should fail now, you would likely never get on your feet again. But we could manage, I dare say, on what I have. That is why I do not care to risk any of it."

"You refuse then, absolutely, to let me have this money?" he asked.

"I do," Mrs. Gower replied, with an air of pained but conscious rectitude. "I should consider myself most unwise to do so."

"All right," Gower returned indifferently. "You force me to a show-down. I have poured money into your hands for years for you to squander in keeping up your position—as you call it. I'm about through doing that. I'm sick of aping millionaires. All I need is a comfortable place where I can smoke a pipe in peace. This house is mine. I shall sell it, and repay you your twenty thousand. You——"

"Horace! Sell this house. Our home! Horace. This is simply outrageous. How is Betty going to meet p-people?"

"You mean," her husband retorted, "how are you going to contrive the proper background against which Betty shall display her charms to the different varieties of saphead which you hit upon as being eligible to marry her? Don't worry. With the carefully conserved means at your disposal you will still be able to maintain yourself in the station in which it has pleased God to place you. You will be able to see that Betty has the proper advantages."

Whereupon, with no manifest change of expression beyond an unpleasant narrowing of his eyes, he heaved his short, flesh-burdened body out of the chair and left the room. Betty soon followed him. She

skipped nimbly upstairs, two steps at a time, and went into a room on the second floor, a room furnished something after the fashion of a library, in which her father sat in a big leather chair chewing on an unlighted cigar.

Betty perched on the arm of his chair and ran her fingers through a patch on top of his head where the hair was growing a bit thin.

"Daddy," she asked, "did you mean that about going smash?"

"Possibility," he grunted.

"Are you really going to sell this house and live at Cradle Bay?"

"Sure. You sorry?"

"About the house? Oh, no. It's only a place for mamma to make a splash, as Norman said. If you hibernate at the cottage I'll come and keep house for you."

Gower considered this. "You ought to stay with your mother," he said finally. "She'll be able to give you a lot I wouldn't make an effort to provide. You don't know what it means to work. You'd find it pretty slow at Squitty."

"Maybe," Betty said. "But we managed very well last winter, just you and me. If there is going to be a break-up of the family I shall stay with you. I'm a daddy's girl."

Gower drew her face down and kissed it. "You are that," he said huskily. "You're all Gower. There's real stuff in you. You're free of that damned wishy-washy Morton blood. She made a poodle dog of Norman, but she couldn't spoil you. We'll manage, eh, Betty?"

"Of course," Betty returned. "But I don't know that Norman is such a hopeless case. Didn't he rather take your breath away with his declaration of independence?"

"It takes more than a declaration to win independence," Gower answered grimly. "Wait till the going gets hard. However, I'll say there's a chance for Norman. Now, you run along, Betty. I've got some figuring to do."

TO BE CONCLUDED.



WHERE WORDS ARE WEIGHED

DOCTOR S. W. STRATTON, director of the Federal bureau of standards, has in his laboratories the most delicate weighing instruments in the world. So nicely are they adjusted that he can weigh a signature written in ink. He goes further than that. He can weigh the crossing of a "t."

S. C. 1030

By Warren H. Miller

A story about submarines that is different from anything that you have ever read. American ingenuity proves itself in trying circumstances

LEUTENANT COMMANDER ALDRICH, executive officer of the U. S. armored cruiser *Augusta*, came into the steerage, the junior officers' mess, of the warship. Instantly the youngsters exploded out of their chairs and stood at attention, all but Nicky, the Class 4 Reserve ensign. That youth, who knew more ways of getting himself into trouble than any "mustang" who ever got into a boat, arose gawkily and made a wavering salute.

Aldrich frowned, the dignity of his three gold stripes being visibly affronted, but he overlooked the lapse, for Ensign Nicholas Trunbull, U. S. N. R. F., late of the Great Bay training station, was but a rank outsider, as the Reserve shield on his collar indicated.

"Gentlemen, be seated," Aldrich waved them to "at ease," taking a swivel chair himself at the mess table. "Ensign Trunbull you—"

"Here!" spoke up Nicky eagerly, squaring himself at attention.

"I suppose you'll learn to say 'Yes, sir,' after you've been a year or two in the service!" grunted the commander sarcastically.

"Yes, sir!" murmured Nicky bashfully.

"Very good. You are to have the guard boat to-morrow, youngster—and, for God's sake, don't fizzle it, now, or the admiral'll think we're all a bunch of beach crabs. It's the easiest job aboard this ship; all you are to do is to keep an eye on the flagship, and when the admiral runs up the guard-boat pennant, look alive with the gig and get whatever orders he has for you to deliver to the fleet."

"Aye-aye, sir," cut in Nicky, very respectfully.

"Don't say that," frowned the commander, "that's for enlisted men—try again."

"Yes, sir!" came back Nicky triumphantly.

"All right. You understand, do you not? You're on duty from eight to six and will

have the second gig. By the way—unofficially—I hear that you are to be detached and ordered to command one of these new one-hundred-and-ten-foot sub chasers. Ought to be right in your line, as a former yachtsman and skipper of the Q-19—"

"Glory!" gasped Nicky happily, "I mean 'yes, sir,' commander," as Aldrich's face began to grow grim again. "I sure am Exhibit A on this warship for greenness, sir—but I just *know* I can make good on a sub chaser."

"Your spit kit wouldn't have a chance!" put in Ensign Tatham, a regular. "The best thing you could do, Nicky, would be to stick close to shore. What'd you do if Germany were to send over a fleet of cruising subs and you should run into one?"

"Put something across on her—that's how!" snapped Nicky, facing the steerage defiantly. "Do something original, something that you hidebound martinets would never think of—because it isn't in your Blue Book! A regular is a regular, always sticking close to his regulations, and a Hun regular'd never do anything outside of *his* Blue Book, either—I'm not afraid of him!"

"Silence!" barked the commander, rising angrily. "Young man, I think you forget yourself! An official reprimand will be your next experience if you don't mend your tongue."

"Oh, I beg your pardon, sir!" apologized Nicky, "I—I forgot your presence, sir." He relapsed into an awkward, miserable silence. The executive went out, with the steerage standing at salute. Nicky stood in truculent silence. He had put his hand in the tar bucket that time, gloriously and completely!

"You're sure in a state of abysmal savagery, kid," murmured Tatham awesomely. "What the exec will do to *you* will be a-plenty when he gets back to the captain!"

"Language unbecoming an officer and a gentleman," that's what the old man will hand you—and it'll be a bad mark on your record, too," volunteered another ensign.

"Better brace up, kid; and, take my advice, you'd better hoe some of that hay off your chin before the captain sees you to-morrow."

Nicky smiled gratefully and went to his tiny stateroom, which he shared with the breech of a five-inch rifle. The navy was a great service, he reflected, as he undressed to turn in, but his short term of duty with the regulars had, so far, been just one comedy of errors. Things were done thus and so on a warship, and in no other way. *How* they were done he had been taught—in books—at Great Bay, but the point was to remember *just* how, when it came to actually doing them under the eyes of a warship full of fussy division officers. From the time he had fozzled his first sentry hail on coming alongside to report for duty, followed by innocently attempting the unheard-of insolence of calling on the captain in person, things had gone hard with Nicky! Next morning he was up bright and early, dressed spic-and-span, and hied himself to the ship's barber shop, for, two days without the use of "Excalibur," as Nicky called his long-suffering razor, had done things to his beard.

While dreaming luxuriously in the barber's chair, came a sudden imperative rap on the door. It was the captain's orderly.

"Ensign Trunbull?" he inquired, poking in his head. "Captain wishes you to report on the quarter-deck immediately."

Nicky looked up. One side of him was a mass of creamy lather, the other clean and clear, about down to the chin. "Will you give the captain my compliments, and tell him that I am shaving and will be on deck in a very few minutes?" he ululated in his very best Bostonese. "Bouse on that barnacle effect lively, my Finnish friend," he added to the barber, relapsing again into navy.

The orderly looked scandalized, but saluted and went away. In two minutes there came an imperious triple thunder of his fists on the door.

"Captain's orders—Ensign Trunbull to report on deck *immediately!*" he shouted through the door.

Nicky waited not on the order of his going, but grabbed up his blouse and ran for the deck, lather and all, buttoning the blouse as he went. The captain met him at the gangway, his face a thundercloud. He used up a lot of the English language and a whole lot more from navy stock to impress on Nicky that when he said "immediately," it

meant just that, and that, furthermore, his quarter-deck was no dressing room, referring to the three open buttonholes which that unfortunate was madly buttoning.

"And hop right down into that gig, at once, sir," he stormed. "Don't you see the guard-boat pennant over on the flagship?"

Nicky tumbled into the gig and his gob shoved off. He washed off the lather with handfuls of cold sea water as soon as he was a reasonable distance from the *Augusta*, but there was no camouflaging that waving side of red fringe that the razor hadn't touched yet. To dive overboard and drown himself while there was yet time seemed the most reasonable thing to do. He could already see the amused grin on the face of the flagship's deck officer when he should set foot on those imperial precincts.

The fleet lay in a vast crescent, the flagship farthest out to sea: A stiff nor'wester was blowing, covering the bay with white-caps, and presently the gig began to labor, throwing stinging spats of salt spray all over him at every other wave. The tar minded it not at all, for the wind blew his collar high over his neck and the back of his jacket shed it like a duck, but Nicky's blouse was of receptive material, and in ten minutes he was soaked to the skin. Like a drowned rat he finally reached for the flagship's gangway and crawled up the steps. Sailors grinned at him openly from the bulwarks, and the officer of the deck turned to hide a smile as he grimly handed Nicky the admiral's orders of the day.

"Cutter drill for the entire fleet," he grinned. "Deliver one of these to each and every vessel of the fleet," he added, eying the beard doubtfully.

Nicky grabbed the orders and beat a swift retreat. He hated to bring contumely on his own ship by the hirsute display, but he realized that every deck officer on every ship of the squadron would have a wallop at the purple fringe of him! The subsequent progress of that brazen bunch of red spinnach was one riot of guffaws.

"For the love of Mike!" growled the senior lieutenant who met him at the gangway of the next ship. "What do you mean, youngster, by flaunting that thing around here!"

"Bandarlogwise, I forgot to shave in time," explained Nicky, proffering his orders bashfully.

"And, 'bandarlogwise,' you'll go back over the side and send up your sailor with your

orders!" the D. O. snapped, cutting him short. "These things are supposed to be delivered by some one in *uniform*," objected the veteran pointedly. Nicky hopped for the gig.

On the next ship a square, black-eyed, hook-nosed commander stared at him disconcertingly, under a visor that showed nothing below but an inflexible expanse of chin.

"Orders of the day," gasped Nicky, poking a yellow slip at him.

The commander made no move to take them, still eying him in stern silence. Evidently the majesty of his battleship was affronted.

"I ought to put you under arrest!" he began at length, as Nicky squirmed. Then, catching sight of the Reserve shield on Nicky's collar, "Some one has wished a poached egg on the *Augusta* evidently, I see."

Nicky retreated crabwise off the deck and set out once more. The next D. O. was for calling his captain and having the unhappy Nicky up for court-martial, and by the time he got back to his own ship he felt that he was a marked man, a public disgrace, and that he had brought down contumely upon them all in the eyes of the whole fleet. He ordered the "duty complete" pennant run up on the *Augusta* and dashed below to his stateroom. Off came the freezing uniform and dripping underwear, and, grabbing Excalibur, Nicky shaved madly. He had gotten half the other cheek cleared, with a piece like a section of pumpkin pie still covering chin and jowl, when the captain's orderly knocked again.

"Captain wishes to see you on deck immediately, sir," he called through the stateroom door.

Nicky flew into his last remaining pair of trousers, his broadcloth ones for dress affairs, buttoned up his blouse, and ran for the deck.

The captain waved a hand at the flagship's rigging without a word. There flew the guard-boat pennant again. Nicky set out in the gig with alacrity. The sea was even rougher, and this time he reported, glistening with salt water and displaying an even more unusual cut of beard. The officer of the deck, comprehending at once, rolled back his head and yelled as he handed him a second sheaf of orders.

"To each vessel of the fleet," he choked. "Retreat from cutter drill—the admiral has

decided that the sea's too rough. Crews will go to great-gun drill, at sea," he managed to gasp out. "Good God, youngster, you'll get it all off yet!" he roared, leaning weakly against the bulkhead. "Look lively, now, we want to head off those orders before the cutters are away."

Nicky saluted and ran down to the gig with all possible speed. Cursing himself and resigning from the service in alternate gusts, he set out for the remaining ships, and again the ordeal, ten times worse than before, for every officer off duty was gathered to see the fun, and the rails were crowded with grinning tars. There was no escaping the story of that pielike tuft of hair, which stood out on his face like a smudge from the engineer stores! Nicky got back more dead than alive, to be received with frowns of displeasure by his own ship. Some kindly soul had, however, taken his other blouse down to the engine room, where it had been dried on a steam pipe and pressed by the ship's tailor, and he managed to finish the shave while the ship was getting under way.

II.

The captain was, however, still huffy, not to say frigid in his attitude toward Nicky.

"He hates poached eggs," explained the steerage consolingly, "and you're worse than poached—you're scrambled. In fact, you're the only reservist on the ship, and it'll take us a whole cruise to make you even remotely presentable. Suppose, for instance, we should run into the battle fleet and become one of its divisions—where in the world could we hide *you*? You'd have to play the game—and no fumbles, either—see? You'll bilge, sure!"

The next day the captain called away his barge, and when he returned from the flagship he sent for Nicky. Contrary to expectations, he beamed on Nicky as that youth presented himself, quaking, in the captain's quarters.

"Young man, I spoke to the admiral about you this morning, and, while we both agreed that there was no place for you aboard a fighting ship like the *Augusta*, when we went over your record and saw that you were skipper of the Q-19 we had you placed in a trice. Why, sir, I've watched you race that infernal twenty-rater myself—two years ago it was, at Newport—and the admiral has recommended a detail that we feel will

just suit your—ah—your diabolical initiative, judging from the way you used to handle that yacht! Some day I should be glad to have you serving under me, but not now; you have a great deal too much to learn, and we have no time to teach you just at present. Here are your orders, detaching you from the *Augusta* and placing you on waiting orders; but, if the admiral's recommendation is acted on by the detail office, you will have a very congenial duty awaiting you. Good day, sir."

Nicky took his orders and saluted in silence. Bilged! Once more and he would be down and out—disenrollment! The steerage wished him good luck cheerily, and by the time his suit case was packed the dinghy was waiting for him at the starboard gangway, and that was the last he saw of the regulars. He could not help but feel depressed as they rowed away, and the tall masts of the warship dwindled over the blue distance widening between him and her. Bilged already, in a brief but stormy existence, yet he was as good a sailor as ever clapped a jigger on a rope! The navy was a great service, but it was essential to find one's niche to get on in it, and not take the whole war to do it in, either!

Once on the beach he reported to the office of the commandant, twentieth naval district, for further duty. After sitting around half a day the aid came out with official papers and Nicky opened them, to read with glad, thankful eyes:

1. To duty in command of the S. C. 1030.
2. These orders to take effect immediately.

W. S. LEIGHTON.
By direction.

"Where is she?" demanded Nicky breathlessly of the smiling aid.

"Over in basin ten; her crew has already been detailed to her," returned the aid. "Say, you're the chap who was skipper of Q-19, aren't you?" he grinned. "Some devil boat! I own an eighteen-rater myself and would be glad to race you some day."

"Hope we pull it off, sir," gurgled Nicky, dying with ingrowing happiness. "What do I do next? I'm green as a hayraker at this official business."

"Report aboard of her to-day and take command. Make yourself at home, and report, via me, when you are ready to go into commission. I sent an old salt of a quartermaster aboard of her who can stand watch against you and will steer you on all the

official business about your crew's pay accounts, your dock trials and such matters that require orders from the commandant. Dope it out with him. Wish you luck—and wish I was young enough to be an ensign, too! Good day, Q-19!" And the aid had backed into the commandant's office, leaving Nicky standing on one foot and then on the other, with his orders idle in his hands.

He inquired his way to basin ten, saluting every one in the yard, and dodging around a big C. & R. building when he spied a four-striper bearing down on him with all sails set. Nicky had had trouble enough with captains before—who are more than apt to be stuffy, and who run mostly to forty-two about the waist line!

The S. C. 1030 lay warped against the stringpiece of basin ten. One hundred and ten feet of slim, gray gracefulness, she was Nicky's best girl the minute he set eyes on her. A trig, wireless mast, with a miniature lookout cage, a searchlight and a string of blinker lights, rose out in front of a boy-sized bridge. Under it were the square lights of a tiny chart room, where Nicky imagined himself, dividers in hand, laying out courses and figuring up dead-reckonings—the captain, the old man—of an infinitesimal spit-kit! Her forward deck mounted a long six-pounder; two machine guns aft snuggled down on the flat deck—the rest was just smooth turtleback, with a cabin aft jutting up above the deck, and the usual anchor gear for'd.

Nicky licked his chops anticipatively. His gobs were all naval reservists, twenty-four of them, three watches of eight men each; bright-faced, clear-eyed boys, collegians, high-school graduates, machinists, ex-chauffeurs—not a man jack of them over twenty-two. Nicky was enthusiastically installed by his reserve training-station crew, and soon encountered the grizzled old quartermaster, a fleet reserve man with three "hash bars"—enlistment stripes—on his sleeve. The old fellow turned over the command with touching deference, ingrained from former naval service—it was enough for him that Nicky wore the gold of a commissioned officer!

By way of general inspection of the sub-chaser, Nicky, flanked by three explanatory chief machinists, peered down into the engine room at his three, bright red, two-hundred-and-twenty-horse-power standards;

was shown his guns and had his depth bomb riggers demonstrated to him by two bubbling gunner's mates; glanced through the hatch into the dark magazine well full of shell racks and painted depth bombs; and finally he and the Q. M. dove for the chart house, to take stock of each other's seamanship. Here was home—a sailor's heaven! The ancient Q. M. silently fell in love with Nicky, while they pawed over signal flags, thumbed the charts, took the sextant out of its box, and sighted it critically, tried out the inside steering gear, and worked the various signal mechanisms. The afternoon flew, while Nicky and his Q. M. pored over mess-store accounts with the yeoman, and made up lists of everything needful for putting to sea. At five, the crew went to mess aboard the receiving ship, while Nicky sought a bite at the officer's club in the yard, and, after supper, Q-19 slipped away to rejoin his beloved S. C. 1030, where, in the moonlight, he and his ancient swapped sealore, and Nicky gathered knowledge of the official routines necessary for going into commission and getting his orders to report for duty at his patrol section at sea.

A bright morning with a nor'wester blowing greeted Nicky and his gobs a few days later, as they rose from their bunks to scrub decks and pipe mess gear. At eight bells the flagship made "colors," and Nicky's veteran Q. M. slowly mastheaded that symbol of national majesty, the flag, while he and his crew stood at salute, listening to the glorious bugle notes of Morning Colors floating out from the flagship's decks. Then, leaving his crew at bright work, Nicky repaired, fresh-faced and rosy, aboard the flagship, to report the S. C. 1030 ready for sea duty. Somehow the fame of Q-19 had again gone before him, for that blithe craft, with her tall spars leaning under snowy canvas while the sea foam bathed her lee scuppers, led him direct into the presence of the admiral himself, instead of dealing with a coldly official aid. So, in due time, Nicky bulked into the admiral's cabin, standing on one foot, with bashfulness, to receive a cordial welcome and kindly words from him whose word rules the destinies of the fleet. As one commander to another, so graciously did the admiral put Nicky at ease, the old sea-dog sounded the depths of Nicky's seamanship and reliability for independent command.

"And, remember, youngster," concluded the admiral at length, "it's just a great yacht

regatta, this patrol game. You may have to run with the ball yourself some day—who knows! And I don't want you to ask me, then, what to do or how to do it. Do it yourself—and then wireless me you *have* done it! Use your initiative—just as you did when we in the navy watched you chance that reef with Q-19 at Newport. Here are your orders—the service expects you to give a good account of yourself."

"Yes, sir," mumbled Nicky adoringly, backing his way out of the admiral's quarters. And, that night, the S. C. 1030 put out to sea, to report later to the S. O. P. of the patrol squadron off Hatteras.

III.

A year passed. Even Nicky's best girl would have taken him seriously now. How her little heart would have fluttered with pride to see men jump when he spoke! The sea had trained him. To face, not one but a dozen Hatteras storms, puts sternness into a man. To stand on a freezing bridge, hour after hour, and face the whip of gale-driven salt spray, while endlessly one huge comber after another towers over a frail deck; to pick a coastwise convoy out of the inky night and befriend her through the lonely wastes of a long sector; to endure weeks on end of patient, weary coast watching, with a hopeless *cui bono?* undermining the morale of officer and crew alike; to go nights without sleep and days in imminent peril of broken limb, while the storm slashes the patrol boat's decks at every angle short of total capsize—these trials make bold the men of the sea!

Nicky learned that, when you see what appears to be three white sailboats going along in consort, they are most likely the markings on a camouflaged steamer, otherwise invisible; that a speck in the air above the horizon is not obviously a coastwise migratory duck, but very probably a patrol hydroplane fifteen miles away; that an exploded "ash can" at eighteen knots will stand such as the S. C. 1030 on her nose and will almost but not quite send her diving for the bottom; that a six-pounder is good for a man's head at two miles; and that machine guns, judiciously handled, can pepper and salt any given sea area into a white foam of bullet spats at two thousand yards.

These things are good to know, and along in May, '18, the kaiser sent over a fleet of

his submarines to see if the men of the S. C. 1030 and her ilk really knew them. Reports of U-boat sinkings came down from the North, vessels done to death by shell fire just over the horizon, while patrol boats drilled before their commander in sham battle; steamers torpedoed, and coastwise schooners sunk with bombs in their holds. And Nicky felt, with a joyful throb of his chivalrous heart, that since these foul deeds were being done up North, wondrous chances for advancement might come down his way, too!

More and more to the southward moved the S O S calls and the sinkings. Made too hot for them by the patrol fleets of the Northern coasts, with two of their number sunk by a destroyer and a hydroplane, the raiders dropped southward, where the sectors were longer, the patrol boats fewer, and the wastes of ocean more lonely. Off the Virginia Capes a steamer in the sector north of Nicky beat off a submarine by her own gunfire, while a S. C. boat nearly burst her engines trying to get into the fight in time. Nicky swelled with hope. The wireless was busy all over the ocean. The chances of his sector being next were *good*, very good, indeed!

Came an oily morning, when the sea was as smooth as glass and a haze lay thick over the distances. A coastwise schooner lolled on the ground swell, her three dirty sails slashing idly across her decks. Nicky, patrolling his sector, stood listlessly on the bridge, pipe in jowl, a commanding thumb laid on one spoke of the S. C. 1030's wheel. One eye was cocked casually on the rhumb line in his compass binnacle, and occasionally, half asleep, he swept the empty horizon with his glass. Two of his gunners were cleaning bright work on the six-pounder, while the two machine gunners lay asleep in the bunks below. Now and then one of his machinists would pop his head up out of the engine-room hatch for a bit of air, for it was boiling hot.

"The trouble with those people up yonder," ruminated Nicky, moralizing on the Northern fleets, "is that they play the game too close to the rules. The Hun pushes forward a checker and they jump it. He's always through with his dirty work before any one gets there. It's all too cut-and-dried. Now, if one of these little S. C.'s wants a Chinaman's chance against a Hun sub with a six-inch gun aboard, he's got to

fool 'em, or else get blown out of water before his small guns can get in range. Initiative's the game—put something across on 'em——"

His soliloquy was interrupted by a muttered "*Je-ru-salem!*" from his quartermaster, listening in at the wireless down in the chart room below.

"What's up?" called Nicky sharply.

"S O S! Steamer to the south of us being shelled! She's coming this way, zigzagging for all she's worth!"

"Call all hands!" shouted Nicky, grabbing the wheel spokes. "Break out ammunition there, for'rd!" Then, stepping to the engine-room speaking tube: "Full speed ahead!" he ordered. "Put on that third engine!"

The crew came tumbling on deck. Cartridge clips were fed to the machine guns, and six-pound shells and depth bombs passed up from the magazine.

"Take the wheel and head her *north*—for that schooner!" commanded Nicky to his astonished quartermaster, young Mr. Wright, of Yale, who took the wheel, scarce believing his ears. Weren't they going *south* on a dash to the rescue? Turning tail was not the way they rushed to battle—not at Yale!

Nicky, offering no explanations to the questioning eyes of the crew, went below and soon reappeared with some lanyard which he cut to three foot lengths. He picked up a depth bomb and hefted it judicially. Then he tied lanyards to two of them, with two more depth bombs set in the trigger release astern.

Presently they sheered alongside the schooner and made fast.

"Got a storm trysail stowed below?" inquired Nicky of the wooden-faced skipper sitting idly at the wheel.

"Yep; 'tain't for sale though," returned the coaster inhospitably.

"Three of you go below and break it out," ordered Nicky of his men. "Government's got to borrow it of you, my red-shirted friend," said Nicky cheerfully. "Show us where it is."

The skipper, after some argument and more exasperating deliberation, signed to his mate, who took the men below. In a trice they were back, dragging the huge sail. It was disreputable and ragged, but not dirty enough for Nicky.

"Souise her!" he ordered. Mystified, his crew dropped it over the side.

"Now spread her out—look alive, there! Don't be all day about it—show's coming off soon!" twinkled Nicky guilefully.

Grumpily, almost mutinously, his gobs spread the dirty, dripping jib along the schooner's bulwarks, and then, under Nicky's orders they hauled its peak out to draw it over the S. C. 1030. Amid shrieks of protest from the skipper, Nicky had a great rent cut in it to pass around the wireless mast, and then he made them drape the edges of the sail down to the water's edge until they completely hid the trig patrol boat.

"Looks like a duck boat camouflaged to a point!" observed Nicky, admiring his work. The crew sniffed scornfully. Hiding from the enemy, when their plain duty was to dash full speed to the rescue— Hell!

"You're a nice officer!" ejaculated the skipper, voicing the mute protests of Nicky's own crew. "Is *that* the way the navy fights! You're sure yaller!"

"Shut up, you!" glared Nicky, facing him menacingly. "If you don't know enough to keep your yawp closed, I'll do it for you—and do it damn quick—see? There's going to be doin's here, right sudden soon!"

Gunfire came over the horizon to the south. Then a smoke, and soon a white steamer, flying for her life, zigzagging like a hunted hare, while behind her puffs of smoke spanked out low over the surface of the sea. Nearer and nearer came the reports of the steamer's stern gun, as she vainly tried to reach the range of the pursuing submarine. In half an hour she had passed the schooner, and soon after, relentlessly as a rattlesnake hunting a rabbit, came the submarine, abreast of them, not over half a mile away, her long straight sheer with its conning tower upstanding out of the sea, and a crew working like demons at her exposed six-inch gun, shieldless and naked on her forward deck.

"Now!" cried Nicky. "Tear off that sail and cast her loose! We gotta do it, boys, and do it quick! You at the machine gun clear off that crew! Full speed ahead!"

The starboard machine gun cut loose, and men around the exposed deck gun on the submarine melted away like flies. More dashed out of her hatches and tried to swing the gun on them, but shrapnel from Nicky's six-pounder wiped them into the sea. And the S. C. 1030 was dashing straight for her!

The sub commander gave up his gun as useless and started to submerge. He had no

time at all to do anything—to so much as port his helm, for the S. C. 1030 was swooping down on him like a hawk.

"Drop those two ash cans on his neck as we go over, while I attend to these!" yelled Nicky, picking up one of the depth bombs by its lanyard. The sea was a boiling smother of eddies where the submarine went under, and over the whirlpool soared the S. C. 1030.

"Snap!" gasped Nicky, starting to whirl the depth bomb about his head by its lanyard, like a hammer thrower. The gunner released both depths bombs astern.

"Hard down your helm!" roared Nicky, as a white mountain of sea water rose behind them. The patrol boat's stern rose like a rocket, and at the same instant Nicky let fly the whizzing bomb in his hands. It soared out over the sea to port, a mighty cast, a glorious cast! Forty—fifty—sixty feet it flew out, in the direction the submarine was going when last seen. Then another boiling hillock of roaring waters threw them on their beam ends. The S. C. 1030 rocked and careened under it until it seemed she never *would* right herself. Under full power she swooped in a vast semicircle, while Nicky, reversing his cast, hurled the other bomb to starboard.

"Four!" he gasped, grabbing the bridge rail as the S. C. 1030 rocked wildly again. "No matter which way she went, we got her!"

Gradually the sea resumed its glassy calm, while the S. C. 1030 circled about. A large slick of crude oil came up from below, and spread wider and wider over the surface.

"Busted her wide open!" declared the grizzled Q. M., shaking his head solemnly. "Lay aloft there, and look for wreckage."

But nothing, not even a life buoy with the U-boat's number on it, came up to the eager watchers—one more sinking that would not be credited by the pay department for prize money, nor be reported to the newspapers.

But, from the fleeing steamer's yard fluttered the bright signal flags, "Well done!" and from Nicky's wireless went this message to the admiral:

Bombed submarine in Sector 28. Credit schooner *Clara* with one new storm trysail.

And, what is more, Nicky's original bomb-throwing idea became the parent of the present Y-gun depth-bomb fire, by which a periscope sighted is a submarine sunk—the latest destroyer method!

The Idol's Eye

By "Sapper"

Is there any real power in a jewel that has served as the eye of an idol? Around this subject there was waged a discussion that had dramatic consequences, and some of those taking part in it were convinced that the power did reside in the jewel. The author is a British army officer who was attached to the sappers' corps in the war, and whose real identity is concealed from the public by his agent

PERSONALLY I don't consider there's a word of truth in the whole thing," said Denton dogmatically. "All this mystery and spook stunt was started by hysterical old women, and has been kept alive by professional knaves, who fill their pockets at the expense of fools."

He drained his port, and glared round the table as if challenging any one to dispute his assertion.

"There was a silly old aunt of mine," he continued, thrusting his heavy-featured face forward, "who bought a house down Camberley way two or three years ago. Admirable house: just suited the old lady. Special room facing south for the canaries and parrots, and all that sort of thing." He helped himself to another glass of port. "She hadn't been in the house a fortnight before the servants gave notice. They weren't going to stop on, they said, in a house where noises were heard at strange hours of the night, and where the clothes were snatched off the cook's bed. So the old thing wrote to me—I was managing her affairs for her—and asked what she should do. I told her that I'd come down and deal with the noises, and that if any one started pulling my bedclothes off he'd get a thick ear for his trouble."

Denton laughed, and leaning back in his chair, thrust his hands into his trousers pockets. "Of course there were noises," he continued. "Show me any house—especially an old one—where there ain't noises at night. The stairs creaked—stairs always do; boards in the passages contracted a bit and made a noise—boards always do. And as for the cook's bedclothes, having once seen the cook, I didn't wonder they came off in the night. She must have weighed twenty stone, and nothing less than full-size double sheets could have been expected to remain tucked

in. But do you suppose it was any good pointing these things out to the old dear? Not on your life! All she said to me was: 'Harry, my boy, there are agencies at work in this world of which we have no knowledge. You may not be able to deal them; some of us can. And it is written in the Book that they are Evil.'"

Again Denton laughed coarsely. "Twaddle! Bunkum! The only agent that she felt was the house agent, who was charmed at the prospect of a second commission so soon."

"She moved, did she?" said Lethbridge, our host.

"Of course she did," jeered Denton. "And the last I heard of the house was that it had been taken by a retired grocer with a large family who were perfectly happy there." He thumped his fist on the table. "The whole thing is entirely imagination. If you sit at the end of a dark passage when the moon is throwing fantastic shadows and imagine hard enough that you're going to see a ghost, you probably will. At least, you'll fancy you see something. But that's not a ghost. There's nothing really there. You might as well say that the figures you see in a dream are real."

"Which raises a very big question, doesn't it?" said Mansfrey thoughtfully. He was a quiet man, with spectacles, who had so far taken little part in the conversation. "Even granted that what you say is correct, and I do not dispute it, you cannot dismiss imagination in quite the same manner as you do a dream. It may well be that half the so-called ghosts which people see or hear are merely imagination; but the result on the people is the same as if they were there in reality." His blue eyes were fixed on Denton mildly, and he blinked once or twice, "It takes all sorts to make a world, and

every one is not so completely devoid of imagination as you are, Denton."

"I don't know that I am completely devoid of imagination," said Denton. "I can see as far into a brick wall as most men, where a business proposition is concerned. But if you mean that I'm never likely to see a ghost, you're quite right." He was staring at Mansfrey, and his face was a little flushed. It struck me as he sat there, half sprawling over the table, what a coarse animal he was. And yet rumor had it that he was very popular with a certain type of woman.

Mansfrey sipped his port, and a slight smile played round his lips. Lethbridge noticed it and made a movement as if to join the ladies. For Mansfrey's smile was deliberately provocative and Denton was not a congenial companion if provoked—especially after three glasses of port. His voice, loud enough at ordinary times, became louder; the bully in him, which was never far from the surface, flared out.

"Ghosts," said Mansfrey gently, "are the least of the results of imagination. Even if you did see one, Denton, I don't expect it would worry you much." His mild blue eyes were again fixed on the other man. "It is not that manifestation of the power of mind that I was particularly thinking of."

Denton gave a sneering laugh. "Then what was it?" he asked. "Trying to walk between two lamp-posts and finding there was only one?"

"Personally," answered Mansfrey, "I have never suffered that way." Lethbridge looked at me uncomfortably, but Mansfrey was speaking again. "It was the power of mind over matter with regard to bodily ailments that I was thinking of."

"Good heavens," jeered Denton, "you don't mean to say that you're a Christian Scientist?"

"Up to a point, certainly," answered the other. "If it is possible, and we know an indisputable proof that it is, for a man to deliberately decide to die when there is nothing the matter with him, and, having come to that decision to sit down on the ground and put it into effect—surely the contrary must be still more feasible. For in the case of the native who dies, his mind is acting against nature; in the case of the man who tries to cure himself his mind is acting with nature."

"Those natives who die in that manner

have always been seen by somebody else's brother-in-law," answered Denton. "I'll believe it, Mansfrey, when I see it for myself."

"I doubt if you would," said Mansfrey. "You'd say the man was malingering even when he was in his coffin."

Once again I glanced at Lethbridge. It almost seemed as if Mansfrey, usually the mildest of men, was deliberately going out of his way to annoy Denton.

"And I suppose," he continued after a pause, "that you absolutely disbelieve in the ill luck that goes with certain houses and other inanimate objects—such as the Maga diamond, for instance."

"Absolutely," answered Denton. "And if I had the money I would pay a thousand pounds to any one who would prove me wrong—" Then he laughed. "I thought you were reputed to be a scientist, Mansfrey! Funny sort of science, isn't it? Do you honestly mean to tell me that you believe a bit of carbon, like the Maga diamond, has the power to bring bad luck to its owner?"

"The last four owners have died violent deaths," remarked Mansfrey quietly.

Denton snorted. "Coincidence," he cried. "Good heavens, man, you're talking like a hysterical nursemaid!"

"When up against the standard of pure knowledge," returned Mansfrey mildly, "quite a number of people talk like hysterical nursemaids. When one reflects how little one knows, and how much there is to be known, I sometimes wonder why even the cleverest man ever speaks at all." He started fumbling in his waistcoat pocket. "But talking of the Maga diamond, I've got something here that might interest you."

He produced a little chamois leather bag, and untied the string that kept it closed. Then before our astonished gaze he tipped out on to the tablecloth what appeared to be a large ruby. It was a cut stone, and in the light it glowed and scintillated with a thousand red flames.

"Pretty thing, isn't it?" said Mansfrey.

"My dear fellow," cried Lethbridge, leaning forward, "is it real? If so, it must be worth a fortune. I'm some judge of precious stones, but I've never dreamed of anything to approach that."

"Glass," laughed its owner. "A particularly beautiful tint of red glass. No—it's not a historic jewel that I've got here, Lethbridge, but something which bears on what

we have been discussing." His mild eyes once more sought Denton's face. "This piece of glass, so the story runs, was originally the eye of an idol in one of the most sacred shrines in Lhasa. The Tibetans, as you know, are a very religious race—and this particular idol was apparently the big noise among all their gods. Some young fools, on a shooting trip, managed to get to Lhasa—no mean feat incidentally in itself; and not content with that, they violated this most sacred temple and stole the eye of the god."

Denton gave a shout of laughter. "Good lads!" he cried. "That's the stuff to give the troops."

Mansfrey looked at him gravely. "They were discovered by the priests," he continued, "and had to run for their lives. All quite usual, you see; the good old historic story of fiction. Even the curse comes in, so as not to spoil the sequence. I, of course, have only heard it fifteenth hand, but I give it to you as I got it. The thing is harmless, unless allowed to remain in the hand or up against a man's bare flesh for a certain length of time. How long I don't know. The sailor I got it from was a bit vague himself—all he wanted to do was to get rid of it as quickly as he could. But if, so the yarn goes, it remains for this necessary period of time in a man's hand or up against him somewhere—the man dies."

Denton spoke with amusement. "And do you believe that twaddle?" he demanded.

"I don't know," said Mansfrey slowly. "There are one or two very strange stories about it." He prodded the glass gently with his finger, and the ruby lights shivered and danced till it looked as if it was on fire. "A Danish sailor stole it from the man who sold it to me, on the voyage home. He was an enormously powerful, healthy fellow, but he was found dead the next morning with the thing inside his shirt. My sailor friend got it from a Chinaman in Chefoo. The chink's assistant had recently stolen it out of his master's shop. He had been found dead with it in his hand, and the chink was frightened." Mansfrey smiled, and put the bit of glass back in its bag. "Just two yarns of many, and they're all the same. Anybody who holds it, or lets it touch him for too long, dies. And dies to all appearances a natural death."

"And you really believe that twaddle?"

said Denton again, even more offensively than before.

Mansfrey shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know whether I do or don't," he answered. "I myself have tested the thing; and as far as I can see, it is just a piece of ordinary red glass. But——" Again he shrugged his shoulders, and then replaced the leather bag in his pocket.

"Do you mean to say that you've been too frightened to hold the thing in your hand and prove that it's rot?" cried Denton. He turned to Lethbridge. "Well, I'm damned! And in the twentieth century. Chuck the bauble over here, Mansfrey. I'll sleep with it in my hand to-night, and give it back to you to-morrow morning at breakfast."

But Mansfrey shook his head. "Oh! no, Denton," he said, "most certainly not. If anything *did* happen, I should never forgive myself."

The opposition only served to make Denton more determined than ever, and more objectionably rude into the bargain. Personally, I had been surprised at Mansfrey carrying such a thing about with him—it did not fit in with what I knew of the man at all; but I was even more surprised at his reluctance to allow Denton to have it. It was preposterous that he could really believe there was any danger to be feared from holding a piece of colored glass in one's hand, and yet for five or ten minutes he remained obdurate.

Then, suddenly, he gave in. "Very well, Denton," he remarked, "you shall have it. But don't say I didn't warn you."

Denton laughed. "If your preposterous stories were to be believed, and came true in my case, I gather I shouldn't be in a condition to say much. But my ghost shall come and haunt you, Mansfrey. I'll pull off your bedclothes, and rattle chains in the passages——"

We all laughed, and shortly after Lethbridge rose. As he got to the door he paused and looked at us doubtfully. "Of course, it's all rot, and only a joke—but I think we might as well postpone telling the ladies until Denton gives it back to-morrow at breakfast. My wife is such a nervous woman, don't you know. Probably come running along to your room, Denton, every half hour to see that you're still snoring."

Denton gave one of his usual bellows, and in a few minutes we had all settled down to bridge.

II.

It was Denton himself who insisted on his hand being tied up with a pocket handkerchief. The four of us were standing, talking, in his room before turning in; in fact, Mansfrey had already completed the first part of his toilet by donning a smoking jacket of striking design.

"Bring out your bally bit of glass, my boy," boomed Denton jovially, "and put it right there." He held out a hand like a leg of mutton. "Then I'll close my fist, and afterward you tie my hand with a handkerchief, so that I can't open it in the night."

But the idol's eye was not immediately forthcoming. "I tell you candidly, Denton," said Mansfred. "I wish you'd give it up. I don't believe myself that there *is* anything in it, but somehow——" His eyes were blinking very fast behind his spectacles; he seemed the picture of frightened indecision.

Denton laughed and clapped him on the back; and to be clapped on the back by Denton is rather like being kicked by a mule. I have had experience of both, and I know."

"You funny little man," he cried, and prepared to do it again, until Mansfrey discreetly withdrew out of range. "You funny little man, blinking away there like a startled owl. You know, Lethbridge, I do really believe that he fancies there's something in his blessed old glass eye from Lhasa. Give it to me, you silly ass," he said to Mansfrey. "I'll show you." To say that Denton's speech was thick would be to exaggerate, but as I sat on the edge of his dressing table smoking a cigarette, I could not help recalling that, though Lethbridge and I had each had one whisky and soda during the evening, while Mansfrey had drunk only plain vichy, the tantalus was nearly empty when we came to bed. He was, in fact, in a condition when, for peace all round, it was better not to annoy him.

Apparently the same idea had struck Lethbridge, for he turned to Mansfrey and nodded his head. "Give it to him, old boy, and let's get to bed. I'm damned tired."

"Very well," answered Mansfrey. "I'll get it. It is in my waistcoat pocket."

Slowly, almost reluctantly, he left the room, and went along the passage to his own. While we waited, Denton got into

his pajamas, and by the time Mansfrey returned, he was already in bed.

"Here it is," said Mansfrey, holding out the little bag. "But I wish you wouldn't, Denton."

"Oh, to hell with you and your wishes!" said Denton irritably, stretching out his hand. "Put it there, little man, put it there."

The piece of glass rolled out of the bag, and lay for a moment glittering scarlet in Denton's huge palm. Then his fingers closed over it, and Lethbridge tied a handkerchief round his fist.

"I'll give it back to you at breakfast, Mansfrey," he said, turning over on his side. "And you can prepare to be roasted, my lad, properly roasted. Good night, you fellows; turn out the light, one of you, as you go."

I closed the door behind me and strolled toward my own room. It was next to Mansfrey's, and I stopped for a moment talking to him.

"What a great animal that fellow is," I remarked.

He did not reply at once, and I glanced at him. He was standing quite still, with his pale-blue eyes fixed on Denton's room, from which already I fancied I heard the snores of the heavy sleeper.

"Animal is not a bad description of him," he answered thoughtfully.

He stepped inside his door and closed it, and it was only as I switched off my own light that it struck me that Mansfrey's eyes had never blinked as he stood looking at Denton's door. And blinking was a chronic affliction of his.

I seemed only to have been asleep a few minutes when I was awakened by the light being switched on. Lethbridge was standing by my bed, looking white and shaken.

"My God, man!" he said, as I blinked up at him. "He's dead."

"Who is?" I cried, foolishly sitting up in bed.

"Why, Denton," he answered, and the whole thing came back to my mind.

"Denton dead!" I looked at him horror-struck. "He can't be, man; there must be some mistake."

"I wish to God there was," he answered hoarsely. "Mansfrey's with him now—almost off his head."

I reached for my dressing gown, and glanced at the time. It was just half past four.

"I'll never forgive myself," he went on, as I searched for my slippers. "That fool story of Mansfrey's made a sort of impression on me, and I couldn't sleep. After a while I got out of bed and went to Denton's room. I listened outside, and you know how he used to snore. There wasn't a sound; absolute silence." He wiped his forehead with a shaking hand. "I don't know—but I got uneasy. I opened the door and went in. Still not a sound. Then I switched on the light." Lethbridge shuddered. "There he was, lying in bed, absolutely motionless. I went over to him, and put my hand on his heart. Not a movement; he was dead as—"

I stared at him speechlessly and then together we went toward Denton's room. The door was ajar, and as we pushed it open Mansfrey, who was bending over the dead man, turned his white stricken face toward us.

"Not a trace of life," he whispered. "Not a trace." He ran his hands through his hair, blinking at us despairingly. "What a fool I was, what an utter fool to show him that thing!"

"Oh, rot, man!" said Lethbridge roughly. "It can't have been that damned bit of red glass. He's dead now, poor fellow, but he was a gross liver, and there's no getting away from the fact that he drank too much last night. Probably heart failure."

But Mansfrey only shook his head, and stared miserably out of the window to where the first faint streaks of dawn were showing in the sky.

"The point is what we're going to do now," went on Lethbridge. He held up the hand holding the idol's eye, and then let it fall again with a shudder.

"Ring up a doctor at once," said Mansfrey. "He's dead, but you must send for one."

"Yes," said Lethbridge slowly. "I suppose we must. Er—the only thing is—er"—he looked awkwardly from Mansfrey to me—"this—er—bit of glass. You know what local people are, and the sort of things that—er—may be said. I mean it will be a little hard to account for the poor fellow being found dead with this bauble in his hand, all tied up like this. The papers will get hold of it, and we'll have a crowd of confounded reporters buzzing round, trying to nose out a story."

Mansfrey blinked at him in silence. "You

suggest," he said at length, "that we should take it out of his hand."

"I do," said Lethbridge eagerly. "After all, the poor chap's dead, and we've got the living to consider. It's bad enough having a death in the house at all; it'll be perfectly awful if it's turned into a nine-days' newspaper wonder. I mean it isn't as if there was any question of foul play," he glanced apologetically at Mansfrey; "we all of us are equally concerned, and it *can* only be a very strange and gruesome coincidence. What do you say, Mayhew?"

"I quite agree," I answered. At the time I was engaged in a big deal, and I was certainly not anxious for notoriety—even of a reflected nature—in the papers. "I suggest that we remove the stone and that we destroy it forthwith by smashing it to pieces and throwing the bits in the pond."

Lethbridge gave a sigh of relief, and started to unfasten the handkerchief. "One moment," interrupted Mansfrey. "With all due regard for both your interests, my case is not quite the same as yours. We are not all equally concerned. The thing is mine: I gave it to him." He blinked at us apologetically. "I've got to think of the years to come, when the momentary unpleasantness will be forgotten, and you two—almost unconsciously—may begin to wonder whether it was a coincidence." He silenced our quick expressions of denial with a smile. "You may," he said, "and I prefer not to risk it. And so I will only agree to your proposal on one condition, and that is that one or other of you send the thing to some good analytical chemist and have it tested. I *know* that it is glass; I want you to *know* it, too."

"Right," said Lethbridge, who would willingly have promised anything, so long as he was allowed to remove the glass eye. "I quite see your point of view, Mansfrey." He was busy untying the knot in the handkerchief. "Perhaps Mayhew will take it up to-morrow to town with him, when he goes."

At length the handkerchief was removed, and with obvious distaste Lethbridge forced back the fingers. There lay the glass—clouded a little by the moisture of the dead man's hand—but still glittering with its devilish red light. Then suddenly the arm relaxed and the idol's eye rolled on to the carpet.

"My God!" said Lethbridge hoarsely.

"Put the vile thing away, Mansfrey, and let's send for a doctor."

"The bag is on my table," he answered. "I'll put it in." With his handkerchief he picked the thing up and carried it out of the room.

Lethbridge turned to me. "I don't often drink at this hour of the night," he said, "but when I've rung up the doctor I'm going to open a bottle of brandy. I want it."

We tidied up the clothes, and with a last look at the great body lying motionless on the bed, we went out softly, locking the door behind us.

An hour later the doctor came and made his examination. By this time, of course, the whole house knew, and there was no question of any more sleep. The women had forgathered in Mrs. Lethbridge's room, and we three men waited for the doctor downstairs. He came, after only a short time in the dead man's room, and helped himself to a cup of tea.

"It may be necessary," he said, "to hold a post-mortem. You say that he was perfectly fit last night?"

"Perfectly," said Lethbridge.

"Forgive my putting the question," continued the doctor, "but did he have much to drink last night?"

"He was always a very heavy drinker and eater," answered Lethbridge, and both Mansfrey and I nodded in agreement.

"So I should have imagined," commented the doctor. "I have no doubt in my mind that, though he looked a strong, healthy man, we shall find he was pretty rotten inside. Brought on by overindulgence, you know. He was essentially the type that becomes liable to fits later in life. Most unpleasant for you, Mr. Lethbridge. I'll do everything I can to spare you unnecessary inconvenience. But I'm afraid we shall have to have a post-mortem. You see there's no obvious cause of death."

Lethbridge saw him to the door, and shortly after we heard his car drive off.

"May Heaven be praised," said Lethbridge, coming back into the room, "that we took that glass thing out of his hand and that we didn't mention it to the women last night." He sat down and wiped his forehead. Chuck that brandy over, Mansfrey; I want another."

Thus ended the tragic house party. At nine o'clock I left for town, with the idol's eye in my pocket. I took it to a chemist

and asked him to submit it to any tests he liked, and tell me what it was. Later in the evening I called for it, and he handed it back across the counter.

"As far as I can see, sir," he remarked, "it is simply a piece of ordinary red glass, of not the slightest value save for its rather peculiar shape."

I thanked him and took it home with me. The next day I returned it to Mansfrey with a brief note containing the chemist's report, and a suggestion that he should drop it into the Thames.

Lethbridge sent me a cutting from the local paper giving an account of the inquest and the result of the post-mortem.

"Death from natural causes," was the verdict, and gradually, in the stress of reconstructing a business which had suffered badly during the war, the matter passed from my head. Occasionally the strange coincidence came back to my mind and worried me; occasionally I even wondered whether, indeed, there was some deadly power in that piece of red glass; whether in a far-off Tibetan temple strange priests, performing their sinister rites round a sightless idol, kept count in some mysterious way of their god's revenge. Then I would laugh to myself and recall the doctor's words when he had made his brief examination of Denton: "We shall find he was pretty rotten inside."

And so, but for a strange freak of fate, the matter would have ended and passed into the limbo of forgotten things. Instead of which—but the devil of it all is, I don't know what to do.

Two days ago I wandered casually into Jones' curio shop just off the Strand. At times I have picked up quite good bits of stuff there, and I frequently drop in on chance of a bargain.

"I've got the very thing for you, Mr. Mayhew," he said as soon as he saw me. "A couple of bits of old Sheffield. Just wait while I get them."

He disappeared into the back of the shop and left me alone. I strolled round looking at his stuff, and in one corner I found a peculiarly ugly carved table, standing on three gimcrack legs. Ordinarily I should merely have shuddered and passed on; but something made me stop and look at it a little more closely. Its proud designer, presumably in order to finish it off tastefully, had cut four holes in the top, and into these four holes he had placed four pieces of col-

ored glass—yellow, blue, green, and red. Mechanically I touched them, and to my surprise I found the red one was loose. Still quite mechanically I worked it about, and finally took it out.

A minute later Jones found me staring dazedly at something in my hand, which even in the dim light of the shop glowed and scintillated like a giant ruby.

"Here are those two bits of plate, Mr. Mayhew," he remarked. Then he saw what I had in my hand and glanced at the table. "Don't worry about that. It's been loose ever since I got it. I must seccotine it in some day."

"Tell me, Mr. Jones," I endeavored to speak quite calmly, "where did you get this from?"

"What, that table? A Mr. Mansfrey asked me to try and sell it for him months ago; you know, the gentleman who's just written that book on poisons. Not that I've got any hope of obliging him, for it's a horrible-looking thing, I think."

A thousand wild thoughts were rushing through my brain as I stood there, with the dealer watching me curiously. If that bit of red glass came out of a table, it had never adorned an idol's face in Tibet. And as it *had* come out of a table, it proved that Mansfrey had lied. Why?

"I will take that table," I said to the astounded dealer. "I'll give you five pounds for it. Send it round at once."

"Shall I put that red thing in, sir?" he asked.

"No," I answered. "I'll keep this. Send it round as it is." I strode out of the shop and into the Strand. Why had Mansfrey gone to the trouble of inventing that long tissue of falsehood? Why? The question rang ceaselessly through my brain; I could think of nothing else. Quite clearly the events of that fatal night came back to me, and the episode which before had seemed a coincidence suddenly took a very much more sinister turn. Why should a writer on poisons and an able, clever man—I had heard of Mansfrey's new book—take the trouble to lie steadily throughout an evening, unless he had some object in view? Why should he have brought the bit of glass down with him at all, unless he had determined beforehand to tell this lie? And suddenly I stood stock-still, to the fury of an oncoming taxi; it was Mansfrey who had started the

subject of the supernatural before the ladies left us after dinner. Why?

I turned into my club, and sat down to try and puzzle things out. And the more I thought of it the less I liked it. I had had the bit of glass analyzed by a chemist, true; but for the first time it struck me as a significant fact that there had been a period of over five hours, after the thing had been taken from Denton's hand, during which it had been in Mansfrey's possession. At the time I had not thought of it—after such a tragedy one does not think of trifles. Now, it no longer seemed a trifle. In fact, everything took on a new significance. The time Mansfrey had taken to get it from his room had not seemed unduly long while we were waiting; but Denton, completely undressed, had got into bed before Mansfrey returned. And then the careful way in which he had picked the glass up afterward with a handkerchief.

At length I rose and, going to a table, wrote a note to Mansfrey asking him to come round and see me at my flat. He came last night—and, as I said before, I don't know what to do.

Straight in front of him, as he came into the room, I had placed the table. The hole for the red glass was empty; the piece itself was in the center of the mantelpiece. He stopped abruptly and stared at the little table; then he turned, and the gleaming red thing in front of the clock caught his eyes. Then he looked at me, blinking placidly, with a faint smile on his face.

"I didn't know you knew Jones," he said, sinking into an easy-chair and lighting a cigarette.

"I should like an explanation, Mansfrey," I remarked sternly.

"What of? Denton's death? My dear fellow—surely it was quite obvious from the first. I killed him." He still blinked at me with his mild blue eyes.

"You killed him!" I almost shouted.

"Hush, hush!" He held up a deprecating hand. "Not so loud, please. Of course I killed him, as I had always intended to do. He was one of the type of carrion who was not fit to live. He seduced my sister, and when I ultimately found her, after he had tired of her, she was on the streets." For a moment he had ceased blinking; then he went on again quite calmly. "But why should I weary you with personal history? Is there anything else you'd like to know?"

"A lot," I said. "Of course, your reason is a big extenuating circumstance, and, undoubtedly, Denton was a blackguardly cad—but that does not excuse you, Mansfrey, for murdering him."

"I absolutely disagree," he returned gently. "The law would have given me no redress, so I had to make my own."

"Of course," I said after a pause, "I shall have to tell Scotland Yard. I mean, I can't possibly condone such a thing as that."

He smiled peacefully and shook his head. "I don't think I would if I was you," he murmured. "Who was it who begged Denton not to take the idol's eye in his hand"—he glanced at the glass on the mantelpiece—"it bore a striking resemblance to that thing you've got there, now I come to look at it. But, who was it? Why, me. Who overruled me? Well—neither you nor Lethbridge backed me up, anyway. Who was it who suggested removing it before the doctor came? I think I am right in saying it was Lethbridge. Who insisted on a chemical analysis? I did. Who had it carried out? You, and I have the chemist's report in my desk. What was the result of the post-mortem and the coroner's inquest? Death from natural causes; no trace of poison." He blinked on placidly. "Oh, no, my friend, I don't quite see you going to Scotland Yard. In the extremely improbable event of that august body not regarding you

as a lunatic, you would inevitably, and Lethbridge, also, be regarded as my accomplices in the matter. You see, between you, in all innocence, you compromised yourselves very awkwardly—very awkwardly, indeed."

"How did you kill him?" I demanded grimly.

"A rare and little-known poison," he answered. "You'll find something about it in my new book. Probably the most deadly in the world, for it leaves no trace. It kills by shock, which induces heart failure. I dipped that glass—er—I mean the idol's eye which is so like that bit of glass—into a solution of the poison before putting it in his hand. Then the next morning I dipped it in another solution. You considerably left it with me for some hours—a minute was all I required. From experiments I have carried out on animals, I should think he died in about half an hour. Er—good night."

The door closed behind him, and I sat staring at the red bauble glittering in the light. Then in a fit of rage I took it to the window, and hurled it into the street below. It broke into a thousand fragments, and Mansfrey—who had just left the front door—looked up and smiled. "Er—good night," he called, and I could imagine those blue eyes blinking mildly.

And the devil of it all is, as I mentioned previously—I don't know what to do.



PEACE MORALE

WE heard a great deal about "morale" during the war. We hear very little about it to-day.

But it is a good word to keep pasted in our hats in times of peace. For peace hath her victories no less than war, as some one has said. And the victories of peace are the victories of morale—not letting the small things or the big things of daily life "get your goat."

Humor is the essence of daily morale. It is the psychological cocktail that builds tissues. It is the wine that changes all values. It is the comic mask against which all the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" fall blunted.

We are all little Davids before the giant Goliath, Life. If we load our sling shots with laughter, what a pasteboard affair this Goliath turns out to be! Like Davy Crockett's squirrel, he comes down to you—if he doesn't run away.

Morale is the art of facing everything as though it were of no importance—including ourselves. It is a sword welded in calmness and imperturbability. Life is an ogre if you show the least sign of fear before her. She wants to sap your morale.

Men and women do not conquer life with money or muscle, but with a mental and physical attitude—simply, morale.

Take a Tip from Midas

By James Hay, Jr.

"Play for the worth-while stakes," says the author, who thinks that the game itself should be more interesting than the monetary reward

OLD King Midas was blood brother of the poker player who's always counting his chips—and he did what that sort of a poker player invariably does: cashed in a big loser. You remember the story? The sordid old sovereign got from the gods the power to turn into gold everything he touched; and, in less than a day, he was begging to be relieved from his glittering self-destruction. When he found that the "golden touch" ruined his digestion, his spirit turned as yellow as his gift.

Incidentally, it was this same Midas who was so poor a judge of music that the gods later on pinned a pair of ass' ears to the sides of his head.

And that's the big end of the story: no man ever succeeded by starting out with nothing but a longing to own a lot of money. Love of the game, not love of money, is the soul of success. If your head is cluttered up all day with pictures of how much this will bring in, or how much you may lose by that, you'll never be proficient in the kingly art of putting things over.

You can't love money and a chance simultaneously—and, unless you can thrill to the lure of taking a legitimate chance, you can't make much money.

Don't mistake me. As a rule, the big bank balance is a badge of efficiency. The number of dollars you own may well be taken as an index to your standing in your craft or profession. Successful penury is something I have never seen. And it is every sane man's duty to win such rewards for his labor as will provide him with the useful and delightful things of life.

But, unless you work with a higher motive than the love of wealth, the odds are ninety-nine to one that, at the age of fifty, you will be occupying the third-floor back in the residence of some distant but luckier relative.

In the wise economy of the world, money for its own sake is the one impossible prize. Men who pile up fortunes are those who render to the world services that cannot be adequately paid for in money.

Said a wizard of big business: "The beggar thinks more about money in a day than the millionaire does in a month. The reason for that is simple. The millionaire is a fellow who, even when he had nothing but a small job, was anxious to risk it on the chance of doing something bigger and better. The failure is the man who, having wriggled into a place paying him enough to keep a coat on his back, shrinks from the bare possibility of losing his wages, and, therefore, never tries for something better.

"The big fellows are those who, yearning to do a beautiful thing, forgot all about money in the rapture of accomplishing a splendid performance."

The man who told me that died a few weeks ago in the very rose and expectancy of his full powers. But, before he laid down the working tools of the world, he had laughed at hardship, courted bankruptcy, and fought with ruin—and, as a result of his giantlike combats, had given new luster to American invention, manufacturing, and salesmanship.

He was a Pittsburger, Joseph M. Flannery by name, and, when his game was played, he had perfected and put into general use a stay bolt which made railroad locomotives safe from steam explosions; he had invented and put on the market vanadium steel—the gates of the giant locks of the Panama Canal are built of this Flannery-made steel—he had manufactured and sold more radium than all the other radium producers the world over; and he had perfected a system for obtaining from crude petroleum a new and cheaper form of fuel oil.

"Show me a man," he continued, "who

works always with the idea of how much money he can make in a day, a week, or a year, and you show me one who quickly becomes so timid about the little money that he has already that he loses the courage, the fine initiative essential to him who is to really succeed in his work.

"If you want to succeed, make up your mind that real success will surely bring its financial reward. Then put that in the back of your head, in one of the side pockets of your memory, and devote all your mind and soul to the struggle to put over a big thing. Accomplish the success, and money will come to you, irresistibly.

"But sit in your office looking for a sure way to get a dime back for every nickel you spend, and you'll be a nickel man to the end of your days."

Business history proves all that. Edison is rich because he cared so little for money that he was willing to lose his job and salary as a telegraph operator, if only he could demonstrate the correctness of his theory that electricity could be made a convenience for the housewife and a plaything for the world. James J. Hill had a fortune when he died because he embraced discomforts and hardships in order to make real his dream of enabling others to build an empire along his railroad tracks. A. T. Stewart revolutionized retail salesmanship, not because he loved money, but because he was fired by the determination to prove that business could be done by better methods than ever before.

Money flows to such men, not because they love money, but because, with all the fervor of the explorer, all the thrill of the gambler, they long to create those things which will adorn and improve the world.

Choose the line of work which you think best suited to you. That done, you have laid the foundation of success. Then demand of yourself: "What glorious discovery can I fling into the lap of progress? With what new and undreamed splendor can I add to the beauties already achieved by others who have done similar work?" Get the answer to that, command all your energies and resources to the materialization of that answer, and you lay powerful and productive hands on the implements of your trade or the principles of your profession.

If hell is paved with good intentions, it is built and bastioned with unworthy ambitions. A man can go no higher than his

ideals—and merely to be rich is an ignoble wish. Even if you realize that wish, you have at forty a waistline too big by fourteen inches—and that's all.

This is, just now, preëminently a money age. The competition of display, brag, and ostentation, among women as well as men, is of the keenest. Social position is too often gauged and determined by the pronouncements of Bradstreet and Dun. "How much have you got?" is frequently the test, instead of "What are you doing?"

But take a tip from Midas!

To-day the yellow blight of money love is apt to wither the flowers of promise that budded yesterday in the rich fields of your imagination.

There is in nature and all the affairs of men a "law of necessary upwardness." If you are always striving for a high thing, you will go upward—slowly at first, but always upward. If you are not looking upward, you will go down. You cannot be stationary. If you set for yourself a goal which can be reached, an object which can be realized in every particular, you are through the moment you do realize it. There is nothing left for you to do, nowhere to go. When you reach that point, you connect with ruin.

That explains the deadly results of money love. Money can be made, even by the gross man. But, when he has made it, he has out-distanced his ideal. No idealism is left in him. He is Midas all over again—a poor judge of music. And he ends by ruining his health, atrophying his brain and, nine times out of ten, losing the very thing that ruined him—money—when it is too late to take a new start.

The poker player who's always counting his chips loses because he thinks so much about money that he can't give intelligent thought to the playing of the game. By the same token, the business man who's always counting and loving his money hasn't the necessary mental energy to study and know changing conditions, new markets, and improved ways of doing business.

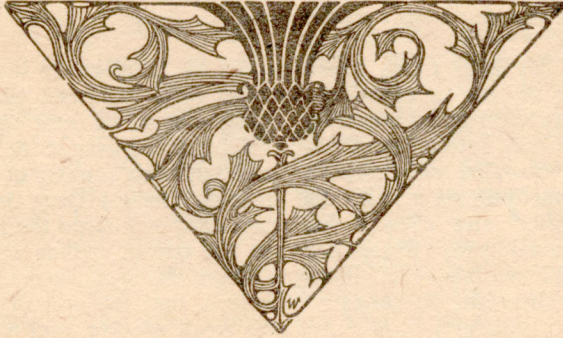
He who keeps his mind always on his money instead of always on his work stands just about as much chance of winning as the tennis player who keeps his eye always on his racket instead of always on the ball.

In the affairs of men the excellence of the performance is invariably influenced by the height of the motive. More than that, the

appearance of a man's face is shaped by the wishes of his heart. Compare the grossness of him who lets down at forty because he has all the money he wants, with the keen, alive, intellectual look of him who at forty is busy with plans to add to the chain of his

achievements new beads of accomplishment. You can see the difference a mile away.

Love the great game—and those with whom you play will pay you tribute. But take a tip from Midas—play for the worthwhile stakes.



Slippin'

By Berton Braley

I FEEL myself slippin' again,
 I said I was done with the road;
 The places I'd seen and I'd been
 Had not got me nuthin', I knowed;
 I said I'd stay home and behave,
 And gather the shekels and yen,
 But though that's the promise I gave,
 I feel myself slippin' again.

I know that I oughta stay home—
 "You stick to your job," I repeat,
 "You ain't got no business to roam"—
 But there's such an itch in my feet!
 I'm sore on my work an' my play,
 I'm restless an' fretful, an' when
 I think "it's my duty to stay,"
 —I feel myself slippin' again.

I've tried to be calm an' content
 With home an' the work that I've got,
 But life's a long time to be spent
 Stuck close to one job an' one spot;
 An' so if you happen to see
 A dust cloud that's movin', why then
 You're safe if you bet it is me
 —I feel myself slippin' again!

Done in Yellow

By Rothvin Wallace

Author of "An Ebony Finish," "Colored à la Mode," Etc.

You will have to read this story to see just how appropriate the title is. The Honorable Horatio Pinkwiddy meets a colored vamp and a member of the secret service

IN the seclusion of his hotel room, where he felt there was no one to eavesdrop, Mr. Horatio Pinkwiddy, grand traveling president of the Great International Association for the Protection of Freeborn Negro Americans, sometimes forgot that he was "college educated," and allowed his speech to revert to racial type. Except for a few inconsequential matters, Mr. Pinkwiddy was happy. Therefore, he sang:

"Dar's de yallah dat spahkle in de gold;
Dar's de yallah ob de fresh sunflowah;
Dar's de yallah gal, wif huh pomade haiah,
An' de yallah-shimin' sun f'om above.

"Dar's de golden rod in de autumn,
An' de black-eye Susan in de fall;
But de bestes' lub I has fo' all
Ain't got nuffin to do wif whut I say,
'Cept de yallah dat spahkle in de gold."

It was a quaint old plantation chant that had come to Mr. Pinkwiddy from his mammy and his mammy's mammy, and he sang it with a great deal of feeling—especially those lines that related to "the sparkle in the gold." Meanwhile, he was costuming himself as a gentleman should.

Among the aforementioned inconsequential matters that agitated Mr. Pinkwiddy, one might be named as Mrs. Virgin Dashman, called also, by her envious rivals in the ultra social set, "Virgie the Vamp." Another agitator of the usually placid mind of Mr. Pinkwiddy was Miss Ivy Leech, who was proving herself all that her name might be construed to imply. A third agitating influence, at a moment that Mr. Pinkwiddy considered more or less psychological, was a dark, mysterious stranger, who wore a big slouch hat and comported himself in a manner so decorous that no one could take exception to his conduct, yet was so disquieting to an elastic conscience that the possessor of such was sure enough troubled. He was reported to be a Federal law officer, but that remained merely a matter of conjecture.

As Mr. Pinkwiddy looked down into the street from his hotel window, he flashed a glimpse of all of these agitators. There was Virgin, sitting over at the soda water, sundae, and sandwich counter of the Fashion Fountain and Society Drug Store; at the popular post-card rack stood the fairly dark Ivy, and, on the corner, puffing at a fat, black cigar, lounged the mysterious stranger. It seemed, indeed, that the eyes of all were riveted on his small window, and were capable even of boring through the dark background to the dim corner where he was changing into a becoming pink union suit.

Mr. Pinkwiddy shrank modestly into a closet and peered discreetly forth, as he followed the lustrous orbs of Mrs. Dashman, bent on a roving appraisal of the hotel across the way. She sure was attractive, that gal, not only in a most delightfully pulchritudinous manner, but also in the matter of material worldly wealth. And Mr. Pinkwiddy repeated the refrain of his touching melody:

"But de bestes' lub I has fo' all
Ain't got nuffin' to do wif whut I say,
'Cept de yallah dat spahkle in de gold."

Incidentally, Miss Ivy Leech had a dark, frowning eye peeled out for that "Vamp" woman, while a tender gleam in the other eye went forth in affectionate appeal to Mr. Pinkwiddy. Ivy was one of those uppity-refined gals, with more family behind her than wealth in hand, her father having been a well-known professional man—a Pullman porter, twenty years on one run. Also, Ivy was intellectual. For her services in helping to organize the local lodge of the Great International Association for the Protection of Freeborn Negro Americans, Mr. Pinkwiddy had seen that she was elected grand district president of the Ladies' Auxiliary. Later, he sold her ten dollars' worth of the Twenty-year Guarantee Maturity Bonds of the G. I. A. P., et cetera; but just for that,

he didn't calculate on passing over his heart and soul in lieu of interest.

Mr. Pinkwiddy drew a fresh, green silk shirt over the upper part of his pink union suit, tucked the tail into a pair of neatly pressed cream-colored flannel trousers, and felt himself sufficiently covered to venture a closer inspection of the doings in and about the Fashion Fountain. Open windows permitted him to catch an occasional snatch of conversation from the street.

"Lookin' fo' sumbuddy in pertic'lah?" he heard Virgin inquire, bathing Miss Leech with a sententious eyeful of disdain.

"Whut I is lookin' fo' ain't sumbuddy's partic'lar bizness," responded Ivy determinedly, transfixing the inquisitive Virgin through her intellectual, black celluloid-rimmed window glasses.

"Reckon a lady kin g'ess," sniffed Virgin.

"Reckon huh could," retorted Ivy; "but as I is ain't lookin' in de mirrah, I ain't see no lady heah'bouts."

"Lawd!" groaned Mr. Pinkwiddy, but not without a smirk of pride. "Without looking into a mirror, I can see that those ladies are discussing and commenting upon a subject, the kernel of which is me, myself. I certain, sure wish——"

What Mr. Pinkwiddy actually wished remained unexpressed in silent thought, while he knotted a purple four-in-hand tie in a fold collar that matched his green silk shirt, and inserted his famous alias diamond horseshoe stickpin.

Briefly, he wished that Ivy would cease to be such a persistent clinging vine. Just now, he preferred the tender tendrils of Mrs. Virgin Dashman—at least, until he could investigate the extent of her wealth.

"Don't strain yo' eyes lookin' fo' a lady in sumbuddy else's mirrah," floated upward in the dulcet tones of Virgin; "'cause iffen yo' does, yo' is gwine hab pay damage fo' smashin' dat glass, an' suffah seben yeahs bad luck into de bahgain."

Mr. Pinkwiddy donned his modish, saw-edged straw hat, took his bamboo stick in hand, lighted a gold-tipped cigarette, and gave himself a final approving once-over in the bureau mirror. He was ready to go down—but he hesitated, hoping that Ivy Leech might get tired and make herself absent, and that the mysterious stranger in the slouch hat might elect to chew his cigar somewhere other than on that corner. Somehow, that man made him nervous. He was

big and black, and looked sort of rough—not the kind of chap that Mr. Pinkwiddy was accustomed to meet in his social set.

And then happened the unexpected. The mysterious stranger walked right down to the Fashion Fountain, doffed his sombrero to Miss Leech, and carried her off on his arm, leaving Virgin to the enjoyment of a cynical smile and the warm dregs of her chocolate ice-cream soda.

"'Cept de yallah dat spahkle in de gold," thrilled Mr. Pinkwiddy as he took the stairs, two at a bound.

"I kinda susespect yo'-all'd be drappin' in," greeted Mrs. Dashman, giving him the tip of a gloved hand in a way that invited him to occupy the stool next to hers at the Fashion Fountain. "An' iffen yo' ain't jes' de elegantes' man—my, oh, my!" Virgin swung her gold hoop earrings effectively and bestowed a languorous look from her sunshine eyes.

"I assure you," replied Horatio gallantly, "that I am always eager and anxious to be present and apparent in any place and situation wherein your gracious elegance enriches and charms the circumambient efflatus of the atmospheric enjoyments thereof."

"An' yo' sho' do speak de mostes' educated langwidge ob any man whut I knows," added Virgin, with conscious pride in the subtlety of her compliment.

"As a college-educated gentleman, it is my professional business to express myself in the most carefully chosen and elegantly selected minims of that speech which we name and designate as English, to wit and so forth," replied Mr. Pinkwiddy gravely, with a bow that had been trained carefully not to ruffle the perfect set of his cream flannel-clad shoulders. "Allowing me to return the compliments of the occasion unto you, Mrs. Dashman, with the assurance that you reflect me in kind, as being the fairest of all fair ladies."

"How yo' does talk, Mistah Pinkwiddy," was Virgin's clever retort. "An' iffen whut yo' say am intend to mean 'hab anuddah,' in langwidge whut I fail to ondahstan', den I's gwine mak' motion to de sodah watah fellah fo' de same."

And Virgin proceeded to do just that, having her glass refilled with chocolate ice-cream soda. Mr. Pinkwiddy ordered a lemon phosphate, which brought the bill to a total of twenty cents, and generously told the boy to keep the change out of a two-bit piece.

"Yo' sho' is a genahous man," sighed Virgin.

"That comes of the professional necessities accruing to one of my standing and position in the community and the world at large," explained Mr. Pinkwiddy modestly.

Having finished their drinks, Mr. Pinkwiddy suggested an hour at the movies, but Virgin thought that it would be more pleasant to wander homeward and spend the time on her front porch. That suited Mr. Pinkwiddy precisely, as Virgin's front porch was just about the finest in town.

And right here, a word about Virgin might not be amiss. She had been in town only two weeks, and, in fact, was somewhat of a mystery; but it was evident that she was a lady of wealth, else she could not have rented the house owned by the widower. "Carolina" Glory, who now had an important job as deck hand on the canal boat. This house stood at the darktown end of Main Street—sort of semisuburban, and was rather a show place, having six rooms, two open fireplaces, nine fruit trees, running water in the yard, and a wide veranda. For this, Virgin had contracted to pay thirteen dollars a month.

Also, in other respects, Virgin was a lady of attainments. Ostensibly, she had come to town as organizer of the Ladies' League of Colored Constituents; but when she learned that Mr. Pinkwiddy had beaten her to it with the G. I. A. P. F. N. A., she decided not to organize any further. Instead, she exchanged dollar bills with Mr. Pinkwiddy, for mutual membership in their respective orders, and opined that she would settle down for a spell and have a nice time. This she was doing, somewhat at the expense of Mr. Pinkwiddy; but the astute Mr. Pinkwiddy was by no means inactive in seeking to devise a method whereby he might accumulate a few hundred per cent on his investment.

"If I might be so bold as to inquire and ask," he remarked adroitly, as they wandered toward the Glory house, "where is it that you place for aggrandizement the increment earnings from your operations in the business world?"

"Meanin', whut does I does wif ma money receipts?"

"Since you express it with such and so much delicate frankness, Mrs. Dashman, that is my meaning, but without the inquisitive interrogation that the question might imply and designate."

"Whut fo' yo' call me Missus, 'stid ob jes' Virgie?" she retorted irreverently with a sideways-lookin' sigh that would have melted a stronger man than Mr. Pinkwiddy.

"That's on account of my politeness and respect."

"Some mens I don't lak so p'lite an' 'spectful," she murmured.

They were passing, then, among the nine fruit trees on the Glory estate, and Mr. Pinkwiddy could not do otherwise than give the shapely shoulders of the yielding Virgin a pseudo-amorous squeeze.

"Do you buy bonds—Virgie?" he asked presently, reverting to the subject closest to his heart. He was thinking, of course, of those bonds of the G. I. A. P. F. N. A.

"Gov'ment bonds, ob couhse," she answered. "Did yo' ebah lub nobuddy but me?"

They were sitting now in the shade of the Glory veranda, and Mr. Pinkwiddy was compelled to give affirmative answer to the question that seemed closest to her heart.

"Seems jes' lak us was made each fo' t'othah," she sighed.

"Seems so, Virgie," he confessed. "Do you know that black slouch-hat man, who walked off to-day with Miss Ivy Leech?"

"Dat nobuddy man? He jes' Moses Fox, de gov-munt sehcret-sehvice agunt, which I meet up wif one time in Memphis. Whut he is spookin' bouten heah fo' I don't know, lessen it am fo' to spahk dat Ivy Leech gal. Is yo' intehumrested?"

"Neither interested nor disturbed about so trivial a matter," lied Mr. Pinkwiddy, who was tickled to death at the information.

If Moses Fox were in town merely to spark Ivy Leech, it took a double burden off his chest. First place, the secret-service agent was not there to spy on his doings and, in the second place, he would relieve him of the annoyance of Ivy Leech. What, indeed, could be finer?

To Mr. Pinkwiddy's immediate discomfiture, however, he could center Virgie on no subject other than that of love. As a man of business, he played the game, of course; but he made an excuse to get away as soon as possible. Virgie sure was in no mood to talk business with a man who had an overload of twenty-year maturity bonds of the G. I. A. P. F. N. A.

On his way back to the Ritz-Regis Hotel, Mr. Pinkwiddy was accosted, not two hundred yards from Virgie's house, by a queer

lout of a country nigger, who carried a grimy gunny sack over his shoulder.

"Is—is yo' Mistah Pinkwiddy?" stammered the timorous nigger.

"I have the honor to be the same which you address," admitted Mr. Pinkwiddy. "Who are you?"

"I—I—I's Cypress Boggs, come f'om de Ribbah Plantashum. I's a membah ob yo' oahdah, which I jine las' Thu'sday week."

"One of my boys, eh?" Mr. Pinkwiddy always was patronizingly polite to the members of the organization. "Well, what can I do for you, Cypress?"

"C-c-c-could I mak' speech wif yo' confidenshal?" Cypress looked furtively about, then cast his rolling eyes appealingly on Mr. Pinkwiddy.

"I can see and observe no reason why you cannot address me in such manner," Horatio assured him. "What is resting heavy on your mind, and what are you carrying in that bag?"

The furtive eyes of Cypress again cast about the landscape, but found no one to overhear his speech.

"Whut is restin' is mo' heavy on my shoul-dah dan onto ma mind," he replied ambiguously.

"Well, what is weighing upon your shoulder?" laughed Mr. Pinkwiddy.

"Gol' brick!" whispered Cypress, again flashing a glance over the scenery.

"Gold brick?" Mr. Pinkwiddy gave himself the enjoyment of a real, hearty laugh. "What are you doing with a gold brick?"

"W-w-white man gib it to me fo' a fibe-dollah bill which I axes him fo' totin' dat many gallums of gasumlene to run hes cayah outen de road down heah a ways."

Mr. Pinkwiddy indulged himself in a veritable paroxysm of laughter. "So, nigger, he gold-bricked you, eh? Let's see the gold brick."

Cypress ran his hand into the gunny sack and extracted a lump of dull, yellow metal, one end of which had decidedly sharp corners.

"Dat brick weigh twent'-fibe pound an' is wuth bouten six thousan' dollahs, 'cohdin' to de way de white man calc'late," said Cypress.

Mr. Pinkwiddy balanced the gold brick in hands and proceeded to laugh some more. "What for is your purpose and object in telling and informing me about this here gold brick, nigger?"

"I—I—I reckons mebbe yo'-all mought

gib me de puhchase price fo' same, sah, Mistah Pinkwiddy."

Mr. Pinkwiddy gufiawed. For the first time in his life, he had been picked for a sucker—and by a country nigger, with as old, moth-eaten a game as the gold-brick swindle. Really, it was very funny. Mr. Pinkwiddy never had heard of anything quite so raw. Not a bit of finesse had been employed. Here was an ignorant, country nigger, coming up to him on the road, offering to sell him a gold brick out of hand.

"How many money you ask?" he inquired.

"Dat's fo' yo' to say, sah, 'ceptin' dat de white man owe me fibe dollahs fo' sehvices rendahed."

"How come you the gold brick at all?"

"Whiles I's ploddin' 'long de road, up comes a white man in a motah machine cayah, an' he says: 'Niggah, I's all outen gas,' an' den he say he pay me fibe dollahs iffen I git him fibe gallums. When I totes dem fibe gallums back, obah a mile ob hot road, he say he got no ready change money, but he's gwine gib me dis heah gold brick, which is mak ma foachune. Den he take a ax an' split dis heah piece offen a big hunk. He say dat is stole f'om de English cum-signmunts ob gold which is come to dis country, an' I is got to be vely ceahful whur I disposeses ob it, countin' de law. Dat's how come I axes yo', Mistah Pinkwiddy, to buy dat hunk ob gold brick."

Mr. Pinkwiddy regarded Cypress in amused surprise. "And what makes you think and believe that I might wish to buy and purchase a gold brick?"

"'Countin' de fact yo' is so wise an' smaht, Mistah Pinkwiddy."

The wise and smart gentleman pondered for a moment. Then he smiled; but it was a different smile than the one he had worn a few minutes before. Now he had an idea.

"Nigger," he said sternly, "you have been bunkoed—by the old and well-known gold-brick swindle. Your gasoline cost you one dollar and sixty-five cents. I shall give you that, plus two bits for your trouble, making one dollar and ninety cents in all."

"Dat moughty fine, thank yo', sah," responded Cypress.

"But say nothing about it, understand."

"No, sah, not iffen yo' say so, sah."

"Of course," pursued Mr. Pinkwiddy, "this metal was not stolen from anybody; but the white man virtually and actually stole those

five gallons of gasoline from you. Here, now, is your one dollar and ninety cents."

"Thank yo', sah," replied Cypress, slipping the change into his pocket.

With an entire new aspect on life, Mr. Pinkwiddy wrapped the gold brick in his lavender silk handkerchief, tucked it under his arm, and resumed his journey to the Ritz-Regis. He chuckled at the thoughts that were cavorting through his facile mind. Twenty-five pounds of gold, he figured, were worth, approximately, the interesting sum of six thousand dollars; but there were times and conditions when an equivalent weight of brass might be made equally remunerative.

Mr. Pinkwiddy took the gold brick to his hotel, wrapped it in a newspaper, and threw it into the bottom drawer of his bureau. Then he summoned a messenger boy and sent a note to Mrs. Virgin Dashman, inviting her to come down and join him in a swell café dinner.

"But de bestes' lub I has fo' all
Ain't got nuffin' to do wif whut I say,
'Cept de yallah dat spahkle in de gold."

So sang Mr. Pinkwiddy, after having received Virgin's collect message note, in acceptance of his invitation. He regarded himself, now, as a child of more or less circumstance. He had been thinking, and thinking hard, of some means by which he might separate Virgin of a part of her wealth. All that now remained was to invent a plausible story, to have Virgin invest in that gold brick. And before she arrived, Horatio was ready for her.

Mr. Pinkwiddy made his prospective victim thoroughly comfortable. He had ordered a special, rose-shaded candle placed on a snowy white table in a remote corner of the select dining room of the Ritz-Regis. Then he ordered lavishly: green turtle soup, catfish and waffles, broiled tenderloin of possum with candied sweet potatoes, fried chicken and green corn, watermelon and strawberry ice cream, fancy pastry with hot chocolate and whipped cream float.

The waiter listened with eyes and ears and mouth agape as Mr. Pinkwiddy hurled this order at him.

"Yassah," he responded limply, and went away. Presently, he returned to remark: "De boss say dat de onlies' paht ob dat oadah he kin sehbe am cabbage soup, boiled cahp fish, an' stew chicken à la fricumsee, wif boil sweet 'tatoes wif deys hides on an' watahmellum wifout no float. Dat's whut

he say. Reckon yo' mought hab coffee fo' deseht?"

Virgin reckoned she would be delighted with such a menu, while Mr. Pinkwiddy gave grudging assent, at the same time grumbling against the lack of service in these small-town hotels.

"Must seem hard," he commented, "for a lady of your attainments and wide experiences to be compelled to eat and exist on the sparse and scarce varieties that are offered and sold in such third-rate places."

"When dey is lub to feed de soul, de eats don' mattah a lot," she replied softly.

There she was—off again on that love stuff, while Mr. Pinkwiddy had a heart full of golden presentiments.

"But a lady with incomes from rich investments like you have and hold and enjoy," he persisted, "must feel pained and disappetized, sometimes. Still, this is the best and most expensive that is afforded and allowed to be enjoyed in this town. I reckon, with your experience among men and affairs, you receive and get a chance now and again to invest in certain things at big profits that are—well, are not just in accordance with the law and order, but which pay and disburse large and gratifying profits?"

"Iffen yo' hab refeehance to de gin traffic, I hab some easy money connectshums," she replied frankly.

That was enough for Mr. Pinkwiddy. He rubbed his hands under the table, licked his lips clean of chicken stew, and smiled.

"Ever enjoy profits and gains from investment dealings in what we might designate as a gold ring, which is quite safe and certain?" he ventured ambiguously.

Mrs. Dashman gave him a coy glance from the depths of her sweeping lashes.

"Is yo' leadin' up to a pupposement bouten a gold weddin' ring? 'Cause iffen yo' does, I puffuhs plat'num." Mr. Pinkwiddy swallowed hard. The question was too sudden. "Anyhow, whutebah yo' is," hastened Virgin "I's gwine say I is got to hab consid'ble time fo' considumrashums—not sayin' right off I ain't got feelin's ob symp'thy an' respec' fo' yo' soot."

"That's right," gulped Mr. Pinkwiddy. "That's right and proper that you should consider a long while about such a matter, Mrs.—Virgie." He felt infinitely relieved that she was not inclined to press the point. "But right now, immediately, the matter which I wish to suggest with regard to a

gold ring, is a little investment—yes, a little investment between ourselves and a third unnamed party.”

“How come?” inquired Virgie, with sapient interest.

“Are you pledged and prepared to guard and protect a secret?”

With the back of a deft hand, Mr. Pinkwiddy brushed a smear of watermelon from his left ear, bent across the table, so that the candle light might play on his alias diamond horseshoe scarfpin, and let his voice sink into a tone of whispered confidence.

“Would you safeguard a man in distress, and, at the same time, add aggrandizements and emoluments to your own income exchequer?” he murmured.

“How come?” Virgin repeated, fanning his nostrils with a swish of her perfumed hair.

“Have you heard or read of the gold bullion bricks which England has been and is now shipping to this great and glorious country, for to redeem and pay off certain bonds which were bought and sold during the war?”

“I sho’ has,” admitted Virgin. “Dem mak’ ma mouf glittah wif watah, come think-in’ bouten such many money, all in de one place.”

“Well,” confided Mr. Pinkwiddy, “I have acquired and got one.”

Virgin regarded him with large-eyed wonder. “How come?”

“Sh-h-h-h!” Mr. Pinkwiddy almost planted a cream-flanneled elbow in his wet watermelon rind, while getting his mouth close to Virgin’s baby oyster-pearl pendant earring. He swept the select dining room with a surreptitious glance of caution. “Can you keep a fine trade secret?” he repeated.

“Jes’ tell me,” she urged. “Whutebah am wo’th keepin’ ain’ gwine be spill by me.”

Mr. Pinkwiddy took a deep breath. “That gold brick—specie-money brick which I possess was stolen from the English government,” he blurted forth in a wheezing exhalation.

“Deed, now,” remarked Virgin casually. She didn’t seem at all disturbed by being made an accessory after the fact of international grand larceny. “How come?”

“That gold-money brick, worth six thousand dollars, was seized and taken on ship-board by an English Negro, sailor-purser friend of mine, who is now here, and in need of ready and immediate cash disbursements. Of course, he cannot present and offer that

gold-money brick at once in the free and open marts and markets of trade. He must be careful. You understand?”

“Deed I does,” Virgin assured him. “Ma speriumce wif de gin trade done fit me fo’ knowin’ bouten de secrets ob de necessariums ob life.”

“Well,” he resumed, taking a whiff of her perfumed hair and another look at that baby-oyster earring, “that sailor-purser man of which I have made remark, is in sore need of one thousand dollars cash money, in order to put through a little deal. In just one week from the date and instant from which he borrows same, he promises to pay and return double the sum, or two thousand dollars. Meanwhile, and in the interim, he leaves me a English gold-bullion brick worth six thousand dollars, for security on the lend of his loan.”

“Whyunt yo’ done len’ de po’ man dat thousam dollahs?” inquired Virgin.

“Cause I ain’t got only the half of the sum total in ready cash money, free from that which I have tied up in my business investments.”

In that, Pinkwiddy spoke a partial truth. He did have five hundred dollars in crisp bills, proceeds of recent shrewd operations in connection with the Great International Association for the Protection of Free-born Negro Americans—and a lucky crap game. Also, he jingled four dollars and thirty cents in ready change, in a pocket of his cream flannel trousers.

“Meanin’, den, dat yo’ axes me to invest dat remainin’ fibe hond’ed dollahs?”

The question was startlingly direct; but Mr. Pinkwiddy, glancing furtively from Virgin’s black-pearl eye to her baby-oyster earring, realized that she was a sure-enough business woman, with whom he would better not attempt too much oily paint camouflage.

“That is which I might have the pleasure to suggest and recommend, provided you have the ready cash money to spare,” he responded.

“Dat’s easy,” smiled Virgin. “Ifen yo’ hab say fibe thousam, all I is got to do am to reach down into ma impobted Patee silk stockin’ laig.”

“Is that sure enough so?”

Mr. Pinkwiddy’s eyes bulged with amazement, while his heart thumped with avarice. Also, he excoriated himself for a fool, for not having invented a sixty-thousand-dollar gold brick, and going to the depths of Virgin’s

imported Paris silk-stocking-leg bank. However, the die had been cast, and Mr. Pinkwiddy knew enough about dice shooting not to attempt to change the spots after the bones were on the floor.

"Dat's de truf," affirmed Virgin, wagging her baby oyster earrings and filling the air with the scent of her perfumed tresses. "But whur is I gwine git s'cuhety? 'Side f'om lub intehest in yo'se'f, I lakways axes de trade intehest ob a bizness woman."

"Why," beamed Mr. Pinkwiddy, "you are to hold and retain that English government gold brick in custody yourself, as security against the promised payments of my friend."

"Dat sho' is a fine arrangemunt," gushed Virgin.

"You see," Mr. Pinkwiddy insisted on explaining, "if 'twasn't for certain business obligations that tie up and utilize my ready cash money in bond and stock investments, I could carry this little loan myself, but——"

"Yo' is said enuf," interposed Virgie pleasantly. "As a bizness woman, I gets yo' on-dahstandin' ob de sitchwashum, an' accoadhs wif yo' standp'int in de mattah. Now, 'countin' de lub I beahs fo' yo', how soon quick is yo' want dat cash money fo' yo' frien'?"

With an elaborately berubied hand, Virgin made a sententious move toward her imported Paris silk-stocking leg. But Mr. Pinkwiddy was a diplomat. As matters stood, apparent haste might spoil desired speed.

He knew the gold-brick game of old. He knew that, to be regular, he must allow Virgin to bore into that gold brick, or to take filings therefrom, for assay, before he could expect her to lay down cash money for an interest in the same. And it was going to take a little time to doctor that gold brick with enough pure metal to stand the test.

"How soon yo' gwine show me de value ob dat gold bullyum brick?" demanded Virgin, with her berubied hand fluctuating between her baby-oyster earrings and her imported Paris silk-stocking leg.

That question compelled Mr. Pinkwiddy to think fast. He figured that he might melt down an old gold ring, weld the plastic result to one end of that plated hunk of brass, hand a nail file to Virgin, and let her take her own sample for examination to the local elite jeweler. But even that simple

process could not be accomplished in a moment.

"Well, lemme see," he stalled. "I reckon I can acquire that gold brick into our possession about by this time to-morrow evening."

Virgin pondered, while her black-pearl eyes dripped various kinds of sentiment.

"I does ma bizness quick," she said.

"But, of course," Mr. Pinkwiddy opined, "you will wish to examine the high-karat quality of the English gold in that brick, before you let out good money investments."

"Iffen a man ob yo' 'spons'bility an' 'poh-tance say dat gold brick am O. K. karats fine, den I ain't gwine axe no fuddah bouten it f'om no tank town jewelah. Deyfoah, iffen yo' is gwine perduce dat English gold bullyum brick, yo' bes' lef' it be quick comin', befo' I places ma investmunts money elsewheah. I don't lak cash money hangin' roun' an' makin' no hay whiles de sun shine."

"I see," beamed Mr. Pinkwiddy happily "You'd rather make dew while the moon shines—eh? My little joke, Virgie, thinking about that gin deal of which you expressed yourself; excuse my little joke." Mr. Pinkwiddy laughed heartily at his own humor. "Well, now," he resumed, "if you will pardon the occasion for my taking absence for a few minutes, perhaps I can locate my friend with that English gold brick, and deliver it into your safe-keeping this very, selfsame evening."

"Yo' excusemunts is asseptable undah de 'poh-tance ob de cirkemstances," Virgin assured him, with a switch of her opalescent baby oysters:

"Maybe you would accept another piece of watermelon to munch upon while I am absent," suggested Mr. Pinkwiddy.

"Thankee, no," declined Virgin. "But iffen de house hab got a pig foot an' a slab ob custahd pie, I'd jes' as lief top off eatin' suppah wif dem."

Fortunately, the house was so supplied and, having given the order that she be served accordingly, Mr. Pinkwiddy was free to slip up to his room and prepare that gold brick for profitable transfer. True, there wasn't much to prepare, but he thought he might give it a decent shine while waiting an effective length of time before returning to the dining room. But that gold brick wouldn't shine up equal to a corroded penny.

"Ain't even good brass," sniffed Mr. Pink-

widdy disdainfully, after having rubbed a hole in a purple silk sock in a vain effort to work up a polish.

However, he was comforted by Virgin's assurance that she would accept his impeccable word for its O. K. karat quality. Therefore, he wrapped it up in a neat little package, tied it with a delicate blue ribbon from a candy box and returned to the select dining room. There Virgin was alternately sucking a pig's knuckle, held daintily in her fingers, and, with the other hand, politely dishing in custard pie from a trading stamp, triple-plated teaspoon.

"Yo' got it?" she mumbled.

"This is the six-thousand-dollar English gold-bullion brick," he replied gravely, allowing it to fall on the table with a gentle thump.

"Us gwine take it right home to ma leased subhuhban estate," said Virgin, delicately licking pig's-foot jelly from her fingers.

He signed a check for two dollars and ninety-three cents, tax included, and they proceeded down to the end of Main Street, passing under the humid, mosquito-ridden dimness of Virgin's nine fruit trees, and into the soft, pink-shaded, kerosene lamp-lighted comfort of Virgin's combination drawing-room parlor.

"Res' yo'se'f easy, Horasheo," she invited, indicating a haircloth sofa with joint gestures of her baby oysters and her slenderly plump hand. "Bes' lay off yo' coat, 'countin' de wahmth ob de night; an' iffen yo' feet huht f'om de walk, yo' kin also lay off yo' shoes."

Mr. Pinkwiddy was too much of a gentleman to do either. Then he got a shock that was as pleasant as an ice bath to a man with a fever. Virgin turned her back, made motions toward the floor, then faced her inwardly nervous guest.

"Heah yo' is," she said nonchalantly, and passed over five hundred perfectly good United States of America dollars, exported from her imported Paris silk-stocking leg.

"Thank you, Virgie," said Mr. Pinkwiddy with dignity. "I can't tell you how much my friend is going to admire and appreciate this act of kindness." He arose and tore the wrapper from that English gold-bullion brick. "There," he remarked with well-feigned enthusiasm. "Did you ever see any thing so pure, dazzling, and beautiful?"

"Deed, ain't dat de truf?" warbled Virgin. "Dat seem to me jes' rumantic, lak

pirate gold, 'countin' it war stole offen a big English bullyum ship at sea."

Then she did something that, if one had been analyzing motives and purposes, might have seemed rather strange. She moved that soft pink-shaded kerosene lamp over to one of the windows, and turned the flame just a little higher. Mr. Pinkwiddy, however, was not concerning himself with feminine fussiness. He was more interested in making a get-away with those five hundred dollars, which he had tacked into the inside pocket of his cream flannel coat, while the getting was good. He would take the most convenient train, at the most convenient hour, no matter where it might be going.

"Yo' ain't gwine off wifout makin' me lub yo' a leetle some, is yo'?" Virgin protested modestly, with what was intended to be an alluring swish of her perfumed tresses.

"'Course not," replied Mr. Pinkwiddy with all the warmth of enthusiasm he could muster.

He allowed himself to sink back on the haircloth sofa, and permitted Virgin's soft, plump arms to encircle his green, silk collar.

"I was merely thinking and cogitating about the wise necessity of placing and depositing this money in the strong safe at the hotel office, on account of the fact that it is becoming late in the night and a gentleman of my standing is a mark for those thieves which are called by the police hold-up men."

"But yo' could set a leetle while," insisted Virgin, creeping closer about the green, silk collar.

"Well, when you talk like that, Virgie, your alluring charms are calculated to hold me in durance for maybe fifteen minutes longer," he said resignedly, allowing his lips to brush the baby oyster that dangled from her near ear.

Had he not been occupied in keeping his own nerves in order, he might have noticed that Virgin was becoming decidedly nervous, and that her black-pearl eyes shifted uneasily from the pink-shaded lamp in the window to the faded mosquito netting in the door. But when those fifteen minutes had elapsed, Mr. Pinkwiddy arose with firm determination. No feminine blandishments were going to hold him longer. He just had to go, and he expressed himself in gentle, but no uncertain terms.

"I got a busy day, a busy day ahead of me to-morrow, on account of a big movement

in certain Stock Exchange securities. Maybe, in the afternoon, we might discuss arranging with a minister of the gospel about tying that Gordian knot which is known as the bonds of matrimony. What do you say, Virgie?"

He made his voice very sweet and tempting, and again his green, silk collar was encircled.

"Yo' sho' speak moughty pleasant, Hora-sheo lub," she cooed.

After which Mr. Pinkwiddy literally tore himself away from her highly scented embrace. She followed him to the porch, begging him to linger longer; but as well might she have tried to halt a hungry mule, with the smell of oats in his nostrils, as to stay the departure of that frenzied financier.

A short distance from the house. Mr. Pinkwiddy encountered the country nigger who had sold him that gold brick for one dollar and ninety cents. He deigned to smile in passing, while he gave an inward chuckle at conjecturing the thoughts that Cypress might express to himself, could he know the profit that had been turned on that gold brick, and how easily the deal had been accomplished.

Halfway to the hotel he met that big, slouch-hat nigger, whom Virgin had designated as Moses Fox, the government secret-service man. Moses was traveling fast, toward the direction whence Mr. Pinkwiddy had come, and Mr. Pinkwiddy gave him all the street he needed. Perhaps it was his guilty fancy that Moses halted slightly and gave him a searching scrutiny. There was one, however, who did not halt. That person was Mr. Pinkwiddy.

Safely returned to the Ritz-Regis, Mr. Pinkwiddy acquired several time-tables in the office rack, and in his room he fell to studying these. It was only ten o'clock, and, by midnight, he hoped to be on his way. He had about decided on a train scheduled to leave at eleven-forty-nine, when there came a loud rap on his door. He thought, for a moment, that he would not answer. Whereupon, the rap graduated into an obvious kick against the flimsy portal. Mr. Pinkwiddy changed his mind and threw off the bolt. No other than Moses Fox, that secret-service agent, stood in the hall, slouch hat pulled over his eyes, and a glare on his face that seemed to be slightly ominous.

"W-w-w-what for and to whom am I in-

debted for the honor of this visit from a strange gentleman at this hour of the night?" spluttered Mr. Pinkwiddy nervously.

"Yo' is gwine fin' out moughty quick," snarled Moses, in a deep, gruff voice, thrusting his bulky shoulders forward and edging his way into the room. "Shet dat do' an' set down, whiles I espreses whut am agittatin' ma min'."

Moses emphasized his command by slamming a big revolver down on Mr. Pinkwiddy's table, and taking a belligerent stand.

"Y-y-y-yes, s-sir," agreed Mr. Pinkwiddy meekly. "W-w-who a-are you, i-if I may have the boldness to ask a-a-and in-inquire?"

"Yo' knows who I is," retorted the unpleasant stranger, throwing his coat back and thrusting a thumb in an armhole of his vest, thereby disclosing a large, shiny badge that was very, very impressive. "Evah-buddy in town know I's. Moses Fox, de sechret-sehvice agunt fo' de gov'munt. I is come axe yo' bouten dat gold brick, which I is infoahm yo' take away f'om a ignumrent niggah fo' de sum ob one dollah, ninety cents."

Mr. Pinkwiddy's thoughts flew fast. He was notably calm in grave emergencies, and here was a situation that demanded cool and careful treatment.

"Gold brick?" he repeated. Then he laughed—one of his ingratiating, appeasing laughs. "Say, Mr. Fox, that wasn't any part of a gold brick to which you make reference. That was nothing more nor less than a small hunk of brass."

"Hunk o' brass!" bellowed Mr. Fox. "Dat's all yo' know bouten it, yo' fool niggah. Dat which yo' call a hunk o' brass am a English gold bullyum brick, stole f'om a shipments to dis nashun. An' fuddahmoah, I is trail it down to yo' han's, an' is come heah to reclaim it. Now, yo' jes' perdooce dat gold bick, or I's gwine run yo' in as a gov'munt prisonah."

"C-c-c-could you wait until to-morrow morning?" ventured Mr. Pinkwiddy.

He was appalled at the turn of events. He had had no idea, of course, that he was dealing with an actual gold brick, nor could he have conceived that this secret-service man was in town on the trail of that piece of stolen metal.

"To-morrah mo'nin'!" bellowed Moses, thumping his big revolver. "Yo' is gwine git dat gold brick dis se'fsame night, iffen yo'

ain't got in yo' perseshum now, or yo' is gwine git run in."

Mr. Pinkwiddy was compelled to explain that he had given the gold brick to a lady friend, and would go for it at once. Luck surely was against him, for those beautiful five hundred dollars now were just the same as though they had never been. Of course, he would have to give them back to Virgin, to reclaim the gold brick.

"Yo' bes' go git it, den, right off," commanded Moses. "An' I is gwine trail right 'long wif yo' so dey ain't gwine be any monkeyshines play."

It was tough business, indeed, but Mr. Pinkwiddy had no alternative. As he sped down the dark street again, he could hear the heavy footfalls of Moses clattering behind, and could actually feel the presence of that terrible revolver. He found Virgin in a bewitching kimono, and surprised, of course, to see him so soon again.

"I have come to redeem that gold brick, Virgie," he palpitated.

"Oh! Is yo' frien' make use ob dat money so soon, an' tuhn profits in ouah favah?"

"N-no," hesitated Mr. Pinkwiddy. "But I have decided to call the whole deal off, on account of certain business reasons; and here is your five hundred dollars back, Virgie. Lemme have that gold brick quick."

"Fibe hondred dollahs?" she said coldly. "Yo' owes me de sum ob a thousam dollahs fo' de retuhn ob dat gold brick, Mistah Pinkwiddy."

Mr. Pinkwiddy was flabbergasted. He pleaded. He argued. He spoke of the love that he bore for her and for her only.

"Mistah Pinkwiddy," she replied firmly, "I is a bizness woman, an' when I mak deals fo' profits, den I espec's ma profits. Dat gold brick is gwine cost yo' de sum ob one thousam dollahs."

"Come along, heah!" bellowed a voice from the dark doorway. It was the voice of Moses Fox, and Mr. Pinkwiddy's heart sank into his boots. "I is been heah whut yo' say to dis lady, man, an' iffen yo' mak a deal wif huh to pay obah one thousam dollahs, den yo' bettah pay. As de innuhcent thu'd pahty, she ain't got no right to lose undah de lah an' oadah."

"But Virgie!" Mr. Pinkwiddy almost wept. "Ain't you got no heart at all?"

"I is a bizness woman, an' all I axes is dat thousam dollahs which yo' agree to pay."

There was no other way out of it. Virgin was adamant. Moses Fox was insistently demanding the return of that gold brick, under pain of arrest and a long term in the penitentiary. Mr. Pinkwiddy was helpless. Back, then, into Virgin's unfair hands went her own five hundred dollars, plus a like sum from his own inner pocket. It was his all, except for the four dollars and thirty cents of ready cash change that jingled in his pocket.

"Now, fool niggah spoht, yo' git along bouten yo' bizness, an' thank me fo' not placin' yo' behin' de bahs, whaur yo' b'longs."

And Mr. Pinkwiddy got along, as directed. He was conscious that Moses, hugging that detestible gold brick, was somewhere behind him, but the *soi-disant* grand traveling president of the G. I. A. P. F. N. A. was too crushed for utterance. He had his opinions about Virgie, but there was no one—no one in all the world who could give him solace in this hour of darkness.

Mr. Pinkwiddy flung himself upon his bed in great desolation, but his attempts to sleep were but a phantasmagoria of gold bricks and cruel women and gruff men who wore slouch hats and toted big revolvers. And then, to add to his weary moil, there came a knock on his door before he was prepared to arise.

"Two white mans is waitin' fo' yo' down in de lobby, Mistah Pinkwiddy," announced the bell boy.

Well, he would have to see them, of course. There was no means of escape.

"Inform the gentlemen that I will be down at once," he instructed the bell boy.

The character of his visitors did not surprise Mr. Pinkwiddy in the least. They were actual, bona-fide secret-service men. They showed him their credentials and proved their claim to authenticity.

"And now," said the elder of the two, "we want to know if you have seen or heard of a gold brick floating about among the colored folks in this town."

"That English gold-bullion brick?" blurted forth Mr. Pinkwiddy.

"I don't know of any English gold brick, but we are on the trail of a perfectly good American gold brick, worth about six thousand dollars, which was stolen from an express car in transit to the United States government."

Once again Mr. Pinkwiddy was flabber-

gasted. These gold bricks were getting quite too much for even his superintelligence. But the white gentlemen seemed kindly.

"We came to you," said the spokesman, "because we heard that you are a leader of your race, and thought you might have got some word about this gold brick. What do you mean about an English gold brick?"

"W-w-why, a country nigger offered to sell me a gold brick the other day—said it was stolen from an English shipment, sir."

"That's the fellow we're after," exclaimed the secret-service man. "The express-car robbers, who were white men, gave that nigger this gold brick for some service he did for them; and that nigger is a member of a band of black crooks. They've been working the badger game, with a woman who calls herself Virgin and a big man who wears a slouch hat and poses as a secret-service operative."

"My Lord!" groaned Mr. Pinkwiddy.

"Well, Pinkwiddy," concluded the secret-service man, "if you hear anything about these people or that gold brick, remember that the express company is offering a reward of a thousand dollars for the recovery of that bit of yellow metal."

"Yes, sir," responded Mr. Pinkwiddy weakly. "I—I—I'll remember, sir."

After their departure, Mr. Pinkwiddy took a cup of coffee, then decided on a desultory stroll to soothe his shattered nerves. And

whom should he meet but that Ivy Leech woman. He tried to dodge her, but it was no use.

"I's feelin' pow'ful peaht, dis mawnin'," she greeted.

"That's nice and fine," he replied dismally.

"Yah, sah, I is got a English gold-bullyum brick."

"Where'd you get it?" he almost screamed.

"Las' night, late, I make Mistah Moses Fox de lend ob a loan ob two hondred dollahs when he was pinch fo' money in a bizness deal. He say he gwine pay me back th'ee hondred dollahs, includin' de intehst money."

"Let me see that gold brick," commanded Mr. Pinkwiddy.

Yes, it was the same, identical lump of metal, and Mr. Pinkwiddy, by his persuasive methods, induced Ivy to allow him to take it right down to the white folks' hotel, where those two secret-service men were staying.

He was some man that day, was Mr. Pinkwiddy. He honestly paid Ivy her three hundred dollars, stuck seven hundred in his own pocket, and counted himself two hundred winner on the whole proceeding. Then he went and ordered an elegant meal of food victuals. As he waited to be served, he hummed happily to himself:

"But de bestes' lub I has fo' all
Ain't got nuffin' to do wif whut I say,
'Cept de yallah dat spahkle in de gold."



NEVER LET A CHANCE ROLL BY

HAVING exhausted the latest gossip about the League of Nations, Democratic senators, lounging in the cloakroom, started in on the "old reliable" of political conversation—William Jennings Bryan.

"A holy and universally respected old lady died not long ago down in a village in the southern part of my State," said a senator from Indiana. "The preacher conducting the funeral services was a stranger in the town, and was, therefore, not well acquainted with the old lady's history. Consequently, he hit on the happy plan of calling for appreciative remarks from those in the assemblage who had known her. Several stepped forward and pronounced their tributes.

"Then ensued a long pause.

"Finally, an old brother got to his feet, ran his fingers through his whiskers, and announced:

"All right; if everybody's done their speaking about our departed neighbor, I will now deliver a few short remarks on the tariff."

"That's like Bryan," concluded the senator; "irrepressible when campaign time comes on."

A Chat With You

JUST dig into your pocket for a dollar bill. Now lay it down and look at it. If you could only tack it down at the corners to stop the shrinking that has been going on these recent years, it would be a good thing. Also, it is probably not so clean as it was a few years ago. Back in the past when they talked about "tainted money" we had nice, clean, crisp bills. Now we have money that looks as if it were tainted but isn't. Still you can read what it says on it. The Federal Reserve bank promises to pay you a dollar.



THIS dollar is actually a draft which allows you to draw a certain amount of the natural wealth of the earth, combined with a certain amount of human labor, human brains, and ingenuity, and sometimes a certain amount of human trickery and fraud. If you spend it for four two-bit cigars, you will have bought some of the labor of the tobacco farmer, the cigarmaker, the cigar-box maker, and, last but not least, the genius who gave the cigar its name and put the beautiful picture on the box.

What else will the dollar do for you? It will carry you thirty miles or so on a train and maybe four miles in a motor car. It will take you into the movies a certain number of times. It won't get you much of a seat, however, in a regular theater. It will buy you anywhere from twenty to nearly two hundred cigarettes, according to your taste in smokes and boxes. It will get you a modest meal or necktie. It won't go very far

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YOU have the proof of what we say in your hands now. Turn to any story in the magazine and figure for yourself how much real brains went into the writing of it. They will all stand the test. The novel by Howard Fielding which opens this magazine was cut down considerably from its original form and comes pretty near being solid story and no padding. The story by Clarence Cullen just proves once more that Cullen is one of the greatest humorous writers living. You have read the

A CHAT WITH YOU—Continued.

first installment of Edgar Wallace's story, "The Daffodil Enigma." Easy as it is to read, do you think it was easy to write? Do you think you have any idea of the solution of the mystery? We would be willing to make a small bet that not one man in ten thousand can tell who committed the murder till the author discloses it himself. A month ago we completed the publication of one of the two greatest mystery stories of the last five years, "The Gray Room," by Eden Philpotts. "The Daffodil Enigma" is the other. Either would run six months in the ordinary magazine and would be the one big fiction feature of the year. In this magazine they are part of the regular run. Everything in the magazine is a big fiction feature.



LET'S keep on for a moment with the present number. You are already familiar with the fact that Hamish McLaurin has discovered a new vein of literary gold in vaudeville and theatrical life, and that we have discovered a new great writer in McLaurin. Brown, Knibbs, Roy Norton, Roy Hinds, Bertrand Sinclair are all names that mean the very best fiction of action, adventure, and human interest that money will buy, and they are all writing exclusively for this magazine.



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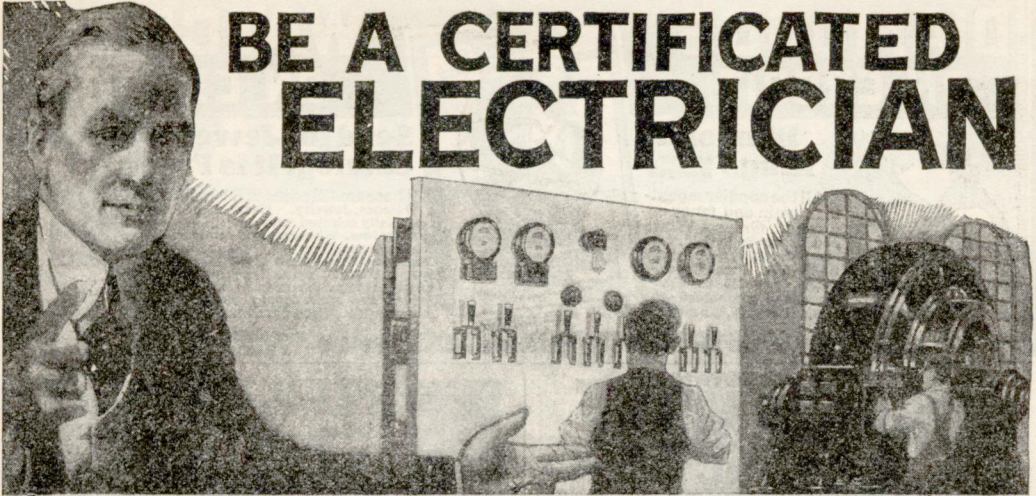
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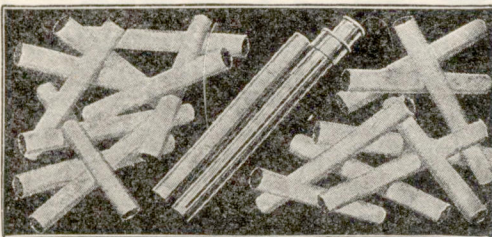
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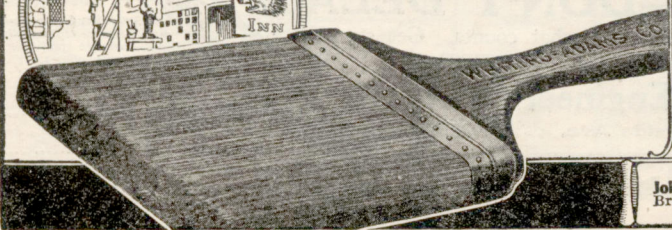
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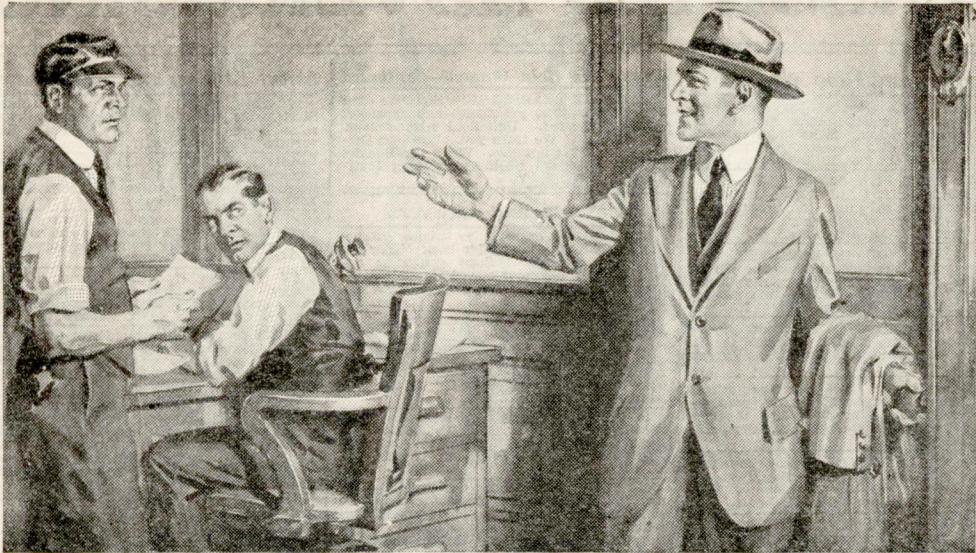
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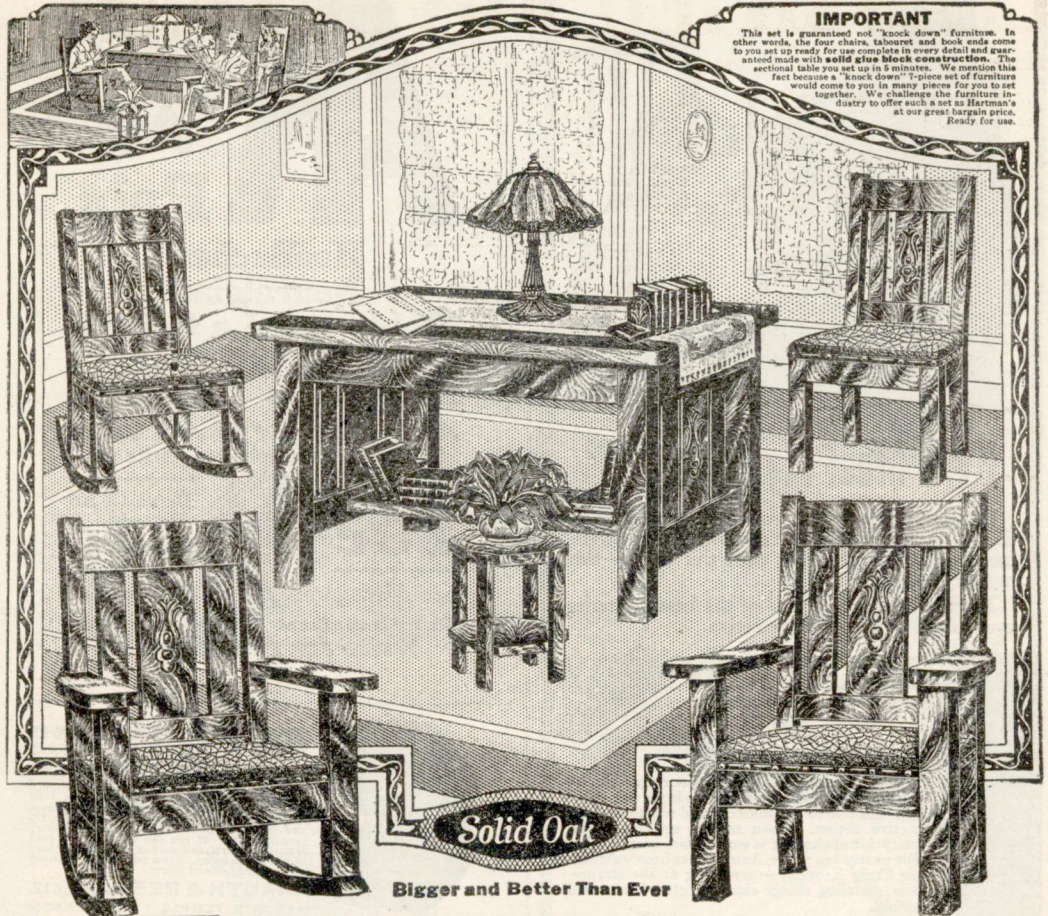
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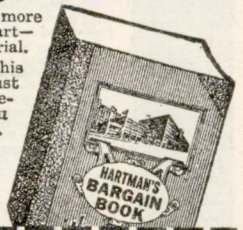
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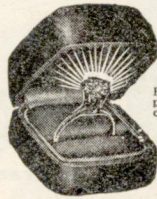
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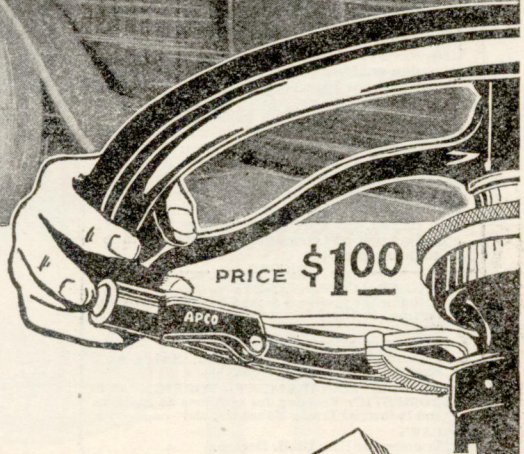
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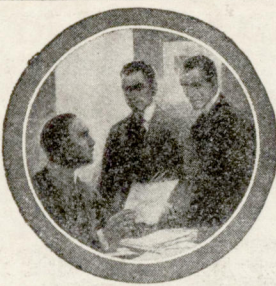
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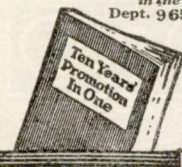
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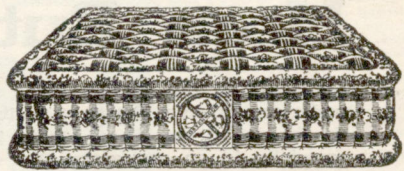
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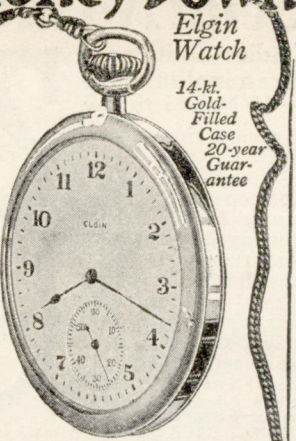
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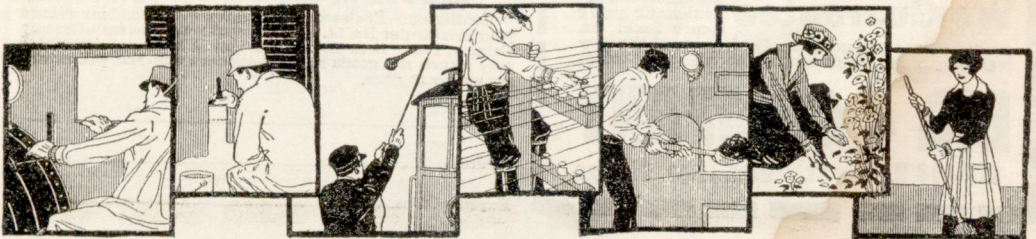


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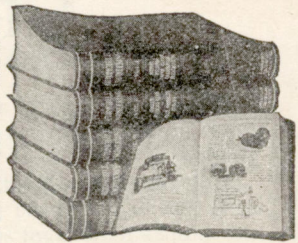
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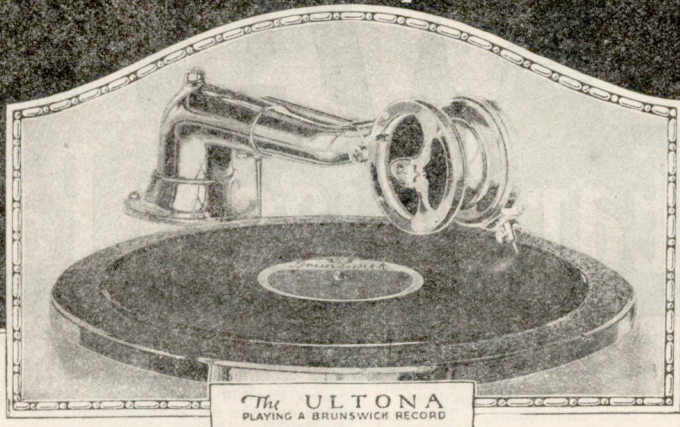
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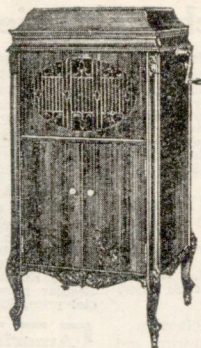
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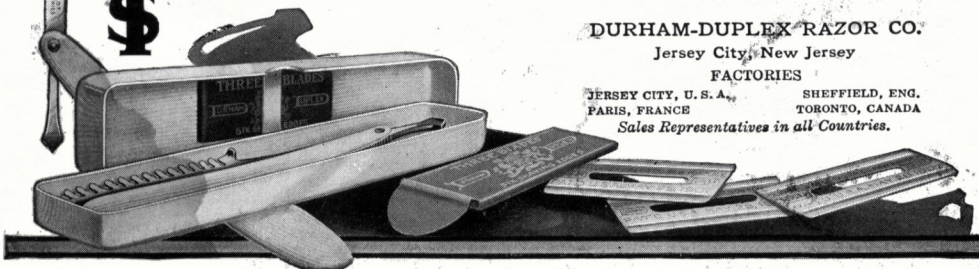


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