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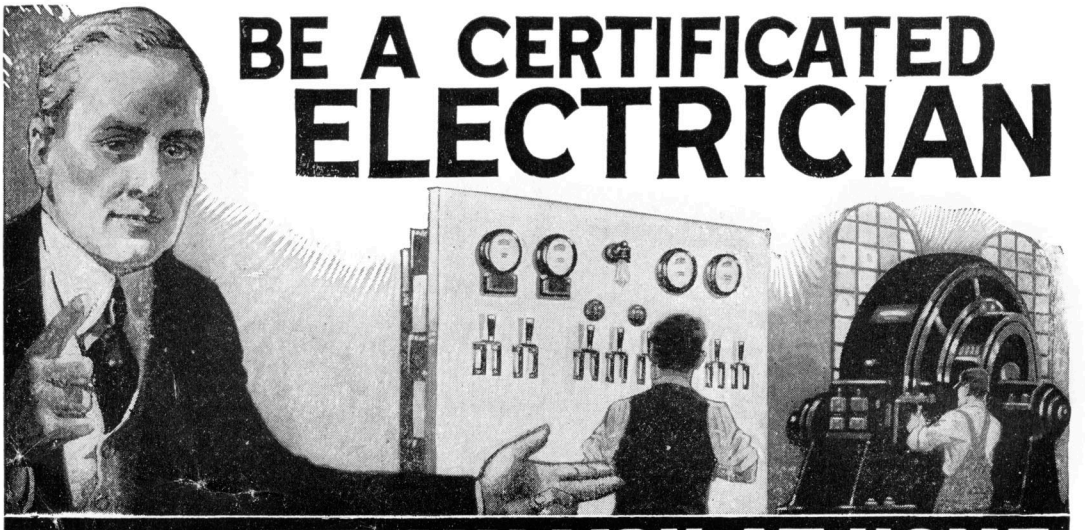

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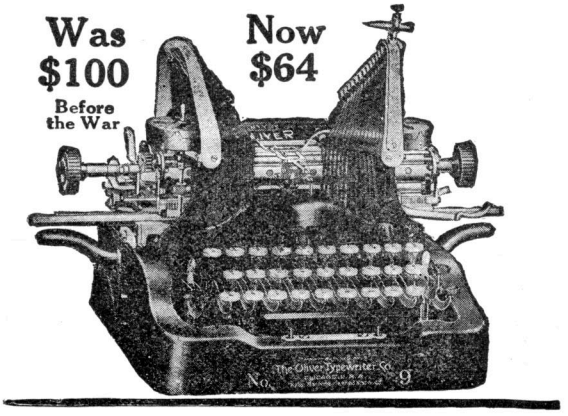

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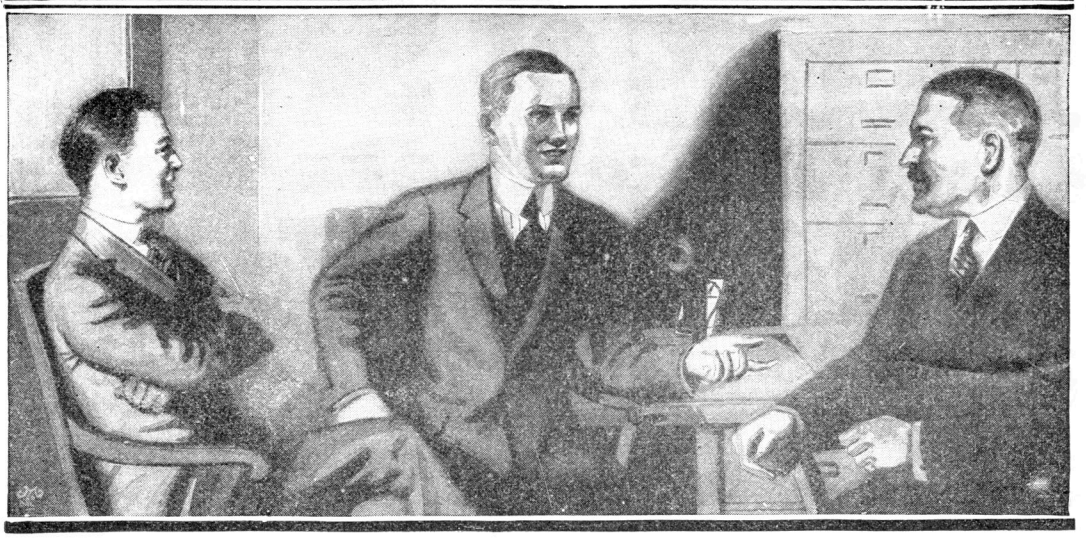

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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. LVIII. NOVEMBER 7, 1920. No. 2

The Count of Ten

By William Winter

There are only four or five great novels of the ring in the English language, and this is one of them. Mr. Winter knows the fight game from top to bottom, and he knows people. He has the rare gift of making you feel as if you were among the scenes and people he writes of. You will want to see more of Mr. Winter's work.

CHAPTER I.

MURIEL DIXON'S brother, Harold, better known as "Hap," loomed up in the space between the chairs and the rail of the gallery overlooking the floor of the gymnasium. Gigantic and bulky, he squeezed himself irresistibly past projecting knees, heedless of the annoyed sniffs of women and the resentful grunts of men, until he reached the chair that had been held for him beside his sister. He dropped into the seat, and Muriel felt a momentary fear that the flimsy chair would not withstand the strain and would be crushed beneath him.

"Now you're due to see something worth looking at," he remarked encouragingly. "They've a real artist instructing the boxing classes, and they're going to put the boys through their paces."

"I hope so," yawned Harry Wells. He would not have enjoyed the exhibitions at all, if it had not been for the presence of Muriel. As for the latter, she was a trifle shocked.

"Are they going to have a fight?" she asked anxiously.

"Fight!" her brother exclaimed. "Of course not. Just a little scientific sparring; and I dare say there won't be enough actual blood drawn to stir up a thrill. I wish they would stage a real fight! You might get a chance to see little 'Lysses Wolfe really letting himself loose!"

"Who is 'little 'Lysses Wolfe?'" inquired Muriel. "Why don't they call him something like 'The Walloping Wild Cat,' or 'The Kilkenny Kid?' I'm sure that little 'Lysses Wolfe doesn't sound like anything exciting."

"Don't be cute," Dixon admonished her. "I'll give you the real dope, if you want it. 'Lysses Wolfe is a young fellow who was born of poor but obscure parents, somewhere around here, about nineteen years ago. He is a graduate of our local high school, where his athletic fame was considerable. He picked up a knowledge of boxing, in some way, probably by fighting with other boys; and when I met him, he was already something of an artist, in that line."

"Is that all he does? Doesn't he earn his living?"

"Oh, yes! You see, I got interested in him when we organized the boxing class down here. We hired an instructor, and it wasn't long before 'Lyss knew more than the professional did. Just the other day, Mike McGloon, who isn't any dub, let me assure you, told me the boy could already give almost any of the welters an argument right now, and would soon be fit to take on the middles."

"Mercy!" shivered Muriel. "These technicalities have me in the middle of a welter also! But go on."

"Of course, 'Lyss didn't have to work until after he'd finished school. His father was a foreman or something, making enough to keep the two of them. But when he died, 'Lyss was left to his own resources, and looked for a job. I had become interested in him and, when I found out that he had

worked hard and had high standing in the technical work of the school, I put him on at the factory as a draftsman.

"Even crusty old 'Dobby' Filbert, our chief draftsman and layout man, has taken a shine to him, though Dobby doesn't know a right cross from a bedpost. He says the boy has the head for a crack engineer. D'you know, when he started to work, he was so enthusiastic about it that he quit the gym cold, and started to stay home nights and study mathematics. I didn't find it out for some time, when I missed him down here and started inquiries. I discovered that the fool was pumping Filbert dry, and was getting him to turn over layout calculations, so he could get practice in working them up.

"I knew that'd never do, if we ever expected to make a champ out of the kid. I told him he couldn't afford to neglect his health and throw away his best asset, and talked up athletics and especially boxing, until you'd have thought nobody ever could have made a dollar who couldn't do a marathon. That fixed him. He thinks I'm the biggest wise one in the world, anyway, and would jump off a roof, if I asked him to."

The great man chuckled with self-satisfaction, as he related this.

"If Mike McGloon is right," he added, "we'll be campaigning that lad to a belt within a year or two. And I'll take Mike's word for a comer every time."

Muriel was slightly amused and disdainful and Harry Wells was absently uninterested. The girl remained silent and looked with a slight feeling of trepidation, on the entry of two large and heavy young men, clad in black tights, into the center of the gymnasium. A short, squat, and hard-faced person, whose ears were abnormally thick and large, assisted these two athletes to pull on the gloves, which were of the exhibition style, more like pillows than anything else.

"The heavies," explained Dixon lucidly, and Muriel tried to look intelligent.

The young men sparred and feinted through two rounds of uninterestingly lumbering exertion. One of the two received a straight jab, in the nose, which angered him, and he went out to get revenge. He rushed the other man and swung ponderously in an endeavor to even matters. But the threatened man ducked, smothered a swing under an arm, and then seized his opponent around the neck and hung on. By the time the two were separated, the bout was nearly over.

Two who were announced as middleweights followed and duplicated this performance, except that the action was faster and the work more finished. The original gladiators had come out of the battle, with hair scarcely ruffled, but these presented a more dilapidated appearance, with red spots on shoulders and faces where blows had landed with force enough to contuse, and one was even puffy about the mouth, where a flush smash had bruised his lips.

Muriel, after watching this affair with growing interest, surprised to find herself anticipating a continuance of the bouts, found it all exciting enough to send the blood rapidly through her veins. During the second bout she had leaned forward across the rail and watched the furious, though comparatively harmless affair, with eyes that shone, clenched hands and breath coming through parted lips.

But this combat was over, like the others, and Muriel settled back, a little ashamed and uneasy at her own absorption. Yet she felt her appetite whetted, and looked at her brother and at the instructor on the floor beneath to see if there was not to be more. Evidently there was, and she was glad with a guilty gladness.

The instructor, who had refereed all the other bouts, now retired, and a young man took his place. He stepped into the center of the floor and, with a serious mien, gravely announced that as a climax to the evening's entertainment, Professor McGloon, the well-known boxer, would go three full rounds with his most promising pupil, Mr. Ulysses Wolfe.

Professor McGloon now made his appearance from the dressing rooms, clad, like his predecessors, in black tights. He looked, with his knotty shoulders and gnarled arms hanging from a torso like a stone block, as dangerous and sinister a figure as one might wish to encounter. A grin distorted his rugged face, as he ducked his bullet head toward the spot where the sound of hand-clapping spread from Dixon's initiative. In every aspect and movement of the man was written the character of the typical bruiser, of a day when the prize ring was no place for dancing masters. Yet, though he was indubitably unprepossessing, Muriel Dixon found herself gazing on his rugged form with an unmistakable fascination, which

might easily have been taken for admiration, though it was more probably the simple, primitive, animal attraction to physical force.

"McGloon," her brother chuckled, "is, like myself, of the Herculean type. There are two others, among athletes; following Apollo and Mercury. Now, look sharp and you'll behold the Hellenic ideal of Hermes."

A slight figure, somber from feet to shoulders in his tights, but with white arms, neck and face flashing brilliantly above them, stepped from the dressing room and looked about him. The handclapping increased in volume and intensity, and the boy smiled with embarrassment, his gleaming face turning red. He walked sedately to the center of the room and studiously avoided any notice of the ovation he was receiving. Muriel leaned far over the rail in order to get a better view of him.

Slender as a wand, but with long muscles rippling up the straight legs, gliding over the narrow hips, bunching in rippling bands about the trim waist, from whence they swelled over the deep chest and down the wedge-shaped back, none of them prominent and all of them smoothly harmonious, the boy's physical identity with the Flying Hermes was almost startling. So perfectly modeled was he, in fact, that he seemed too delicate to be subjected to hard usage, lest his perfection be marred. Dixon turned triumphantly to his sister, who was now openly responding to the call of these rites and mysteries, with all her nineteen-year-old soul.

"What do you think of that for a beauty?" cried he. "Did you ever in your life see anything as swift and clean? Look at the long slope of those shoulders, sis! They don't look as though they carried a punch, with not a knot showing on them! But that's where many a pug is going to get fooled, before that boy is through with the game. They're like rubber; and they carry a kick under that smoothness which'd make Maude, the mule, give up in despair. And fast! Oh, *ask* me if he's fast!"

"He looks like an antelope," murmured Muriel, utterly abandoning herself to some subtle excitement. "But he's not going to fight that great brute, is he? Why, he will be killed!"

Hap laughed aloud scornfully. "Killed!" he jeered. "Why, Mickey won't lay a glove on him in a week, if he's feeling right."

The boy, as though sensing that he was the subject of conversation, turned his face up to the gallery, and Muriel got her first full view of his countenance. "Glorious!" she whispered to herself, so low that her brother was unaware of the utterance. But Wells frowned as he heard it.

But, in fact, the Greek god might have owned face as well as figure for prototype. For the dark eyes looked out of straight, finely carved features which were thatched with crisp, curly hair. There was nothing Roman in that face. It was the sweet, rather gentle countenance of a handsome boy, just verging on manhood, redeemed from softness by its intensity and alertness.

Muriel had another surprise due her. As 'Lysses Wolfe lifted his hand to have the glove thrust upon it, she perceived that the instrument which was to deal blows was small, shapely, and delicate, in contrast to the twisted knuckles of McGloon. The contrast, between the two, was accentuated enormously, when they had had the gloves laced to the wrists and, after shaking hands, had fallen into position. McGloon, crouching, with bullet head drawn between his shoulders, was an image of dangerous force and might, while 'Lyss, who stood lightly poised and straight before him, with hands shifting delicately, was like a butterfly. But McGloon, who had trained the boy and well knew his ability, had no illusions of this sort, as was to be guessed by the care with which he worked his way toward 'Lyss, being cautious to keep elbows and glove well in, covering every vital point.

'Lyss' restless feet slipped an inch at a time, as he stood awaiting the attack that he knew was coming, while his alert eyes roamed over McGloon's figure. Neither of the men looked the other in the face, McGloon carefully watching 'Lyss' gloves while the boy, swifter and more careless, looked for an opening. The sturdy pugilist worked himself into range and feinted. 'Lyss' left hand shot out with the quickness of light, aimed at the jaw which seemed to be exposed by the movement. But the crafty professional shifted the motion to a quick tap which seemed to barely touch the younger man's shoulder. Yet the blow which had seemed too swift to be blocked was jarred and diverted to empty space.

Still, 'Lyss was not through. His right hand swept in a short arc to McGloon's chin, and the prize fighter, instead of being able

to send his own left hand home, was forced to turn the glove in the way of the vicious blow. 'Lyss' feet, working like machines, carried him lightly out of reach, long before another smash could be aimed at him. Neither had landed at all, yet even a novice must have seen that this action was to the bouts that had gone before as the work of a thoroughbred is to that of a cart horse.

McGloon worked patiently in, and 'Lyss circled and slid in and out, fast as light and deadly as a rattlesnake, sending in swift jabs whenever an opening seemed to offer. Yet, the lightning stabs were diverted by that tricky jab at the shoulder or were smothered on gloves or shoulders. Nor did the aggressive lay entirely with Wolfe. Frequently enough, with his feet firmly set, McGloon sent a swing singing through the air that, if it had landed, would have ended the bout there and then. But it did not land. He might as well have aimed at a sunbeam as at his elusive antagonist.

Not that the boy was always out of the way. There were times when the blow was sent home at close quarters, and he made no effort to avoid it by dancing out of reach. At such times he exposed the fact that his own skill was no whit behind the master's in point of blocking. McGloon swung sturdily, on one occasion, full upon the boy's diaphragm. 'Lyss, instead of leaping backward, deliberately lifted his arm high, stepped swiftly inside the blow, dropped his arm over the elbow that had harmlessly bent on his waist, and, with a grin, struck with his other hand at McGloon's face, drawn perilously near. But Mike also had a trick or two at command. He ducked his head quickly under 'Lyss' chin and, in turn, locked the dangerous free hand with his glove. During the entire round, though both were working seriously, not a clean blow was landed by either.

The second round, entered on to after a minute of rest, was practically a duplicate of the first, though they were warming up to the work and exerting themselves strenuously. McGloon stamped and rushed heavily across the floor, and 'Lyss slid and danced out of his reach or into a position where he could send home a blow. Both were getting heated and stirred, as could be seen by the set lines of McGloon's face and the fiery light that danced in 'Lyss' eyes. But neither forgot his skill for a moment, though the affair was past the exhibition stage.

The round was closing, without hurt to either, when, roused beyond self-control, McGloon rushed viciously, pushing the light-footed 'Lyss back toward the wall, beyond which there was no escape. His head was shoved into the boy's chest and his weight was irresistible. Back and back retreated 'Lyss, twisting and squirming from the short-arm blows at his abdomen, craftily locking the pistonlike arms and occasionally venturing a jolting hook into the ribs or neck of his opponent.

But the wall was near, lined with chest weights and wrist machine, dangerous projections to one hurled against them. In his absorption, it appeared that the sign of the novice was showing in the fact that the boy seemed to have forgotten the circumscription of the arena—to have failed in one of the first principles of "ring generalship."

If he had, he remembered it in time; barely in time. As his foot touched the iron base of one of the weights, he put his weight on McGloon's shoulders and swung him half about, twisting sinuously from his hold, and stepping back and out, away from the wall. The sleight of footwork that enabled him to do this escaped the most part of the spectators, but all could realize the grace and skill of the movement, though it was not entirely successful.

For McGloon, straightening up as 'Lyss' left foot slid out for the turn, aimed a heavy swing with his right hand which, though diverted slightly by his enforced pivoting, yet met the encircling movement fairly and got inside 'Lyss' guard. The glove smote the latter above the ear, where bone was too thick to suffer real damage, but the force of it jerked 'Lyss' head toward the wall, until it came in contact with the projecting arm of one of the weights. The skin on the boy's temple broke and the red showed on his white skin.

He was not badly hurt, and completed his side-step safely. It was plain, however, that his temper was now thoroughly roused. Indeed, it had need to be, for McGloon had completely forgotten that the bout was merely one of exhibition, and was fighting ferociously. He gave 'Lyss little time to recover, but turned and rushed him back toward the center of the floor, either not heeding the red glitter of the boy's eyes and the set of his lips, or else only more roused by these symptoms. He came on like a bull, and, for the first time, 'Lyss gave ground

openly and rapidly. In fact, he fairly leaped backward. But not because he was awed or frightened. His swift movement carried him out of reach for a second, and that instant was enough for him. It gave him time to poise, settle himself on his light toes, measure his distance, and strike.

There was no blocking that flash of white arm. The glove shot home squarely to the face of the rushing McGloon. Yet the movement was so easy, so swiftly delivered, that one would have thought there was little force behind it, if there had been time for thought before the sight had rendered it useless. The clean smack of the blow reached the ears of the spectators, as the sight of McGloon, checked as though he had run into a stone wall, and then hurled cleanly back and to the floor, impressed their vision. They sat there, blankly trying to realize that the stocky demon who had seemed invulnerable, had been knocked sharply and neatly, flat on his back.

For an instant, 'Lyss remained standing tense, poised, with arm swinging slightly, as though hung loosely to the shoulder blade, yet holding the potential force and speed of a coiled spring locked in its muscles. Then he shook the fire from his eyes and dropped his hands, stepping forward to help McGloon to his feet. Muriel and the other startled spectators heard the ex-pugilist's explosive comment.

"Be Gawd! Was youse taught to carry a horseshoe in yer mit, ye snake?"

"G'wan!" retorted 'Lyss, grinning. "You ran plumb into the punch, Mike. Get up and take a rest before we finish it."

McGloon shook his head and arose slowly. There was a sour grin on his face, as he made his way out of the room. 'Lyss looked up to the gallery, where Dixon leaned over the rail, whooping triumphantly: "Attaboy, 'Lyss! Didn't I tell you you could do it?" Hap turned to his sister, speaking excitedly.

"Wait a minute for me," he said. "I want to say a word to the boy. I'll bring him around if you'll wait down in the hall."

Muriel, still under the spell of 'Lyss' beauty and grace, was eager to agree, and Harry Wells, though he was not enthusiastic, had no valid objection to make. Dixon's huge bulk was squeezed rapidly over indignant knees, as he forced his way to the entrance and downstairs, leaving Muriel and Wells to follow in the wake of slower spectators. On their way to the lower hall, Muriel commented on what she had seen.

"What a perfect thing he was!" she exclaimed. "Do you know him, Harry?"

Wells, superior by weight of twenty-seven years, shrugged half contemptuous shoulders.

"I've met him," he admitted. "It's true that Filbert lauds him to the skies—but he's something of a crank. As for Hap, he thinks only of making a pugilist out of the boy. I think he'll fail there, too. I talked to this fellow once. He's crazy about engineering, and he laughs at the idea that he'd ever go in the ring. He has more sense than Hap has."

"But Hap is really interested in him. He gave him a position at the factory."

"Gave it to him so he could see to his training. Of course Hap is in charge since your father died, but his responsibilities don't seem to weigh extra heavy on him. He seems more interested in developing a prize fighter, than in managing the Dixon Structural Iron Company."

"I'm sure that isn't so," said Muriel. "And *anybody* would be interested in that glorious boy!"

But Harry Wells only looked sour.

CHAPTER II.

Hap came into the dressing room, where 'Lyss and McGloon were rubbing down, after a shower, and heard them conversing, while lesser athletes stood around and listened. When Dixon entered, 'Lyss was thoughtfully opening and closing the fingers of his left hand, examining the knuckles as he did so. Dixon paused to look the boy over, gloating on his slim perfection and planning in his cunning brain the form of attack upon his scruples which might be most effective. In Hap's mind there was no surer way to reach the adolescent weakness than to "jolly 'em along." A bit of night life and a judicious application of "salve" should fetch the boy. But, as Dixon knew by experience, 'Lyss was stubbornly recalcitrant. He was speaking now to Mike.

"I guess it was a good thing that we had those pillows on, after all," he was saying. "If we hadn't had, I guess I'd have pretty near smashed my hand on you."

"I kin jine ye there, lad," replied Mike. "If thim had been five-ounce gloves, I'd have e't a dozen o' me teeth. But ye're right, at that, about the mitts! If ye iver fight a

r'ale go, me boy, it'll have to be bandages fer youse, and nawthin' else. Wid the punch ye've got, them hands is like a mule havin' china teacups fer hoofs."

"What's that?" cried Dixon. "Did you crack a knuckle on Mickey, 'Lyss?"

"Nothing like that, I guess, Mr. Dixon," said 'Lyss, smiling. "All the boxing I do won't hurt them, unless I run foul of Mike again. I guess there wouldn't have been any trouble, anyway, only I got excited, and he was getting red-headed, too, and I just naturally let him have it. I wish I hadn't, because I didn't want to mash him, and I didn't want to sprain my mitt, either. But I forgot."

"It's a good thing ye did," growled the professional. "Fightin' ain't any tango par-rty. It wasn't by slappin' fellys on the wrist and then beggin' their pardon fer it that made old Jawn L. and Jake Kilrain the min they was. Even Corbett, while he couln't hit a man hard enough to rumple his hair good, would slash him into ribbons before he dallied wid him long. If ye kin fergit, often enough, to unravel that kick, oncet er twicet, in each entertainment ye oblige in, we'll all be sayin' 'I knew him when,' some day."

Mike started for the locker room and Dixon followed.

"Say, Mike," he asked in a low tone, "on the level, did the kid lift you off your feet?"

"No," said Mike scornfully. "I was imaginin' that I was doin' the Dutch roll on r-roller skates, and I lost me balance. Did ye see anything wrong wid me footwork, that ye think I tripped over me own toe?"

Dixon drew a long breath and expelled it in a whistle. "He's the goods, then?"

"He's as fast as the Empire State, and he kin kick like a cannon," grumbled Mike. "I give ye my word that I thought I'd r-run into a beam, when he hung that on me. I won't be able to chew me soup fer a week."

"Then," said Dixon, satisfied to his soul, "we can turn him loose, pretty soon, on some of the preliminary boys, can't we?"

"We c'u'd if we wanted to stand trial fer murder," replied Mike. "If the lad ever hit one of thim four-round dobeys, like he kicked me, the ambulance would be callin' round. But there's nothin' doin', Hap! The boy's too soft for the ring."

"Forget it!" scoffed Dixon. "He lost his temper with you."

"Oh, he'll fight, right enough," agreed the pugilist. "It ain't that. But he ain't got the temp'rimint fer the game. There's the makin's of a champ in the boy, right enough, but he don't want to be a pug, an' he ain't a-goin' to be one, er I miss me guess."

"Sh-h!" said Dixon, as 'Lyss, white and beautiful in his nude slenderness, came out of the showers and into the locker room. "It's the bright lights for his." This in a lower tone. "They'll fetch him."

"Well, maybe they will," sighed Mike. "They've put many a fine lad on the bum. But if you fetch him, let me loose wid him, and we'll be doin' big time in vodyville at a thousand a week, before he's a year older."

Dixon left the prize fighter and pushed through the crowd of men in all stages of undress, until he reached 'Lyss' side.

"Aren't you going to take a rubdown?" he asked.

"I guess Mike doesn't feel like tackling the job," answered 'Lyss. "Anyway, there wasn't enough of it to stiffen a fellow up. Outside of a headache I feel all right."

"That will pass off," said Dixon, glancing at the strip of plaster which adorned Lyss' temple. "I've got a date down at the Alhambra, after dinner, and suppose you come along. Charley Mastyk is showing there this week."

"All right," said 'Lyss cheerfully, but with no sign of the eagerness which Hap had hoped for when he mentioned the name of the famous welterweight champion.

When the boy was dressed, Hap conducted him upstairs and drew him into the hall of the building, where Muriel was waiting. 'Lyss was not unduly embarrassed at being presented to his employer's sister. Muriel's youth was so apparent that he was quite serene in her presence. The thing that most impressed on him was the way she was dressed. He had always thought that his own friends were up to date and correct in their apparel, but Muriel somehow had a different appearance, which he was quick to notice. He also noticed that she was pretty, but that was nothing new to the boy, nor a thing of much importance. Already, though, he was unconsciously placing the girl on a pedestal, establishing her as a model for all that was correct and inspiring in femininity.

"I've certainly heard of you, Mr. Wolfe," said Muriel, when Hap had presented him and they were turning to go to the car. "You are quite a hero with Hap."

"Who, me?" said 'Lyss deprecatingly. "I'm nothing like that, Miss Dixon. I'm just a draftsman."

"Really?" she said. "Yes—I know—but you are also a wonderful—what is it? Such a wonderful fighter."

'Lyss was astonished. "What!" he exclaimed. "Why, that was just a boxing match—for points, you know. I'm not a bruiser. I'm a draftsman in your brother's factory, Miss Dixon. "There was a note of protest, almost of anger, in his insistence on this point.

"Of course, we know it wasn't a regular *prize fight,*" said Muriel. "We wouldn't have come if it had been. But it was very exciting, you know. Much more so than drafting, or things like that."

"There's nothing in this pug business," said 'Lyss shortly.

"Pug?" repeated Muriel inquiringly.

"Short for pugilist—and pugnacity," explained 'Lyss. "You might call Mike McGloon a typical pug."

"Oh," said Muriel. "Well, at any rate, I should think you'd find anything like drafting very tame, when you are so skillful at boxing."

This was distasteful to 'Lyss, who thought such subjects rather remote from those proper to her age, position, and sex. "That only shows how little you know about it," he said with some condescension.

Muriel resented this, and showed it by rather pointedly ignoring him for the rest of the ride home.

CHAPTER III.

The outside of the Alhambra music hall was an ornate affair, glaringly lighted and plastered with gilt. In the lobby, lined with imitation stone and floored with terrazo—the latter stained and dirtied with tobacco and the tracks of feet—hung row on row of pictures, autographed with many a famous—and a few infamous—names. The likeness of a woman who had escaped the electric chair, through the sentimental susceptibility of jurymen to the tears of handsome females, found place beside the picture of Jake Kilrain, done in old-fashioned brown print and signed with a scrawl. The big, beefy torso of the famous "John L.," surmounted by the mustached face and artistically waved scalp lock of that never-forgotten hero, scornfully and sternly faced the smiling gyrations of "The Celebrated Ascot Four," who, in little more garments than the gladiator wore, were frozen by the camera in an attitude in which the arms linked about shoulders made a straight line and the lower limbs imitated four compasses, with legs set at an angle of one hundred and twenty degrees. All the more recent favorites of the ring and the wrestling mat appeared beside black-face comedians, tramp and "mick" and Hebrew and German humorous artists and coryphees of all sorts, kinds, and conditions.

In this lobby, men and more men walked or stood; some roughly dressed—men of the working class; others in clothes of extreme cut, their coats abnormally broad-shouldered, with pockets whose flaps were ornamented with buttons and scrolls, and trousers with huge cuffs and bulging at the hip. These men generally had unhealthy, pimply faces, and wore their hats on the side of their heads, all of them being young, of that class which lives in pool rooms. There were still younger men, or boys, few in number, evidently schoolboys from respectable families, who regarded a visit to the Alhambra as a rather devilish amusement. Once in a long while entered a man escorting a woman—generally of the underworld—but they always hurried through the entrance and out of range of the impudent leers of the street-corner loafers and bar flies, into the dim obscurity of the theater.

It was not until the curtain inside had gone up and the lobby had been almost deserted, for some time, that 'Lyss and Dixon arrived. 'Lyss settled back with a pleasurable feeling that he was about to witness something peculiarly devilish and wicked. Why this was so it would be hard to tell. Barring a few broad witticisms and a lot of coarse horseplay going on between members of the chorus and two orthodox "comedians," one made up as an Irishman and the other as a Jew, there was nothing in the performance particularly scandalous or shocking. Nothing that was any worse than utterly vulgar.

The "olio," a vaudeville program of inconceivable banality, dragged its weary length through half an hour of time, after the opening burlesque had ended with a period of horseplay and loud shouting which passed for singing. A tramp bicyclist fell off his wheel in various unconventional ways; two gaudily dressed girls, with no claim to beauty, hoarsely cackled some sentimental

ballads and a suggestive song, and a "prima donna," so described because she weighed two hundred pounds, warbled acceptably for ten minutes.

Then the great occasion arrived. In the midst of yells and handclapping, a rather stout man stepped in front of the drop and held up his hand for attention, which he obtained after the prolonged applause had worn itself out.

"Ladees and gent'men!" he shouted, in a bull voice, "y'are now 'bout to have th' pleasure of witnessin' the instructive and entertainin' exhibition of "The World's Champeen Welterweight Pug'list, the Great an' Only Nonpareel, Charley Mastyk, of Madison, better known to one and all as 'Battlin' Macey!'"

It took fully five minutes for the pandemonium of applause to die and the audience to realize that the still uplifted hand of the announcer meant a further enlightenment.

"In conclusion, ladees an' gent'men, I am authorized to anounce that the Great Battlin' Macey, Welterweight Champeen of The World, will, at each and ev'ry puformance, box four rounds with any aspirin' pug'list that cares to meet him; and the management of this theater guarantees to pay to each man that stays the four rounds with Battlin' Macey, the sum of one hundred dollars!"

The noise once more swelled into an inferno of sound, through which percolated strident and derisive comments.

"Where's Mike Mulligan? Step up there, Mike, and take the guy on! Hey, you 'Liver' Schwartz, now's yer chance! Git 'Roundhouse' Jackson up there: he kin lick 'im——" And so on down the list of local celebrities of all nations and colors. But the announcer once more quelled the outbreak.

"One hundred dollars!" he repeated. "In the event that no battler cares to appear at any puformance, Battlin' Macey will go four rounds with his sparrin' partner. Now, gent'men, I have the honor and pleasure of introducin' to you the Welterweight Champeen of the World, Battlin' Macey!"

The drop rolled up and from the wings there sauntered, dressed in a long bath robe, a medium-sized figure, which nodded to the audience, first on one side and then on the other. The roof rocked and groaned again above the cheers, while the champion stood unconcernedly with his hands in the pockets of his robe. The announcer, who had stepped to one side to give his principal the stage, once more advanced.

"And now," he said, "if any gent that can handle his mitts cares to step forward, we will take pleasure in arranging matters with him. One at a time, gentlemen, and don't crowd!"

A few moments of expectation, punctured by calls for the local favorites—most of whom remained in retirement, however—was ended when a chunky young fellow, with a low forehead and bulbous nose, whose shoulders hunched alarmingly under his sweater worn beneath his coat, shambled down the aisle and paused before the rail that separated orchestra from audience. He spoke hoarsely, and the announcer leaned down to hear him the better, while Battling Macey sauntered indifferently to the side of the stage, and leaned negligently against a projecting piece of scenery. He had the attitude of being bored to death with the whole affair.

The announcer spoke to the challenger in the aisle.

"Come up here where the audience kin git a look at you!" he insisted. "They can't hear you down there. Right this way, friend. Lemme give you a hand."

The challenger mounted the steps to the stage and, blushing furiously, twisting his cap in his hand, turned a frightened face to the hilarious audience, who had no notion of sparing him.

"Oh, Willie!" yelled a gallery wit. "Kin I take yer last message home to yer mother?"

The announcer bent to the ear of the challenger and asked a question. He then smiled and once again held up his hand.

"A candidate has presented himself in the person of this gent'man," he shouted. "Tomorrer evenin', ladees and gent'men, this c'rageous youth will endeavor to win the hundred bones. I take pleasure in introducin' Steve Janlos, the 'Demon Greek!'"

"Where'll we send the flowers, Steve?" queried a gallery wit.

"Who let that loose?" "Look what the cat dragged in!" "I kin lick him, meself!" were evidence that to most of the rest of the audience the Demon Greek was an unknown. This was not surprising in view of the fact that Mr. Janlos, if that was his name, had been brought along with him by the manager of the champion to furnish amusement for his audiences.

However, a real sensation was furnished a little later when, encouraged by the example of the Greek, a lanky negro appeared to enter *his* defiance. The audience—some of them, at least—recognized this character, even behind the gigantic grin which hid his features and his embarrassment. A riot in the galleries was barely suppressed by the police, when a number of inhabitants of the "Gold Coast" were aroused to such enthusiasm by the appearance of this hero, "Cannon Ball" Johnson, as to bring down on them the wrath of other inhabitants of "Kilkenny." When the announcer succeeded in sending his voice again, into a comparatively uncrowded atmosphere, after many scuffling combatants had been ejected, it could be noticed that he was not so ready to give the negro a date. He said that it would be arranged, probably for Wednesday night, but he could not say for certain. The aspirant could call at the box office, on his way out, or better, on the following morning, and he would then be given a date on which to be sacrificed to his desire for fame.

During this excitement the champion had removed his bath robe and was engaged in pulling on a pair of very light gloves. When these were on his hands he walked to the punching bag and negligently amused himself by knocking it skillfully and yet carelessly from side to side. He presented a graceful and handsome appearance in his black tights, the beautiful muscles showing superbly on his uncovered arms. His face, too, was a rather handsome one, though his eyes were set too close together and his jaws were very prominent. One of his ears was slightly enlarged, but it was understood that this was a result of his early battles before he had acquired the skill for which he was now celebrated. It was said that, for over a year, an opponent had never reached his features with a blow sufficiently heavy to mark him.

In a box, the members of Dixon's party took in eagerly every incident of this scene.

"That's a stall," said 'Lyss, when the Greek first appeared. "They've planted that guy."

"But he looks like a fighter," objected Dixon.

"Too much like one," said the wise 'Lyss. "He ain't any good, except that maybe he's tough. Sparrin' partner, I guess."

"But that fellow's the goods," he grinned, when the negro followed. "I've seen him fight down on the Avenue. But he's got a streak of yellow in him, and he'll run before he's half licked."

The welterweight champion was actually not so tall as 'Lyss, and, though his muscular development was more noticeable, Dixon was confident that 'Lyss, who had floored Mike McGloon, once an almost impregnable rock of the ring, could hit at least as hard as the champion. 'Lyss ought to weigh a few pounds more, if anything, than the welterweight, who was supposed to fight at a hundred and forty-eight pounds. Speed and hitting power ought to give the boy a more than even chance against Macey. Dixon leaned toward the boy and grasped his arm, yet never taking his eyes off the figure in tights on the stage.

" 'Lyss," he whispered stridently, "why don't you take them up? You could do it!"

"Where do you get that noise?" said 'Lyss. "Me fight that guy! Say, I don't carry any life insurance."

"But you might do it, 'Lyss. He's not trained any too fine, and he must be pretty well played out with this trouping. Besides, he couldn't get any line on you, except as an amateur."

He continued with subtle suggestions, watching the boy closely, and gloating as he observed the sparkle in his eyes. 'Lyss fidgeted in his seat, and his eyes were on the pugilist. They were eager eyes, strangely fierce, in his gentle face, bright with the desire for battle, glowing like those of a bull terrier. He felt his lips dry against his tongue, as his imagination played furtively with the possibility that he might land that long, shattering left of his on this fellow's jaw. And if he *did*—— All this talk of money meant nothing to him—but this fellow was a world's champion—and he didn't look so invincible—and it would give 'Lyss a new and mighty thrill, to try the quality of that firm, white flesh against the piston blows of his glove.

Some fight!

Hap was breathing in his ear insistently.

" 'Lyss, let me go on up there and frame it! *Please!*"

"I sure could give that guy a run for his white alley!" said 'Lyss hoarsely.

Dixon jumped the low rail that separated them from the stage and walked toward the announcer, who was coming halfway to meet him, doubt and disgust written all over his coarse face. Battling Macey, who was now

playing a ringing tattoo on the punching bag, rolling it against its platform with the lifting cadence of a thousand drums beating as one, faced to the front, staring under a frown at the huge bulk creaking across the stage. In the box, 'Lyss' enthusiasm dropped as he realized what he had consented to, and a chill stirred the roots of his hair.

"Say, bo," hissed the announcer, "you're outa your class! We ain't signin' on with no heavies!"

"Not me," stammered Dixon, embarrassed, as the hoots and cat calls, confused and incoherent, beat upon him from the audience. "I want to make a date for the kid: there in the box!"

The announcer and the champion both turned to look.

"Who is he?" said the former, while the pugilist stared coldly, once more the blasé hero, and turned contemptuously back to his punching bag. "Let him step up here."

Dixon turned back to the box, where 'Lyss, thoroughly sorry for his impulsive consent, shrang into his chair. Dixon's long arm hauled him forth and dragged him to the stage. Frightened, he tried to face the roaring audience, but was unable to do it. Licking his dry lips, he met the announcer's sneering eye and grinning mouth, and anger flared up in him.

"Never mind my name," he blurted hoarsely. "I fight under the name of Kid—Kid——"

He floundered. The impulse to anonymity had been a sudden one, unprepared for. He looked around in a panic, but inspirations did not come. Desperately he seized upon the first name that came into his mind.

"'Kid' Keeley!" he snarled. "And I'll take on that fellow any night you say."

CHAPTER IV.

Saturday night, of course, saw the Alhambra filled from gallery to pit. This was always the case, even though the current attraction might be a degree worse than usual. This night, it had been announced, was selected for the appearance of one Kid Keeley, an aspiring but unknown boxer, who would share the fate of others whom the champion, Battling Macey, had sent over the route to dreamland during the week. On Tuesday the pugilist had artistically cut the Demon Greek into ribbons. On Thursday he had chased Cannon Ball Johnson off of the stage, after battering him into a pulp for two rounds and a half. On Friday he had knocked out another hero of the local ring colony. At a matinée, on Wednesday, he had blighted the dreams of a fourth aspirant.

There were not many comments to show interest in this Saturday night's closing event. About all any one ventured was a speculation as to whether the bout would be more worth observing than the others had been. No one had any doubt of its outcome. Even those who had come expressly to witness the fight, members of 'Lyss' own party, indeed, expected hardly more than the others.

Over across the street, in a back room of a café and bar, where 'Lyss himself and his advisers were awaiting the hour when he should appear for the ordeal, there was little more optimism.

"It's this a way," growled McGloon, answering the remonstrances of the big man. "Ye shouldn't steer the Kid agin' the best o' thim, all at wance. The t'ing to do wuddy been t' take on de dubs first, and thin worruk the lad up, as he gits his confidence, ontil he's fightin' the best o' thim, and not run the r-risk of killin' the hearrt in him, the fir-rst time ye send him on. 'Tis not the way I would ha' done it, at all."

Dixon swore. "No, you'd take the heart out of him before ever he gets in the ring!" he exclaimed.

"There's more to fightin' thin fancy footwork, blockin', and a poonch," repeated McGloon. "There's the jaw that will stand batterin' and the belly that'll stand poundin', an' the two o' thim don't come by nature to anny man. And there's the wit that comes only fr'm experyunce, w'ich the same is generally the knowin' how to git out of a tight place through havin' heard the birdies sing, more than wance, fer lack of the knowin'."

But this served to rouse the boy a little. "I'll bet you he don't know so all-fired much as all that," he said sullenly.

"That's the way to talk!" cried Dixon. "We'll show them what you can do, 'Lyss. And remember that this fellow thinks he's going to have a cinch of it. That's all in your favor, isn't it?"

"'Tis this much," said McGloon. "If the boy will lay low, fer the first few minutes, and thin, when Macey has sized him fer a lemon, will look fer the first hole and let him have it, wit' everyt'ing he's got behind the poonch, there's a chance fer him."

Dixon blazed with impatience. "You talk

as if he had to knock him out!" he shouted. "What's the sense of that? He only has to stick for four rounds, man!"

"And will ye be holdin' the watch?" asked McGloon dryly.

"If they string the rounds more than four or five minutes the audience will want to know why. They'll see fair play."

"Aye!" gloomed Mike; "if they ain't so tickled to be gettin' more than they paid fer that they forgit the fair play."

Dixon leaped from his chair in disgust and, seizing 'Lyss by the arm, led him across the room and stood him against the wall.

"Shake it off!" he commanded. "You know there's nothing to what that old corpse says. You can hold this fellow for ten rounds, let alone for four. Now, make up your mind that you're going to show him up!"

"A fat chance!" mourned 'Lyss.

"Are you turning yellow?" growled Dixon.

The light flickered in 'Lyss' eyes for a second, making his glance that fleeted over Dixon's face seem vicious. The boy was dangerous if roused, and Dixon saw it.

"It ain't that," said 'Lyss, after the pause. "I'm not afraid of that bruiser. But I've been thinking, and I want to know what business have I got to be swapping punches with *him*. I was a big fool to get into this."

"Fool, nothing!" exclaimed his tempter explosively. "It's the chance of a lifetime for you. Why, if you lick this fellow, you'll soon be making more than a half dozen like me can ever hope to make."

"Well, I'd rather be a draftsman than a pug," said 'Lyss sorrowfully.

Dixon looked at his watch. "Forget it," he said scornfully. "Go in and lick that fellow, and that'll be the best way to get out of it. It's about time to go over, if we can unwrap Mike from that kettle of suds he's wrapped around. Hey, Mike! Come out of that and let's start!"

Over in the Alhambra, the dolorous performance had dragged its way toward the part of the bill in which the welterweight champion of the world was to close his engagement with the burlesque show. The curtain rolled majestically to the upper regions, and the bare stage, occupied only by the square of rope and the canvas covering the floor, was exposed. There were chairs at two corners, and tin pails for the refreshment of the gladiators. Just before the ring stood the announcer, ready, with hand upraised to still, Jovelike, the tumult that greeted his appearance.

His rolling, nasal voice rose above the dying clamour of applause, informing all who could hear that Battling Macey, the incomparable, was making his last appearance on that stage, and would perform for their delectation in competition with an hitherto unknown aspirant to fame who was known as Kid Keeley, and described by the announcer as "the Pride of Dalesburg's Sportin' Fraternity." The audience knew nothing of the Sportin' Fraternity and less of this Kid Keeley who was its pride, but it roared approval just the same. The vociferous applause dying down, the announcer finally was able to bow and step backward against the ropes, waving his hand toward the wings. Dressed in his bath robe, and still nonchalant, Battling Macey stepped before the footlights and ducked his head toward the crowd, who cheered him to the echo.

Again the announcer waved toward the opposite wing and 'Lysses Wolfe answered the gesture. He stepped out slowly, pale except for two spots which looked gray in the glare of the footlights, but were really red, yet otherwise self-possessed and calm. Something like sullenness masked his trepidation, something like resentment overlay his inward quaking. Dixon and Mike McGloon crowded out behind 'Lyss, herding him toward the corner he was to occupy. For Dixon, the champion and his manager had merely a glance, but for McGloon they abandoned their attitude of ease. They were seen to pass signals to each other, and then the manager walked to 'Lyss' corner.

"Howdy, Mike!" he said. "What're you doin' in this neck of the woods?"

Mike shook hands sourly. "Livin' here," he explained.

"Come over'n meet Charley," said the manager cordially. "He remembers you since when he was fightin' prelims."

The ex-prize fighter responded rather reluctantly, and the three gathered in front of the ropes, for a moment. After shaking hands with Mike, and recalling the fact that he had often seen him fight in the old days, the champion jerked his head toward 'Lyss. "Some one you're breakin' in?" he asked.

" 'Tis a shame to put the boy out," grunted Mike. " 'Tis no wan but a lad that I've been givin' lessons to. He ain't never fought yet."

"They're startin' to kill him before he's ripe," grinned the manager.

"He's a good boy, too," said Mike disgustedly. "An' he's got the makin's of a champ in him, if they'd handle him right. 'Tis the big felly that's steerin' him agin' this."

The two other men watched the old war horse suspiciously, noting every feature and expression as he spoke. But his sincerity was obvious, and they made up their minds that he was not seeking to deceive them. McGloon returned to 'Lyss' side and stooped to mutter in his ear.

"Be 'asy!" he hissed. "They t'ink ye're naught but a dub, lad, an' if ye lay low and, whin the felly's eye is off, let him have it if ye break ivery bone in yer hand, it's likely ye may git away wit' it. He'll play wit' ye fer a while, fer the sake of the aujience."

If the advice had reached 'Lyss it would have been well, but he was lost in a maze of tangled thoughts, self-recriminations, sullen resentments, aud half-panicky attempts to recall all the ring lore that he had ever learned. The advice fell on closed ears.

There were preliminaries of fitting on gloves, of gathering in the center of the ring for instructions which 'Lyss forgot before he had heard them, of shaking hands with the champion, and of returning to the chair to await the bell. It rang, and the boy rose to meet his fate.

The champion was across the ring and well into 'Lyss' corner before his chair had been jerked through the ropes. His hands were circling swiftly, in circles of narrow radius, and his head was crouched a little. He wore a smile, and his movements were as perfectly coördinated as those of a reciprocating engine. 'Lyss, as yet half confused, seemed slow and awkward in comparison to him.

The champion broke ground, feinted and led lightly. 'Lyss leaped back, throwing his hand up like the veriest tyro, while the audience yelled in derision and the champion's smile broadened into a short laugh. Craftily, he circled, maneuvering the boy toward the corner, working him into a trap, then leaping swiftly in and lightly striking, with left and right, landing both, and dancing back without a return. As 'Lyss rushed blindly from the ropes in pursuit, Macey danced back, sliding to one side, stepping away from a swing at the exactly timed moment when 'Lyss had reached a point opposite the back of the ring. In following his blow the boy was borne almost to the ropes at the rear and, swinging to face his tantalizing antagonist, once more had his back to the hemming boundary. At this moment the champion drove home a flush blow to the face, and sent 'Lyss' head back until it bumped the back drop, which was almost touching the rope. It was a light jab, doing little damage, and the curtain yielded readily, so that, while stung, the boy was not injured.

He rushed again, the champion standing to meet him, driving in a body punch and then clinching. 'Lyss, as Macey's arms slipped down from his shoulders and bound his own to his sides, wrestled fiercely to throw him off, wild at the grinding of the pugilist's chin in his shoulder, and half frightened at the cunning restraint. It was then that Macey made a mistake which was nearly fatal.

It was all so easy; the boy seemed such a tyro, and the temptation to play with him was so strong that Macey, intent on amusing the audience, while he leaned on 'Lyss' shoulder, struck him on the back resoundingly with his open glove, grinning broadly as the boy twisted and panted to free himself. The champion's manager, acting as referee, paid no attention to the fact that the clinch was lasting longer than it should, and Dixon was so chagrined by the poor showing of his protégé that he never thought to object. As for Mike, he was wondering if 'Lyss was really acting, or if he had actually forgotten all the skill he once possessed. Then Macey got his right hand around in front of himself, and, using the heel of his glove, brought it up in a scythe sweep across 'Lyss' chin and mouth and nose, stinging and hurting him fiercely. This added greatly to the amusement of the audience, which roared as the champion pushed 'Lyss' shoulders away and broke the clinch.

But it made a tremendous change in 'Lyss. The foul blow sent the blood raging through him, roused his fighting instinct and, paradoxically enough, caused him entirely to forget his awkwardness, restoring him as by magic to all his skill and coolness. He forgot that he was fighting the greatest man of his weight in the world before a hostile audience. To him, Macey now was just another such as he had faced many a time, in the gymnasium, except that he was a dirty fighter, a crook and a coward.

The champion, stepping leisurely backward, guard down, expecting only to meet another wild rush which he could easily avoid, was amazed when, with a machinelike precision as perfect as his own movements, 'Lyss stepped swiftly forward, right hand drawn well back, and, with uncanny swiftness, drove the left straight and flush to his chin. The champion's glove circled, instinctively, to block the blow, but it was too late. It got home, barely broken in force, and hurled him backward. He kept his feet under him, broke ground, and tried brilliantly to set himself. But 'Lyss came on again, not as before, with disordered, ill-conceived rushes, but with perfectly poised weight on toes that slid easily over the canvas and left him in position for the next attack. Realizing swiftly that he had terribly underestimated his man, the pugilist called all his cunning and resource to his aid. That long left was again within range, and the right was still threatening. He covered up and struck in, to get to close quarters, for a man with a punch, such as he had just felt, was as dangerous as a tiger, if he could get it home.

It came home again before Macey could close in. The man was too skillful to expose a vital part but, before he could get inside that reach 'Lyss' heavy glove had crashed with sickening force against his ribs. Then the crowd, for a few seconds, got its money's worth. Crowding in, the champion found that the boy did not give an inch, but, with skill equal to his own, and a strength almost as great, set himself firmly and stood until their arms half locked, swapping punch for punch and ripping the short blows to head and body with vicious, stinging precision. Red spots started out on white skins, but no more on 'Lyss' than on Macey's.

Almost in a panic, the champion's manager signaled and the bell rang. 'Lyss, frowning, shook himself free and hurried away to his corner, but Macey stopped in the middle of the ring and turned back to look long and dubiously at him. He wiped his mouth with the back of his glove, and spat blood on the canvas. That long left had gone home with terrible force. What if there were in the right an equal or superior drive?

As for the audience, it had suddenly gone raving mad.

In the second round, after a whispered conference with the referee manager, Macey undertook to match skill with 'Lyss. He was one of the most finished performers in the ring of a day when boxing skill was common, but, after a minute of beautiful combat, he knew that he had met more than his match. The boy was perfect in blocking and swift as a swallow on his feet. His judgment of distance was correct to a hair, and that long left carried a drive that would crack a skull of ivory. In that minute and in the succeeding one, he unmistakably outfought and outboxed the champion.

The manager referee considerately rang the bell a full minute before the round was ended, and now Dixon was so enthused with his protégé's recovery of form, and Mike was actually so amazed at the brilliance of his performance, that neither again noticed the unfair tactics.

It was plain that, in four rounds, fairly fought, the champion had little chance to dispose of this hornet he had clutched. It was more than probable that Macey's strength was superior, and that, in a long contest, his stamina would tell in favor of victory. But in the short time granted him, he could not hope to put the boy away. The manager referee understood this perhaps better than the fighter, whose hurt pride might have outrun his judgment, and he passed a signal to one of the champion's seconds, who, in turn, took occasion to step for a moment into the wings, returning, however, before any one had taken note of his movements. The referee's face, which had been a little anxious, became serene again, and he smiled condescendingly on 'Lyss as he rang the bell again for the third session.

This was slower than the preceding rounds. The champion boxed cautiously, making much use of footwork, and carrying the fight all over the ring. He seldom came to close quarters, but more than once suffered from 'Lyss' driving, full-arm jabs, taking them grimly and silently. Around and around the ring the two circled, 'Lyss boring in and forcing the fighting, trying hard, but vainly, to land a finishing blow, yet plainly having the better of each exchange. Mike McGloon, watching the champion's tactics, began to frown and chew his stubby mustache. He knew that Macey would not deliberately take a beating without an object in doing so.

Once 'Lyss had his back to the rear of the ring, and the champion poised as though to rush, but the boy slid around him before

he could do so. A few moments later the circling had him in the same position, and this time Macey was able to trip in to close quarters, though 'Lyss clinched skillfully. In infighting he was at least equal to the champion, and the maneuver promised to gain the latter little. Macey struck upward at his chin, and 'Lyss threw his head back against the curtain to avoid it, the champion springing away as he struck. Instantly Macey set himself tensely, and drove a right-hand swing at the boy's jaw. It appeared to land flush, and the sound of the impact could be heard plainly, singularly dull, and crushing.

Though the blow should have been blocked easily, it seemed that 'Lyss did not even make an attempt to stop it. Instead, he wilted suddenly, slumped at the knees, and fell forward on his face, prone and sickeningly limp, nauseatingly suggestive of one dead.

The champion glanced contemptuously at the prone figure, loweringly and challengingly at the audience, who were too stunned by the suddenness of the finish to make a sound, and walked to his chair, throwing himself into it as though satisfied with a day's work well done. The referee manager grinningly tolled off the seconds.

CHAPTER V.

The Dixons lived in a handsome apartment on the North Side, the choice residence section of Dalesburg. With Muriel and Hap resided an aunt, sister to their deceased mother. Her function was to act as housekeeper and chaperon, and to protect Muriel on the many nights when Hap remained away from home, though in this latter duty she was more ornamental than effective.

Aunt Kathie Abromet had a deep distrust of modernity and a strong conviction of sin. She had remained single from choice, for she must have been a very charming girl when young. Her looks had survived the years, and now, though well past middle age, she preserved much of the same beauty which had descended to Muriel through her mother.

Though accustomed to mellow her meals with a moderate amount of wine, at times, the blackest sin in her eyes was indulgence in strong liquor, by which name she distinguished spirits, champagne, cocktails, and beer, not discriminating at all in favor of any one of these against the others. Muriel herself loved life and pleasure, though moderate and refined in her tastes. Her brother Hap, wild, licentious, dissipated, perfectly portrayed aunt Kathie's conception of the most prodigal of prodigal sons. Yet, Miss Abromet maintained her affection for him, and hoped against all reason that there would yet come a return to virtue on his part.

For a week, now, aunt Kathie and Muriel had seen nothing of Hap. He had not returned home since last Saturday, though he had called them from his office and told them that business would occupy his attention for some time, and that they need not expect him. What the business was he did not explain, and his sister had had experience enough of his whims not to ask him, more especially as he seemed to be in a very bad temper.

Dixon finally reappeared, looking the worse for wear, after a week of dissolute living, during which his business had suffered neglect. After he had freshened his appearance, though he could not entirely remove the fragrance of a week's intimacy with tobacco and strong liquors, he came into the living room, more like himself, condescending to speak to his relatives with some approach to courtesy. Aunt Kathie was quite ready to ignore the signs, but Muriel noticed them with growing uneasiness. She had heard rumors of evil times, at the factory, and notice had reached her that the last dividend had been passed when the board of directors had met.

While Muriel was making tea, Hap turned to the sporting page of the paper and scanned the columns closely. There was a full-length picture of a boxer in the most prominent part of it.

"Look at that, now," he said aloud, in deep disgust. "Battling Macey, welterweight champion. It makes me sore to see that false alarm swelling around and getting all this glory when, if the truth was told, he'd be a back number in no time at all. The dirty crook!"

"He is welcome to his glory," said Muriel. "I do not see why you should be agitated over the doings of people of that sort."

" 'By your associates shall ye be known,' " quoted aunt Kathie solemnly. "Harold, it grieves me to observe your interest, in characters of that sort."

"Fruits, auntie, fruits!" corrected Harold. "Though, to tell the truth, it fits this fellow as well one way as another. I'll admit that

he's fruit: a regular lemon! Whenever I think of what happened Saturday week it makes me boil over. I wish that fellow was my size!"

Aunt Kathie was scandalized. "Harold!" she cried. "Is it possible that you are having anything to do with creatures like that?"

"I'd like to have enough more to do with this one to get even with him," exclaimed Hap. "When I think of that poor kid laid up with his skull fractured, maybe, it gets my goat, let me tell you!"

"Skull fractured? Who?" from Muriel.

"'Lyss Wolfe—in his fight," snarled Harold. "And a prettier scrap you never saw in your life. He was making that seed Macey look like thirty cents, too. Then something happened. I don't for the life of me know what, but I do know it was crooked. He never hit him hard enough to drop him that way—and I saw him start to fall before he got the punch. And he fell *forward* —sagging down at the knees; not on the back of his head at all. Yet the doctor said he had a knot the size of a baseball on the back of his head, and I could see it myself."

"They that take the sword——" began aunt Kathie with due solemnity. But Muriel was roused to a different state of indignation.

"Hap," she said sharply, "what have you been doing? Is that the boy we met at the gymnasium—that good-looking, graceful boy? Have you been inducing him to fight again?"

"I didn't induce him," said Hap sullenly. "He's as game as a bull terrier. What if I did, anyway! The boy's a born champion, I tell you. Only, I do feel a bit guilty at steering him into such a damned nest of crooks as that, on the first trial."

"Hap!" said Muriel firmly, "what is all this about? What did you do with that boy?"

"I tell you that I didn't do anything," insisted her brother. Then he went on to defend himself, explaining as he could and finally telling the whole story of the fatal affair. Muriel listened stonily, yet uncertain on whom to blame the disaster.

"And is he really so badly hurt?" she asked, when the tale was done.

"Well, maybe not," said Harold reluctantly. "The doc says there was no fracture, though there came near being one."

"What a pity!" exclaimed Muriel indignantly. "Such a handsome boy! His face was as gentle as a girl's."

"And he's as decent a boy as ever you'd want to see," Hap protested. "Why, when he was all down in the dumps, over going on with that bruiser, and I thought he was afraid, do you know what it was all about? He was thinking of having let that chance to fight win him away from his 'profession,' as he calls his lessons under old Filbert. And"—Hap's recollection of some muttered words he had heard the unconscious 'Lyss mumble, when the doctor was working over him, came to his rescue with a chance to add a romantic interest to the affair—"there was a girl back of it all, I'm sure. I don't know what the details are, but the kid is crazy over some skirt or other, and I guess this Macey had been casting eyes at her or something."

With a queer feeling of shock, Muriel could not help wondering who was the girl for whom 'Lyss had fought. Somehow, she resented the fact, while striving to honor him for his chivalry. It seemed to her a pity that such a splendid boy should have been enamored—and she supposed he was—with the kind of silly, vulgar girl who would appreciate the advances of a pugilist.

In the meantime, as a matter of fact, 'Lyss had returned to his work in the factory, intending to forget his late disaster, in earnest toil; but his fellow employees had heard something of the story, which had grown in the interval, in its passage from mouth to mouth. Most of them jeered the boy, ascribing his downfall to soaring ambition to be a pugilist, mingled with a definite lack of ability in that line. There were those to whom 'Lyss showed his teeth, during those days, snarling a threat here and a challenge there. He had only to answer a jeer with an invitation to the animadvertor to come out in the yard and get his face pushed in, when the belittler of his prowess invariably became silent.

Old Filbert, the layout man and head of the drafting room, who had always been sour and unapproachable, surprised 'Lyss. He became even sourer to the others in the room, ordering more than one of them to spend less energy in venting cheap wit at the expense of the boy and more to his work. To 'Lyss he said little. But he took occasion to trust him with rather important calculations, now, and never spared a gruff word of commendation, when he turned in his sheets.

"Those fellows," he said once, jerking his

head toward the room behind him, "can get a lot of fun outa nothing. Even if you aren't the best prize fighter on earth, you have a nice head for engineering, and you'll be building bridges when they're hanging on the bread line."

"I never wanted to be a pug," said 'Lyss hotly. "I'd rather be a draftsman, all my life, than the best bruiser that ever fought. But those fellows get my goat! I may not be such a wonder, but that guy, Macey, never whipped me! Not in a thousand years!"

"If I was you," said Filbert, "I wouldn't care whether he did or not! Here's a good little job for you. See if you can work out the stresses and permitted load on this truss. It's the first we've had on the new MacKintosh design—and it don't look right to me. Those are the specifications, and that's a long span for that truss."

'Lyss took the drawing and the specifications helplessly. "Say!" he protested, "what do you take me for—a college graduate?"

"I'm taking you for a fellow that can use his head," retorted Filbert sourly. "What you don't know, you can find out, if you're willing to dig for it. If you can bone that thing out for yourself, you'll learn more doing it than you'd learn in college in a dozen years. For you'll have learned that you can think."

This had roused fresh ambition in 'Lyss, almost causing him to forget his recent injuries. Elated at the implied praise, he had taken the stuff home with him, and pored over it hopelessly. His drafting course had led him just far enough to give him a vague inkling of what the specifications involved, and he had sufficient grounding in mathematics to understand vaguely the procedure necessary to a solution, but the actual solving of the problem was as impossible to him as the translation of Aztec hieroglyphs would have been. After racking his brains for some definite method of procedure, he gave it up. The next day he got a correspondence-school textbook of the rudiments of the science, and, with his Trautwine to aid, set himself blithely to the most difficult task of his life.

Then, one evening he went, at Hap's invitation, to a gathering of boon companions at the Jefferson Hotel. The affair bored him and, when Mike McGloon happened by, and proposed that they should go to another barroom near by, he was glad that Hap consented. As they went out on the sidewalk they saw a car drawn up at the door, and recognized it as the flashy roadster driven by Battling Macey, the welterweight champion, who was training for his coming fight.

'Lyss flushed angrily at the sight.

" 'Tis the fine life they lead—for a while," commented McGloon. "Wine, women, and song and a roll that'd choke a cow."

"I wish to Pete I could get another lick at that bum," growled 'Lyss. "I'd bet he'd not put me down another time with a punch."

"That's true for ye," said McGloon. "He'd not put ye down wid a poonch—fer the main reason that he niver put ye down befoor wit' anny poonch at all. Macey never hit ye, that time, until the business had been done fer ye. If ye want to know, there was a stout felly with a mallet behind that curtain. When yer bean brushed it back so he could figure where to hit ye, he tapped ye a jolt and said 'good night' to ye."

"What!" shouted 'Lyss. "A fellow with a mallet? D'you mean to tell me they busted me in the head with a mallet from behind the curtain?"

"If ye wasn't as simple as ye look," grinned McGloon, "ye'd been wise to that long since."

'Lyss' face went as black as a cloud. There was something incredibly fierce in his eyes as they looked out under his frowning brows. His face set in lines which made him look mature and hard, all the gentleness being wiped from it as with a sponge. He soon became calm—but he had also become a man, and a dangerous one, in that few seconds.

"They say he'll never be able to make the welterweight limit again, after this fight," he finally remarked, surprising Dixon but not McGloon, who had noted every change in his expression. "There's no one in the middleweight class he can't whip—except Walker himself, and he's getting old! I suppose Macey'll be champion there, too, in a few years."

"I wouldn't be surprised," said McGloon.

"Well," said 'Lyss, drawing a long breath, "I'm growing, myself. I reckon that in two years I couldn't train down to one-forty-eight, and be strong enough to crack an egg."

"Ye could not," agreed McGloon.

"Well, let's be getting along. I'll see you later, Mike."

He seemed suddenly to have taken charge of the group, and the puzzled Dixon followed him, vainly trying to fathom the unexpected

problem that was presented by the change in 'Lyss. But Mike McGloon, as they turned away from him, seemed strangely content with affairs as they were.

McGloon was no psychologist, and yet he had read the boy correctly. In the months of close and intimate contact with 'Lyss, training and teaching him all the arts of the prize ring, he had come to a closer insight of him than Dixon possessed. He knew that the lad was like a bull terrier; gentle, friendly, and trusting, but latently gifted with a certain vindictiveness that never died, once it was stirred to life. Always, heretofore, 'Lyss had fought without a thought of personal animosity toward his antagonists, fighting as the terrier fights, skillful and deadly, but with glowing eyes and smiling face, even as the dog closes in, with tail wagging and shoe-button eyes snapping merrily. But like the dog, also, the boy, once affronted, held an eternal grudge.

So, as the ex-pugilist correctly read, 'Lyss, whose scruples against professional pugilism could not be overcome by all the lures of wealth and fame and public adoration, in those few seconds, threw his qualms overboard, though they might well cost him all that made life worth while to him, in order to live for a day when he might reek vengeance on the man who had taken mean advantage of his inexperience and broken him with a foul blow.

He said little enough about it, as he rode uptown in Dixon's car, but Hap, though puzzled by the fact, realized that the long fight which had seemed a losing one, was suddenly won. He even felt a little remorse, as he glanced at the stern face beside him, realizing that the boy was now irrevocably launched on a career which would make him, in spite of wealth and fame, little better than a denizen of that anomalous half world where stage and prize ring and gambling hell and race track bridge the gap between respectability and the gutter. And of all these, the ring was nearest the gutter.

Something of this he acknowledged, though he did not analyze the vague thought. Before it could take form, he dismissed it. Sport was respectable enough in this country, and even professional sport was winning its way to toleration. Many a baseball player was a college graduate, practicing law in the off season; one of the leaders among wrestlers was a qualified physician, and there was, among the pugilists, a man who served his native community as mayor, another whose brokerage firm was well known and prosperous, and a third who was winning a reputation for himself as an actor.

In 'Lyss' mind there were no reflections at all analogous to these. He simply reiterated to himself, with deadly earnestness, that, if he had to knock out every pug in the ring, he'd get another fight with that condemned crook and cut him to ribbons, even as Devine had once cut McCord, sparing him the mercy of a knock-out, until his cup of suffering should be full and overflowing.

CHAPTER VI.

'Lyss walked through the outer office, smiling, well dressed, and debonair. Of all those who had formerly worked beside him, there was hardly one that recognized him. There had been changes, but not in feature, nor in bearing. He was taller and comparatively more slender, and his clothes were no longer ready-made and shapeless, though they were not loud nor sporty, either. Yet, in spite of the resemblances, this figure was nothing like that of 'Lyss Wolfe, of the dead days, two years and more ago.

The men at the desks of the Dixon Structural Iron Works gave him insufficient heed perhaps, or it may have been that every one there recalled 'Lyss as a boy, whereas this upstanding young fellow was clearly a man grown. The timekeeper, for example, who had passed 'Lyss many an envelope containing his week's wages, in the ancient days, answered him absently, when he made an inquiry.

"Mr. Dixon? He's left long ago. Five o'clock for *him*."

"Where's Mr. Filbert?" asked 'Lyss of one of the workers who was hurrying out of the room.

"Dobby? He's gone, I guess. You can catch him on the street."

'Lyss knew the route old Filbert had always followed, and a few moments of rapid walking rewarded him with the sight of his former chief striding ahead of him, going toward the downtown apartment house in which he had lived, ever since being connected with the factory, and he soon ranged alongside him.

"Well, Mr. Filbert," he hailed him, "and how's the world going with you?"

The chief draftsman stared severely at him, as though contemplating a rebuke, but

it died away before he could utter it, while his memory struggled slowly with the problem of 'Lyss' identity.

"Hey? Well, who'd have thought it? It's 'Lyss, isn't it?"

"You have me dead to rights."

"You surely have changed, boy! But you're looking well and prosperous."

One might have detected a note of envy, tinged with a certain hopelessness in the comment. 'Lyss dragged the elder man across the street and into a grillroom, heedless of his protests. He was going to buy him a dinner, he declared, in memory of the old days. The old, submissive 'Lyss was utterly vanished and in his place was this wonderfully masterful, cock-sure, and aggressive person. Yet he did not look like a pugilist in Filbert's eye. He might have been a prosperous young business man.

Filbert noticed that his face was still perfect as to features, but it was not gentle any longer. There were certain angles to jaw and brow that had not been there three years ago. Possibly the cheek bones were more prominent, and certainly the eyes were no longer round and open. They still smiled genially enough, but there was a strange depth to them, maybe caused by their deeper shadowing. They looked as though they had beheld a good deal, in that time—seemed, in fact, to veil a sort of sinister wisdom. A wisdom that might be put to good purpose or might—perhaps—degenerate into the unscrupulous cunning of the wolf or of the fox. And looking at the boy's mouth, a mouth still shapely but no longer set in soft curves, one would have said at a guess that it was more likely to be the cunning of the wolf than that of the fox.

"You look the same as ever—and yet you don't," grumbled Filbert.

"I have grown older, Mr. Filbert; that is all."

"I'll be damned if it is," said Filbert, half under his breath. "You could tell a tale if you wanted to."

"Not much of one. I've fought, more or less, all over the country, and won a fair proportion of the fights. Waiter! A Martini cocktail, a glass of sherry and lithia for me, and a menu."

"What's that you're drinking?" demanded Filbert belligerently.

"The strongest tipple I indulge in," laughed 'Lyss. "My profession bars all but the mildest dissipation. The price of success, in it, is abstinence."

Filbert drank the cocktail slowly. "And you've succeeded," he said. "We've followed your career pretty closely here in Dalesburg. Barring the fight with Disso, you've cleaned them all up, except the best. You've won a real reputation. And I reckon you make a lot of money first and last."

'Lyss shook his head and laughed. "Not so good as that," he said. "Still, since I got rid of Mike McGloon, who was milking me right and left, I have done fairly well. But, let's hear your own history."

Filbert was reticent. "My history is tame beside your own," he said. There was a suppressed note of bitterness which 'Lyss dimly observed. "Just one job on top of another for thirty years and more. I'd hoped to see a change, soon, but I have no luck."

'Lyss smiled. "I wish we could trade places, then," he said. "I've a notion that to be an engineer is about the greatest luck that could happen to a man. You remember that, some time before I went away, you gave me a problem in Bridge Design to work out—a calculation in stresses, it was, and miles above my head."

"That would be the MacKintosh design for the Benton County bridge, I guess."

"Well, when you set me that task, you roused my ambition. I soon found that I could not work that problem in my then stage of knowledge, so I began to study. I signed up for correspondence courses in engineering.

"For a while, my new career kept me busy but, after a while I found time hanging on my hands. I didn't drink, gamble, or run with women, so the gang were not congenial. I had little to fall back upon and took to study. I've had three years of it, Fibby, so that I'll be ready, when I quit the ring, to come back to the factory and take my place again under you."

"Maybe you'll come back," said Filbert glumly, "but not under me."

'Lyss started. "What are you giving me? Aren't you with them now?"

"My month was up to-day," said Filbert listlessly. "They had to curtail expenses—or so Dixon said—and I was let out."

"Curtail expenses? Anything wrong with the works?" 'Lyss' voice was anxious.

Filbert was not betraying any professional secrets. He shrugged his shoulders.

"Nothing that I know of," he said. "Why?"

"I've heard some tales. You know, Fibby, if Miss Dixon should ever have to worry about anything, it'd nearly break me up."

Filbert stared and frowned. "What's that, 'Lysses?" he said warningly. But 'Lyss laughed reassuringly.

"Don't worry," he said. "I know where I belong. But that's the way it is, anyway. But it is a dirty shame, Mr. Filbert, that they let you out, after all these years."

They ate and drank, and finally Filbert began to thaw under the influence of the liquor and the cheerful company of the boy he had once loved and taken pride in. Pretty soon he began to talk, half enviously, of 'Lyss' chance to make a name for himself, and from that he went on to his own dead ambitions.

"And yet they weren't entirely dead, even at this late day. They'll die now, I reckon, but, until a short time ago I had my dreams. I studied out where MacKintosh fell down on his designs, and I worked out a better truss than his ever thought of being. I wouldn't sell it to the builders, for if MacKintosh could get royalties on his rotten design, I had a better chance. I was all for setting up as a consulting engineer and making a fortune. I patented the thing, and I could see my way clear to hanging out my shingle in New York, one of these days. But I didn't have as much money as I thought I needed, so I got reckless and took to betting on one of these proverbial sure things. I met the usual fate. That fellow, Disso, walked off with that scrap with you—and I guess I don't hang out my shingle yet a while."

'Lyss sensed the acute pain beneath the elaborate assumption of flippancy. He did some swift thinking, in the next second or two.

"You bet on my fight with Disso?" he repeated slowly. His eyes were snapping and hard now.

"It's a fact that I thought you couldn't lose," said Filbert carelessly. "But, like many another, I was a poor guesser. I didn't figure on Mike McGloon."

"You've never held malice against me?" said 'Lyss wonderingly.

"Lad, I never doubted but that you did your best."

'Lyss ordered another drink. When it came he spoke slowly.

"See here, Fibby! I've told you that I intended to take up engineering, when I'm through with the ring—which should be in another year. I'd have to start at the bottom, though, and that would be a comedown, for a man used to earning what I do. Would you sell me an interest in this patent?"

"It'd be a gamble, lad." Filbert shook his head but his smile was wistful.

"I'll judge of that. I've told you that I have engineering theory down pretty well, and I'll take a chance on my judgment. If your stuff is what you say, I'll find the money to start it off right."

CHAPTER VII.

Having been too late to catch Dixon at the factory on the previous day, 'Lyss was there the next morning at about half past ten. To 'Lyss the new furniture, in Hap's outer office, seemed evidence that the concern was prosperous, and he was pleased to note it. For a while, yesterday, the remark of Filbert had caused him to fear that all was not well with the man he always looked on as a benefactor.

The inner door suddenly opened and a woman came out. For a moment, 'Lyss did not recognize her, nor she him. But as she turned, her profile outlining itself against the open doorway, he knew her, and sprang to his feet. Some impulse made him draw back to the wall and stand without moving, but his height now brought him above the glass partition and placed his head in the light from the other room. She moved no farther than the middle of the room, looking at him doubtfully, and then, making up her mind, paused.

"Why, it is Mr. Wolfe, isn't it?"

'Lyss took her hand shyly, suddenly losing his expression of maturity and becoming boyish, as his twenty-three years impelled. He was not at all sure that she knew either his profession or his *nom de guerre.* But she undeceived him promptly.

"It has been a perfect age since we saw you. But I have followed your career in the papers—have even seen your picture there. I must congratulate you on your success."

"Congratulate!" 'Lyss was a little bitter. "Thank you, Miss Dixon." His self-possession was momentarily gone, and he could think of nothing to say to her. "I

was just waiting to see your brother," he explained awkwardly.

Muriel had become a woman since he had last seen her, three years ago. Then he had never asked himself if she was pretty, but now he knew, with a profound conviction, that she was more utterly lovely, in fact. From jaunty hat to shapely boots, his swift eye took her in, one glance photographing in his mind the perfection of sweet features, transparent skin and slender figure. His ideal memory of her became wider and more complete, as he was more mature. It swept him like a wave, her new image filling him and his lonely, empty heart to overflowing.

But she had merely smiled and murmured that she would not keep him from his engagement, and was gone. 'Lyss presently stumbled into Dixon's office, where he went through the ordeal of boisterous greeting and the volley of questions that followed, with such equanimity as he could summon. Hap, bubbling over with plans, was all for signing him up for a fight in Dalesburg during convention week.

"Nothing stirring!" said 'Lyss. "I've bigger game than that in sight." He had put on, like a cloak, a professional manner, so to say. Gauging his audience, when he had a sporting man to deal with, he adopted the manners of sport. And Hap was the typical sporting man. "I wouldn't sign on for a mill if they'd guarantee me the mint."

Hap's eyes opened. "Vaudeville?" he asked.

"Nothing like that. I'm going to go on with Charley Mastyk."

Dixon realized that the hard-faced young man, who sat facing him, had his own notions and intended to follow them. In this year of absence the tether had broken.

"What's the game, then?" he asked.

'Lyss did not answer for a moment, musing, his features grim with a secret triumph.

"I've been out of sight for two months. Where do you suppose I've been?"

"I'm no good at guessing."

"Well, I spent most of it in Charley Mastyk's camp at Lake Charles. He was training for his match with Disso."

"But he put Disso away in five rounds, two weeks ago."

"I know he did. In fact, I helped him do it. I worked four weeks there, as his sparring partner."

"What!"

"I'm giving you the goods. I walked in ragged, looking like a panhandler, and talked myself into a job. For four weeks I took that guy's snarling and mauling of me, and was as meek as pie. You'd have thought, from the way I handled myself, that I never had a glove on my mitt before. Once I almost forgot myself, and nearly let him have it. I'd been saving it for him so long that I came darned near slipping him the spiral right then and there."

"The spiral?"

"You don't sabe the spiral? No. Nor anybody else, as yet. They will, though, before long. I aim to make Mastyk acquainted with it first of all, though. D'you ever see a fellow punching the bag, tear it off the rope with a blow?"

"I've seen a few that had the knack."

"I never had it, for a long time. I got curious about it, then. Tried to figure out the principle of the thing. I figured and figured and experimented for weeks, but I never told any one why I was poking things about like that. Finally, I not only figured that stunt out, but I went further. I learned a mess of stuff about how to hit in those days. I invented the spiral doing it."

"What the deuce is the spiral?"

"A punch, Hap! The damnedest kick that ever was sprung on the ring. If they stand up in front of it when it lands, it'll be because they've got a wall behind them."

"And you haven't used it yet?"

"I got it pat after I fought Disso. I could have used it on 'Shorty' Moore or on Black or Hinkle and finished the thing in a round or two, but I didn't need to. It's a punch that starts low, almost short arm, and you can't tell where it'll land because I can shift it. But it twists—twists like a bullet—before it lands. You do it with your wrist, just as it connects—and it'll tear the hide right off and break the bone that's under it. That's what I'm saving—saving for Mr. Charley Mastyk. And now, after having found out everything *he* knows about the game, I'm ready to go after him."

"You said he knew you, now?"

"Yes, he knows me. On the last day in his camp I told him who I was. He'd had his usual fun with me—the dub sparring partner it tickled him to maul. Just before it ended, I let him have one good one. No, not the spiral. I was saving that. But he got the left straight on the map—and he nearly broke the wall of the gym where he

hit it. That was one I had to let him have, for that tap on the dome he gave me, three years ago. He was still on the floor when I spoke to him:

" 'That's with the compliments of Kid Keeley, you Hungarian sweep!' I said. 'And when I chase you into a match, I've got a few more of the same sort for you.'

"Then I beat it while the beating was good. Now, I'm ready to go after him—and I'll get him."

"Why can't you get him here—in this country?"

"Do you think he'll fight willingly? Haven't I challenged and challenged, and hasn't he told me to go and lick some one first? He's claiming the championship now, though Walker is still alive, and he isn't taking a chance on losing it. He won't fight Lewellyn—or me. I could burn up the sporting pages howlin' for a match and would I get it? I would not!"

"But how the deuce do you expect to land him?"

"Easy, though it may take time and money. He's off to make the tour as middleweight champion, isn't he. Well, when he gets to England and signs up with some of the marks, for easy change, I'll be there and challenge. The English will ask why he don't take me on—they'll get up my record—as good as his own, except for Disso. He may get away without signing then. But there's South Africa to come, where they ask a man to give them a run for their money, and after that there's Australia and New Zealand—and they think, there, that he ought to be back here fighting Lewellyn—which he won't do. I'll follow him clear on around, but I'll get him some day."

"And if you get him—you'll be the champion!"

"The champion? Well, maybe I will, though there's Lewellyn. But I haven't been thinking of that. At the best, I couldn't hold it. I'm getting big—and it's already a drag to make one-fifty-eight, ringside—though I can still do it. But when I've licked Mastyk, I don't care. Lewellyn can have it for all of me."

But Hap, who had been so far overmastered by his one-time protégé, protested at this.

"Say! What are you talking about, Kid? If you're champion, it means a wad that would choke a horse!"

'Lyss continued his pacing, his excitement having subsided considerably. He was thoughtful, debating with himself whether to confide further in Dixon. Still, once started, during that first heartbreaking year, he reflected, Dixon had aided him with generous subsidies, backing him with a full purse. He had been paid back since then, but the obligation was one that could not be satisfied with mere money returns. So he persisted, trustfully, in crediting Dixon with a purely friendly and whole-hearted interest in himself, whereas the man actually had used him without scruple from the first moment he had known him.

"All right," he said at last. "But we'll tackle the money stuff when the time comes, right now I'm for settling Mister Battling Macey. I'm set for England in a week or two, and before I leave I want to get as square with you as I can, Hap."

"Why, I think you're all square with me. You don't owe me anything, Kid. I picked enough at fair odds on your last fights to make up for everything—and more. And how about funds for this trip?"

'Lyss shook his head. "Don't need a cent," he declared. "I *had* figured some on a side bet of a couple of thousand, but I had a chance to soak my surplus in a nice investment, yesterday, and I took it. It doesn't make much difference. Charley will roar about side bets of ten or fifteen thousand, but when it comes to the point he'll not risk his good money—not if he remembers that poke he got from me! I have enough for traveling expenses and training."

"I could raise enough for the side bet," suggested Dixon. He was thinking of the chance it would give him to win more, but 'Lyss ascribed the offer to generous interests and was grateful.

"There's nothing in it for you," he said. "You'd have to bet it even, and the sports will be laying odds of three to two or better. You'd do much better to keep it with you and lay it here. And that is what I wanted to tell you. Get every cent you can raise together and spread it all over the place. If you want *long* odds, and are game to take the chance, I'll cable you the round I'll finish him in, and you can name your own price on that pick!"

Dixon laughed and shook his head.

"I'll take a chance where there is a chance," he said. "I'll bet my head off on you to win. But picking the round is a bit chancey."

'Lyss slapped his knee forcefully.

"I'd admit it," he said, "if I didn't have something in my glove for him."

Hap was still doubtful. "I wish I was certain of that," he said. "I would make a million on it."

The pugilist got up to go. "You go ahead and wait for that cable, then, and, when it comes, get your coin down. The million's as good as yours."

Hap also rose, placing an arm on the smaller man's shoulder. "Well, I'll see if I have the nerve when the time comes," he laughed. "Don't be in a hurry. I'll walk over with you if you'll let me get my hat. I suppose you're at the Jefferson, as usual?"

They were walking out toward the door, followed by the curious regard of the stenographer, who was in a still tremor over the proximity of the famous fighter.

"By the way, too bad about Mike," said Dixon. "I suppose he got to hitting the suds too hard for you. But he had a fine chance to make himself, until you let him out. I hear he sued you?"

"He didn't recover, though. You ought to hear Mike talk. You'd think he'd brought me up from the bottle days, nursing me on his lap and making me by hand until I could toddle alone. Give him a liter of brown suds, and he'll harrow you, like a rake, with his tale of woe. He could have drunk himself blind for all I cared, but when he worked me to a boneyard and then threw me into Disso, I kissed him good-by. I was willing to be a meal ticket for him, but I wouldn't fight six times a week."

"I know," said Dixon. "He was here not long ago, and he told every one down at the St. James that you'd done him dirty. I'd look out for him, too. He's not the man to stop at talk."

"What could that old soak do to me?" answered 'Lyss.

"I don't know about that. He talked a bit with me before he left. Showed me a letter or two, in fact. He was off to New York, then, to close negotiations with Pete Barkum, the heavyweight."

"To take charge of Barkum? Did he land?"

"I'm not sure, but I think he did. You may be meeting his man, some day, yourself, if you have to go up to the heavies."

'Lyss' lip curled.

"Ain't that a nice pair," he said sarcastically. "Mike, the drunken old pirate, and Pete Barkum, the original missing link! Say, that'll be a wild stable with those two, won't it?"

"Well, he ought to make some money with Barkum," said Dixon carelessly. "They say he can't box worth a cent, but that the only way to get him is to use an ax. That kind are terrible hard to whip."

"I'd like to let loose my spiral on him," said 'Lyss, "and see if his head would turn it."

CHAPTER VIII.

'Lyss had finished a considerable volume of correspondence, in the writing room of the Jefferson, in the course of completing the final details, preparatory to his leaving the country. He was a little tired and hungry, and finding that it was only about half past ten, he decided to go to the café and have a light lunch.

He had taken a seat to one side of the room, barely noting that the first of the after-theater crowd were drifting in, and that the floor was being cleared all about in preparation for dancing. But he soon discovered that his own table was now on the edge of the open space, instead of being rather remotely situated. This did not annoy him, for he anticipated some pleasure from watching the dancers while he ate. The orchestra was playing away strenuously, and the few people, well dressed, chattering women and men, eased his usual feeling of loneliness.

The Jefferson, considered slightly fast by the staid old families of the town, was the sort of hotel that suited him. He was not likely to be known at places like that, and fawned on by the sort that made heroes of pugilists. No one knew the famous Kid Keeley under the rightful name of U. G. Wolfe, and few recognized him by his infrequent pictures. He had never encouraged pictorial publicity, somewhat to his disadvantage, perhaps, but he had had his reasons. If his face and figure had once become familiar, he would never have been able to stalk his enemy right into his own training camp. Mastyk, unaided by the *Police Gazette* and the sporting pages, would never remember the obscure amateur he had once fought, as he had fought hundreds in exhibition bouts on the stage.

Yet he was not unremarked to-night, and more than one party found his straight features, marvelously clear skin, and fine figure

a cause for surreptitious comment and observation. 'Lyss was used to this to the point of usually being unconscious of it. But a group appeared now, at the sight of which he shrank a little in his chair, glancing behind him, as if to mark a way of escape. Before he could make up his mind, the party swept in, opposite his table, and Muriel Dixon, whom he most wished to avoid, turned and looked full upon him. For an instant their eyes met, and then she smiled openly and bowed to him, every member of her party noting the recognition.

'Lyss stood up and bent in answer to her. But to his relief she did not pause, but went on to a table which had been reserved for them. The pugilist noted the individuals who constituted the party, as they passed him. There was the old aunt, whose name he had forgotten: he remembered that she had been a severe judge of him, three years ago. Then there was a young fellow, Burr Tallant by name, whom he had known by sight, at one time; a member of an exclusive family. There were two girls, of about the same age as Muriel, but he did not know either of them, nor another young man who made the last of the group.

Aunt Kathie, whose dress was severe and plain, had no sign of festive spirit about her. She frowned on her surroundings, openly disapproving and half scandalized. When Muriel had spoken to 'Lyss, she had noted the quick deference with which he rose from his chair, and stood, while they passed, and she had rewarded this with an approving smile. She had not recognized 'Lyss at all.

It was hard for 'Lyss to sit with his back to this party, not knowing whether or not he was the subject of remark from them, but feeling extremely self-conscious. He watched the doors anxiously, dreading to see some theatrical or sporting character come in who would claim his acquaintance loudly, borrowing glory from his own notoriety. "If the old dame," he muttered to himself, frowning over his oysters, "should tumble to this Kid Keeley business, she'd sure throw a fit. If I get an excuse I'll beat it."

But it would have looked odd to get up and leave his food uneaten. He sat on, endeavoring to be stoical and unconcerned, eating stolidly and grimly keeping his eyes away from the other table though he fairly itched to turn and glance that way. It was something of a relief when he saw Burr Tallant go past him, with one of the girls, dancing a fox trot quite oblivious of him. If there was gossip going on, about him, they would never have done that.

Nothing of the sort was occurring, of course. Muriel had had no idea of betraying his identity to any of her friends. As a matter of fact, she was at once engaged in an altercation with aunt Kathie, which took all her attention. They had not yet taken their seats when Miss Abromet's delicacy took alarm.

"Muriel!" she had exclaimed, as her eyes fell on a rather vivid young woman, who leaned intimately across a table, toward a gross man of the convivial type, "I am sure this is no place for a respectable young woman!"

Muriel frowned and let her cloak slip from her shoulders, which were bare except for a strap or two.

"Nonsense, aunt Kathie," she said, "the place is all right. Don't be such an old fogy!"

Aunt Kathie subsided resignedly, but protesting to the last.

"I shudder to think what your mother would have said to this," she remarked. "I am glad there seem to be a few respectable people here, like that young man you spoke to. And the *dancing!* Surely you don't intend to get up there and carry on like these creatures?"

Muriel laughed, and one of the other girls protested.

"Why, Miss Abromet, everybody dances that way! Of *course,* we are going to dance!"

While the waiter was bringing refreshments, Burr Tallant seized the hand of Miss Wright and pulled her to her feet. "Come on!" he said. "We shouldn't miss this."

They went gliding off, Miss Wright's tight skirt clinging to her swaying figure in a manner that gave aunt Kathie fresh cause for scandal.

"I am *glad,*" she said fervidly, "that Mr. Wells could not come with us. You, at least, Muriel, will be unable to join in this disgraceful rout."

Allen Gibbs and Miss Catherwood looked regretfully and longingly on the dancing couples.

"We'll sit here with you, Muriel, until Burr gets back," said the girl significantly.

"Oh, don't mind me," said Muriel. "Have all the fun you can."

Allen Gibbs was looking around the room, trying to find some unattached male who would fill the vacant place.

"Who was that good-looking chap you spoke to, when we came in, Muriel?" he asked, as his eyes rested on 'Lyss' broad back. "I'll go over and collect him, if you say so?"

The desire to do something daring was irresistible to Muriel. When aunt Kathie discovered that a pugilist had been one of the party Muriel's fame would be secure.

"Why, I don't know about Mr. Wolfe," she said slowly. "I know him only slightly. He is a great friend of Hal's."

"Well, if he's all right, shall I ask him over?"

"Oh, I think he's a perfectly nice man," said Muriel. "I suppose it would do no harm."

Thus it was, that just as 'Lyss had decided that he might finish his meal and go quietly away, he was startled by the appearance, at his table, of one of those young fellows who had come in with Muriel.

"I beg pardon, Mr. Wolfe," said Gibbs impeccably. "Miss Dixon asked me to take the liberty. We should be delighted if you could join us. We are one man shy, you know."

"Miss Dixon?" was all that 'Lyss could say, repeating the name blankly. With some idea of appealing to her, he turned his head toward her table. But she was merciless. She waved gayly at him, beckoning him to come before the entire room full of people.

'Lyss was at sea. His one fear was that some one—some sporting waiter or one of the habitués of the place—might recognize him and connect him with the girl. He seemed to see a thousand eyes examining him critically; and who could tell how many of those eyes had beheld him, stripped to the waist, battling in any one of a hundred rings? Yet, if he refused, every one would notice it and would speculate on the reason. It would be a pretty conspicuous discourtesy, sure to cause talk—and if they kept on looking, some know-it-all would be sure to get wise. He turned back to Gibbs. "It's very kind of Miss Dixon," he stammered. "I should be delighted, of course."

"It's mighty good of *you*," said Gibbs politely. "We're short a man, and you'll help us out. My name is Gibbs."

'Lyss had risen and now shook his hand. Gibbs was momentarily astounded at the hardness and iron strength of the rather small and well-shaped hand, which pinched his own.

"I'm glad to meet you, Mr. Gibbs. You know my name, I think." There was a trace of evil, in the smile with which he said this, reflecting that if Gibbs had known his commoner name, he would have dropped dead.

He had followed Gibbs to the other table and was looking down into the half-defiant and half-frightened eyes which Muriel turned up to him as she extended her hand. And then she was hurriedly presenting him to the others, Miss Wright and Tallant having returned.

"And this is aunt Kathie, Mr. Wolfe—Miss Abromet, I mean!"

He had acknowledged every name quite nicely, Muriel noted, without trace of unpleasant mannerism or awkwardness to betray his station, though his face was a trifle flushed and his eyes disconcertingly alert and suspicious. If he could carry it off, her joke on aunt Kathie—in fact, also on the other girls—would be a success.

"Aunt Kathie just paid you a perfectly nice compliment, Mr. Wolfe. She remarked, when she came in, that you were the nicest-looking man in the place."

"Muriel!" said aunt Kathie severely, "you exaggerate. I remarked that Mr. Wolfe, at least, was respectable."

Muriel winced and 'Lyss turned eyes that were a little threatening on her. He seemed to ask her if she had planned that irony. But before he could say anything, the very thing he had feared happened from an unexpected source. The waiter who brought the chair shoved it behind him, and spoke, smiling proudly.

"Your chair, Mr. Keeley!"

"Keeley?" said Gibbs. "Why, I thought it was Mr. Wolfe?"

"Mr. Keeley Wolfe," said Muriel stiffly, pulling herself together with a great effort. So relieved was 'Lyss that he smiled frankly his admiration for her, as the waiter hurried off. "I'm sorry!" whispered Muriel, leaning close to him, as he bent forward. 'Lyss nodded his understanding and forgiveness.

Allen Gibbs asked him what he would have. He called for sherry and lithia as he had done with Filbert. The waiter was busy with the order placing aunt Kathie's wine before her and tall glasses containing a

brownish liquid in front of the two young men. Aunt Kathie had beamed approval when 'Lyss had ordered his mild concoction.

"It is your turn to entertain aunt Kathie," Muriel quietly declared to Miss Wright. "I am going to dance." She looked at 'Lyss. "You dance the new dances, don't you, Mr. Wolfe?"

There was no way out of it for 'Lyss, and it may be doubted whether, by this time, he wished to escape. The experience, while closely resembling others he had had, was yet new to him. He had more than once, however, been a member of parties, in such places, which included women fully as expensively and well dressed as these—and women as pretty, too—though they had invariably been of another sort entirely, and he danced well.

He had risen, and leading Muriel to the open floor, they were soon gliding and dipping through the motley throng of dancers.

Both of them were somewhat carried away by it. The girl was almost startled, though pleasantly, to feel the terrible strength of the arm that bound her, though it rested so lightly at her back. In connection with his swift grace he seemed to be something invincible, protecting; a security against any possibly threatening harm. The fact that he was a pugilist, while it persisted in her consciousness, lost all its significance as she was lifted and guided through the whirling crowd.

To 'Lyss, however, this intimacy, casual though it was, meant more than to the girl. Muriel, a dim, idealized figure which, for years he had set before himself as a symbol of feminine impeccability, had stirred no active emotion in him. But now, this girl, who rested so lightly in his arms, and yielded so lissomely to his guiding hand, swaying as he swayed, her head hanging slightly to one side and her arm floating above his own, was life; pulsating, throbbing, warm life, the atmosphere of which was as heady as spirit. Her hair brushing gossamerlike across his face, the gleam of her skin, the half languid repose of her face, all had an intense personal appeal for him. Every fiber of the man suddenly woke to appreciation of her; clean, unevil appreciation, but acute and direct as his former regard had been vague and dissociate.

In that moment he realized the full poignancy of love and loss. He knew that she was the ultimate desire—and that he perceived her through a door that soon would close between them forever. Unless—unless—— His wild thoughts were playing with schemes of rehabilitation; strenuous pursuit of fortune and respectability. After this last fight was he not to retire and become an engineer? And who would know "Kid Keeley" in Ulysses Grant Wolfe?

A vision of the grinning waiter, and another of the flaming, vivid pages of the *Police Gazette* answered his flight of imagination, and stifled his wild hope before it was born. A pugilist he was and would be until the end.

"Shall we stop?"

"Never!" And then he was abashed at the fierce emphasis which he had given to the word. "If you please," he said. "I am not used to—this kind of exercise." He grinned stoically over the bitter witticism. But with feminine disregard for subtleties Muriel saw no incongruity in the fact of the trained prize fighter being wearied by a few minutes of dancing. She was all sympathy and consideration. They were at some distance from their table, but there was a bench at hand, beside the entrance to the foyer. Muriel did not attempt to return to her rightful place but made for this spot and seated herself, making room for 'Lyss beside her.

He would have preferred to stand, it being easier to fight that temptation to take her in his arms, and kiss her on the lips, before that whole roomful of people, than here beside her. But he had no choice, if he would avoid notice. So he sat down, but that he suffered through this birth of love was evidenced by the fact that his face was pale, and a furrow between his brows gave it a look of pathos.

Muriel saw it, and was anxious.

"You are not well!" she exclaimed.

"Yes—or no! I may not be, I mean! It's nothing, however. It's just——" He found his attempt to fight down his rising rebellion at his fate, futile. "Miss Dixon! Why did you want to do it? Why couldn't you have let me alone?"

The outburst astonished her. Yet she had a guilty feeling of playing selfishly with this splendid man, and so her disclaimer was not entirely convincing.

"Why, Mr. Wolfe! What do you mean?"

"You must know what I mean! Isn't it bad enough for me to have to be what I am, without your rubbing it in? Maybe

you don't realize it, but it's bad enough to know that I'm out of your class without being dragged into it for exhibition! And I *know* you can't afford to know *me*—and think what it means to me to have to fight to keep you from hurting yourself by forgetting it!"

"I don't understand you," said Muriel. "I do not see why I cannot know you if I wish to."

'Lyss broke into wild words. "I wish to God you could—or I could know you! But I'm a prize fighter, Miss Dixon! A paid fighter who slugs other men and is slugged by them to amuse those that pay us! Of course I know, that it is because you know me some, and think I'm all right that you associate with me, to-night." And then he added, "Unless you just did it to pull a sensation——"

The bald statement of the truth struck her like a blow. And she suddenly knew that she cared a good deal for this man's good opinion.

"Why!" she said vehemently, "I never dreamed of doing anything so hateful! And the rest isn't true. I don't care if you are a pugilist, Mr. Wolfe. Even a pugilist can be a decent man, can't he?"

He fairly glared at her. "Decent!" he repeated. "Yes, I can be decent! But I can't trot in your class—and you can't bring me into it without losing out! That's elementary, and even a pug can see it!"

"Maybe a 'pug' can see it," she retorted indignantly, "but I can't! If I choose to know you, as I know you to be a perfectly nice man, I guess I can do it without regard to what fools may say."

"Right!" he said. "But they'll make it their business, and it's up to me to make you see that you can't afford it."

He was looking desperately into the room, striving to get his thoughts in expressive order, trying vainly to voice the half-felt conviction, against which he rebelled while admitting it, that, if he could not ascend into her class, her only way of knowing him was to descend into his. And there, at hand, was the demonstration that he needed.

Harry Wells, accompanied by two other men, all three of them flushed and rakish with conviviality, had entered the room, and were seating themselves at a table. Wells was already casting an appraising and half-drunken eye over the room, in search of acquaintance or flirtation.

"There's trouble ready for you!" muttered 'Lyss. "We'll have to get out of here."

Muriel also saw and felt her heart jump. The usually sober Harry was palpably intoxicated. If he saw her with 'Lyss, what would he do? The question suggested possibilities of disastrous gossip.

"Walk out there and toward the table," ordered 'Lyss. "I'll come right behind you, keep my back to him if I can, and make my get-away from here as soon as you're back there. He may never know the difference."

If she had had presence of mind to walk sedately all might have gone well. But she was frightened and hurried, and that drunken eye followed her with what began as curiosity and ended with recognition. And 'Lyss, hurrying behind her, was too conspicuous a figure to be overlooked. Wells' hectic eye rested on him, with doubt, at first, and then with growing comprehension. He saw the girl hasten to her seat, turn and acknowledge the bow with which 'Lyss excused himself; saw the other men shake his hand and the girls follow Muriel's example; saw the man turn and stride out of the room and into the lobby.

He arose from his seat solemnly.

"The damned scoundrel!" he said to his companions. "He can't pull that off and get away with it, while I'm here! I'm going out there and say something to him."

CHAPTER IX.

Six months later, Ulysses Wolfe had sought out Mr. Filbert as the only one in New York likely to be able to give him the information he wished, in the form that he required. It had been easy enough to find him. His name was printed in the telephone directory as "Dobson W. Filbert, consulting engineer," and at the address given, 'Lyss found a glass-fronted door, on which was the same legend and beneath it: "The Filbert Laminated Truss." On opening this door, he entered an outer office, from which could be seen a well-lighted room in which was a drafting table, over which a young man idled in his shirt sleeves. Beyond him, Filbert, himself, looked out the window.

The engineer welcomed him heartily. He hailed 'Lyss out to lunch, declaring that he was going to get even with him. On the way out he pointed proudly to the lettering on the door.

"See that, lad! That's what is going to

make our fortunes! You've still got your papers, haven't you? A half interest in that truss is nothing to throw away, 'Lysses. When are you going to come in with me?"

"Pretty soon, I guess," said 'Lyss. "I'm through with the game, I think."

They were in Delmonico's downtown restaurant by now, and Filbert was doing the honors grandly.

"Good!" he said. "You won't make a mistake. There's nothing in the ring business in the long run. Now, you won't make any fortune right away, with me, but I can promise you, that, with your salary as salesman and your half of the royalties, you can take down a couple of hundred a month or better right at the start."

"Sounds good to me," smiled 'Lyss. He seemed to have shed the former gaunt, rather hard look, and to have returned to his original boyishness of face and bearing.

Then he talked with Filbert, laying plans, eager, enthusiastic, boyish plans, yet displaying to the older man a real knowledge of engineering that was quite satisfactory. Filbert found it actually impossible to realize that he was sitting opposite the real middleweight champion of the world.

"But this wasn't what I wanted to see you about, Dobby, after all," 'Lyss finally exclaimed. "I wanted you to tell me about Hap Dixon, if you know what the trouble is there?"

"I saw him only a few days ago in the Calumet," said Filbert. "But surely you've been more in touch with him than I."

"I've heard nothing but a telegram of congratulation just after I put Macey away —until I landed. I found a letter from him at the office of the *Journal*—one of the reporters told me it was there. What's he doing in New York? What's come of the Dixon Structural Iron Works?"

Filbert shook his head gloomily. "He put it on the bum," he said. "Hap was too much of a sport to be a manufacturer. There was a smash. The creditors may be able to pull it out and put it on its feet again, but I doubt it."

'Lyss frowned anxiously. "How did it hit Hap?"

"He seems to have come out all right. At least he has plenty of money. He was all dolled up in the Calumet—and lit up to boot."

"Humph!" said 'Lyss, his frown deepening. "Where is he stopping?"

"Wait a moment!" Filbert reached into his pocket for a wallet. "He gave me his address. Here it is: 51 West Blank Street. Said he and his sister were living there and invited me around. It ain't the best neighborhood in the town, in my opinion."

"His letter to me didn't mention where he lived. Said he wanted to see me when I got home, and to look him up any time at the Calumet grill. He had some scheme on foot, I think."

"You better steer clear of Hap Dixon's schemes," said Filbert.

'Lyss was somewhat absent during the rest of the meal, and, when it was over, declined to accompany Filbert back to the office, saying that he had one or two engagements that would take his time for the rest of the afternoon. Promising to be ready to take up his new duties within the week, he shook hands with the engineer outside the restaurant and parted with him. He had intended to wait until after dinner and then to look up Hap at the Calumet, in preference to seeking him at his home where he might meet Muriel. In order to kill time he sat in the lobby of his hotel after buying a paper, idly trying to read it, while his thoughts were elsewhere. He was thinking about that address. There were parts of New York with which he was only too well acquainted, and it seemed to him that this was very near to one of those spots. What was Dixon about to live there, with Muriel, if he had plenty of money?

Memory somehow began to bring back that scene of a year ago, in the far-away lobby of the Jefferson Hotel, in Dalesburg. He recalled again with a hot flush, the drunken recognition of himself and Miss Dixon, by Wells, and the scene that had followed. He had done everything that his quick wit suggested to get the aunt and her companions out and away before the inevitable happened, but he had failed, chiefly, because Muriel, in some exaggerated impulse of loyalty to him, had turned back when she was safely outside. He saw again the staring crowd of waiters, the important room clerk hurrying up, the loud accusation of Wells, that the infamous Kid Keeley, pugilist, was worming his way into the society of decent women under a concealed identity.

There had been a thrill, too, when Muriel had spoken for him, denying the charge, facing the room clerk down, when he inti-

mated that neither pugilists nor their female companions were considered desirable as frequenters of that hotel. And he took rueful pride, that, in the face of terrific provocation, he had refrained from violent resentment of the vile insinuations and insults to which he had been subjected by Wells, whom he could have killed with a blow.

The lesson had been burned into him, however, and that lesson he read as a condemnation to life outside of respectable circles. Even the unsophisticated girl must have understood, after that episode, the impassable gulf that yawned between them. And now, she was in New York—and disaster had overtaken the works! He could not bear to think that Muriel, the epitome of everything desirable and dainty should have been brought low and perhaps reduced to poverty.

This idea grew upon him as he made his way to the street on which the Dixons were living. He told himself that he would see Hap Dixon and find out what he meant by it all. As he turned off Broadway his fear and indignation grew to overmastering proportions. It did not need his sporting man's knowledge of the city to tell him that these old, dingy, converted brownstone fronts, not far from the section known then as the Little Tenderloin, were, in the best instances, no more than semirespectable. He could picture the street after night, with apartments, innocent to outside scrutiny but brightly lit, with the noise of automatic pianos sounding in more than one, while, on the sidewalks, painted women flitted, peering into the faces of men who passed.

He rang the bell which bore the Dixon card and listened at the tube. Muriel's voice, rather frightened, answered him, saying that Mr. Dixon was out of town and then timidly asking who it was.

"It is 'Lyss Wolfe, Miss Dixon. Could I leave a message for Hap with you?"

"Mr. Wolfe! Oh, you must come up. I shall be so glad to see you!"

There was a note of instant relief in her voice which smote him and made him throw overboard all his resolution to avoid her. He climbed the dingy stairs and found her waiting at the door to welcome him. She was smiling and, in the semidarkness of the hall, he did not at first notice the marks of suffering and strain upon her face.

'Lyss stepped inside, noting swiftly that the place was better than its exterior promised. But Muriel seemed to be alone. "Why, where is your aunt?" he asked.

"Dead," said Muriel simply.

"And you're alone? With Hap out of town?"

"You must sit down and have some tea, Mr. Wolfe. Yes, he went to New Haven, this morning, on some affair or other. He said something about a 'main' there, whatever that may mean. Some athletic event, I think."

"Athletic!" snorted 'Lyss. "A cock fight! No, I won't have tea—not here at least. Do you mean to tell me that he leaves you here alone at night with these honkatonks going full blast around you?"

He was furious with suppressed rage, and Muriel was alarmed. Yet she sensed, in a way, that the rage was on her behalf.

"Go and put on your hat and coat," he said sternly. "You can't stay here."

"There isn't—any place I can go," she said, making a brave effort to hide the break in her voice.

"There's the Martha Washington, at least, or, failing that, the Y. W. C. A. You're going with me to dinner, and after that I'll see that you are safely placed."

Muriel did not stop to think of the incongruity of placing herself under the protection of a notorious character of the prize ring. She had, in fact, forgotten his connection with that institution, or only remembered it as she had always done, nebulously. Even when that scene had occurred in the Jefferson, the figure which she had beheld had been that of 'Lyss, thoughtful and chivalrous, with no hint of the pugilist about him, except for the fortuitous chance of his recognition and exposure.

The memory of the shame had faded. But there would remain forever another memory—that of his cry of agony, when he thought that she was exhibiting him out of cruel thoughtlessness. He had betrayed himself then, and she remembered vividly the thrill she had felt, as she read that self-betrayal. She felt the same sort of thrill now as she went to do his bidding.

They walked down Broadway to the Astor and the street looked brighter to the girl. The telltale marks of strain and fear had vanished magically, and she felt strangely light-hearted. But 'Lyss was serious. Little by little, during that walk and as they sat at table in the hotel, he broke down her

reserve by relentless questioning until he had heard all of the story that she knew. She told him at last how she had, at first, suffered somewhat from the notoriety attaching to that evening at the Jefferson, but that it had been quickly overshadowed and forgotten as graver events impended. She confessed that Hap had gone from one dissipation to another, careless of results to either himself or her, until at last the crash had come.

Hap had done something, she did not know what. But aunt Kathie had known, and it had killed her. Muriel knew that she had died of shock, to find that her idol had feet of clay, but she supposed that the final knowledge of his recklessness and licentiousness had been the straw that broke her. She did not know and so could not tell 'Lyss, that aunt Kathie had been apprised of the true facts—that Hap had stolen and embezzled until he had wrecked the concern and with it, her own and Muriel's fortune. Nor did she know that he would even now have been in the penitentiary had not the creditors, mostly bankers of Dalesburg, spared him for her own sake.

When the tale was told she had an opportunity to turn her attention to him, as he sat pondering the story. She noted certain changes in him. She was eager to hear of his adventures, but he was disinclined to discuss them.

"I've heard of your last affair," she told him. "Of course, only in the papers. But it must have been wonderful."

'Lyss mumbled something.

"It's over and done with," he said. "I want to cease to figure as a bruiser—a hired thug, and begin to function as a decent member of society."

"I refuse to regard you as any such thing as a bruiser," said Muriel. "I've often tried to picture that journey half round the world and the final climax in that glorious fight; and I've found it thrilling."

"Miss Muriel," said 'Lyss earnestly, "you haven't a thing in common with such animals as Macey and Kid Keeley. It may sound thrilling when you hear about it, but it would be just plain disgusting and brutal if you were to see it."

"I wonder why you say that," said Muriel. "What is there in an exhibition of that sort which makes it so terrible and apart from any other sport? I have seen men box—and it was neither terrible nor disgusting. I found it quite fascinating, in fact."

"A fight isn't sport," explained 'Lyss. "In my profession we fight as a matter of business. We have no scruples, for we can't afford to have them. So, as you can see, we have to be pretty hard citizens."

In his mind a project was already forming. He was inwardly writhing with the pain of final and complete renunciation, the surrender of his last bit of pride. And yet he was finding a fierce joy in the contemplation of that supreme sacrifice of all he had left, on the altar of his love and respect for this girl. She, all unwitting, ignorant of how he was stabbing himself, uttered the words that were like twisting the knife in the wound.

"There is a worse thing than that, even if you were that bad, which I don't believe."

"I'd like to know what it is," scoffed 'Lyss.

"Being dishonest; being a cheat; being a coward. I could easily be proud to know an honest and manly pugilist, but I couldn't stand a dishonorable man, no matter what else he was."

"Would you like to see me fight?" he asked grimly.

"Oh, I'd love to!" she cried, confirming his fears.

"I remember that I vowed once that you'd never see me again, except in the movies," he said slowly. "I was a bit off in that prediction. But, if you'd like to know what it is all like, I'll make that vow come true, in part. Shall we go to a picture show—of a prize fight?"

"But—I said I'd like to see *you* fight."

"And that is what I suggest. The pictures of my fight with Macey are being shown at the Jewel, on Forty-second Street."

"*Your* fight. Why, if I had known that they were being shown I would have gone by myself, long ago—though I hate moving pictures."

"They'll not run away," laughed 'Lyss.

CHAPTER X.

They paused before the theater, from which people were pouring, showing that the performance was at an intermission point.

"It's a mint," said 'Lyss, looking at a life-size poster of himself, which neither he nor any one else could have recognized, but for the legend beneath it. "And that sweep gets

the entire rake-off from it. They wouldn't even give me a small per cent of the receipts."

"It was a shame!" said Muriel indignantly.

There were plenty of women, and even young girls, coming from the place, which seemed to be entirely respectable. 'Lyss stepped up and purchased tickets, wondering if any would recognize him from the pictures. Nothing of that sort happened, however, and he returned to lead Muriel in.

"Be careful not to give me away talking about this," he whispered to her. "If people around you hear you commenting on it and me, they'll get wise."

They got seats in an advantageous spot and sat watching the crowd file in. There was nothing to attract their attention in particular, except two men who sat two or three rows in front of them, and who were discussing the pictures, which they had apparently seen once already, in tones that were audible to 'Lyss and his companion.

There was something familiar about the smaller of these men, and 'Lyss frowningly endeavored to recall him. It was not until he heard the voice that he suspected who it might be.

"I want ye to watch this now, and get next to the poonch! Ye missed it entirely the lasht toime, Pete."

"Whew!" hissed 'Lyss, under his breath. "Mike McGloon, for a bet! And who's the tame gorilla with him?"

The man in front warranted the description. Only his vast shoulders and head could be seen. Two bulbous ears clung to the latter, which was as round and smooth as bullets, and the hair grew over it like a bristle. Swelling up beyond the ears the enormous shoulders, knotty and hunched, despite all the efforts of a skillful tailor, rose direct from the base of the skull, without suspicion of neck to separate them.

'Lyss leaned toward Muriel. "See there," he pointed. "That's the pugilist of legend! Pete Barkum, the heavyweight; the aboriginal cave man and all the rest. Isn't he handsome?"

Muriel looked and shuddered. "What a terrible brute!" she exclaimed. "What is he doing here?"

"Watching the pictures to get a line on how I fight," whispered 'Lyss. "A lot of good it'll do him, for I'm through with fighting."

"Thank Heaven for that!" breathed Muriel. "Do you mean to say that you would ever have fought that terrible thing?"

"You never can tell," said 'Lyss carelessly. "As a pug, I would be supposed to fight whoever challenged, if the pursee was satisfactory. As for Barkum, do you know I always had a sort of hankering to try his game!"

"Oh, why!"

"Well, they used to say that a heavyweight named Delaney was the toughest thing and hardest hitter in the game. He and Barkum went twenty rounds, once, and Pete, who can't box at all, took a terrific mauling—quite a historic one, in fact—yet he was not even knocked from his feet. Since then many a fighter has tried to beat him down and failed. Craft wants none of him, and others are shy of him. Yet—I always had a notion that I could hit him hard enough to put him down, and always wanted to try it."

"I hope you never do!" said Muriel fervently.

"There's no chance now," laughed 'Lyss. "Here comes the spieler!"

A man in a dinner jacket came out before the screen and addressed the audience, while the operator tuned up his machine. In particular, he asked them to watch for the last round, when he would call their attention to the terrible new blow that had finished the battle—the wonderful punch which was known now to all the world as "Keeley's Spiral."

Then the lights snapped off and the machine began to buzz. A picture or two was shown which represented scenes of training. Most of these were of Battling Macey, but one showed 'Lyss, clad in a sweater and cotton running shorts, engaged in the exciting pastime of skipping a rope. Muriel was thrilled and almost shocked to recognize him. She had never yet realized the identity between Kid Keeley and 'Lyss until she saw this picture.

His intimate connection with pugilism, and what it meant, was further brought home to her when the droning machine threw on the screen a replica of the ring, taken close up, showing the padded ropes and posts, and the canvas-covered floor, on which stood one or two men who tested the spring of it carefully, with their toes, while other men in sweaters or jerseys, standing on the ground outside it, leaned on the platform

and made pantomime comments, or looked curiously through the crowd, seeming to stare out of the screen at herself and giving her the uncanny impression that they recognized her companion and were wondering at her association with him. She found herself searching eagerly through the faces of spectators nearest the ring for the dimly remembered features of that girl for whom, she thought, 'Lyss had entered on his career of battle. But she did not find it.

Other men gathered in the ring, and a scale was hoisted to the floor of the platform. 'Lyss leaned over with a chuckle to explain that Macey, well-informed as to 'Lyss' condition, had insisted on ringside weighing. The flickering picture showed the gathering of paraphernalia, chairs, sponges, and buckets; and then two boxes of gloves were thrown in and opened. The only gloves Muriel had ever seen were those used in exhibitions, and she noted that these were thin, flimsy affairs compared to what she had expected. It served to deepen the impression of seriousness that hung around the replica of the bout.

Finally, the phantom audience rose and waved countless hands and hats, cheering frenziedly and soundlessly from the ground glass. Down through an aisle came a man whom she had never seen, clad in a bath robe, and followed by a retinue of others in sweaters. Something, she thought, must be the matter with his hands, which were bound round with surgeon's adhesive tape, or something that looked like it. This man, she saw, as his counterfeit resentment climbed to the platform, was not as tall as 'Lyss, but looked stockier. His face was not bad looking, but he had a rather supercilious expression, though he smiled and nodded to acquaintances near the ring.

Another soundless, ghostly wave of cheering rippled over the screen, and down another aisle stepped 'Lyss, clad, like his opponent, in bath robe, and with hands bound as his were. His retinue was not so extensive as that of the champion, nor was his welcome as exuberant. Muriel hardly noticed this, however, as she was thrilling with the realization that, here stepping toward her out of this projected monotone, was no other than 'Lyss, tall, with face thin and a bit haggard, but smiling cheerfully. There was something confident and sinister in the free swing of his shoulders as he strode toward the arena, and climbed to the platform. A momentary gathering of seconds and helpers took place in the center of the ring, and the gloves were carefully examined and compared. Then a flash, as a new scene was abruptly projected.

Battling Macey, wearing his bath robe, was standing on the scale. He stepped down, and then Muriel received another slight shock, as 'Lyss stepped forward. He slipped from his robe as he came up to the scale and stood there, naked and white, except for the trunks about his loins and the light shoes on his feet, slender, shapely but thin, with sinews showing under the skin and muscles bulking gauntly on shoulders, arms, and waist. He stepped on the scales with infinite care—and the beam rose and trembled at the limit to an ounce.

Another flash, and the two were sitting in opposite corners, while seconds laced the gloves on their hands. Muriel could see 'Lyss' face and noted that he was watching Macey through narrowed, cunning eyes, from under furrowed brows, while his mouth was set in a peculiar line, not quite a smile, and altogether cruel. Macey was as stolid as though 'Lyss did not exist.

Preliminaries of the two meeting and getting their orders from the referee, a man in his shirt sleeves, passed rapidly; they shook hands in the middle of the ring and stepped back to their corners, while the chairs were jerked from the ring. Then, without warning, the two men sprang toward each other. Their naked figures were bent, their arms crooked at elbows, and swinging freely back and forth, in short motions, and their heads were thrown a bit forward. 'Lyss was tall and slender and almost frail, while Macey was blockier, sturdy, and heavily muscled and nearly two inches shorter.

And now began a spectacle such as Muriel had never dreamed of, which, even in the monotone pantomime of the moving pictures, free of crimson tinting, soundless of panting sobs of the combatants, or of the frenzied shouts of spectators, yet showed a faithful moiety of brutality and cruelty. It was not real; it was minus two-thirds of the actual excitement; but the pictures showed faithfully the expressions of the men, and that was enough. When a blow was struck, it seemed, after all, to be but a phantom blow, yet it was immediately made real by the changing faces of the man who struck, and of him who received it.

And that was 'Lyss—gentle 'Lyss Wolfe—

who smiled there, through cruel lips, and stabbed and cut and slashed at that other man, pitilessly, inexorably, methodically! Her 'Lyss; her 'Lyss, turned into a tigerish beast!

If the pictures robbed the fight of half its horrors, it also robbed it of most of its compensating excitement, its mob sympathies and enthusiasms, its buoyancy of cheering and encouragement, its thrills of active participation. A slight effort, only, of imagination, was required to vision those black splotches which streaked Macey's face and were smeared on the gloves of both, as red, red stains that spread, in spite of sponging between the rounds.

It was hardly a fight, but rather a slaughter. For a round or two, only, did Macey figure in the battle as a combatant. True, he rushed and swung, blocked and sidestepped, making terrific and skillful efforts, utilizing every bit of science and force that he possessed. But the tall fiend in front of him was like a shadow, slipping in and out, gliding swiftly from side to side, stooping under blows that flew above his head, invulnerable and almost intangible; while those corded arms stabbed and stabbed and stabbed at the features which they held at distance in front of 'Lyss.

It was a revelation in fighting skill to every man who watched the pictures. Swift, inhumanly swift, 'Lyss fought with cool deliberation and with every movement timed and gauged to the fraction of a second. Even those of the audience who knew nothing of boxing realized that they were seeing in action the greatest and most skillful man of his weight who had ever lived. Battling Macey, a deservedly renowned champion, was there, trying with every resource at his command, to beat back that terrific assault, and failing pitifully, like the veriest tyro of the preliminary bouts.

For round after round, while Muriel watched with horror that gradually grew into a queer, strained interest and excitement, those two shadows stepped from their corners and met in the center of the ring. And for round after round, that cruel half smile that streaked 'Lyss' face, never varied. Doggedly the champion bored in, striking at long range and at short, standing off and slugging, or rushing to close quarters, to exchange short jabs and hooks with the free arm, wrestling frantically when arms bound him, trying every trick and dodge of the trade, rubbing his head in 'Lyss' chest, grinding his chin in his shoulder. He strove to push him into the ropes, where an opportunity for a blow might be given. He fell away, retreating, wary, and covered, to let his antagonist force the fighting, while he watched, ready to plant his fist on any exposed spot. But it was all in vain.

When he struck at long range, that swift arm would beat him to the blow, and that impregnable defense would block it with tantalizing ease. When one occasionally got home, it was short, made so by the sway of the lithe body backward, or to one side. In infighting, so cunningly were his arms bound that not one blow out of ten reached its mark, and of those, few did any damage. On the other hand, when 'Lyss let loose an uppercut, or dug in a close-range jab, it had, in one instance, a vicious, blistering sting, and in the other, a solid jar behind it that boded ill for its receiver.

Yet the fight went on, through round after round, while Macey stood up under that fire and did what he could to return it. His seconds sponged him off during the intervals, sending him back into the battle with skin once more white where it was not bruised; and yet, in a few seconds, he would be stained and polluted with the black streaks and smears that Muriel knew were his own blood. And his antagonist moved there in the ring, or lolled easily in his chair, during the intermissions, unmarked, almost unruffled, watching, with cruel eyes the frantic efforts or the labored breathings of his victim, fighting him on the floor, or stretched, gasping, in his seat.

How the man could stand up under that battering became a mystery that grew, as the time went by. His apparent stamina finally forced a stifled query from her.

"Oh, pitiful! Pitiful! How can he stand that?"

"Stand it! He had to stand it. It was hurting him—hurting him—but it wasn't putting him out. He was remembering that trick of his!"

"Oh, how *could* you do it? Why, why, why?"

His answer was slightly absent.

"Because the dirty crook had me laid out with a mallet. I'd lived over three years, with the thought of making him pay for that over and over again. He paid!"

Muriel found herself trying to readjust her shattered ideals.

"I thought—it was for a girl," she murmured.

"Nothing like that," he said. "When I was a mere kid, this dog put me out by getting a fellow to hit me in the back of the head with a hammer. I lived just to settle that with him—and I did. But I guess I wouldn't take it so hard, if it was to happen to-day. It would take more than that to make me take up prize fighting."

Muriel was stunned. Yet the fact that her dream of chivalry was over actually affected her much less than might have been expected. She found that there was some relief, even in the disillusionment, since it followed that 'Lyss had not fought to avenge —another girl! Then, too, the cruelty of the performance she was witnessing was impressing her less, as custom used her to it. After all, it was Macey and not 'Lyss who was getting that fearful beating.

In the stillness of the theater she now heard a voice from the rows in front, where Mike McGloon, all unconscious of those who sat behind him, was whispering hoarsely to his companion.

"I want ye to watch out now and git what's comin'. If ye don't, ye may wake up, some day, wid a headache that'll hold ye fer a while."

'Lyss had also heard it, for he laughed shortly.

The man on the stage, in the interval between the reels, spoke loudly.

"In this round, which is the final one, ladies and gentlemen, you will see the famous "Keeley's Spiral" delivered. Keep a close watch and, at the moment before the blow is delivered, you will be warned again to look for it."

The only difference Muriel could see between this and the other rounds, was in the expression on 'Lyss' face. When the picture flashed on, it showed him leaning forward in his chair, one elbow on his knee, looking with a strange intentness at his opponent, who still seemed strong, though very weary. When at the signal, the two arose and strode together, she saw that 'Lyss' face was set in hard lines, all trace of a smile being gone, while, as though knowing he was to meet a new attack, Macey was frowning, with battered features, and seemed to have summoned up all his reserve of strength to resist what was coming. He even pushed the fighting, rushing 'Lyss as though he had suffered no impairment of his powers.

'Lyss slid backward, blocking and holding his counter. The determined champion closed in, striking with right and left, but 'Lyss met these blows almost indifferently, blocking one and stepping away from the other, so that it missed by a hair. He seemed to be measuring his distance with more than usual care. Around and around the square of rope he retreated, still quiescent, holding the deadly threat in reserve. Well covered, cautious, and yet aggressive, Macey followed, getting home a blow, now and then, and meeting only light exchanges in return. It almost seemed as though the tide had changed for the moment.

But now 'Lyss' left fist dropped almost to his hip, where he held it, with elbow flexed backward. His foot slipped, slipped, slipped to a new position. His right glove jabbed swiftly into Macey's face, and drove him a step backward.

Macey set himself again, and drew back his own right, as though to feint with it. An instant the two poised, every muscle tense. Then——

'Lyss' left hand shot forward and upward, with the speed of a bullet. Macey's right swung upward to block it. But the hand twisted snakily, as though winding about the guarding pad and smote full on the jaw, 'Lyss' shoulder turning and sinking with the motion. Macey did not drop. He was literally lifted from his feet and hurled senseless to the canvas.

"Great Gawd o' guns!" came the booming comment of the amazed colossus, who sat in front of them. "Wot a helluva wallop!"

Muriel had heard the warning call of the announcer, just a second before:

"Gentlemen, here it comes! Kid Keeley's Spiral!"

"Is he dead?" whispered the awed girl.

'Lyss chuckled a little.

"Dead! Not a bit of it. It took them twenty minutes to bring him to, though."

The audience was rising and crowding from the theater. They, too, got up, Muriel finding that she was suffering from a slight headache and that the air was close. When they came out into the air, she turned to find 'Lyss, and came almost face to face with that great man with whom Mike McGloon had been sitting.

His face matched his figure, which was bulky and muscular beyond description. It was gross, huge-jawed, coarse, yet it was

not exactly vicious. The little eyes twinkled, impudently, under knotted brows, and his mouth was agrin. He turned to look again at her, attracted by her uncommon beauty. She was waiting for 'Lyss, who loomed behind some other people a few feet away, and as he came up and joined her, Barkum swung about on Mike McGloon.

"Would yuh git that!" he said. "Look who's wid de skoi't—wid dat peach dere! It's de Kid er I'm a paperweight!"

Mike McGloon also looked, and grinned evilly at them.

"It sure is," he agreed. "Well, let 'im have his day! 'Twill soon be good night fer the lad, if ye do yer duty, Pete!"

CHAPTER XI.

'Lyss had left Muriel safely bestowed in the care of a matronly chaperon, at the Martha Washington Hotel, and had gone to his own quarters, there to pass a restless night thinking over and planning his new and greatest renunciation. For years he had lived in the midst of evil, but, with grim strength, almost unimaginable in a man of his years, he had kept himself free of it. Yet he had known it—had acquired a knowledge of sinister things and of vicious practices, from mere contact with those who lived by them.

He had been of fine enough fiber to realize his position, and to value all that he had lost. With lonely pride he had clung to the last shred of respectability, as to something that, at least, gave him a link with the world that he had thoughtlessly deserted, out of a childishly vindictive craving for revenge. In all his ring career there had never been the whisper of crookedness or dishonesty on his part. Many an opportunity for illicit profit had been scorned and, as a consequence, his earnings had never been extremely large.

Now, confronted with what he regarded as the absolute necessity to rescue Muriel, by restoring her to her rightful place, he knew but one way to secure the fortune which it would require. That way lay only in the sale of his very soul to the devil, and yet he did not hesitate.

Late the next afternoon he was prowling around the grill and through the bar of the Calumet Hotel, seeking for Hap Dixon. Finally he found him, though he did not at first recognize him. Hap's figure had so improved for the better that 'Lyss was doubtful at first of his identity. Exercise and some measure of abstention had greatly improved him, though he still bore a dissipated appearance as he recognized 'Lyss and greeted him.

'Lyss motioned Dixon to a table and ordered champagne—to Dixon's surprise, for he knew the athlete's abstemious habits. "Have you seen your sister, yet?" the prize fighter asked abruptly. Hap swallowed and his eyes shifted. "She—er—called me up from the Martha. That was——"

"That was where you ought to have taken her yourself," said 'Lyss sternly, "if you'd had an ounce of decency in your ton of carcass."

Dixon started to bluster but 'Lyss waved his protestations calmly aside. He had big things on his mind and, at present, he looked upon Dixon as a mere tool. As for Hap, he was half ashamed and half afraid. He was also puzzled as he saw the pugilist drain his glass of heady wine.

"Now," said 'Lyss as he set the empty glass down, "what did you do with the Dixon factory, and how did it all happen?"

"It went to pieces," said Hap cautiously. "We lost all we had in it. Fortunately, I followed your tip and cleaned up on your fight. With Dalesburg on the fritz New York looked good to me—and here we are. It's the place for me. The town is full of boobs, and you can bet your roll a dozen times a day if you feel like it. On the whole, I am not going hungry—and the ladies still love me."

'Lyss sneered openly, reaching down for the bottle and filling the glasses again.

"It's a pretty precarious life," he said. "They tell me that the factory back in Dalesburg is soon to be sold to the highest bidder. How much do you suppose it'll fetch?"

"Not much, from me," said Hap. "If you mean what is it worth, good will and all, I'd guess at about a hundred and fifty thousand."

"Will that wipe out the debts?"

"It's all they'll get, anyway, even if they're lucky. The creditors will have to take that or leave it. Whoever buys it, certainly won't purchase the liabilities if he has any sense. Say, are you figuring on buying it?"

"I'm figuring," said 'Lyss deliberately, "on you buying it."

"See here!" said Hap forcefully, his gaze

growing narrow and calculating. "What are you driving at?"

"Merely that, if I put you in the way of getting a hundred and fifty thousand dollars, will you buy back the factory and take your sister back to Dalesburg?"

'Lyss was staring hard at him, with something menacing and commanding in his face, flushed a little by the wine he had drunk. But Hap was reflecting, unawed, his cunning brain pondering over the evident unsophistication of the youth, and wondering if it could actually be real. Buy the factory? Not on your life! But if there was a way to get a hundred thousand, he would promise to buy it.

"Well," he said judicially, "if I could get the factory back I'd be a damned fool not to take it. And I've no objection to Dalesburg so long as I have money. Where'll the hundred and fifty thou come from, let me ask you?"

"Never mind," said 'Lyss impatiently. "Will you do it?"

" 'Lysses," said Hap solemnly, "show me how to collar that roll, and I'll buy the U. S. mint if you say so."

"I'll tell you about that in a minute. At present I want to lay down a condition."

"Shoot! I'm ready to yield anything."

"Then, first, you will take your sister out of that apartment, and rent another, in a decent section, where she can be safe from insult!"

"That's a perfectly good apartment," protested Hap. "What's the matter with that place?"

"You're a pretty big man, Hap," said 'Lyss slowly. "But I think you'll think twice before you run afoul of me. Now, speak quick."

Hap eyed him belligerently, secure in his size.

"What do I get out of this?" he demanded.

"You'll get what I give you," replied 'Lyss. "In one case, a tip that may be worth money to you. In the other, a licking that I think you need."

Hap laughed freely. "Well, if that's the choice, I agree," he chuckled. "But I've got to see the color of your money."

"When Roberts gets here you'll see it," said 'Lyss.

Hap knew that Roberts was a newspaper man, employed by 'Lyss as publicity agent, who had actually filled to some extent the position of manager for the pugilist. He was wondering what was afoot, yet confident that there was some plan in hand which could be made profitable to himself.

"Before Roberts gets here," said 'Lyss, "I'll make a proposition to you, which you will do well to accept. I want a manager—and you're elected."

"What?" exclaimed Hap. "What'd I be doing as your manager? What's the game?"

'Lyss was impatient. "The game is that, if you sign on as my manager, you will get a percentage that'll satisfy you—or one that'll go far toward getting that hundred and fifty thousand, before we've been at it long. When does that sale come off?"

Hap reflected before he answered, wondering if 'Lyss knew as little as he pretended, calculating the risk of committing himself too far, in a matter the details of which could be easily checked up by the pugilist, if he ever thought to investigate them. At any rate the prize was worth playing for.

"Well," he said, "as far as my information goes, no date has been set for the sale, though it's a moral certainty that it will come off sooner or later. How long do you figure you'll need?"

"Four to six months," said 'Lyss grimly.

"A hundred and fifty thousand in four months!"

"That's all right! All you have to do is sit tight and keep your word to buy the place. I'll attend to the rest."

"And what will you do with it, after I've bought it for you?"

"You'll buy it for yourself, and run it for your sister. If you try any looting, I'll—— And that reminds me. When you buy it, you'll have to do it in her name—not your own. I'll not trust you that far."

"You seem to be willing to trust me with the roll before it's bought," said Hap dryly. "Or did I misunderstand you?"

'Lyss was in a quandary, suggested by this remark. If Hap had known how near to spoiling his prospects he had come by that remark, he would have turned pale. The pugilist did not trust Hap's disposition to manage the factory, since he had already ruined it once by his tendency to dissipation, but he had no reason to suspect his honesty nor his good will. He considered the desirability of himself holding the money they should acquire, but met difficulties. In order to be successful his own direct par-

ticipation in the scheme should be as little as possible. If money was handled by himself and collected by him, it could be traced —could, in fact, hardly be hidden, and exposure might ruin future chances. Certainly, Hap, who would have everything to gain by playing square, and everything to lose by a contrary course, could be trusted to do his share without "welshing." And, as a last consideration, 'Lyss felt an absolute disability to touch the wages of his sin. The very thought of it made him burn all over. He could sell himself for Muriel, but he could not handle the price.

So he expressed himself confidently:

"You get the coin—and spend it as you agree. I'm not afraid of your double-crossing me. The only thing I don't trust is your keeping on the job after you've got the factory back. But here's Roberts! D'you know each other?"

"Like a book!" The newcomer, an active, sharp-faced young fellow, of that type nowadays described as "a live wire," had pushed his way energetically to their table and was hastily wringing Hap's hand. He did everything as if he was in a great hurry. Thus, Roberts took a glass of wine in a hurry and, as the bottle was getting low, made a great fuss until he had caused a waiter to rush to the table and take the order for another. Lyss, who was constitutionally deliberate and healthily nerved, frowned on this exhibition.

"Say, Bobbie," he growled, "I'm paying for your time, ain't I?"

"Well, well! All right! Shoot! What's the dalliance about?" Roberts threw himself sideways to the table, rested one arm on it, and crossed his knees, doing it all jerkily, and completely belying the attitude of relaxation.

"What will you eat, Bobbie? Now, don't set all the waiters to running! You won't starve before they get here. Sit quiet and while you're doing it, let me present to you my new manager, the honorable Happy Dixon."

"Hold on!" said Dixon, "I haven't signed up yet!"

"Well, you will. Now, Bobbie, let's talk a little business, but you can relax while we do it. I want a few matches."

Roberts, who was busy congratulating Hap, looked about and stared.

"Safety, white phosphorus, or glove?" he demanded. "But ain't you just signed a manager?"

"Well, call yourself assistant manager if you want to. I tell you we want matches —and it's up to you to get 'em. The usual terms."

"Then," said Roberts confidently, "you've come to the right shop. Now, shoot!"

"You and Dixon can work in together. Get busy and begin writing up the dope on Marino first——"

"What are you giving us! You're a middleweight!"

"You ass! I'm fifteen pounds over the limit. I nearly sweat the strength out of me to make it for Macey. I'm a light heavy now."

"But, if it's easy money you want, you can fight at catch weights—making them weigh in. Why tackle Marino? The man's a wolf!"

"The more reason I should cop him! The odds will be long—and a match with Craft ought to come of it."

They stared at him. This was flying high with a vengeance.

"And, Hap!" went on 'Lyss, "you ought to be in with some of the sports with money."

"I know plenty of them, but they're not parting with it easy."

'Lyss leaned across the table confidentially, his face set and his eyes gleaming cunningly.

"I don't want their money—yet. I'll first show them what can be done. I want you to talk to some of them, and lay the way for forming a syndicate to play the books. Not here alone, either, but all over the country. As for Marino, we'll put what we three can raise in on that, and take down what we can at long odds. But, we'll first promise your friends that we'll put Marino down in any round they name. If I can do that they ought to be willing to back me, oughtn't they?"

"I'll take a chance on anything—once," said Roberts.

"How much can we raise?" asked Hap.

"I can put in three thousand," said 'Lyss.

"I guess I can copper that—with a couple of thousand more," added Hap.

"As for me," said Roberts, "I never saved my money. I think I have about a thousand left of my killing on Macey."

"Nine thousand dollars! Well, put your moneyed friends wise to the play, Hap. Let

'em name the round—the only stipulation I make being that it shan't be too long in coming."

"We ought to get five to one," declared Hap.

"We ought to get ten to one," supplemented Roberts. "But what we'll get is a stinging. I kiss that thousand farewell right now."

"Go after Copeland, or one of those fellows, Hap. Roberts will put you wise to the ropes. They will be glad enough to stage it and Marino will fight any one for a good purse. And you and Bobbie will know how to get the money down."

"On what round?" asked Hap.

"I tell you to let your friends pick that! They won't bet on it. But when I cop in the round they name, they'll be willing to talk business. Then we can go after Craft."

"All I got to say is," said Roberts, "that if I had your confidence, I'd run for president."

'Lyss sneered. "There are tricks in this trade you never heard of," he said bitterly.

CHAPTER XII.

'Lyss, at Filbert's invitation, had gone to live with the engineer, sharing with him a small apartment downtown. It was not until they came to discuss the duties that he was to assume, that 'Lyss' change of mind was brought home to Filbert.

"I've got to train yet," he said. "I'm not leaving the ring for a while."

Filbert was surprised and disappointed.

"But, 'Lysses!" he remonstrated, "I was counting on you. And you don't *want* to keep on at that business, do you?"

"No, I don't want to, Dobby," said 'Lyss. "But I've got some obligations to meet, and this is the only way to do it. I'll give some of my time to the work and take my share of the rake-off, whenever I get a contract for the truss. You needn't pay me any salary or share of the takings outside of that."

"I was looking forward to your help," insisted Filbert. "I need some one to go out and talk to the engineers."

"I'll do that in my spare time. In a few months I can quit this for good, I hope."

Filbert grumbled that he had heard that before. But argue as he would with the young man, he met only sullen determination. He went ahead with his training program, doing not as much, though, as one would have thought advisable, in view of the caliber of his opponent.

This opponent was Barney Marino, who had the reputation of having killed the aspirations of more would-be champions than any other man in the ring, though not himself a champion. Almost as clever as 'Lyss himself, and far bigger and stronger, he was considered the most dangerous fighter of the day with the exception of Craft, the champion, and possibly, Pete Barkum. Marino would fight anybody, and he had little reason to fear any middleweight, such as 'Lyss had been until very recently. Accordingly, Hap and Roberts had easily obtained the signatures to articles calling for a fight of fifteen rounds at Coney Island for a purse of ten thousand dollars, of which the winner was to take three-fourths.

The match had been advertised extensively, and, of course, news of it had come to Muriel, who had been deeply shocked and grieved to find out that Lyss had proved recreant to his pledge to quit the ring. 'Lyss had not put in an appearance since the night of the moving-picture episode. Nor would Hap give her any explanation, merely hinting that there was something big in the wind, and that he was due to make a "killing," as he called it. She thought it was in anticipation of this, that he had installed her in a better apartment, on Central Park West.

Down at Antonelli's, where sporting men gathered, there was much talk of this match. Certain men, of large betting interests, were heard to drop a word or two, which was eagerly taken up. Gradually it got out that Kid Keeley had boasted that he would put away Marino in any round these men might name. It was said that Dixon had bet a large sum with them that this would be done.

'Lyss' conduct during this time was not encouraging to his backers. He was seen more than once in rather swift company, and rumor said that he was not entirely abstemious. His condition, if he really intended to win, had need to be of the best, yet he gave it little heed. Still, their financial arrangements had gone through without hitch, though Jim Faraday and "Lucky Penny" Donovan, two wary old gamblers of large means, had declined to name the round in which he was to win, until it should be entirely too late for him and Marino to come to any agreement, if there should chance to

be a Senegambian in hiding. So it was not until 'Lyss sat in his dressing room, while the last of the preliminary bouts was being fought, that these two worthies made known their conclusions and wishes.

This delay had caused 'Lyss more worry than had the details of placing their own bets, which had been done in devious ways. He and Roberts were waiting there gloomily, while 'Lyss' seconds stood about, talking in whispers. The entrance of Faraday and Donovan dispelled the clouds.

"Well, we're not going to wish you any ill luck," the first of these said jovially, shaking 'Lyss by the hand, "but we hope you don't win too quick. We're laying quite a wad against your winning short of the sixth."

"You lose," grinned 'Lyss, as though merely bantering. "I'll win in the fifth by a knock-out."

When they were gone, 'Lyss rose and prepared to strip.

"Get those bandages ready," he ordered one of his friends, and then, in a low tone, to Roberts: "You better hang around here until I come back. Be ready to go out and demand the loot as soon as I come in. If I'm gone when you get it, come up to Hap's rooms. And look out for this stuff after I'm through with it."

He was naked to the waist now, and clenching his fingers under the bandages which had been wound about his hands. The stuff he referred to was something in a paper bag, which he now took to the washstand in one corner of the room. Here he fussed about for a while, and then came back to slip into his bath robe. He sat down and held his hands in the pockets of the robe, while his seconds laced his shoes on his feet.

Roberts was far more nervous than 'Lyss, who seemed unconcerned enough, though very gloomy. No man alive could hope to defeat Marino in any given time, unless the Italian was in league with him, and Roberts knew that Marino was reputed as straight as a string. Yet 'Lyss was staking their all on doing it.

When 'Lyss had at last gone, Roberts sat there nervously, listening to the noise from the crowded arena, trying to guess from its swellings and dyings the course of the conflict. Certain events he could discern but, after the fight must have begun, he could get no idea of how it was going. At last there came a sudden blank lull; and then a roar of mingled cheers and cries of fury.

At last he heard excited voices and hurried steps in the corridor, and then the door burst open and Dixon hurried in. Behind him crowded 'Lyss in his bath robe, and his seconds and assistants, the latter making explosive and jubilant comments. 'Lyss, himself, was silent, with lips drawn almost in a snarl, while his face was pale and sweat stood in beads on his forehead.

"Did you do it?" Roberts blurted.

"All right!" Dixon answered. "As clean as a whistle! Never saw such a wallop!"

'Lyss looked at the publicity man with stony eyes. "Beat it and draw the loot!" he ordered. "Come up to my place after you get the stuff—we'll be up there. Get a move on!"

Roberts hastened out and the pugilist turned to his assistants.

"Get these things off! Never mind the shower. I'll clean up later. Peel these gloves off of me! Here! Leave the bandages alone, I tell you! Hap, hand me my clothes and throw everything in the grips. Hurry up, now! I want to get out of here!"

Without stopping to remove his bandages, or even to smooth his ruffled hair, he hastily pulled on his clothes and, dragging Hap after him, took his suit case and walked out of the dressing room before the audience in the arena had fairly begun to disperse. Out in the corridor they could hear the confused outcry of the mob of spectators, and could make little out of the incoherence, but every now and then a cry of "fake" rose above the din.

"Fake nothing!" said Hap carelessly. "Say, this'll make them all sit up! Slap in the middle of the fifth round, too. Faraday and Lucky Penny'll have a fit!"

"Come on!" snarled 'Lyss. "Make a getaway!" He hurried out by the rear entrance, threw his suit case into the waiting car, and jumped in after it, ordering the driver to start. Hap was left standing on the sidewalk, looking after the automobile and vainly trying to fathom the reason for the haste that had prompted the prize fighter to leave without stopping to strip the bandages from his hands.

"How the deuce did he pull it off? I didn't see a thing wrong in it and neither did the referee. We all thought he'd try to get him with the spiral. Always thought 'Lyss was a left-hand fighter! But, great guns and little pistols! Whoever dreamed he packed a kick like that in his right mitt?

Zowie! Bam! And the wop's light was out!"

He was grinning triumphantly when he returned to a small room off the lobby of the building. Roberts joined him here a few moments later, and displayed a certified check for seventy-five hundred dollars, 'Lyss' share of the purse. He had had no difficulty in securing it, he said, though the promoters of the fight had been a little bit serious, and acted as though annoyed. It seemed that Marino was still senseless, and they were afraid that serious consequences might result. A doctor, however, had given his opinion that he would come around all right.

They got a taxicab and went on uptown. They found the prize fighter in his shirt, sleeves, busily engaged in cleaning off the particles of adhesive that clung to his hands. The strips of tape that had bound them were thrown on the washstand in the bathroom. He came out into the living room as they entered, rubbing gasoline on his reddened hands.

"Cut the chatter!" snarled 'Lyss, turning impatiently to Roberts. "Bobbie, did you get the stuff?"

Roberts dramatically displayed the check, kissing it affectionately.

"We sure can live easy for a week or two," he said.

"Well, all right! And what did you do with that paper bag I left on the washbasin?"

"What paper bag?" asked Roberts blankly.

"The one I told you to take care of! D'you mean to tell me you didn't get away with that?"

Roberts was astonished at this vehemence.

"Honest to Pete, Kid," protested Roberts, "I never saw the darned bag. If you said anything about it, I was too flustered to hear it."

'Lyss sat down in a chair and glared at him.

"You ——, double-decked ass!" he said bitterly, "if you've gone and given the show away, I'll hand you one you won't forget!"

"For God's sake!" remonstrated the aggrieved Roberts. "What have I done? I didn't know that sack held your jewels! What blamed difference does it make, anyway?"

"Difference!" said 'Lyss with deep disgust, as he rose and entered the bathroom, returning with a strip of tape from his bandages. "Look at that, you low-life bonehead, and see what difference it will make when they look into that bag!"

The two men took the tape, wonderingly, and immediately looked up at the lowering pugilist, with startled faces, in which intelligence was dawning.

"What do you know about that!" muttered Roberts. "They're as hard and stiff as boards!"

"What in —— did you have in that sack?" demanded Hap Dixon.

"Plaster of Paris, you simple fools! Did you think I was taking any chances on a bet like that? A fat chance!"

They continued to stare at the hardened tape, and from it to the perpetrator of the trick.

"And now," said 'Lyss, "you've left the evidence for them to find—and there'll be merry hell to pay, if they can guess at all."

Roberts broke into a low laugh.

"I thought you were packing a horseshoe in your glove. But this is a new one on me. Laid him cold with a plaster cast! Oh, mamma!"

CHAPTER XIII.

By what means Hap had acquired his sudden affluence, resulting in a comfortable Central Park West apartment for her, Muriel did not know. But, hitherto, he had been given to sudden fits of comparative generosity, when one of his ventures turned out lucky, though of his total winnings she had then, and still enjoyed but a tiny fraction. Therefore, she assumed that he was now settling down to some regular and profitable employment, which enabled him to care for her in better fashion.

But there was, at first, no adequate explanation of 'Lyss' absence. Nor could she explain why, in face of his expressed intentions and ambition, he had resumed his ring career. This had hurt her, though she admitted to herself that such claim as she might have to his consideration was thin—imaginary, in fact, based on a few words and what she had read in his eyes and manner toward her. Yet she had sought an explanation, recalling that 'Lyss had mentioned his connection with Filbert. She persuaded Hap to bring the engineer to call, and Filbert, who would not have come for her brother, remembered the girl's entanglement

in these affairs, with pity, and obeyed what he guessed was her summons.

Thereafter he came often, for the lonely old man and the friendless girl soon discovered that they had one absorbing interest in common—which was the wayward 'Lyss.

"He was coming in with me," said Filbert plaintively, "and he'd the makings in him of as fine an engineer as you'd want to see. Besides, the business is making money now, and his share will soon amount to as much as a reasonable man could want—though maybe it wouldn't equal what he'd make in the ring. Yet 'Lyss was never the one to want to handle the dirty money he could make that way."

"He was always modest and simple—and clean," agreed Muriel. "I wonder why he went back!"

"Says he has 'obligations' to meet," said Filbert gloomily. "Between fights he works for me desultorily. I wonder if he could have got to gambling and put himself in the hole."

"*I* wonder," said Muriel uneasily, "what Harold has to do with it all."

Filbert, who knew more than she about that partnership, pretended a discreet ignorance. But Muriel, after a period of thought, suddenly broached a subject which had been on her mind for some time.

"Mr. Filbert," she said, "is there any likelihood of your needing a typist or secretary or something, in a few weeks?"

Filbert was startled. "I don't know," he said. "Just what had you in mind?"

"I was thinking," she answered with a blush, "that I'd like to earn my own living. I've—I've lost my prejudice against working girls, if I really had any. I have been attending a business school for some time."

Filbert looked keenly at her. "All right," he said. "You go on and complete your course. When you think you're qualified, I'll put you on at the office."

Muriel read the papers and, surreptitiously, took an absorbing interest in the sports sections, on which there was frequent mention of the notorious Kid Keeley, now, it seemed, become more notorious than ever. Some of the sporting writers began to speak of him in tones which held a peculiar note of scorn, though his prominent position in the world of the ring was unquestionable. Veiled references were sometimes made to his fight with Marino, and Muriel noted, with vague misgiving, that, once or twice, the newspaper scribes were wont to hint that there was a story behind that fight which had never been told, and that, should they betray the knowledge which was theirs, the reputation of certain well-known characters would suffer severely.

But this sort of innuendo did not persist long, for when 'Lyss had the hardihood to challenge the champion of them all, the great Craft, himself, and, when the king of heavyweights scornfully accepted, began unmistakable preparations for the battle, the critics were silenced, admitting that he had the courage born of confidence in himself. Muriel read this news with greater uneasiness than she had read the vague and sinister hints whose meaning she had not understood.

On the morning following the day of the fight, she opened the paper with trembling fingers, eager and yet hesitant to know the worst. The news was carried in headlines on the front page and she read it with puzzled brows and a creeping fear of something unknown and yet horrible.

"BATTLE FOR HEAVYWEIGHT CROWN ENDS IN FIZZLE!
"Tame Fight Ends In Sixth Round With Inexplicable Defeat of Keeley!"

There was no direct accusation but every implication to be gathered from the narrative was to the effect that the fight was a fraud. The champion, fighting cautiously, had done no damage and received none, during the first four or five periods. In the sixth round he had become slightly more aggressive and begun to push matters. There had been an exchange of blows, and then, though every observer was convinced that he had not been struck hard enough to hurt, Keeley had collapsed and been counted out. Immediately after the arm of Craft had been held aloft, he had sprung to his feet and, with a smile, walked coolly out of the ring, apparently unhurt.

Muriel grew hot with indignation as the meaning of it all was borne in to her consciousness. Her 'Lyss do a dishonorable thing like that! The very idea was preposterous. Yet, she recalled, with cold fear, those innuendoes, half understood, which she had read previous to this occasion. That evening she sat in a surface car and shrank whenever men about her mentioned the fight. 'Lyss, in the opinion of every one, had "thrown" the fight. But why? Why?

"I can tell you that it's as certain as death or taxes!" one man, behind her, was saying vehemently. "Down at Tony Antonelli's it's common knowledge. Lucky Penny Donovan and Faraday are backing them, and this fellow Dixon is in with Roberts in making the matches. I've heard Dixon talking, when he was drunk, and I'll take an oath that the whole crew are planning bets, all over the country, on every fight the Kid is signed up for.

"Why, you recall the sensation there was when he knocked out Marino? Well, Dixon has been known to spill the inside facts of that, too. They say the Kid agreed with Faraday and Donovan that he'd knock him out in any round they named, and he did; which is more than Craft or any one else would have had the nerve to promise. Did you ever guess how it was done? I'll tell you, then. The Kid had wrapped his hands with tape and sprinkled plaster of Paris on it. Then he wet it just before going out and nobody noticed it. His bandages were nothing but a plaster cast when he was fighting, and he only had to hit Marino once, and hit him right, to bring home the bacon."

Muriel hardly knew how she got home. She was stunned, and her mind dwelt on only one thing—a sense of ineffable evil and foulness into which she seemed to have unwittingly stepped. She hardly thought of 'Lyss, except as one who, like herself, was being engulfed against his will in that mess of iniquity and filth. The figure that loomed largest, that filled the horizon, that seemed to wallow in the slime and make it his own, was that of her brother. She hurried on, longing to escape from sight, to tear off her body the very garments that she owed to his shameful bounty, to flee from the roof which he maintained for her.

But when she reached her apartment, that mood had been displaced for the time by another. Now, she wanted to see 'Lyss, to go on her knees to him and beg him to tell her that these tales were lies—they must be lies! She got Filbert on the telephone and in half hysterical bursts, she begged him to find 'Lyss, to bring him to her, to hurry and not to rest until he had searched the city from one end to another, if necessary, to find him.

Filbert's quest was a long one, and it was not until after nine o'clock that he found 'Lyss, sitting by himself in an obscure, Sixth Avenue café. He went straight up to the boy, who raised his head and looked at him with red, cunning eyes, wolfish and hard.

" 'Lyss," said he, "it's time you were coming home."

"I'm home, Dobby," sneered 'Lyss. "Home among the bar flies and the bums."

"Miss Dixon——" Filbert began in desperation. But 'Lyss stopped him with narrowed eyes and lips drawn into a thin line.

"Don't go mentioning decent women to me! What is it you want?"

"I want you to come and tell her—what the truth is about this business."

But 'Lyss was staring at him, with mouth twisted into a grin of bitter agony.

"The truth! My Gawd, Dobby, d'you think *I'd* tell her the truth? She'd go into screaming fits if she heard it! Tell her to go back to Dalesburg, when Hap has the factory back, and forget about it. She doesn't know *me* any more."

"She's no intention of going back to Dalesburg. Nor has Hap."

"Oh, yes she has, though maybe she hasn't found it out yet. And so has Hap—in a little while. One more good clean-up ought to do the business. Just as soon as the sale comes off, she's going back."

"Sale?" said Filbert. "What are you talking about."

"Sale of the factory. That's what. Hap's going to buy it in."

Filbert bent over 'Lyss and shook him. "Sale of the factory? What sale and what factory? Are you drunk, man?"

"Nearly," said 'Lyss. "Sale of the Dixon Structural Iron Works! Hap's got lots of money now—plenty of money. He's going back."

" 'Lyss," cried Filbert. "Don't you know that the factory was sold by the receivers more than four months ago! What are you raving about that crook buying it for? Tell me, you fool, what have you done?"

"Is that true?" whispered 'Lyss, in an awesome tone. His white fingers were clutching the edge of the table, and Filbert could almost see them sink into the wood with the force of the grip. He nodded solemnly.

"But Hap Dixon? He must have known!"

Again Filbert nodded, watching 'Lyss narrowly. He saw the hard face grow gray and despairing, and the look of one who has sold his soul in vain come into the wrinkling eyes. "He must have known!" repeated

'Lyss. And then, he bowed his head and sat trembling.

In a moment Filbert leaned forward and placed a hand on his shoulder. Then 'Lyss, in a monotonous voice, began to speak. He told the story flatly, hopelessly, but the old man, made understanding by his love for the boy, read into it what 'Lyss left out.

"You've too high a sense of chivalry and romance, 'Lysses. All of this wasn't necessary, and you'd have done better to forget the taint of the ring, which was so strong in your nostrils, and remember that you had kept yourself clean in spite of it. You'd also done better to remember that a girl—even like Miss Dixon—can forgive a man a lot if the man is the kind of man she likes. You could have lived down being a pugilist by——"

"But I can't live down being a cheat—a cad—a coward! And I can't even show her anything for it."

"I think you can—with her. You were all that and worse, but she'll remember that you became what you did, in order to serve her. Now, come with me, and see if I am not right."

But 'Lyss shook his head. "I've another job to do," he said. "Where is Hap Dixon?"

"At Antonelli's, I think. But you can leave him to another time."

'Lyss' face had changed again. It was more like that of a wolf than ever, but the cunning was gone, leaving nothing but ferocity.

"I can't leave him to enjoy himself another minute," he said. "There's something he never can pay for if he burns in hell forever, but there's eighty thousand dollars' worth of loot he's had that he'll pay for to-night with every bit of his hide and the wracking of every bone and muscle in his rotten carcass. Let me alone!"

"But you'll come back?"

"I'll come back to your rooms, Dobby. To-morrow, I'll go back to work for you, if you want me. Now, I'm on my way to find Happy Dixon."

"If you must," sighed Filbert. "But beat him up in Antonelli's. Tony has a pull that'll prevent the police from taking you in. You don't want to end it all by landing before a magistrate."

"I'm more likely to land before special sessions for manslaughter," growled 'Lyss, and was gone.

Filbert went slowly back to Muriel's. He found her awaiting him, and had no difficulty in surmising that she had spent a part of the time in tears. He noted her glance of inquiry and disappointment, when he came in alone, and hastened to begin his story.

"And why wouldn't he come with you?" she demanded, through the tears that would flow in spite of her as Filbert told his tale.

"Oh, he was ashamed, I suppose. Though I don't know. He was off to half kill that graceless brother of yours when he left me."

Muriel sprang to her feet with clenched hands. "I hope he does," she cried. "Though he isn't worth soiling his hands on. And I'm going, too! I'll not spend another night under his roof if I have to walk the streets, Mr. Filbert."

"Right!" said Filbert. "I'll take you to the Y. W. C. A., until you can make other arrangements. To-morrow you can come down and I'll see that you have work that will keep you, Miss Dixon. As for 'Lyss, the fool will be out on the road, from now on, and he'll not be allowed to bother you with his idiotic sentiment."

"He's not idiotic!" blazed Muriel. "He's chivalrous—and fine—and if he's a prize fighter, I'm only a stenographer myself, and —I don't care—what he's done or—what he's been——"

She dived into her *mouchoir* and turned to run out of the room. Filbert grinned and winked slowly at the face of a gilt clock that ticked on a mantel.

When Filbert arrived at his rooms that night after seeing Muriel safely to her new quarters he found 'Lyss asleep in a morris chair, and roused him.

"What have you done with Hap?" asked Filbert.

"Put him in the hospital for about two months," said 'Lyss coolly.

CHAPTER XIV.

'Lyss, as Filbert had promised, was seldom in the office, and so Muriel was little troubled by him. When he did come in, her frozen attitude so daunted him, if he had any intention of trying to restore himself in her good graces, that he abandoned it at once and henceforth slunk in and out as though he were a pariah and realized it. 'Lyss was humble enough, right from the start, but the relaxation of her severity came from no overtures of his. On his second ap-

pearance at the office, she gave him a distant nod; on his third, she murmured a greeting, in a very formal tone; on the fourth she even spoke his name.

During the summer 'Lyss had been brooding and thinking, magnifying his disgrace in his own peculiar manner, and gradually getting in a frame of mind where it seemed to him that, unless he expiated it, he must pass the rest of his life in torment. He had finally made up his mind to make one, supreme effort at rehabilitation, and to stand or fall by that. The preliminary details, leading to this, had been comparatively easy of performance.

Roberts, who of all the crew connected with his ring career, still held some measure of his trust, had been of assistance. But the use of Roberts involved the use of the press, and he could only hope that neither Filbert nor Muriel would ever happen to read the sporting pages which had once again blazoned his *nom de guerre* in their columns. For 'Lyss, whose press agent had strenuously refuted sundry tales which reflected on his rectitude, had challenged Pete Barkum to a fight. And Pete, whose manager, Mike McGloon, had been living for the day when the cave man should crush his former protégé, had lost no time in accepting. A promoter was easily found, and Madison Square Garden was to see the affair staged.

'Lyss told himself that this was to be his last and most brilliant appearance. They had called him a crook, and he deserved it, but this time, he should fight such a fight as should, once for all, wipe out that stain on his name. Back of the desire to clear his name was the real, though unacknowledged pressure of Muriel's scorn. As a pugilist, he had lost her good will: as a pugilist, he should regain it, if that were possible.

He had had no intention of telling her about it, but, when he came back from New Jersey, early in November, and went in to Filbert's private office to tell him that he wished to take the time off until after Thanksgiving Day, the sight of her sitting at her desk, from which she had given him a distant nod, almost maddened him. He did not speak, at this time, but made his demand of Filbert.

"All right," said Filbert soberly, when 'Lyss had done. "You're welcome to the time, 'Lysses, and I know you too well to tell you what I think of this folly. You've been getting along so nicely, though, that I think it's a bleeding shame."

"What?" 'Lyss flushed at the reproof.

"I've seen the stuff in the papers, and I know what you're about. You say it's the last time; that you're doing it merely to clear yourself, once for all; but they all say that."

Filbert sighed and took up his pencil to resume some interrupted calculations. 'Lyss went out of the room.

Muriel paid no apparent heed to him, but Filbert's reproaches had roused him to the desire of defending and justifying himself, especially to her. He *had* to fight, he declared, and she would recognize the necessity, if Dobby did not. So he went and stood beside her, until she looked up with an inquiring uplift of the brows.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Miss Dixon," said 'Lyss, "I've just taken some time off, for a purpose, and I want to explain it to you, if you'll let me."

"I have no objection," said Muriel primly.

"Well, it was as a pugilist I lost your respect and did the things you've never forgiven me for doing. I never wanted to be a pug, and always intended to quit being one, as soon as I could do so. I only kept on because I couldn't see any other way out than the one I took. I know that what I did was rotten bad, but ever since I've been planning to prove that I'm not all crooked, because I can't stand to have you go on thinking I am."

"I haven't thought about it at all," declared Muriel indifferently.

"You've had a right to think, if you wanted to. I'm going to fight again—once more, and the last time—fight to clear my name; fight to win square. I'm going to fight Pete Barkum, at Madison Square, on Thanksgiving evening."

Muriel was pale and her eyes were shining suspiciously. But she kept up her pose of indifference and coldness.

"I had seen something in the papers to that effect," she said. "I suppose you will earn more at that than here."

'Lyss flushed hotly. "I won't get a cent!" he said vehemently. "I'm not fighting for money. That fellow gets the bulk of the purse and what he don't get will go to Roberts. I'll make nothing out of it."

Muriel knit her brows as though puzzled.

"Really?" she questioned wonderingly. "I supposed, of course—— But, Mr. Wolfe, please tell me one thing: what has this Pete Barkum—if that is the name—ever done to you that you should wish to fight him?"

"Why—why, he never did anything to me!"

Muriel sighed and shook her head. "I really don't understand why you should wish to knock him about, then," she said. "It is beyond me."

'Lyss' jaw dropped. "I'm fighting——" and then he stopped.

"I presume just to gratify your wounded vanity," added Muriel. "Well, I should think much more of you, if you didn't fight unless you had some better reason than that. But, of course, my opinion doesn't count for very much."

"Doesn't!" exploded the tortured 'Lyss. "If I hadn't gone so far, I'd call it all off in a minute. I'm a fool, I suppose, but I thought you'd understand, and sympathize, to some extent."

"Oh, if that is what you wish, you have my sympathy," said Muriel sweetly. 'Lyss, tortured beyond control, seized his hat and fled.

When he had gone Muriel sat there, without any pretense of working, for a long time. Finally, she rose and went into Filbert's office.

"Mr. Filbert," she asked, "are you going to see 'Lyss fight?"

Filbert examined her face, noting that there were traces of recent emotion about the eyes. He smiled a little awry.

"I suppose I'm an old fool," he said, "but I think I will."

"Isn't it getting quite—quite usual—quite common for women—respectable enough women, I mean—to go to these things, Mr. Filbert?"

"It may be," said Dobby doubtfully. "I've read that pretty well thought of women have been seen at some of them." He looked thoughtfully at her while her eyes pleaded with him, and finally grinned faintly. "Your old friends would have a spasm, if they heard," he remarked.

"I don't care—and I could wear a veil."

Filbert shook his head, but Muriel seemed pleased.

"That boy never, never will grow up," said Dobson wearily. "I should be hoping and hoping that this outrageous gorilla, Barkum, fairly beats all the pugilistic tendency out of him, for good and all—but, somehow, I rather warm to the hope, instead, that 'Lyss knocks the top off of him."

"He would quit, if he was beaten, wouldn't he?" asked Muriel wistfully.

"And probably never will, unless he is," said Filbert.

Muriel sighed. "I'm afraid that he will always be a prize fighter," she mourned. "Isn't it a pity?"

"Oh, some one will lick him finally."

"I don't believe it!" exclaimed Muriel warmly. Then she blushed, as Filbert laughed, and went back to her desk.

Filbert was very careful about the selection of seats. He purchased them with an eye to their being inconspicuous, some distance back from the ring and near a blind aisle, though he got choice ones, for he figured that what women were there would be less remarked in the expensive sections than they would be in the cheaper, where all kinds of rough characters might surround them. Then he brought them to the office, and surreptitiously showed them to Muriel, after which he hid them in his own desk. Muriel had laughed, a little uncertainly, but still rather gleefully, when she saw them.

Muriel realized, of course, that, in physical strength the ugly Barkum had the advantage. But she gathered this idea more from an inspection, in the papers, of two silhouettes showing the contestants with outstretched arms side by side. It was said that 'Lyss weighed a few ounces less than one hundred and seventy pounds, while Barkum tipped the beam at over a hundred and ninety-five. 'Lyss was five feet and eleven inches tall and Barkum an inch shorter. In every measurement, except that of reach, Barkum was superior. Yet Muriel had the utmost confidence in 'Lyss' winning. It did not occur to her that he could lose.

It required some maneuvering, on the night of the battle, to get away without rousing curiosity at her rooming house, but this was done under some excuse of night work at the office. She and Filbert were soon on their way to the Garden, the girl dressed inconspicuously, with a heavy veil attached to her hat.

The ordeal of entrance was not as bad as she had anticipated. Madison Square was thronged with a disproportionate number of men, who filed endlessly through the doors;

but there was a goodly sprinkling of women among them, also, and women who, for the most part, seemed to be perfectly respectable; women who chattered, and looked self-conscious or half frightened, and laughed a great deal, as though they were fully impressed with the daring of their actions in coming to such a performance. Some of them were veiled as was Muriel, but this attempt at disguise only served to attract attention, and the girl soon made up her mind that the concealment was useless and threw back her own.

Once installed in their seats, she was relieved to find that those who sat near them were people of the ordinary type, men of substantial appearance, who merely acted as though they were out on a holiday, much as they might have done at a baseball game. They looked at her, it is true, curiously and admiringly, but took no further note of her presence, except to govern their own utterance with more care in deference to it.

Down there in front, nearer the platform and roped ring, the spectators were of a more flashy type, and diamond studs and checked clothes were more in evidence; but there were also people of evident position. One or two parties of men and women were even dressed in evening costumes, occupying boxes as though at the horse show. Her misgivings were very largely allayed before she had been there long.

The preliminary bouts had been disposed of before they arrived, as Filbert had desired to escape as much of the other events as possible. But after these were over, there was considerable delay. The motion-picture operators fiddled and fussed with the instruments, which were on platforms, situated at advantageous points. Referee and other officials stood talking desultorily in the ring, and men who had more or less connection with the staging of the bout strolled before the platform and talked with people seated near the ring.

Muriel, looking around through the audience, saw no one whom she recognized except her brother, who was one of those occupying a ringside seat and easily recognizable on account of his size. The sight of him, swaggering and lowering down there among all these sporting men, caused a hot wave of indignation to run over her. She saw him arguing hotly with another man, who seemed to be laughing at him, and waving a roll of bills before his face as though to bet with him. Others joined in the badinage, and Hap's face grew black and furious. Muriel had no difficulty in surmising that they were probably taunting him with his fate at the hands of 'Lyss.

Finally the preliminary preparations got under way. Boxes of resin were brought out and placed. New gloves were thrown into the ring, and the referee turned them over with his toe. Men walked about, testing the ropes and guys of the squared circle. There was considerable bustle, and bursts of cheering echoed and reëchoed through the building, as man after man climbed to the stage and was introduced by the referee as this or that star of the pugilistic world. They generally made short speeches in which they challenged and defied anybody and everybody to fight for any consideration or none at all.

Several men in shirt sleeves or jerseys now made their appearance, swarming about the opposite corners their protégés were to occupy. The crowd became intensely watchful and were soon rewarded, as Barkum entered and was escorted to the ring by his handlers. Swathed in his bath robe, he merely looked bulky and shapeless. But his knotty features and bullet head were formidable and threatening. With him was Mike McGloon, whose red countenance was triumphantly and viciously confident.

At the sight of that ugly face and huge jaw, Muriel felt a return of the fear that had captured her when she had first seen this man at the Jewel Theater. All her confidence in 'Lyss evaporated. In place of it she felt a strong impulse to cry out that it was not fair to match that delicate organism against this block of stone and iron.

But here came 'Lyss, walking with head up and shoulders swinging, smiling about on those who reached out to shake his hands, and coming rapidly and confidently to meet his antagonist. He leaped lightly and easily to the platform, swinging through the ropes and to his chair with barely a glance at Barkum, who scowled murderously at him and then turned an elaborately indifferent face to the audience, shooting a remark through a grin at one of his party, at which they all laughed sneeringly.

Then Mike McGloon stepped into the center of the ring, and spoke to the referee. That individual called in another man, and

the three argued for a moment or two. Roberts joined them to hear the dispute and at once began to object vehemently. But McGloon stuck strenuously to his point, flatly refusing to yield it, whatever it was, and, at last, Roberts went over to 'Lyss. One could see that his news was unwelcome, for 'Lyss frowned and uttered an angry ejaculation, at which both Mike and Barkum grinned. The red flush that crept over 'Lyss' face might have been one of anger, or it might have been the tint of shame.

'Lyss, with an angry and defiant uplift of his curly head, had motioned his consent to the demands of McGloon. McGloon came over to his corner and stood watching operations, while the seconds gloomily unwound the tape from 'Lyss' hands and left them bare. The pugilist held them before him and looked at them as he clasped and unclasped the fingers. Muriel could see the lithe muscles starting on his forearms, with the flexure of the digits. The audience, sensing now what was going on, was in an uproar, some hooting the precaution and others cheering it.

The announcements were made, and the two men rose as the introductions were made, echoed by cheers from the adherents of each. They slipped out of their coverings and stood, stripped, in their corners, while the chairs were jerked away, leaning with arms on the padded ropes.

Now the contrast between the two was even more startling and terrifying to Muriel, who had completely abandoned all her original confidence. The slender, beautifully formed body of 'Lyss, a sculptor's model of speed and grace, was frail and delicate, in comparison to that of Barkum, all bunched and knotted with huge muscles, brown and hairy and hard. The gloves on this savage's hands even seemed, by comparison, to be much smaller and lighter than those worn by 'Lyss, though they were actually identical. His shoulders hunched, without any intervening neck, almost to his ears. Squat, huge, and powerful, he seemed abundantly able to crush the other with a single blow. Yet 'Lyss was looking at him eagerly, confidently; and the little eyes of Barkum answered that look with something that was, if not uneasiness, at least caution and doubt.

The sharp clang of the bell sent them out of their corners and toward each other. But 'Lyss bounded forth like an antelope, and Barkum waddled solidly to meet him, slow and crouching, his head drawn down behind his huge shoulders, until it looked as though sunk in a shell.

Warily, cautiously, he crept toward the light-stepping boy, his feet planted solidly, his hands drawn in and elbows covering his ribs, ready to wheel or swing as occasion might offer, and never for an instant relaxing his vigilance.

'Lyss swept around him like a swallow, his hands swinging lightly and threateningly, searching, searching feverishly for an opening in that impregnable front. And the great bull-like man, pivoted constantly to face him, in his turn watching for a slip, or a moment of carelessness, which would enable him to send one of those knotty hands crashing home.

The lithe, white body paused and hesitated, the restless fist hovered, was drawn back, and then dropped as though a change of mind had taken place. Barkum sprang like a flash, astonishing by his unexpected activity, and hurled his fist at 'Lyss. Those near the ring heard the clear, low laugh of the Kid as he caught the terrible blow more than a foot from its mark; and then his own left hand ripped viciously into Barkum's ribs, left uncovered by the swing. The thud of the blow and the grunt of pain, with which it was acknowledged, could be plainly heard, evoking a chorus of cheers from the supporters of 'Lyss.

And 'Lyss was back, out of range, long before Barkum could recover and launch another effort. Apparently, the cave man was not seriously hurt, resuming his former tactics as though nothing had happened. Yet his caution was redoubled, as though that arm had impressed him with its power.

He crowded 'Lyss slowly toward the ropes, hoping to squeeze him into a disadvantageous position; and it seemed for a moment that he might succeed. Back and back, 'Lyss retreated, until he was pressing the rope outward. Barkum crouched and set himself, and swung another bone-breaking smash at him.

The boy stooped easily, slid under the arm, and danced joyously into the open, laughing at his clumsy antagonist, who had been nearly overthrown by his own effort. Barkum scowled and rushed fiercely after him.

Then 'Lyss tried the spiral. As Barkum

stormed in, he sent that queer, twisting blow flashing at his head. It was short, not dangerous to see, but Barkum, startled, stopped in his tracks, sprawling in his hurry, and tucked his bullet head into his shoulders almost in a panic. The audience saw 'Lyss' look of disgust and noted that he tried to "pull" the blow. Yet it struck on those mighty shoulders with enough force to send Barkum teetering to one side.

'Lyss dropped both hands to his side and looked after the man with supreme contempt. The audience yelled and laughed, now taunting Barkum for the ungainly spectacle he was presenting. Mike McGloon, however, as he saw the ineffectiveness of the spiral against those armoring shoulders, nodded with satisfaction, and grinned encouragement at his friend.

Barkum recovered himself, without molestation, and resumed his cautious tactics, apparently resolving that he would not again be further tempted. This continued until the end of the round. When the bell rang and they took their seats, neither seemed in the least distressed, but 'Lyss was as calm and serene as a summer day, while Barkum was frowning doubtfully, and listening intently to the encouragement and advice of McGloon.

In the second round 'Lyss changed his tactics slightly. He no longer retreated lightly or flashed in to strike when an opportunity offered. Instead, he faced the man, poised lightly on his toes, and gave way only inch by inch. Barkum crowded to close quarters time and again, seeking to plant a blow to a vital spot, but each time he was forestalled by the swift counter. Though a fast man, for one of his build, he was pointedly outclassed in speed by 'Lyss. His short jabs were blocked or he was hurled back, by the counter, before they could land. Once, even, the spiral, starting exactly as it had before, but changing direction in a mystifying way, sank deep into his short ribs, twisting and tearing cruelly at his vitals. It hurt him, too, as could be seen when he fell back, covering himself and now openly yielding ground to 'Lyss.

The round was well on its way and drawing to a close, at this point, and 'Lyss saw fit to act without further delay. He crowded after Barkum, setting himself and measuring his distance carefully. Blindly following instructions, Pete crouched and crept to meet him. 'Lyss feinted once or twice, drew back his arm, paused a moment as Barkum followed a threat with moving glove—and struck with a suddenness and force that was as unexpected and startling as a clap of thunder.

And like a clap of thunder, short and sharp, the audience heard the impact of that terrible blow. They barely saw the glove shoot into that tiny opening and crash against that craggy chin, but every man in the vast concourse rose to his feet, and drew astonished breath, preparatory to emitting a frenzied shriek of approval, as he beheld the mighty, rocklike Barkum hurled backward from his feet, to fall with a crash to the floor. They made the rafters creak, with the strain of their applause, as that bullet head bumped the hard canvas.

"Count him out! He's gone! He's down!"

The referee bent over the man, who was gropingly trying to raise himself, stunned and bewildered. His finger rose and fell while 'Lyss stood a little away, watching the count.

"Get up, Pete! You're all right! You ain't out!" The supporters of the cave man were vainly trying to rouse him with noise.

He was half up, holding a glove to his face, and the count had reached seven when the bell rang loudly. Groans came from one section and wild jubilations from another. 'Lyss shrugged his shoulders and walked toward his chair. His seconds swarmed about him, patting him on the back and shaking his hands enthusiastically, all of which he took indifferently. As for Barkum, he got up and was guided to his chair by his helpers, seeming still dazed and almost helpless. McGloon was frowning like a thundercloud, wondering where, in those smooth, sleek shoulders, that slender tiger carried the strength of ten men.

CHAPTER XV.

Muriel watched 'Lyss, as the bell rang again eagerly, with expectant anticipation, welcoming the coming assault as unreservedly as a Roman maiden might have beheld the victor of the Colosseum. It was *her* man who was conquering—and, whatever might be his published motives, she knew that he was conquering for her, and her alone; conquering against terrific odds; conquering brilliantly and magnificently: and she was prepared to turn thumbs down for his an-

tagonist, as pitilessly as any Claudia ever did.

Yet Barkum seemed as yet far from being completely cowed. By the time the bell rang him out of his corner, in which his seconds had been strenuously working over him, he had almost recovered from the effects of the blow. He rose and strode out, still cautious, still following blindly the tactics that had been outlined for him, still creeping toward his threatening Nemesis, who flitted there in front of him, swaying gracefully, keen eyes marking the distance and restless glove swinging in short arcs.

Those skilled in the art noted that Barkum was doubly careful, his shoulders humped well up, his body bent to hold his abdomen as far from harm as might be, his right glove carried in front of his chin, and his left sunk to his diaphragm, shielding him almost completely. Yet his precautions were directed against that driving, shattering left hand, and only incidentally against the right. 'Lyss walked around him, and he wheeled to keep his face to the boy. Once or twice he took a cautious step, seeking to get within range and attack, as was his instinct. But 'Lyss bided his time.

It came in a few moments of fiddling. Closing in, but carefully, Barkum tentatively drew the guarding right glove back for a try at a swing. He never made it. Like a flash, 'Lyss leaped in and lashed out with the despised right. It struck flush on the man's craggy jaw, back near the ear. He lurched sideways, stumbled over his crossed feet, and fell heavily, while the crowd again went mad with cheering.

"Put him out! Kill him!"

Muriel was leaning forward with parted lips and staring eyes, clutching Filbert's arm. But he was oblivious of her excitement, clutching the chair in front of him and shrieking like a maniac. The two of them watched the great lump of bone and muscle as he painfully turned over and raised himself on one elbow while the referee, holding back 'Lyss with one hand, counted over the prostrate Barkum.

"Take your time!" yelled Mike McGloon, so as to be heard above the din. Barkum took his time. At the count of eight he was on one knee, and at that of nine he was rising, a bit dazedly, but still apparently strong, covering himself cunningly.

The referee stepped back and 'Lyss flashed in and out again, feinting dizzily. Barkum made an awkward attempt to block a blow that did not reach him, and stepped clumsily back. Like a leaping wolf, 'Lyss stepped forward and once more sent that terrific left hand driving into his face. He went down again, hurled backward; and this time he lay still. For an instant 'Lyss turned to the audience and Muriel saw his face. It was drawn and pale, and he shook his hand, as though shaking something from it. But there, on the floor, lay Barkum, almost, if not quite senseless, and, at any rate, an easy victim to further attack.

Yet 'Lyss seemed to have lost his eagerness, remaining at some distance from the man as the count went on, and stepping peculiarly from one foot to another. Pretty soon Barkum stirred and made an attempt to rise.

Slowly and with great difficulty, while the inexorable count went on, the rugged giant raised himself until he had his knees under him. Before the fatal ten was tolled off he had lurched to his feet and stood, half insensible and wholly helpless.

"Finish him! Put him down again! Kill him, Kid!"

And Muriel was up on her chair, jumping up and down on both feet and crying out with the others, though her admonitions were hardly so ferocious. "Make an end! Make an end! The fight is yours!"

But 'Lyss acted as though his senses had suddenly deserted him. He let the man get as firmly on his sagging limbs as his condition would permit, and, when he moved, he no longer rushed to striking distance and hit with all his force. At last he did step closer to the tottering Pete, who staggered groggily out of his way, but he did not strike fatally, as one would have supposed. Instead, as though in pity for the helpless giant, he slashed lighty at him, barely landing at all.

The man swayed even at the contact of that love tap. One more blow would undoubtedly finish him. His guard was mechanical and useless and his instinct alone kept him in position. He retreated stumblingly, futilely shielding his face with trembling gloves. 'Lyss followed him, striking delicately, lightly, with featherweight taps, that played over his face and body like a spray. It was magnificent—but it was not war!

Muriel and the others of the audience were alike feverish with impatience and

disappointment. They yelled advice and admonition to 'Lyss, begging him to strike home, threatening him, imploring; yet he heeded them not at all. Around and around the staggering Barkum he stepped, beating that fitful, light tattoo on him at will. The flicker of an arc suggested an explanation to some.

"Yah! Get busy! What're you doing; playing for the pictures?"

Muriel heard and wondered, for an instant, if that could be the explanation. But she understood that 'Lyss had retained no interest in them, and, surely he would not risk his victory for the sake of his victim's profits. And, surely, 'Lyss could see that, far from being worn down by his tactics, Barkum was actually growing stronger under this tantalizing bombardment. After a full minutes' rest, 'Lyss would undoubtedly have all his work to do over again. His seconds remonstrated with him, during the intermission, in which Pete's followers worked desperately over him. But 'Lyss, whose face was still pale and drawn, sat sullenly, and only shook his head. Mike McGloon, watching him with puzzled face, realized that some miracle had saved his man, and vainly wondered what it was.

During the next two or three rounds he watched 'Lyss like a hawk, seeking a clew to the mystery. Meanwhile, 'Lyss continued his astounding folly. He swept about the ring, with the still groggy Barkum staggering after him, striking, cutting, dancing in and out, rolling up points with perfect ease, but never delivering a blow that could, by any stretch of fancy, be called damaging. And Barkum gradually and inexorably regained his strength, and, as he regained it, realized that something was wrong and became aggressive.

By the fifth round Mike had guessed and whispered his surmise to his protégé. After this, the restored Pete, pressed fearlessly after the flying 'Lyss, crowding tirelessly in his wake, lashing out at every chance, heeding the storm of light blows as little as though they had been the buffetings of insects' wings. And, for all the damage they did him, they might have been the efforts of a butterfly.

Some of them cut and stung: there was blood now on that rugged countenance. But his strength was restored, and he came on and ever on, fearless, determined, inflexible, and dangerous as a bull. 'Lyss danced and struck, invulnerable, magnificent in his skill and speed; but fatally ineffective. And, as time passed, he grew paler. His eyes were beginning to take on a hollow appearance, and his drawn lips bespoke some great pain. Yet he flashed as brilliantly as ever.

Six, seven, eight, and nine rounds rolled by, and, as yet, he was practically unmarked and undamaged. Hardly one of those crushing blows had reached him. But now, the difference between the physique of the light heavyweight and the cave man began to tell, inevitably. The graceful 'Lyss, lacking the rugged, rocklike endurance of Barkum, was tiring. Blows, partially blocked, it is true, but still somewhat damaging, were bound to reach him sometimes. Even the swiftest of men could not forever avoid those ponderous swings. And every punch that reached him took some of the vitality out of him. Could he go at that pace for twenty rounds, and win on points?

In the tenth round the question was answered. Crowded into a corner, 'Lyss flashed sideways, struck for the first time since that third round, hard and straight. And Pete was still in deadly fear of that punch, for he leaped away as though a snake had stung him. The blow got home, too, but not at the proper distance. As it struck, though, 'Lyss swung as gracefully as ever into the safety of open ground; all could see that his face was ghastly and pitiful.

Men commented, loudly and crudely, on 'Lyss' evident distress, callously predicting his downfall. Yet he was scarcely touched by Barkum's blows. Muriel raged against their brutality, entirely forgetting that she had had no pity for Pete when it had been his turn. Inexorably, the cave man pushed 'Lyss before him. Again he was in a corner and again he darted under an arm and out of it. But he was slower in turning to meet the following rush, and Barkum came upon him. The corded arm swung and the glove went crashing home, into 'Lyss' diaphragm. He doubled suddenly, like a jackknife, and his knees bent until he came to the floor.

But he retained his senses. Sinking forward to one elbow, he reclined on the canvas and watched the eager Barkum and the counting referee with eyes that were like slits, but still calculating. It was obvious that he could not rise, and the crowd was shouting murderously for his fate. Muriel hated them and raged against them.

As it had saved Barkum, the bell saved 'Lyss, but not one of all that audience but thought that it was only for the moment. The great question, now, was whether he would continue the fight or yield, acknowledging defeat. When his seconds leaped in and assisted him to his feet, holding him up until he reached his chair, most of them thought that he would take the latter course. Roberts was vociferating in his ear, as he leaned painfully forward, evidently advising this course, but 'Lyss shook his head and made a gallant effort to straighten up. His livid countenance, however, advertised his collapse.

Triumphantly Barkum strode forth, at the sound of the fatal bell, and tottering, half bent, 'Lyss went to meet him. Then, in the center of the ring, they faced each other for the last time. 'Lyss was endeavoring to smile defiantly, but his wracked mouth was not mirthful, while the fierce face of Barkum was set and pitiless. He struck—and to the amazement of all 'Lyss dodged the blow. But Barkum was sure, now, and he stepped back and leered triumphantly at his antagonist.

'Lyss had wheeled until he was facing the crowd where Muriel sat, and in his gray, tortured face the girl read all the pain that he suffered. Some murmur, creeping from the seconds at the ringside, from seat to seat, had told her that, in some way, he had been injured, though she did not know how. As his haggard eyes aimlessly swept the banks of seats, however, in a frenzy of pity and yearning for him she sprang erect and cried out:

"Oh, 'Lyss! 'Lyss!"

The wracked man heard her and his sagging limbs straightened. Half dazed, he glanced around, his eyes meeting the eyes of Barkum wonderingly. The great pugilist was creeping in on him, setting himself for the final blow that would end the fight, and the crowd, waiting tensely, had hardly noted that lone cry from the crowded stands.

The crowd saw the white, drawn face tighten, and the mouth set like a trap. There came a sudden red blaze in the eyes. Barkum rushed, and, like a willow wand, 'Lyss swayed out of the way, and pivoted on graceful feet. He drew himself together as Barkum whirled and lashed out at him. Then, for the last time, he lashed out with his right hand. The muscles had sprung tight and snappy on the lithe shoulders. The blow flashed swift and true to the mark. Full on the craggy jaw of the half human Barkum it smote, and once more the great animal was raised from his feet and hurled crashing to the ground, while the stunned crowd sat frozen in their seats.

Then, as the referee began to count, the storm broke around them, and rolled in a rising crescendo of yells and shrieks to the very rafters of the Garden.

"One—two—three——"

The tolling voice was swamped and only the finger, slowly rising and falling over the inert, ungainly lump of bone and brawn, told the tale. Mike McGloon, shouting frantically and leaping up and down, outside the ropes, could not be heard a foot away.

And 'Lyss stood swaying, eyes half closed, facing, not the fallen antagonist, but the section of stands whence had come that voice. His knees were bending under him and his hands hung limp at his side. Once, again, he half lifted one of them and shook it. His face, upturned, was like the face of one bound to the stake, who looks at the sky from the midst of burning faggots, seeking strength to bear his agony. And Muriel, trembling, the world red around her, stood and reached out arms to him that he could not see for the press that hemmed her in. She called and he could not hear her.

"He's hurt, Mr. Filbert! He's hurt!"

Filbert seized her arm, for he thought she was about to faint. And now the crowd was chanting the counts, as the referee's finger tolled them off.

"Seven—eight—nine——"

'Lyss turned and tottered toward his chair, and then stopped. The finger fell again and the great building shook.

"Ten!"

The referee sprang to 'Lyss and lifted his arm. As he seized it, 'Lyss writhed under his hand, and then settled to the floor, his limbs twisting under him. His seconds stormed the ring and gathered him up.

Filbert hurried Muriel out into a passageway, but here she resisted him, turning toward the hall again.

"I tell you he's hurt," she cried. "Mr. Filbert! Oh, why don't you *do* something? Please, go and get him!"

Filbert perceived a colored woman, who was a maid or scrub woman about the place, and called her. She agreed to stay with Muriel, and then he went away to look for 'Lyss, though he doubted the wisdom of it.

He inquired the way to the dressing rooms and, after a time, found himself in the corridor on which they fronted. Among a group standing about the door of one of them, he recognized Roberts, and went up to him.

"Where is 'Lyss?" he demanded. Roberts eyed him doubtfully. But the use of 'Lyss' right name won his confidence.

"What do you want with him? They took him over to Doc Brinker's office, the other side of the square, as soon as we'd got him off."

"Over to a doctor's office? Is he badly hurt?"

"Not to say 'badly hurt,' " said Roberts sarcastically. "When you send a fellow with a pair of mitts like a girl to beat them against solid ivory, like that dome of Barkum's, you can look for *some* slight injury, old top! The Kid just busted both his maulers on that fellow's map! Aside from that, though, all Pete did was to jolt his wind and his jaw a bit. But some one'll have to feed him for a few days."

"Busted his maulers? What do you mean?"

"Where's your education, man? He hit that bone head with both hands harder than any one ever hit him before. And what'd you think would happen. Why, he smashed both hands as clean as a whistle. There ain't a solid knuckle left in either of them."

Filbert hastened back to Muriel, and found her pacing up and down the anteroom, in wild impatience for his return. She fairly rushed at him, her eyes hungry for news.

"It's all right!" he cried reassuringly. " 'Lyss wasn't much hurt after all. He just broke his hands on Barkum's head!"

"And is that *all!*" Muriel was furiously sarcastic. "It's nothing at all that the poor boy should break his hands! Where is he? I want to see him!"

Filbert weakly acquiesced. "He's over at Brinker's office, getting them attended to," he admitted. "It's across the square."

"Well!" stormed Muriel. "Take me there!'

She had never appeared in this light to Filbert, and she overawed him. He knew that 'Lyss was probably unpresentable, but he did not dare to raise this objection. Instead, he went with her to the entrance of the Garden and thence, after an inquiry of a cabman, to a building on Fifth Avenue, where Doctor Brinker's offices were situated. In the doctor's waiting room they found only a young fellow who had assisted in 'Lyss' corner. He had brought the pugilist's clothes from the Garden, and was waiting now for further orders.

"He's all right," said this young man, in response to Filbert's questions, and looking curiously at Muriel. "The doc fixed the splints right away. I guess he'll be out in a minute."

The doctor's inner office door opened, in a short time, and the physician stepped out.

"You can go," he said to the boy. "Keeley will go on home from here. He's all right now."

He noticed Filbert and Muriel.

"Is there anything I can do for you?" he inquired.

"Mr. Wolfe—Kid Keeley," explained Filbert. Somehow Muriel felt the sound of that name as a physical jar. "We are near friends of his, and would like to see him, if possible. It's Filbert, tell him."

The doctor also looked curiously at Muriel. She was obviously not the sort of girl one generally associated with pugilists —but then, 'Lyss was not the sort of man one generally found them to be, either. It might be—— He ceased to speculate and turned to the door.

"Mr. Filbert is here," he stated. They heard 'Lyss answer: "All right. Tell him to come in."

Filbert looked inquiringly from the doctor to Muriel, while she looked eagerly back at him. The doctor, however, smiled and nodded. "Oh, he's presentable enough," he said, holding the door open. "The boy brought his clothes over."

Filbert entered the office and looked about him, while Muriel stepped behind him. 'Lyss sat on a sofa, at one side, his elbows on his knees and his bandaged hands hanging between them. His attitude was one of deep depression. Filbert stood still, as 'Lyss looked up at him with sick, gloomy eyes. But the pugilist's glance went past him, and rested on Muriel. His face went white, and he rose from the seat as though he saw a specter. His expression was full of pain, pleading for mercy, apologizing abjectly.

Filbert stepped out of the room, and pushed the doctor away from the door. Muriel, inside, closed it behind her. 'Lyss continued to stare, his eyes full of doubt and hunger.

"I did my best," he muttered, his voice on

the verge of breaking. "And now I'm through!"

But Muriel had no words of reproach for him. He was only her boy—victorious, but terribly punished and abused—needing her as he might never need her again. She went straight to him, lifting his clublike splints carefully.

"My poor, dear boy!" she murmured. "Poor, poor boy!"

'Lyss' eyes were dazed, but wonderfully eager.

"I'm not hurt," he lied, "and I really did it for you!"

"Oh, I know you did—and I'm proud of you."

'Lyss' arms, in spite of his crippled hands, must needs go naturally about her. Muriel sank into them, her face uplifted from his breast. He had no need to ask her anything, nor she to answer. "It—it was for you," he repeated inanely. But she seemed to understand why that fact was important.

"I love you for it," she answered. Her face called him insistently and, though she was a little frightened, her lips did not shrink from his lowered head. Her hand even fluttered to the slight swelling at the side of his face, as he kissed her.

After a long while he thought of all his old scruples.

"You couldn't ever marry a prize fighter," he groaned, trying to be miserable, but finding the reality too concretely comforting to permit his doubts to live.

"Why, you're *not* a prize fighter," insisted Muriel. "You're a civil engineer. And, besides," she added, smiling suddenly, "I'm only a typewriter clerk, myself. That's the kind of girl prize fighter's usually marry, isn't it?"

"When they don't marry chorus girls or that sort, I suppose it is," said 'Lyss, Then he kissed her again.

After something like fifteen minutes, Filbert was unscrupulous enough to look through the keyhole. When he rose he turned to the doctor.

"Doc," he said, "you and I will have plenty of time to go and get a drink—and I need one!"

"Same here," said the doctor. "And we might have a health to drink."

They went to a near-by hotel and obtained refreshment. When it was before them, the doctor spoke.

"Beautiful girl," he remarked.

"You bet," said Filbert, "and he's a fine, game lad!"

"Handsome pair," agreed the doctor. "Here's to 'em."

And Filbert drank.

"Here's to them!"

CONCERNING THREE BULLDOGS

ANGUS McSWEEN, Senator Johnson's presidential campaign manager, is outspoken, as fearless, as never-say-die, as two-fisted, as knock-'em down-and-drag-'em-out as Johnson himself—which is enough to explain why McSween dearly loves bulldogs. Whenever you see Angus, you can look behind him or under his chair or on top of his desk and find a bulldog. And, whenever he sees a particularly fine-looking pup of that species, he has an irresistible impulse to open negotiations for a purchase. During one of his trips this summer in behalf of Johnson's presidential hopes, McSween three times yielded to that weakness for owning new bulldogs. One by one, he saw, loved, purchased, and shipped home a bull pup guaranteed to lick thrice his weight in wild cats, tarantulas, and rattlesnakes.

The dogs were sent to a friend who had a stable in his back yard, and the instructions that went with the dogs were that they were to be put into box stalls and tenderly nurtured until their fond owner got back from the grime and grind of making a president. Soon after shipping the third dog, McSween received this emotional letter from the friend with the stable:

DEAR MR. MCSWEEN: Your three bull pups got here yesterday all right, all at the same time, owing to delays of two trains. I put them in box stall last night as per your instructions.

P. S.—I have only one box stall.

P. S.—You will have to buy some more dogs.

A Purely Moral Issue

By J. Frank Davis

Author of "Statutes Made and Provided," "The Zamboanga Wild Man," Etc.

Politics is a dangerous game for the layman, especially if he is one who can't be told anything. The Reverend Hector, of Eddsfield, was luckier than most amateurs though, even if he didn't know it

THE Reverend Hector McNutt was on a rampage. This was by no means unprecedented; indeed, rampaging, getting over a rampage, and laying plans to go upon a new rampage, were the Reverend Hector's normal avocations. Nor did this one threaten, at the moment, to be more dangerous than usual.

He sat in the mayor's private office, in the Eddsfield city hall, and declared himself upon the subject of public dance halls, and the mayor, striving to be patient and courteous and not to forget that McNutt was an absolutely honest zealot who must be treated with the respect due his sincerity and his profession, was annoyed without being at all worried. The Reverend Hector had never won a crusade in all the days he had been having them, but seldom had he ever started one that did not cause the leaders of Eddsfield's political administration annoyance. He never had any large group of citizens behind him; commonly his backing was a small but highly articulate minority of council of perfectionists after his own heart; but there was never any telling what he would do next, although quite certainly it would be something unpleasant. It was also a safe wager that, once started, he would not stop until he had made all the trouble he could, and he was a most accomplished trouble maker.

His rampages were always along similar direct lines, being nothing more nor less than crusades for the right and against the wrong; laudable and altogether commendable, every right-thinking person must agree, but loaded with possibilities of conflict, if what was right and what was wrong, under a given set of circumstances, chanced to be a matter of divergent opinion. Because the Reverend Hector McNutt, who always *knew*, did not concede that there ever existed any ground for debate.

It was an uncomplicated world, morally, in which Mr. McNutt lived and preached and rampaged. Things in his world were black and white; there were no grays whatever. Men and things were good, or they were bad. He approved the good and fought the bad. That was all there was to it; a perfectly simple matter. If people disagreed with his definitions, they were in error. Usually he took it for granted also that they were conscious partners of evil.

"Civic righteousness" was the customary aim of his crusades; "civic righteousness" and "simple principles of morality" and "right living." Always bearing in mind that "civic righteousness," when the Reverend Hector said it, meant nothing more and especially nothing less than a city conducted as he would conduct it, if he had full and autocratic authority. "Right living" meant living as Mr. McNutt chose to live and as he believed all others ought to choose to live.

Absolutely honest, entirely well-meaning, he was a Puritan living later than his time. He would have ornamented the Venice Council of Ten; the Inquisition or the Vehmgericht would have been stronger and crueler for his aid; had he lived in Salem, in the latter end of the seventeenth century, it is likely the still somewhat prevalent delusion that witches were once burned in America would be truth rather than fiction; the twenty or more unhappy wretches whom Cotton Mather sent to the gallows for being in league with the devil, would, under the dictatorship of Hector McNutt, have journeyed instead to the stake.

And the most exasperating thing about McNutt was his calm refusal to consider logical consequences. The word "expediency" had been definitely expunged from his lexicon. Show him that a course which he proposed would in practice do harm rather than good, and he remained wholly unmoved. "That is not our affair," was his implacable retort. "Our duty is to do right. The Lord will take care of the results."

He sat across the flat desk from young

Mayor Orson Kendall, this day, his long, lean body stiffly hostile, his fanatical face set in hard lines, his smoldering eyes stern, and delivered his ultimatum:

"Because I believed you would improve conditions in this city, I supported you last fall. It is not more than fair for me to state to you, now, that I am disappointed. I am disappointed, and the right-thinking people of the churches are disappointed. Unless you are prepared to do this proper thing that we demand of you, at once, we are about to withdraw our support. We are about to take such action as may seem advisable to make this a better city. In fairness I give you warning."

"Haven't I?" the mayor asked him. "Haven't I improved moral conditions in this city?"

"Somewhat," Mr. McNutt conceded. "I will admit you have closed the open gambling houses, although there is much playing of cards, for stakes, in social clubs and private homes. I will admit vice does not flaunt itself as brazenly in Eddsfield as it did last year, but it is far from being eliminated."

"I distinctly said during my campaign that I did not propose to attempt to stop bridge whist playing in clubs, and that I could not go as far as some of you good people go, in my ideas as to the best way to lessen some of the evils that we all know cannot be entirely abolished."

"Do not say 'we' in that connection," the minister admonished him harshly. "I do not admit that any evil cannot be abolished. In any event, your duty is not done until you have taken every measure in your power to abolish it."

Kendall realized the futility of arguing this point.

"There isn't a disorderly dance hall running in this city to-day," he said. "With a trustworthy matron on duty at each one, under the supervision of the policewomen ——"

"All dance halls are disorderly," the preacher interrupted. "Dancing is ungodly and unseemly and altogether vicious. It is not illegal to allow public dancing, unfortunately, so I do not say you could wholly prevent it; but there is no question whatever of your power to prevent the halls from hiring professional dance girls, whose sinful duty it is to dance with any and every patron."

"The girls are under strict discipline," Kendall maintained. "They are controlled by the matrons, whose qualifications have been passed on by the city policewomen; if their morals are found to be bad, they are instantly discharged. I am certain, Mr. McNutt, that ninety-five per cent of them—and the other five per cent is constantly being discovered and fired—are hard-working young women, who find the extra money they earn, of an evening, a welcome addition to their incomes, and who are entirely respectable."

"We will not make progress discussing possible respectability of dance-hall girls," McNutt said stiffly.

"I told you six weeks ago I would appoint a committee to make a complete investigation of this matter, and I submitted the names to you before making the appointment. You did not question the honesty of the two men and the woman I named, or their competency as social welfare workers to judge such things. I promised you I would abide by their report and recommendation. It was unanimously in favor of continuing the present regulations."

"I did not question their competency," the minister said, "until they made their report. That demonstrated their incompetency. I am grievously disappointed in them. The members of the Law and Order League are grievously disappointed. Right-thinking people, generally, are grievously disappointed."

"A good many excellent men and women have commended me for the improved dance-hall conditions," Kendall couldn't help saying. "Many of them very earnest church workers. Some of them are members of your church."

Mr. McNutt received this characteristically:

"I am fully aware that even in my own church there are members who cannot see the right, and, even when the right is pointed out to them, will not battle for it. Their weakness is no argument. Nor have I ever hesitated, Mr. Mayor, at being in a minority." His face expressed a certain grim satisfaction. "Yet it has been gratifying to me, in this instance, to find our position approved by many people who have not always stood for civic righteousness. I do not need to remind you that one of the leading independent newspapers in this city has definitely indorsed our stand in this dance-hall matter."

Mayor Kendall nodded. "The *Dispatch* has sided with you very enthusiastically," he agreed. "You know why, don't you?"

"It has stated its reason in its editorials. In the interests of morality and a better city."

"Exactly. And there is also another reason, which you may have overlooked. My pledges, when I ran for this office last fall, did not all have to do with moral betterments for the city; some of them were along economic lines. Among other things, I said I would see that taxes were adjusted more equitably. For more than fifteen years, Mr. Henry Ingram's *Dispatch* building and plant had been assessed at thirty thousand dollars—a fair enough valuation when it was first made. But the *Dispatch* has grown; Ingram couldn't replace his building and machinery to-day for a hundred and fifty thousand dollars. We assessed him this year at eighty-five thousand."

"Why not at a hundred and fifty, if that is the value?" Mr. McNutt asked, quite overlooking the obvious point of Kendall's statement.

"Half to two-thirds the actual value is the approximate rule in Eddsfield assessments. Ingram is now paying a tax proportionately somewhere near other large property owners. He doesn't feel pleased."

"It should have been done before," the minister declared. "However, we seem to be getting entirely off our subject."

"On the contrary. Don't you see, Mr. McNutt, that Ingram is merely playing politics? Your agitation of this dance-hall question gave him an opportunity to attack the city administration, which has increased his taxes. He seized it, just as he will seize every other opportunity that arises, to attack us, hoping he can either frighten us into lowering his taxes next year, or help elect another administration that will lower them. He has made an alliance with you because he hopes it will serve his pocketbook, at the expense of the other taxpayers of the city. I appreciate the perfect honesty of your intentions, of course, but in tying up with Ingram you are helping him play his game."

Mr. McNutt replied with great dignity:

"I do not play games, Mr. Mayor. Neither do I participate in practical politics, so-called. In my labors for a better city, I welcome aid from all sources. If Mr. Ingram and the *Dispatch* are able to see the right side of a problem that confronts us as citizens, and willing to make a fight for it, I cannot see how it concerns the forward-looking people of the city that in some other matter he may have a political ax to grind."

"You do not see that he is using your agitation for what you believe to be a good reform, to accomplish a bad end? That he is using you, in fact?"

"Nobody uses me," Mr. McNutt declared with much positiveness. "This matter of proper regulation of the dance halls is not a question of business or politics, and I decline to allow any discussion of business or politics to confuse it. It is purely a moral issue, and nothing more. As such I require your answer as to what you propose to do."

"I am sorry," the mayor said, "but I cannot see that I ought to alter my decision to abide by the recommendation of the welfare committee."

The minister rose and bowed formally. "Our people, then, will take such measures as they can to secure proper protection for the morals of the community. I warn you, sir, that I believe we are in a position to succeed."

The threat did not alarm Kendall; Mr. McNutt had sometimes believed on previous occasions that he was in a position to succeed. He recounted the conversation sketchily, however, at an informal gathering of the inner powers of Eddsfield Republican politics in Webster C. Judson's office, up near the top of the Merchants' Trust Building, that afternoon.

"Web" Judson's official title was treasurer of the Republican City Committee. The kindest name that his political enemies gave him was "boss." He and three others constituted a coterie that passed upon most matters of political concern before they came up for formal party or official action. The three were Merrill Hart, a bank president, who never held office, Lawrence Neal, Eddsfield member of the State senate, and Mayor Kendall.

"I suppose he thinks the support of the *Dispatch* gives him a chance," Hart said. "Our old friend Ingram needs to have all the fun with us he can, this year, because when he gets his *next* tax assessment, he is going to have something to get worked up about. The darned ungrateful cuss! As a sensible man, he couldn't help knowing his valuation had to go up sooner or later, and instead of grouching at an eighty-five-thou-

sand-dollar assessment, he ought to be thankful. However, let him play the game out his way. We don't have to buy his support."

"And next year he'll pay a tax on about a hundred and thirty-five thousand," Judson remarked. He changed the subject: "I hear Curtley is back."

"I met him on the street this afternoon," Senator Neal said. "His vacation has done him good; he is looking the best I ever saw him. They say he has cut out drinking—temporarily, anyway."

"It was time," Hart said. "I presume he'll be getting back into the game presently. I wonder what he will run for."

Thomas Curtley was the unscrupulous, dissipated, but withal brilliant politician who had been mayor of Eddsfield for three years and had been defeated by Kendall at the previous election, after a close and bitter contest.

"He would like to make another try for mayor," was Neal's opinion. "No office would appeal to him that hasn't plenty of graft in it, and there is nothing like controlling a police department to produce the kind of pickings he likes. We shall very likely hear within a few weeks that he is laying his lines for the old job."

"Let's hope he does," Judson said comfortably. "After the record we've made this year, there's nothing I'd like to see better."

"I leave to-morrow morning for the special session of the legislature, of course," Neal reminded them, after a little. "If anything comes up that you need me here for, a long-distance call will bring me in a few hours, barring my having to stay over there for some important vote. I shall be here, as usual, over Saturdays and Sundays."

The conversation turned to a number of matters due to come before the legislature, none of them of extreme importance to Eddsfield, and to the course to be pursued by Senator Neal and the Eddsfield representatives in the lower branch. The policy outlined was obstructive rather than constructive, the legislature that year being Democratic by a fair working majority, with a Democratic governor ready to sign its bills as soon as passed. Griffith Fessenden, State Democratic boss, had things well in his own hands, and about the most the Republicans could do was to cause him delay and annoyance and so conduct their opposition as to supply themselves with campaign material.

The ultimatum voiced by the Reverend Hector McNutt did not again come into the speech or even the thoughts of either of the four. It suddenly became a subject for immediate discussion, however, about a week later, when Judson summoned the mayor and Merrill Hart for a hurried conference in his office.

"I've just got an inside tip, straight," he told them, "that McNutt's Law and Order League is going before the legislature, as soon as the thing can be shaped up, with a petition that a police commissioner be appointed for Eddsfield. McNutt has talked old Judge Stetson into preparing the bill."

A police commissioner, appointed by the governor and responsible only to the State, would take all control of the Eddsfield police department out of the hands of the mayor, where it now rested under the city charter. Judson and his friends were quite familiar with the idea, because they themselves had discussed similar action, in a day when the legislature was Republican and Tom Curtley, Democrat, was holding the Eddsfield police force back from doing its duty as regards gamblers and other agencies of disorder. They had decided against it, however, esteeming it better to let things rest as they were, and devote all their energies to retrieving executive power.

"Where does McNutt think his crowd would get off with any commissioner that Griff Fessenden would name?" Hart puzzled.

"Trust McNutt not to consider that," said the mayor. "In McNutt's simple understanding of politics, the bill passed by the legislature will provide that the governor makes the appointment; hence Governor Roland will do it. Griff Fessenden and other wicked politicians do not enter into it at all."

"But he must think the appointment will be a satisfactory one," argued Hart. "He is a fool some ways, but he isn't fool enough to jump into this entirely without looking to see where he is going to land."

"Judge Stetson," Judson told them. "That's the answer. McNutt believes that, after the bill has been passed, he and his Law and Order League, being sponsors for the legislation, will be allowed to name a satisfactory candidate for the place."

"How does he get that way?" Kendall scoffed.

"And he is going to recommend Judge Stetson."

"Stetson is a trifle old, but if we had to have a police commissioner he wouldn't be the worst one in sight," said Hart. "Up to the time he retired, he was held to be one of the best constitutional lawyers in the State. Where does McNutt get his pull with him?"

"He belongs to McNutt's church," replied Judson. "He hasn't usually agreed with McNutt, though, in his radical ideas. A pretty strong man, generally speaking, and a mighty fine, honest man. If he stands back of this petition, with the governor and majority up there at the capital all primed to pass it, we have a job cut out for us. I had Neal on the telephone just before you two came in. It was news to him, but he will scout around this afternoon and hear what he can hear, and unless I get word to the contrary, he will come down on the evening train. We will all meet here at nine o'clock."

"You don't for a minute believe Griff Fessenden would stand for Judge Stetson being named, do you?" Mayor Kendall asked.

"I do not," Judson replied positively. "For one thing, although Stetson has never been very active in politics, he is a Republican. But I don't question that McNutt and Stetson *think* Stetson will be named."

That this was unquestionably true, and that it was just as indubitably certain that the powers at the executive end of the State house had no smallest intention of making such an expectation good, became clear soon after Senator Neal entered Judson's office, soon after nine o'clock that evening.

"Unless I don't know a thing about politics, it is one of the prettiest little frame-ups ever planted in a State that has seen many," the senator reported. "McNutt's crowd, with highbrowed Republicans of good standing, as citizens in the foreground, is to do all the arguing. Democrats are not to appear in it at all. Some of the Republicans in both the house and senate will unquestionably be for it on general principles—the strict church people from the country districts, especially, who are always ready to believe the worst about the machine in power in any of the cities. They will be encouraged to do most of the talking, but when it comes to the point of putting the thing through, the Democratic machine will pass the word around and get behind it. If McNutt can get a big apparent demand for the change from Eddsfield people, I don't see a chance to stop them jamming it through."

"Ingram and the *Dispatch* can be depended upon to work up such a demand," Hart said. "Has the time come for us to tell Ingram he gets his taxes lowered next year, Web?"

"Not on your life!" the leader snorted. "I wouldn't make terms with that pup even if we knew he was able to lick us—and we don't know it. What is the rest of the story, Lawrence? Who is slated for commissioner?"

"I couldn't hear a whisper as to that," the senator confessed. "But here's a straw that might bear on the direction of the wind: Tom Curtley spent a whole evening with Fessenden, last week."

Judson's lips pursed in a silent whistle. "It bears all the earmarks of one of Fessenden's fine Italian jobs, doesn't it? McNutt and Stetson and their forward-looking friends do the work. The legislature puts it through in response to the demand for good government. The governor, for reasons that will sound almost convincing, feels impelled to appoint a man satisfactory to Curtley, and the new commissioner and Curtley—with a proper percentage to Fessenden for the State slush bucket—whack up the ensuing proceeds. McNutt and Stetson, after they get through pulling out the chestnuts and wake up to the fact that they have been pulling them, will be delighted."

"Show them right now what the game is," Hart advised. "That ought to be easy. Then they won't play it."

"Who won't?" the mayor demanded. "McNutt? An exposé of the scheme from soup to nuts wouldn't add one wrinkle of worry to the hundred lines he already has in his face. In the first place, he wouldn't believe a word of it, and, of course, we can't prove it until after the appointment is actually made, when it will be too late for proving it to do any good. He would say"—Kendall exasperatedly mimicked the Reverend Hector's sonorous tones—"that he was not concerned with practical politics, and that this is a purely moral issue."

"Who of our friends stands especially strong with Judge Stetson?" asked Neal.

"Nobody," Judson decided, after a moment's consideration. "You know how reserved he always is. I don't know a man who could go to him for a confidential, heart-to-heart talk, and get met halfway."

"Somebody has to see him," Kendall declared positively. "If there is nobody stronger than anybody else with him, I'm the man to do it, because I'm mayor."

Judson nodded agreement with this. "You might be able to convince him," he said. "If you can, he will withdraw from his partnership with McNutt."

"And McNutt will get somebody else in his place, and the scheme will be put over just the same," Neal objected pessimistically. "We don't get anywhere unless we can stop McNutt."

"And we can't stop McNutt. At least we can't stop him going ahead with the plan, now he is started," the mayor said. "When the thing is over with and he has been double-crossed—and we are loaded with a police commissioner that we can't get rid of—he'll believe something has gone wrong; but even then he won't take a particle of blame to himself, because he only did his duty as he saw it."

"We must take a crowd up to the capital and fight it from start to finish," declared Hart. "Sid Waters' papers will back us. We will get up petitions of our own, set all the back fires possible——"

"And Griff Fessenden will cast the votes," Judson put in. Neal nodded somber agreement with this practical summing up of the situation.

"Wait a minute!" cried Kendall, with sudden inspiration. "They say you can't eat your cake and have it, too, but—who is the best constitutional lawyer in the State? Kerns, isn't he?"

"Undoubtedly," agreed Judson, who was himself an attorney by profession, although he had not practiced for years.

"I want you to take the first train to-morrow with me, Web, and go to see him. We can get back by evening, and I'll call on Judge Stetson as soon as we get home. If Kerns can fortify us with some kind of law or precedents, I'll have a suggestion to make to Stetson that might straighten the whole thing out." He sketched his idea roughly, and, before he had finished, Web Judson carefully stroked with the palms of both hands the place where in earlier years his hair had been parted, by which any one who knew him well could have opined that he was pleased.

Exceedingly dignified, urbane and cold was Mr. Russell Stetson, by courtesy called "Judge" because of his age and legal attainments, when he received Mayor Kendall, the following evening, in his library. For all his seventy years, he was a man in strong health and vigor, and his eyes looked steadily and shrewdly across to where he had seated the mayor in a strong light, while the younger man went at his errand without circumlocution.

Kendall prefaced his story by saying that he, of course, did not consider a police commissioner necessary or advisable for Eddsfield, that he believed he was administering the police department for the best interests of the community and its citizens, but that he did not ask Judge Stetson to agree with him, or expect him to. He said, if there had to be a commissioner, that he believed the judge would be an efficient and honest one. "But I am convinced," he said, "that there is no intention whatever, on the part of the governor, to appoint you commissioner, if you should succeed with the petition you are about to present to the legislature." And he stated the reason for his belief.

Judge Stetson may have been surprised that his plans were so well known, but he gave no outward sign of it.

"Thank you," he said. "As you seem quite positive that what you say is the governor's plan, perhaps it is no more than fair for me to say to you that I am assured, on what seems to me to be most excellent authority, that before any appointment is made, the Law and Order League of this city will be invited to name a candidate—and that the candidate whom it suggests will be given the place."

"Yourself," said the mayor.

Judge Stetson neither admitted nor denied this. "I presume your call presupposes some request or suggestion," he said. "Will you state it?"

"If I could prove that the governor intends to appoint a man friendly to Tom Curtley, you would withdraw from the movement, wouldn't you?"

"Perhaps. If you could prove it."

"It is not susceptible of proof, naturally, until the appointment is made."

The judge bowed slightly, a trace of a smile on his lips.

"But I don't want you to withdraw from the movement," Kendall surprised him by saying. "Frankly, I don't see how that would do any good; Mr. McNutt would only get some one else. I have no intention of

going to Mr. McNutt with this, and I would much prefer, although I have not bound you to secrecy, that you should not. Mr. McNutt is a very stubborn man. He is not amenable to advice. You do not always see eye to eye with him in his plans for city reform, do you, judge?"

"Mr. McNutt is a most excellent man," Judge Stetson said, without contradicting the statement, which was of common knowledge. "Like most of us, he has his individual peculiarities. In this case, I am in sympathy with him, because I believe, irrespective of what party is in power in Eddsfield, it would be better if the police force were entirely removed from politics."

"Do you think I am doing my duty to the city in the way I am handling the department?"

There was a not unfriendly look in the old man's eye. "You are certainly giving us a much better administration than we had during the past few years," he said.

"I don't believe you would adopt Mr. McNutt's extreme ideas any more than I."

"Perhaps not," the judge admitted. "However, I haven't said that I have any desire to be police commissioner, or any expectation of being. I will say that I have no personal hostility to you, Mr. Kendall. I think you are trying to serve the city to the best of your ability, and that you are succeeding measurably. But I do not think the force should be politically controlled."

"Exactly," Kendall said. "And if there were any way whereby I could convince you that it would be more politically controlled under a police commission than it is now—and worse controlled—you would favor letting things remain as they are. You feel positive that if this bill for a police commission is passed, the naming of a commissioner will be left to the Law and Order League of this city—which means that you will be appointed. I feel positive that there is a scheme afoot to double cross you and your associates, and name somebody satisfactory to Curtley and his crowd. I am prepared, now, to show you a way whereby you can ascertain beyond a doubt which of us is right."

"I shall be glad to hear it."

"Have you drawn the bill yet, to accompany your petition to the legislature?"

The judge hesitated. "Suppose we assume it may have been drafted, but not yet definitely decided upon."

"You have specified in it that for purposes of this act the cities of the State shall be divided into classes, of which cities whose population is between one hundred thousand and one hundred and fifty thousand are known as cities of the third class—or perhaps, second or fourth; I haven't seen the draft, of course; the division is an arbitrary matter. And that cities of the third or second or fourth class, as the case may be, shall have a police commissioner, to be appointed by the governor. The only city in the State with a population between one hundred thousand and one hundred and fifty thousand being Eddsfield."

Judge Stetson looked a trifle surprised. "Very well. We will also assume that the draft contains some such wording."

"The legislature will undoubtedly pass the bill in the exact terms in which you draw it; it will be the policy of the leaders to take the attitude that they desire to do exactly what the people of Eddsfield—as represented by the petitioners—want. My suggestion to you is that instead of the phraseology which I have outlined, you make the bill to read that it applies to the city of Eddsfield—referring to the city directly by name and not indirectly by class."

"You show a considerable knowledge of law, Mr. Kendall," the judge remarked coldly. "Your suggestion is one I do not see myself able to accept."

"Because you are familiar with the supreme court decision of 1884," said the mayor, "which held that legislation such as this cannot be made to apply to a specific city, but only to all the cities within the State of a certain class."

"Quite so," agreed the judge. "I am surprised that you should come to me suggesting that I offer a bill that would be found unconstitutional the moment it was brought before the supreme court. Not that it wouldn't be to your interest to have an unconstitutional bill passed, but I am not complimented by the inference that you believed I would not know it was unconstitutional."

"You misjudge me," Kendall told him. "I would like to make you a promise. Do you believe my promises would be kept? And do you believe I can speak authoritatively for the Republican organization in Eddsfield? If you are not sure about the latter question, I wish you would pick up that telephone on your table and call Mr. Judson. He is at his home. He will as-

sure you that he and the other leaders of the administration will back me unqualifiedly in what I am about to say."

Judge Stetson waved aside the suggestion that he get in touch with the Republican boss. "I have understood you are a man of your word," he said. "I think I would be justified in relying upon you to keep any promise."

The mayor leaned forward, and earnestness and sincerity rang in his voice:

"Draw that bill to read 'Eddsfield,' instead of 'cities of the third class'—or whatever class you have named it. Mr. McNutt will take it as you prepare it. The legislature will put it through in that form; nobody will catch the weak spot in it; that decision of 1884 is ancient and few lawyers even are familiar with it. The governor will make the appointment."

He spoke slowly and impressively:

"If he appoints you or any other man who is suggested by Mr. McNutt or by the Law and Order League, or who is even satisfactory to them and you, I give you my word we will not raise the point of constitutionality in regard to the bill. And if any one else should do so, and the bill should be set aside, I give you my further word that we ourselves will support you in securing the passage of a new and corrected bill."

"If you should be right in your surmise as to this plan on the part of those politicians at the capital," the judge said slowly, after a moment, "I would then be placed in the rather humiliating position—having some small reputation as an authority on constitutional law—of having drawn a bill that a team of horses could be driven through."

"In that case you would certainly owe no obligations to the politicians who set the trap for you," the mayor argued, "and there would be no reason in the world why you should not announce that you had done it deliberately and intentionally, having been suspicious of their good faith. But I don't see how the public, generally, is going to know that you drew the bill, unless McNutt tells it. I take it for granted neither you nor he has planned for you to appear actively in the attempt to get it passed, seeing that he purposes to recommend you for the position."

Judge Stetson pondered several minutes in silence.

"If you would like to come and see me again to-morrow evening," he finally decided, "I will be prepared to give you my answer. I want to think it over, and to consult with one or two friends."

"Not Mr. McNutt, I hope," said Kendall.

"Not Mr. McNutt," the judge smiled. "With one or two friends who are a trifle more practical."

The bill shifting the control of the police force of Eddsfield to a commissioner to be appointed by the governor passed the senate, having already gone through the house of representatives, at eleven-thirty one forenoon. Mr. McNutt, who was in the spectators' gallery surrounded by most of the half-baked reformers of his city, held a reception that made his right hand ache, and then sought the governor, whom he found to be busy. Mr. McNutt had never up to this moment exchanged a word with the governor, relative to his bill; it had been represented to him by mutual friends that this would be the best policy; he would have opportunity, soon after it was passed, to nominate his candidate for the commissionership, whom the governor would naturally appoint at once. The executive's secretary smoothly regretted the governor's inability to receive him at once, but made an appointment for noon the following day. Mr. McNutt, well satisfied, went out into the Statehouse corridor and continued to receive congratulations.

At four that afternoon, Governor Roland signed the bill, which thereupon became law. At four-thirty he appointed Thomas Curtley to be the Eddsfield police commissioner.

"Great Cæsar's Roman chariot!" cried Web Judson delightedly, when the news reached them by telephone shortly afterward. "Who ever supposed they would put it over as raw as that?"

"We could get Judge Stetson himself to fight the constitutionality of the bill now," grinned the mayor.

Merrill Hart asked an important question:

"When do the wheels of the law start merrily turning in the direction of the supreme court?"

"Kerns will file the papers first thing tomorrow," said Judson. "Whole gobs of them—injunctions and mandamuses and quo warrantos and I don't know what not—enough to make it mighty sure Curtley will never hold the job, even for one day."

He stroked the place of his vanished hair

parting with the palms of his hands. "It will be many a year," he exulted, "before we ever have to fight this particular thing again. McNutt himself must be aghast. Who would have believed even Griff Fessenden would have dared put over such a coarse piece of work!"

"I wonder if there is any inside to this business, other than Fessenden's double-crossing of McNutt?" the managing editor of the Eddsfield *Chronicle* said to his city editor, the day the supreme court handed down its decision that the bill giving Eddsfield a police commission was clearly unconstitutional. "It's queer, in all the hearings and arguments, that it has never come out who drew the bill. Was it ignorance, or boneheadedness, or is there a chance that the thing was planted?"

"The question having to do with McNutt, I'll bet on ignorance *and* boneheadedness," replied the city editor. "There has never been any talk of a frame-up, so far as I have heard. Who were you thinking might have rigged it?"

"I haven't any reason to believe anybody did, but on general principles I naturally wonder, when Web Judson and that smooth gang of his win a thing as big as this, as easy as they won this, whether they didn't have something to do with fixing it in advance, so it would win easy. Somebody might have wished that bill on McNutt."

"The easiest way to find out is to ask him," the city editor said promptly. "McNutt is a crank seven ways from the jack, but he is never a liar. I'll send a good man out to see him, right away."

"The bill was drawn under my own direction, and by one of my best and most reliable legal friends," the minister told the reporter, with his usual stern dignity. "Very few lawyers, I am informed, were familiar with that old supreme court decision, which had never been invoked as a precedent since the day it was rendered. Under those circumstances, I do not think it would be fair to him to make public the name of the attorney who actually committed my ideas to paper. I take full responsibility."

"It was pretty fortunate, as it turned out, that your friend made a bust," remarked the reporter. "The Eddsfield police force, under Tom Curtley, wouldn't be exactly a reform organization."

"Fortunate is not the word," the Reverend Hector corrected him, with almost his pulpit manner. "It was providential. Which proves again, young man, a thing I have always maintained—that we have but to do what is right, regardless of expediency and consequences, and the Lord, in His own time and way, may trustfully be depended upon to take care of the results."

Another of Mr. Davis' Eddsfield stories, "The Yarboro Flop," appears in the next issue.

WHEN KING COLE ORDERED BREAD

HUGHIE JENNINGS, the grass-pulling manager of the Detroit Tigers, tells this as the funniest thing he ever saw in baseball. His team was playing the New York Americans and, incidentally, knocking the ball all over the lot. "King" Cole was then in his glory as a pitcher, and on this occasion he had been sent to the "bull pen" in deep right field to warm up as relief man for the New York hurler who was being lambasted to a fare-you-well. After warming up, Cole ordered a peanut-and-pop boy to bring him a sandwich. He wanted to eat it before going in to pitch. The boy said his sandwiches were sold out, but promised to bring one in a few minutes.

"Hurry up!" said Cole. "I want it now."

Just then he was signaled to go into the game.

"And you'd better cancel that sandwich order," one of the players near by told him. "You'll go the remaining six innings. It's easy. The next three men up are only Cobb, Crawford, and Veach."

"Is that so?" countered Cole, thinking he was being very funny. "Only those fence breakers? Say, boy, hurry that sandwich! I'll be back here before you know it."

But his joke was an accurate prediction. When he went in to pitch, Cobb doubled, Crawford singled, and Veach tripled. The "king" was back on the bench ready for the sandwich when it arrived.

"Oh, Say, Can You See—"

By John Lawrence Ward

Author of "A Concession in Marimba," Etc.

Be careful about making promises to an Indian is the moral of this misadventure. Especially to such a budding merchant genius as old Charley Manyhorses

OUR railroads, once the pride and boast of globe-trotting Americans, have been so badly maltreated and viciously ballyragged, in the past few years, that I don't want to add one word to the great mass of abuse to which they have been subjected. So I am going to restrain myself and merely state that a day train, from Kansas City to Omaha, is not a vehicle de luxe, particularly on a mid-August day.

But I was on one, and that was all there was to it. On it of my own volition. Therefore, I could censure nobody but myself for my discomfort. I had broken a transcontinental journey, because there was a handsome roan, presiding over the altar of orange sticks and nail polish in a Kansas City khan, with whom I fain would hold further parley, ere I fared farther Westward.

Having parleyed, I was on my way back to Omaha, to resume my original itinerary. Net result of detour: one additional and superfluous sister.

At St. Jo I deserted my uncomfortable chair in the first car, built by Mr. Pullman —or perhaps, it was Mr. Wagner—and sidled into the tiny smoke room. I divested myself of coat, collar, and cravat, lit a cigarette, and gave myself up to thoughts on the perversity of woman.

Shortly, a whale of a man eased himself, sidewise, through the narrow door, took possession of the remaining chair, and lit a good cigar. Without looking at him directly—it was too hot to turn one's head—I got the impression that he was fat, ugly and loudly dressed. Mentally, I rehearsed several sarcastic comebacks, in case he inadvertently mentioned the weather. To my surprise, however, for this type of person is usually loquacious, the only sound I heard out of him, for an hour or so, was an occasional grunt, as he mopped his face with a fine linen handkerchief. He, too, soon shed his coat and waistcoat. He loosened his collar and rolled up his silken sleeves, and out of the corner of my eye I noticed a wicked scar on his right arm, running along the great extensor muscle from elbow to wrist.

My curiosity landed me in an embarrassing position, however, when I indulged in what I intended as a casual glance, a second too long, and it became a rude stare. And he caught me at it. Considerably confused, I was forced to meet his eyes, and immediately I knew I was confronting a personality.

"I couldn't help noticing that—ah—little souvenir of a bad accident," I said, attempting to let myself out of an awkward situation easily.

He flexed his mighty arm, gazed reminiscently at the scar, and grinned.

"Looks a heap worse than it was," he answered. "That, my boy, is positive evidence of the truth of that old wheeze, 'Never make a promise to an Indian.' I made two, in my lifetime, and regretted both of 'em. Once I promised a thievin' young buck, down old Mexico way, that the next time I caught him loiterin' around my tent, I'd whale the everlastin' socks off him. Two nights later I caught him red-handed, makin' off with my only quart of antisnakebite. I was so glad to get my little nostrum back, that I plumb overlooked the beatin' I had reserved for him. With brilliant logic he figured out that I didn't beat him because I was afraid of him, so he tried to extinguish me. Unfortunately my gun jammed, and he nicked me here in the arm, before I could get him to consider the thing reasonably."

"What was the other promise?" I made bold to ask, surveying my companion with quickening interest.

"Oh, that's a long story."

"Have a heart," I begged. "If you have a yarn concealed about your person, that will take my mind off this damblasted heat, for a while, for Heaven's sake unwind it, providing it isn't that one about the Boston schoolmarm and the cactus."

He lit a fresh cigar and smoked silently, and I surmised that he was fiddling for an opening, that bane of all raconteurs and writers. After several minutes, evidently spent in marshalling his ideas and reassembling his characters, he began. Here is his tale substantially as he told it.

Ever since the good wife died, many years ago, I've been spending my vacations, whenever I happened to be in this part of the world, with my brother-in-law, Will Ransome, who is the Indian agent at Fort Custer. Will's a bachelor, and lives back of the government store. He's his own housekeeper and a rattlin' good one; and a mighty good host, except that he's a natural-born argufier. Like all argufiers, he's usually on the wrong side of any question that comes up. Will's a crack hunter and what I'd call an inspired fisherman. He's so good with a rod that I can't for the life of me figure out why he lies so about his fishin'! Yes, sir, Will's got a lot of fine traits; also he's the dumbest, pig-headedest, contrariest son of a gun you ever met up with. But when it comes to knowledge of the noble red man—biology, chronology, habits, habitat, morals, and immorals—Will Ransome is in a class by himself. He knows Indians so well he can think like an Indian. Nary a whizzer is ever run over on him by *those* high priests of procrastination, prevarication, and the double cross. But stupid? He's so perniciously stupid that he don't know how much he knows about Indians, if you savvy what I'm drivin' at. Will's got wavy, blue-black hair, and brown eyes, just like Sally had, but what was just a commendable firmness in Sally is a chunk of mulish obstinacy in him. Yes, sir, I think a lot of Will and always enjoy my visits with him. The climate is fine and not too hot, and there is plenty of excellent fishin' and huntin'. The best bearskin I've got come from down there, and incidentally that skin ranks, as a trouble maker, with the box that Pandora opened and found a Paris hat in.

The nearest native village to Will's place is about three or four miles away, in the creek bottoms, where the foothills begin. Chief Flyin' Elk is the head man, and his son, Little Tom Goose, heir apparent. A competent auditor, checkin' up the resources of the village, would write Little Tom Goose off as a total loss and old Flyin' Elk is of no more importance than the mayor of any city, and fulfills about the same mission—somethin' to hang the insignia of the town on, and trot out on parade day.

The dominatin' figure, in this Utopian community, is one Charley Manyhorses. The great unsolved riddle of the universe is Charley's age. The contest is open to all and sundry, and nobody is laughed at unless he guesses under ninety years. Charley's body is small and mummyfied. His Hebraic head is oversized and wrinkled, like a walrus hide. A few strands of hair are coiffed in a wispy knot and ornamented by a lone frazzled eagle feather, which rears itself defiantly through a hole thoughtfully punched in the comedy derby that rests on Charley's ears, thereby heightenin' the impression that he is some Hester Street wag, dolled up for a Tammany masquerade ball. The rest of his costume consists of a brilliant, many-colored vest, a faded blue shirt, a breech clout, and a wrist watch. He swindled a young engineer on the Antelope Dam out of the watch.

Charley is one of the world's financial geniuses. The old rascal is as rich as a Levantine merchant, and, in a trade, he can start with a busted spark plug and run it up to a Pierce Arrow. Although he has no official standing in the tribe, nevertheless, he is the well-known man higher up. I think the whole village is in hock to him. It's a safe bet that he has an equity in every piece of tangible and intangible property in it. Even Big Fat Annie, his sixth or seventh wife, is an asset, not a liability. Besides doin' all the heavy liftin', around Charley's bailiwick, Annie does a thrivin' retail business, at Sandblast. Sandblast is a tank station on the Sante Fe, six miles across the hills from the village. and consists of the tank, the station, the eatin' house, and Annie's booth, from which she dispenses to tourists rare articles of genuine Indian bead and basket work, lace, blankets, moccasins, pottery, et cetera, manufactured at Brattleboro, Vermont.

Charley's surname isn't just a piece of Indian imagery, either. He has the horses all right. If Charley had to shoe 'em, his farrier's purchases would affect the steel market. But his faithful Rozinante is a buckskin caricature of man's best friend, entitled Hoss. At least, that's the only printable thing I ever heard Charley call him. Hoss is but a few years younger than his

master and is a fiddle-headed, ewe-necked, cow-hocked, rat-tailed nightmare, with a pink eye and a drooping under lip; blessed with the sunny disposition of a puff adder, and the perverted appetite of a Harlem goat. With Charley at the helm, emitting senile whoops and drumming bare heels on spare ribs, Hoss scampers along like an enthusiastic cottontail. But the minute Charley straightens out his legs, and lets his mount walk out from under him, the old dromedary leans comfortable against the nearest tree, fence, person, or animal, and falls peacefully asleep. Hoss' tonneau is innocent of blanket or saddle, and Charley steers him with a hackamore.

Well, sir, three year ago, I started on my holiday with more than the usual pleasure. I had put somethin' over on Mister Ransome, and I was anxious to give him the laugh, and make him admit, once and for all time, that he was a narrow-minded know-nothin'. I'll tell you what I had handed Will Ransome. The ravages of tuberculosis, among my red friends, had preyed on my mind for a long time. After givin' the matter a good deal of heavy thought, I figured out that livin' as they did, in those unspeakable tepees, along the marshy, miasmic creek bottoms, was mainly responsible for the appallin' number of good Indians created every year.

I maintained that the government had ought to take better care of our denatured citizens, and build them regular houses to live in, with front porches, hot water, heat, sanitary plumbin', and garages in the rear. In a moment of misguided confidence, I mentioned my scheme to Will. He hung up his hat, unloosened his shoe laces, lay down on the floor, and had a fit. He almost knocked the waddin' out of my hot idea, but I ain't without some little influence myself, down Washington way, and I finally put it over. The Indian office got busy, sic'ed an engineer on Will, and, in a short time, fifty model bungalows were erected on the high, dry ground above the bottoms. The Indian office allowed to house the whole tribe, if the samples met with the proper enthusiasm from the little brothers. So I was anticipatin' a lot of real pleasure in crowin' about my victory over Will's prejudices and influence.

Will greeted my arrival with his usual hospitality. That is to say, he stopped tellin' old Two Tails Bear why he couldn't buy more than five bottles of Worcestershire sauce, in one calendar day, long enough to wave a languid hand to me.

"Hello, party! Heerd some good news about yuh," he said in his mild way. "Heerd you was in Chiner. Yore supper's set fer yuh. If the cakes is burned, yore out o' luck."

After supper, I says to Will, casuallike, tryin' not to grin, "Well, Will, and how are the bungalows?"

"Oh! The bungalows," says Will, scratchin' his off ear, like it was a difficult job recallin' a vague matter like fifty bungalows. "The bungalows is all right. Purty nice little houses they are."

"Are the Indians pleased?" I asks pleasantly.

"Pleased? Should say they are," says he. "Say, party, the day them bungalows was finished, the tribe give a big feast. Barbecued a hundred dorgs, danced all night, had games and races. And gamble? My gracious how them children of nachure did gamble! I'll betcha the entire propity of that there tribe changed hands twenty-four times, in twenty-four hours."

"Well, well!" I says, more tickled than I let on. "Pleased as all that, eh! That's bully. See, Will? Now you'll admit, won't you, that it's all a matter of education? Just think—they've been living in those filthy, unventilated tepees, subject to the vagaries of the elements, all these years, because no one had brains enough or interest enough to house them decently. Now that they live in nice, tight, warm, well-aired bungalows——"

"Hol' on a minute," he interrupts. "What in time you-all talkin' about? Them hombres is still livin' in the same ole tents, down in the same ole bottoms, jest like they allus did."

"What's that?" I yells. "Do you mean to tell me they are not usin' those bungalows?"

"Sure, they're usin' 'em," he says. "They stables their ponies in 'em."

Directly after breakfast the next morning I saddled Reba—Will's big white Missouri nightingale—and ambled down to the village. I requisitioned old Charley as interpreter, and, believe me, I read the old razz to that bunch of maroon ingrates. They understood my pungently phrased oration just about as much as a present-day statesman understands the Constitution of the

United States, and when I bawled Charley out for his diluted version of my remarks, he side-stepped the issue, very cleverly, and attempted to placate me with many mysterious allusions to a wonderful bear, on which he seemed to have all the available dope. He finally succeeded in interesting me, and partly because I was disgusted with the villagers, and partly because I wanted to get away from Will Ransome's irritatin' manner, I ordered old Charley to pack our gear, and we started immediately on the trail of the bear, of whose existence I entertained a hundred to one doubt. That was one of the few times I caught Charley tellin' the deliberate truth, for, a week later, we returned to Fort Custer with the finest pelt I ever saw.

I spent a mighty pleasant month. Gettin' that bearskin had restored my good humor to a point where I even conceded to Will that I had been in error on the bungalow proposition. The day before I was to depart, Will and me were sittin' in my room smokin', and old Charley was pretendin' to pack my few possessions. I had fixed the old gargoyle up with an exceptionally heavy pourboire, but every time I looked at that handsome skin, my heart expanded further.

"Charley, old son," says I, "you've displayed almost as much activity, this trip, as a gorged anaconda, and the Great Spirit has touched my heart and made it as soft as a maiden's tears. I want to give you a nice present. Now, what do you want most?"

"You gimme present?" inquired Charley brilliantly. "Anny damthing I say?"

It dawned on me that I had made a pretty loose and comprehensive remark. I was just about to hedge, a mite, when Will Ransome said, "Barnum was sure enough a conservative ole feller." That riled me into backing my play to the limit.

"Anything you say, Charley," I declared flatly. To my surprise Charley dropped on one knee, by my half-packed trunk, skillfully emptied it to the bottom, and arose, holdin' in his outstretched hand—his choice!

Now, I don't go around with a red, white, and blue chip, on my shoulder, or overworkin' my mouth makin' nasty comparisons, but nobody takes a crack at our old sweet land of liberty, without bein' advised by me that he's speakin' out of his turn. My business takes me over a lot of the known world, and whether I'm parked in the Savoy in London, or a nipa hutch in the Big Numbers country, a little United States flag is draped over whatever piece of bric-a-brac supports my gun, razor, and toothbrush. Knowin' this little sentimental peculiarity, a very dear friend of mine—and if I told you it was the wife of an ex-president, you would begin to wish a husky brakeman would soon blow in—made for me, a beautiful, hand-stitched flag of finest silk, edged with gold fringe, also hand-twisted. You can imagine how much I thought of that gift from the White House. That little old emblem traveled all up and down the earth with me, for years. And here I'd just cheerfully passed my word to give it away to an evaporated old squid of a hell-inspired Indian. For that's just what that moth-eaten old totem pole had clutched in the turkey foot he called his right hand. Charley's shrewd eyes perceived my consternation.

"You no givum Charley?" he asked simply.

"Wouldn't you rather have the bearskin?" I managed to ask, sweatin' at every pore.

Charley shook his head slowly and pathetically. What could I do? Well, I did it. I waved for him to keep the flag, and went out in the air, feelin' a whole lot like the fisherman did, the day he decanted the djinn.

The next mornin' I was up at five o'clock—my train was due at six—finished my packin' and breakfasted alone, as Will was out milkin'. Just as I swallowed the last of my coffee, he came in, set down his pails, and jerked a thumb toward outdoors.

"We have with us, this mawnin'," says he, "a-squattin' on its collective haunch, out in our front yard, the entire contingent from the bottoms. Every buck and his wife and his children. Every pony and his wife and his children. Every dorg and his wife and his children. Every flea and his——"

"What's eatin' on you?" says I, sore as a mashed thumb. "Why don't you treat your charges decently, and you won't have 'em comin' up here, in the middle of the night, like this, and slippin' you a round robin."

"Oh, they ain't honin' to see me this mawnin'," says he. "It's you-all they got business with."

Considerably puzzled, I stepped out onto the veranda. Will might have been guilty of mild exaggeration, but, to my jaundiced

eye, the big turfless square, in front of Will's store, was no doubt plumb full of Indians. They even overflowed out and onto that boundless prairie beyond, their feathers and topknots fading out in perspective. They reclined at their ease, like a tableau in a 101 Ranch Show. At first, I reckoned they were just payin' a little call, with the idea of showin' me all their personal possessions —judgin' from the amount of gear and live stock they had with them. But, as I gazed into that vast assemblage of poker faces, I began to fear the worst.

"From my knowledge of diplomacy, in the highest Indian circles," says a gloatin' voice in my ear, "I'd say you-all was confrontin' a situation."

Ignorin' the Ransome lizard, I raised my hand in greetin', and said, "How!"

The Indians raised their hands in return. It was an impressive sight. Everything was all right as far as it went. But, where was Charley? I could see Hoss dozin' contentedly against Big Fat Annie, but I couldn't locate his master.

"Lookin' fer Charley?" says Will. "There he is yonder, hidin' behind Little Tom Goose. He's all disguised up in a pair of pants."

Considerably relieved, I motioned to the old mummy to come up to the veranda. "What's the big idea?" I says to him. "Why the gatherin' of the clans?"

"How the hell Charley know?" he asks sweetly. Charley thought cuss words were descriptive adjectives and a necessary part of the English tongue.

"Ask them," I ordered him, sort of madlike. Charley threw the draggin' end of his mangy blanket over one shoulder, advanced a moccasined foot forward, like Ajax defyin' the income tax, and uncorked a series of grunts and squeals that would have evoked the admiration of a large and growin' piggery. When Charley finally run out of language, old Flyin' Elk got on his feet, and recited "Hiawatha." Charley was all set to volley back with "The Night Before Christmas," but I short-circuited the elecutionary duel by favorin' him with a sly boot to the rear of his borrowed pants.

"What did he say?" I asks.

Charley grinned at me pleasantly. "Huh! All them big dam' fools want present."

"Present?" says I, kind of hoarse. "All of them? What kind of present?"

"Flag present," says the old gila monster.

"Oh, my good gracious!" says Will.

"Do you mean, Charley," I says slowly so that there wouldn't be any darn fool misunderstanding, "that all your friends want flags?"

"Huh! You bet." Charley seemed to be positive about it. "All want flag present for hisself. One—two—t'ree million flag present maybe. How I know? You count um."

"What are you all figgerin' on doin'?" asks Will. "Think fast. It's nigh on to train time."

I condescended to ask him a question: "How many in that tribe, Will?"

"Well, party, they'll tally just fo'teen hundred and twelve head, this mawnin', runts an' all," he drawls. Then he smiles meanly. "To-morrer they might be more or they might be less. I dunno."

Roughly estimated at about twenty-five cents a flag, a little matter of three hundred and fifty or sixty dollars!

Then, as I ruminated over this triflin' amount, the sordid scales were knocked from my eyes, and I saw a great light.

After all, here was my great moment staring me in the face, and I was chokin' over a few measly hundred dollars! Here was my pet idiocyncrasy—my rabid patriotism—bearing the most glorious fruit a man could wish. I felt ashamed and degraded by the base thoughts I had entertained, on bein' obliged to give Charley my precious flag. See what that gift had brought about! Fourteen hundred grave, childlike, misunderstood Indians wanted, each for himself, a flag of their country! Here, at my feet, were fourteen hundred children, of a vanquished and dyin' race, petitionin' me, a lowly representative of our great government, for flags—for visible symbols of the mysterious Power that ruled them and regulated their very lives. I tell you it was a great and solemn moment in my life.

"Charley Manyhorses," says I, "say to Chief Flyin' Elk, and to all my red brothers and sisters, that I am touched more than I can express——"

"Yore dad-blamed whistlin', yore touched!" cackled the ribald fellow whom a grave error on somebody's part allowed to rule over these sensitive and high-minded people. I resumed:

"Say to Chief Flyin' Elk that the Great White Father at Washington shall hear from my lips of the great loyalty and devotion of

the noble Indian. Tell him," says I, loud and defiant, so Will Ransome wouldn't miss a word, "that, before the coming of the new moon, every man, woman, and child in his village will be the proud possessor of an American flag—the sign of the Great White Father. I have said it!"

"Does Big Fat Annie git one, too?" snickered Ransome.

I stood firmly at attention, while Charley relayed my impromptu oration to the eager tribe. He must have slipped it to them in the native code, for, after two or three one-syllabled words, they all arose hastily, assorted themselves in traveling formation and departed swiftly.

"Serves yuh dad-blamed right," said Will peevishly, as we reëntered the house. "Yuh hadn't oughta give that old horned toad no flag in the first place. An' now yuh gone and promised a flag to every dag-gone one of 'em. An' yuh know what promisin' anything to a Indian is, don'tcha? He'll pester yuh to yer grave."

"Will Ransome," says I coldly, "you have the bowels of a rattlesnake, the soul of a Limehouse Chinaman, and the imagination of a cow tick."

"I kain't afford to have no imagination," he says. "I gotta *know*. I gotta run this hère reservation decent, orderly, and ec'nomically, and bum promises is out of order."

"Listen to me," I interrupts sternly. "I never made a promise in my life—bar one—that I didn't keep. I promised to send a flag to every Indian in that village, and I'm goin' to keep that promise."

"In a pig's eye," he sneers. "If you-all think you kin sandbag that gang of hard-boiled aigs, down to Washington, fer a car load of flags yore wrong."

"I don't aim to pester the Indian office, in the matter of these flags," I says with a lot of dignity. The whistle of the train put an end to the bickerin', and we parted fairly good friends.

As soon as I arrived in Chicago I made a few inquiries, regardin' the flag business, and learnin' that the Empire Novelty Company were big manufacturers and jobbers of flags, buntin', and so forth, I paid them a visit. I left my order with them for ten gross, allowin' a few extra for any Indians that might have been overlooked in Will's last census, told them to box them carefully and ship to Mr. Charley Manyhorses, care of Will Ransome, and gave my certified check for two hundred and twenty-six dollars. I left Chicago for Washington, feelin' at peace with the world. I had done a good deed and at a much lower cost than estimated.

I had just about enough time, in the District of Columbia, to notice that the monument had grown two feet higher, since I last saw it, when my chief chased me off to Buenos Aires where I spent a busy winter. I returned to the States, in May, and spent June in Washington. On July 4th I detrained once more, at Fort Custer, for my annual holiday.

That first night, as we were turnin' in, I says to Will, "By the way, Will, did that case of flags get here all right?"

"Flags?" says he. "Oh, yes. The flags. Sure! Yeh, they showed up all right."

The next mornin' while I was breakfastin' Will come in, set down the milk pails, and grumbled out, somethin' I couldn't quite get.

"Dag-gone it all! Jest as soon as you show up, trouble begins! Look out the winder."

I looked, and gazed out upon a scene very similar to the one that had greeted my eyes on that momentous occasion almost a year before.

"Probably come up to thank me for the flags," I says calmly. "Pretty decent of them, I say. I'll go out and address them."

"An' I'll go out and tell 'em to git the blazes offen my front yard," he says.

We stepped out on the veranda, and I genially saluted my red friends. Old Charley came hot-footin' over and we shook hands cordially. Then I noticed that, in front of the store, stood a low, springless wagon, drawn by two gaunt ponies, on which was lashed a huge packing case.

I looked closer, and was startled to discover that stenciled on one side, in big black letters, was Empire Novelty Company, Chicago, U. S. A. I walked over to the wagon and gingerly lifted one of the loose boards that formed the lid. A hasty glance inside assured me that the case was full of flags. For some reason or other I began to have an unpleasant feeling in my stomach.

"Charley," I says sternly, "what the devil does this mean?"

Charley grinned happily. "Bring um flag present all back. Ev'y dam' one. You listen me; we honest Indian. On square, you betcha. You count um flag present. Ev'y dam' one."

"Bring them back?" says I, puzzled to death. "What's the idea? Why bring them back? They are yours. Savvy? You square-headed old ass! Keep um! Savvy that?" Such ignorance got my goat.

Charley waved his hand in lordly fashion.

"Don't want um," he announced calmly. "Bring um back."

"Don't want them!" I yelled.

"Yep, tha's right. Don't want um. No."

I forced myself to speak calmly—gently: "And why don't you want them, Charley?"

"Huh! Look!" says Charley, snatching one of the flags out of the case, and flirting it with great scorn. "Those big, dam' fool in Shee-ca-go, he send wrong kind flag present."

"Wrong kind?" says I kind of weak. "What do you mean—wrong kind?"

"Sure thing. Look! You feel um. You buy sillik flag present in Shee-ca-go. Those fella send cotton flag present. Big cheat. You savvy that?"

"Oh, my good gracious!" says Will Ransome.

Did I savvy that! Well, I didn't know just exactly what I did savvy, at that moment, but I savvied that I was in a nasty jam. So! I had purchased silk flags, according to Charley, and those Chicago swindlers had shipped cotton ones! Well, wasn't that a neat diplomatic way of lettin' me know that the gift wasn't up to specifications? There posed Charley tryin' to fool me into believin' that he only had my best interests at heart, that never, while he lived, would he see his good friend and benefactor double-crossed by low city merchants. And all the while, I could read, in his beady calculatin' eyes, that he had sworn seven vows, to the Great Spirit, that I would supply that tribe with hand-stitched, silk flags, or he would know the reason why. I was hooked securely. There, in solemn expectation, sat fourteen hundred and some odd Indians, waitin' to see what I was goin' to do with my face; and in the doorway lounged my unspeakable brother-in-law, wearin' a grin that encroached on his ear space, makin' five-cent bets with himself that I would welsh out of my predicament.

For a long while I was too angry to trust myself to speak. And then I realized that I was dealin' with a primitive people, singularly childlike in the thinkin' and reasonin' and noted for their passion for gayly colored trinkets and gewgaws. Therefore, I would fail to display a broad tolerant mind, did I resent too keenly their very obvious peep into the gift horse's mouth. My anger died down. Besides, I always made it a point to do the thing Will Ransome figured I wouldn't do.

"All right, Charley," says I finally. "The company in Chicago made a mistake. When I go North again, I'll see to it that they ship the silk flags. Just nail up that case, and leave it on the platform, and I'll ship it back to-morrow."

I turned on my heel and went into the house, carefully avoidin' Will Ransome's eye. I cut my vacation short that year, as I was anxious to return to Chicago and get that flag business settled. I went around to the Empire Novelty Company's place and made a clean breast of the matter to the boss man. He was a prince, and after treatin' himself to a good laugh, he said he would go the limit to help me out. Havin' learned, by my previous error, to have a healthy regard for details, when purchasin' for Indians, I took great care to explain thoroughly just what sort of flags I required—silk, handstitched, twenty-four by thirty-six inches in size, gold fringe, tassels and so forth. He was sure a good sport. Allowed me full credit for the flags returned and gave me the silk ones at cost. But, at that, little gifts approximatin' three thousand dollars are a bit too rich for my purse. Incidentally that's a pretty high price for a bearskin.

My fat acquaintance sighed heavily, and dabbed at his face with his handkerchief.

"Hot, ain't it?" he observed.

I had been so entertained, by his yarn, that the remark failed to provoke me, and so I merely agreed, politely enough, that it was.

"That's a very interesting sidelight on Indian character," I said. "I can easily imagine that you were a trifle put out by their hair-splitting attitude. And three thousand dollars is a lot of money, even if spent to save one's face. But as you say, their frank criticism of the quality of your gift was but an irritating outcropping of their childishness. Back of it all was the spirit of loyalty and patriotism. I should say that fostering such a noble sentiment was well worth three thousand dollars."

The fat man's eyes twinkled.

"For the past month," he replied, "I've been down visitin' with Will, as usual. I

didn't mention the flag episode to him, notwithstandin' the fact that not one of those flags were in evidence. Which puzzled me. One evenin', Will and I were sittin' out on the veranda. Our attention was attracted to a cloud of dust, rapidly approachin' the store. As it floated past us, I was just able to glimpse a shiny new flivver, behind the wheel of which sat Charley Manyhorses. The tonneau was slightly crowded by Big Fat Annie, who was all dressed up like a Turkish rug bazaar.

" 'Charley struck oil in his back yard?' I asks Will.

" 'Better than oil,' he says. 'Charley struck a boob.'

" 'How come?' says I.

"Will scratched his off ear, for quite a spell, and then he says, 'Party, I usually knows what a Indian's got in his mind, and I aims to outguess 'em before they pulls anything on me. But dang me, if I wasn' a long time dopin' out Charley's flag trick.'

" 'Flag trick?' I says, feelin' somehow that once more I was about to be decorated with cap and bells.

" 'Yeah,' says he. 'Yuh didn't notice any of them there expensive silk flags a-floatin' in the breeze, did yuh? Neither did I, and I thought about it, fer quite a spell, and finally I got the right of it. It's cute enough. The mawnin' you give Charley that there silk flag o' yourn, he hung it up in his tepee, and then went on about his business. Big Fat Annie was just settin' out with her load o' trinkets fer Sandblast Station. She pinched the flag. She hung it up, in her booth, and some tourist on the Twilight Limited give her ten dollars fer it. She told ole' Charley about it, and he decides that silk flags is good merchandise. So he staged them tribal visits on yuh, by threatin' to call in all outstandin' loans in the village. I reckon you'll tell the world he got his silk flags reasonably cheap, even if he did have to wait a year fer 'em. Annie sold them all, before the winter was over. Aside from the sentiment of the thing they was durned purty flags, and most any of them wealthy highbrow tourists would pay ten dollars to pick up sich a rar' specimen of Indian hand needlework, to show to their admirin' friends back home. Ten dollars apiece, on fifteen hundred flags. Clear profit for Charley. Savvy?' says Will.

"I savvied."

GREATNESS IN DISGUISE

WHEN Zebulon Weaver left the towering mountains of western North Carolina and arrived in Washington to serve his first term as a member of Congress, he realized the ambition of a lifetime. Every time he thought of the great things he would do for his country, his spirits soared and his heart beat thunderously against the top of his hat. His constituents had hailed him as another Abraham Lincoln. Moreover, he looked the part of a Lincoln. He had not ridden to victory on his facial beauty, and, since he had sojourned and campaigned among rough mountains and mountaineers, he was arrayed not exactly like Solomon in all his glory.

He approached with lordly step the main entrance of the House of Representatives on the opening day of the session.

"Hi, there!" shouted one of the two guards stationed in the corridor to keep back the lowly public. "You can't go in there. Nobody but members of Congress allowed in this door."

"If you please," said Weaver, "stand aside. I'm a congressman."

"You're a what?" queried the guard, obviously unimpressed.

"I'm a member of Congress. My name's Weaver—from the State of North Carolina."

The guard produced a printed list of the members' names and ran his finger down the column to the letter W.

"Is your name Weaver, Zebulon Weaver?" he asked at last. When Weaver answered in the affirmative, the guardian of the door bowed deeper than his shoetops and ushered him in with every show of hearty veneration. But the new congressman, as he took his assaulted dignity through the entrance, heard the fellow say to his companion guard:

"Good God, Sam! Did you see it? After that, I'll never have the nerve to stop anything that shows its face here!"

The Man Who Talked Too Much

By Roy Norton

Author of "David and Goliath," "Merely Business," Etc.

"Lucky" Cochran they called him. Also he was eloquent—very. Too much so, felt David and Goliath. However, they came to think that he was not the only one that way

THE Westbound Overland on the Santa Fe Railway, although doing its splendid fifty miles an hour, seemed to two of its passengers to be moving at a snail's pace; for the journey ahead of them was long, and their destination, which was far northward from San Francisco, the only spot on earth worth reaching. To increase boredom they had for so long been partners and fellow adventurers that all ordinary topics of conversation between them had long been exhausted, and the barren scenery through which they passed was too familiar to be worthy of interest.

Furthermore, they had, but a few days previously, escaped from a certain district in Mexico where for a brief time they had gambled their lives, and were still too glad of escape to indulge in foolish conversation. The veriest fool could not have mistaken them for other than what they were; miners, prospectors, men of still places where life is crude and hard. There was nothing to distinguish them or attract a second glance, other than their incongruity of size; for one was a magnificent giant, and the other a blocky, stocky runt, with shoulders much too large for his stature and a flaming red head that seemed to have defied even the bleaching of the sun. That these two were known to frontiersmen and men of their ilk, over many thousands of miles, as "David and Goliath," meant nothing to them, nor to any of their fellow passengers; but that they had casually reversed a seat in the smoking car and thus sprawled over two seats instead of one did, as a magnet, attract the attention of a man who wandered inward with a very large and very new alligator-skin suit case that he dropped in the aisle beside them.

"You boys mind if I sit in this seat?" he demanded, and, although they very much did, they promptly lowered their feet to the floor, doubled their tired legs back into cramped postures, and told him to "set in."

"Goin' far?" he asked, before his weight had settled.

"Clean through to Los Angeles, then to San Francisco," David, the smaller man, replied after a moment's pause.

"I'm bound for Frisco myself," the man said, and then as if considering an introduction necessary, added, "I'm Cochran. 'Lucky' Cochran, as they call me."

The partners did not appear impressed, or act as if they deemed it incumbent on them to either register surprise, curiosity, or tell him their own names.

"Reckon you've heard of me—Lucky Cochran?" the newcomer asked with a grin that was entirely self-complacent.

The partners studied him for a moment and then the smaller man said, not without a suggestion of disapproval, "Nope. Can't say I ever did. Why?"

"Never heard tell of me? Lucky Cochran? I'm the man that owned the ranch at Placides, where they struck oil. I'm the boy they paid twenty thousand to last week and—— By gosh!—if things go right, I'll get a million more."

Goliath yawned openly, stretched his long legs out into the aisle, and David unblinkingly gazed at him as if taking stock of all his new clothing, his diamond stud screwed into a flannel shirt, the diamond ring on his heavy, thick-knuckled hands, and thence downward to his big feet that were incased in patent-leather shoes of a design affected by "sporting gents" of the previous decade.

"Humph! He looks it, don't he?" David said, turning toward his partner. As if his attention had just been casually called to something outside, Goliath, in turn, appraised Mr. Cochran and then rumbled, "He sure does!"

Entirely unabashed by their comments, Mr. Cochran seemed, on the contrary, to be highly pleased.

"That's me!" he remarked. "Lucky Cochran! That's me, boys." And then, as if

stimulated to speech, he began talking. He told them the history of his new wealth, of his lean years, of where he had originated. He even told them stories. His tongue wagged as if on a pivot, pendulous, and the fact that neither of them evidenced the slightest interest, or interpolated any remarks, did not in the least curb his loquacity.

The partners moved into the emigrant sleeping car, where they breathed deeply, thanking Heaven that they had lost Mr. Lucky Cochran. Two hours later Mr. Cochran also moved in and greeted them like long-lost brothers. The partners fled to the smoking compartment, and Cochran pursued them. The tiny cabin was filled with men and smoke, and to their relief Cochran began telling his story to those therein assembled, and the partners fled to the smoking car at the front end of the train. They sat quietly, glad of the fact that no conversation was hurled at them; for they were wonderfully skilled as listeners, although short in words. One man was telling another of how much cheaper it was to travel to San Francisco from San Diego by steamer than by rail, and how much more comfortable if one had time to spare. The partners listened and weighed his words.

"Goliath, what's the matter with our takin' the boat up?" David asked, after the man and his companion had gone.

"Just the thing, provided we can lose that lucky guy," said Goliath with a grin.

"Right! Anything to lose him," David agreed, and they considered their information fortunate when Mr. Cochran found them again and opened up his verbal batteries with, "By gosh! Been lookin' for you boys. It's mighty lucky we're to keep company all the way to Frisco. Where do we stop in Los Angeles?"

"We don't stop," said David sourly. "We've got business down in San Diego."

"San Dieger, eh? Come to think of it, I ain't never been to San Dieger. Tell you what I'll do, I'll go along with you!" he added benignantly, as if doing them a great favor.

It was on the tip of Goliath's tongue to say, "Not by a dam sight, you won't," but David broke in hurriedly with, "Come to think of it we ain't so sure. Maybe we won't go that way. We're thinkin' it over."

By skillful dodging they succeeded in losing Cochran, when they arrived at Los Angeles, and went to an obscure hotel, where they intended to stop overnight and break their journey; for railways to men of their stamp were like temporary prisons. Unfortunately, after dining, they sat in the rotunda which was ablaze with lights. In from the street rushed Mr. Cochran with great jubilation.

"Mighty nice I found you!" he roared. "Been lookin' everywhere for you. A fool nigger grabbed my suit case there at the deepot, and while I was chasin' him I lost you. Reckon you were worried about me, too, wa'n't you?"

"We were! We were!" David declared, most fervently and truthfully.

Cochran bolted from them to the desk, held a conversation with the clerk, produced a wad of bills as big as a Mohave maiden's leg, and then rushed back to them and seized a vacant chair.

"It's all right! Got her fixed up now. Sent over to the Willard House for my things and got a room here. By gosh! It's a lonesome thing to be travelin' alone. I'm tickled as stiff as a burro's ears just to be with you two fellers, because it seems as if we was real old friends. But it's all right now, don't you worry none!"

"We wasn't; but we are!" growled Goliath, but Cochran took not the slightest notice. He wanted to take them to a show. Failing in that, he wanted to buy drinks. Failing in that, he bought three cigars at a dollar each. They could find no complaint regarding his liberality. He would have gladly paid their traveling expenses to continue in their company.

And then, when they were ripe to murder him, he did something that at least gained their tolerance. A terribly bent and crippled old man came timorously into the rotunda with a tray of collar buttons and shoe laces. The clerk spotted the vender, called harshly, and a burly porter rushed forward to eject such an objectionable intruder. Cochran rose to the occasion.

"You git to hell out of this!" he roared, planting himself between the porter and the derelict, and poking a hard, huge fist under the bouncer's nose. "This old feller's a friend of mine. You let him alone. Come over here and sit down, old hoss. Here—take my cheer!"

Much to the partners' interest in the proceedings, Lucky Cochran seated the old man and said to him reassuringly, "Never mind,

old feller. It's me that's lookin' after you. Me—Lucky Cochran. What I say goes, back in Texas, where I'm known. I know tough luck when I see it. Had a heap of it myself. What's ailin' your legs and back? Rheumatiz? U-m-m-mh! I know what that is, too. Had it myself."

The partners watched Cochran with a dawning respect and—as usual—listened. Cochran certainly had sympathy for one who was in what he called "tough luck." He asked personal questions that made the partners wince, and then smoothed the wincing with his kindly drawl. They were gradually getting bored when Cochran suddenly said: "See here, uncle, I was goin' off on a bust. I got money, I have; but I reckon I couldn't blow in all I got comin' to me, if I took twenty years for the job. And I reckon I can cut out a few things I was goin' to do, anyhow. You said just now that if you had a thousand you could buy a cigar shop you know of, where you wouldn't have to worry no more."

He dug out that huge roll of bills again, wet his heavy thumb on the tip of his tongue, and proceeded to laboriously count off some bills. He went over them twice, while the partners, aghast, watched him. He thrust the bills into the old man's half-reluctant hands.

"Now," he said, "you hustle out and buy that cigar place. I hate to see a busted up old feller like you peddlin' things in hotels and saloons. Always makes me think of what might have happened to me. Come on. I'll walk out to the door with you so's no one can bother you."

And he did escort the derelict to the exit and for a few minutes disappeared with him. The partners stared at each other, as if doubting their senses.

"Well—well—what do you think of that!" exclaimed Goliath.

"Think of it? Can't quite say—yet! But it looks to me as if there was some good streaks in this piece of bad bacon after all," David said, and then added, "The big boob!"

It may have been the somewhat kindly feeling engendered by Cochran's liberality that caused the partners, after much consultation, to leave a note to be delivered to him after their departure on the following morning. It read:

Impossible for us to wait to say good-by and good luck to you. Found we have to hustle to catch the train. Better not take the trouble to wait for us to come back, but go on to San Francisco. May your good luck continue.

David was very proud of his note.

"She don't tell lies, nor nothin', and don't give nothin' away," he remarked, as he sealed it into a hotel envelope, carried it down to the desk, after carefully reconnoitering to make sure that Cochran, the loquacious, was not in the lobby, paid their bills, and gleefully joined Goliath who appeared with their suit cases.

In San Diego they had to wait twenty-four hours for the northbound steamer, during which time they lived in some slight apprehension lest Cochran appear; but once they had climbed the gangplank and been shown to their cabin, they felt secure and jubilant. They went back on the deck to see the steamer cast off, interested, as landsmen usually are, in anything so novel. The "all off" had been given, the last of the stewards had come aboard, and the order had been given to clear the gangway, when there was a whirl of excitement in the outskirts on the dock, and there appeared, breathless, but loudly yelling an appeal to hold fast until he could get aboard, a belated passenger.

"Good Lord! It's him all right!" groaned David.

"His luck holds good; but—hang it all!—ours is out!" Goliath growled, as Cochran climbed aboard, discovered them, and, dropping his big alligator suit case to which he had clung, rushed upon them.

"Ain't I the lucky one, eh? Lucky Cochran! That's me. You spoke in your letter about troublin' to wait for you; but, pshaw! It wasn't any trouble to me, although it was right thoughtful and kind of you fellers to say so. Nothin' ever troubles me. So I just found out from the boss porter at the hotel how you'd been makin' inquiries about trains to San Dieger, and about the boat, and says I, 'I'll just pop down and join 'em, and won't they be surprised to see that I'm goin' to keep 'em company.'"

"We're surprised, all right!" David remarked, but Cochran did not observe that he had omitted any reference to the happiness his arrival had caused.

Their sole remaining chance for peace now rested upon wind, wave, and weather. They hoped, earnestly, that Mr. Cochran would be as sick as the whale that swallowed Jonah; but Cochran's luck held, and if the

ship had turned somersaults, he would have merely laughed. For an hour they watched him solicitously before they gave way to despair. He talked as joyously as ever, roaring with laughter at his own jokes, and bubbling over with human kindness in sufficient quantities to deter them from murdering him. If he could have but kept his mouth shut, the partners would have rather liked him. And then Goliath suddenly gave a groan, clutched himself around the abdomen and said, "I got to get below. I feel awful, I do!" And away he went.

"Pore feller! I'm awful sorry for him. Anybody sick or ailin' always gits my goat," said Cochran sympathetically. "I couldn't kill a rattlesnake, if it was hurted. One time I had a burro that busted its foreleg right above the pastern joint, and I couldn't shoot it. Didn't have the heart! And every time I tried to nuss it the damn thing bit me."

David failed to draw the sympathetic connection between rattlers, mules, and his partner. Indeed, at the moment, he was solicitous for Goliath, and after a time went to investigate, and try to help, having much difficulty in dissuading Cochran from accompanying him. He found the giant on his back in the lower berth, calmly reading a dime novel.

"Thought you was seasick?" David blurted through the half-opened door.

"Seasick? Hell! I was talk sick!"

"Good! Never thought of that. I reckon I'm seasick, too. But what are we goin' to do? Stay shut up here all the way to Frisco?"

"Either that, or chuck the perpetual-motion talkin' machine overboard," growled Goliath.

"Got another one of them dime novels? Gimme it. I'm sick, too," David said as he climbed into the upper berth.

At intervals for the first few hours Cochran called on them, bringing various remedies that he had solicited from their fellow passengers; but when dusk came the partners ventured out, trusting to the darkness to escape the attention of their well-wisher. As time went on they gained courage, and began to enjoy their freedom. They even dared to saunter along the decks. From the smoke room, which was forward under the bridge, came inviting sounds of conversation, merriment, and human society. They paused and looked enviously through the open window and breathed more freely, for they discerned Cochran absorbed in a game of poker, but still talking steadily.

"That's me. Lucky Cochran!" they heard him explode, as he raked in a pot.

"Good old sport! Hope he plays poker from now until this boat ties up at the dock," David remarked. "That'll keep him busy, and make it a lot nicer for us."

Their hopes seemed justified when, after the deck lights were turned out they retired to their cabin, for Cochran was still playing and still winning—and still garrulous. It was a late session, they learned on the following morning. They were leaning up against a deck cabin, staring at the sea and, as usual, saying nothing because there was nothing to talk about, when through the open window near them they heard a yawn, as some late sleeper turned in his berth, and then an answering yawn.

"Gad! I dreamed that sucker Cochran was talking to me in my sleep. Bad enough to have to sit up until three o'clock and listen to him. We certainly do have to work hard to earn our money. What?"

The other voice yawned and said, "Yep; but what we want to watch out for most is the howl he'll make when we collar his bank roll. Rubes like him always yelp the loudest."

"He's got no friends aboard, I reckon; and he's too much of a mutt to make a gun play, and, besides, we don't want to pull it off, if we can help it, until just about the time the boat is ready to land. He can yell all he wants to then, and we can stand it."

"'Tis music to the gambler's ears to hear the loser squeal,'" the other voice quoted the old proverb.

David looked across at Goliath, gestured for silence, and slipped cautiously away. Goliath, with equal care, followed him until they were well aft, but from where they could keep an observant eye on the door of the cabin occupied by the complacent "Sure-thing men."

"So that's the way of it, eh?" Goliath rumbled.

"Looks like it."

"Reckon we ought to wise him up. I'd not do that, if it wasn't for—ummh!—the way he acted there in the hotel and—it's better for him to give his money away where it'll do some good, than pass it over to a couple of sharks."

After a time, the door they had under observation opened, and two men sauntered out who were neither over nor underdressed, but had the appearance of being nothing more than possibly a pair of small-town merchants. The partners marked them well for future identification and patiently waited for Lucky Cochran to appear. He came after a further interval, and David, with characteristic bluntness, opened up on him.

"You played poker until three o'clock this mornin' with some strangers," he said, staring at the prosperous one. "And me and my pardner have found out that they're nothin' but a pair of sharps out to do you."

"Out to do me? Out to do Lucky Cochran? It's a joke! Why, boys, I won fifteen hundred dollars last night. Nobody can beat me. I'm Cochran. Lucky Cochran!"

And his "Haw, haw, haw!" was so loud it startled even the deck steward, who barely missed dropping a cup of hot coffee he was carrying to an invalid, and prompted an A. B. on the boat deck to peer over, to learn whether there was a menagerie aboard.

"Oh, you're lucky, are you?" David answered with a badly concealed sneer. "And you've won at the first sitting, have you? Well, see here, Cochran, I'm goin' to tell you something. The boob always wins at first—until the stakes get high. After that his luck changes. If we're either locoed, or talkin' through our hats, I'll tell you what we overheard this mornin'." And then, in confidential tones, he repeated all the conversation that had come through the cabin window shutters, and ended with, "If you'll take a little pasear with me I'll point the two crooks out to you, so that you can steer clear of another game with them, and quit fifteen hundred to the good."

"Psho!" said Lucky Cochran. "You don't mean it! Come on and show 'em to me."

The three men promenaded the deck, casually looked into the smoke room, and finally discovered their quarry in the bows holding earnest conversation.

"There they are," David said, pointing at them.

"That's them, all right," Cochran agreed. "And right nice sociable fellers they are, too. Don't see how it kin be that two such nice fellers as them could be out to skin a good old feller like me. Think I'll go over and tell 'em what I think of 'em, right now."

"Suit yourself," said David. "We'll come along and see you through."

Cochran moved as if to carry out an intention, then stopped, looked at the partners and wagged his head slowly and solemnly.

"Nope," he said, then paused and grinned. "I reckon I've got the best of it as it is—got their fifteen hundred, so I'll just hang on to it and leave 'em alone, and stick around with you two fellers. I was mighty lonesome yisttiday without you two and—— By heck! I'm glad you ain't seasick any more. Reminds me of a story about a feller that——"

And the partners glanced at each other, as if admitting a great mistake; for the garrulous one was on again, had promised to stay with them indefinitely, closely, intimately, and—talk their heads off! He clung to them like a loving leach, or as a bride of seventy adheres to a bridegroom of twenty, or as does the unbreakable limpet to its gray rock. His sole virtue was that he never repeated himself. Their sole hope was that some time he would run down, get hoarse, or have paralysis of the tongue. He tried indirectly to learn all about them, where they had been, their business, whither bound, and what luck they had endured or profited by; but the partners, bored, surfeited with words, and casting about for means of escape, maintained their customary reticence.

David was the first to escape and most callously deserted his partner; but Goliath, being less diplomatic, eventually invented an excuse and ran, rather than walked, to a distant part of the ship. The partners met in their cabin and took turns in imprecating the kindliness that had inspired their well-meant interference.

"I don't give a cuss what happens to him now. He's been warned, and if he loses his wad it's not our fault," David asserted.

"Neither do I care what happens to him," Goliath growled. "I ain't no hero, nor Christian martyr, nor nothin' like that. All I want is to have him keep away from me. I'm goin' to read from now on, right here in this cabin. I'm afraid to go out on the deck."

"So'm I!" David asserted; but their resolution broke, after some hours, and the craving for open space, habitual with such men of outdoors, overcame their fears of Cochran, and they slipped away to the decks again. Almost surreptitiously they looked through a window of the smoke room and then frowned. Cochran was sitting at the same

table with the same pair of gamblers, playing with what was probably the same deck of cards and talking just as steadily as ever before. Even as the partners looked they caught signs of undoubted signals between the two card sharps, saw a bet brought to a finale, and by the interchange of money discerned that Lucky Cochran's luck seemed to be out, and that he was passing over considerable sums of his accidental wealth. Save for these three earnest players, the smoke room was deserted.

"Think we ought to go in and bust up that combination?" Goliath asked.

"Humph! That old boob would think we were hornin' into his business. The pair of cutthroats he's playin' with would yell to the skipper of the ship for help, and—no!—all we can do is to get him outside and tell him he's bein' trimmed by good sign work."

David sauntered in through the door and said, with an attempt at suavity: "Cochran, I'd like to talk to you a minute outside. It's somethin' right urgent. Sorry to disturb your game, but——"

"Sure, pardner, sure!" said Cochran, lumbering to his feet and sweeping his money into his pockets. "See you fellers later," he said to the two gamblers who glared at David, exchanged glances of inquiry, and then resignedly began pocketing their own money. But David and Goliath gained nothing by their warning. Cochran merely grinned and then chuckled, and finally laughed.

"You boys just let me alone," he said. "Me lose? Lucky Cochran? Not by the mill by the damsite. Why—say!—I'm still winner by nigh onto four hundred dollars. Can't beat that, kin you?"

They exhorted him for his own protection to stop and call his four hundred an ample winning. He appeared to ponder it, and then blurted: "But what's a feller to do when he's out on the fust vacation he's had for more'n forty year, if he can't play a few keerds—huh? Here! Tell you what me'll and you'll do! We'll go in and play penny ante and cut them fellers out. What say?"

The partners flatly refused this proffered amusement, remembering that Mr. Cochran would have them completely at the mercy of his interminable, unquenchable drawl. Anxious as they were to protect him, they thought the price in self-sacrifice too great, and found difficulty enough, as it was, to finally shake him off.

Something went amiss in the engine room, and for a couple of hours the steamer hove to, lolling gently, on a gentle sea. It was conducive to sleep, although rendering it certain that their landing in San Francisco must be made late at night. The partners were awakened by the supper gong and on arriving at the table discovered that not only Lucky Cochran, but the two card sharps, were not to be seen. Nor did they appear in the smoke room afterward, and as the hours passed, the partners began to be apprehensive. They made inquiries of the deck steward, and learned that he had served sandwiches and coffee to three gentlemen who were now playing cards in one of the deck cabins, which he pointed out, and the partners promptly retired to the rail in wrath and disgust.

"I'm through!" declared David. "Let 'em trim him for all I care."

"That goes for me, too," Goliath snorted.

Lights became visible, and passengers crowded the decks waiting for the first big spread of glowing points that would open out after the ship had rounded the Golden Gate. Luggage had all been packed and stewards were bringing out and heaping up piles of traveling impedimenta. And then what the partners had expected, happened. A very gloomy man came through the crowd, stumbled into contact with them, and said: "Well, what do you think of that! You was right about them two fellers bein' regular cheaters and crooks!"

"Got you, did they?" David inquired sarcastically. "Well, it's your own fault. We did all we could to pry you loose from 'em, and it serves you darned well right."

"Yep. And the fact is if you hadn't talked so much they'd never have gone after you the way they did," Goliath added. "Did they get all that twenty thousand dollars you was blowin' about?"

"Not all of it," said Cochran dolefully. "I got enough to get back home on, anyhow. My luck didn't altogether leave me, but——"

"The only thing for you to do is to go and get a cop the minute the boat lands, and nail 'em!" David declared.

"I reckon maybe they'd fork over, if you did that," Goliath seconded.

"Think so?" said Cochran hopefully. "But—how in tarnation can we keep 'em here till I find a cop?"

"We'll keep 'em for you, all right,"

growled Goliath. "You be the first one off that gangplank when she goes down, and get a hustle on you. And mind this—that if it'd been a square game me and my pardner wouldn't turn a hand to help you, because we both hates a squealer. It's only because you're such a dam old simpleton that we do anything at all. Maybe this'll teach you a lesson!"

"It will! It will!" groaned the now "unlucky" Cochran, with great humility. "But—but—how you goin' to hold 'em aboard this here ship?"

"We're goin' to horn into their cabin with a gun and just naturally keep 'em there," said David as the plan slipped into his agile mind.

"By gosh! That'll be good!" Cochran gleefully chortled. "Me for the head of that gangplank!"

David and Goliath stationed themselves outside the cabin door of the two sharpers and waited. They seemed to be in no hurry. Indeed, from the few sounds that could be overheard from within, they were indulging in a hot altercation and mutual recriminations.

"They're fightin' over the split, I got an idea," David mumbled to his partner.

"Let 'em fight! Saves us trouble," said Goliath.

The gangplank fell and the passengers began to pass away, in an orderly procession, before the cabin door opened, and the first of the sharks appeared. Instantly he was confronted by a determined little red-headed man, who said: "Just a minute. I want to talk to you two fellers. We'll just step inside, if you don't mind."

With an oath of surprise the man fell back, and both Goliath and David entered, and closed the door behind them.

"You've got to wait here a few minutes. It won't be long," David remarked in a voice that forbade any light reply. "You might as well sit down and take it cool—unless you're lookin' for trouble."

The card sharpers looked at each other helplessly, and, quite evidently believing themselves held up by officers of the law for some of their misdeeds.

"We're in for it, Crump!" one of them growled at the other.

"You sure are, and the less you have to say the better it'll be for you," David announced sharply. Whereupon the evil pair settled disconsolately to the edges of the lower berth and stared at their captors.

"Goliath, keep an eye out of the door for the cop and call him this way," said David, still acting as master of ceremonies.

The two crooks scowled apprehensively, and one of them inquired savagely: "You might at least tell us what it's all about?"

"You'll find that out soon enough," David snapped back at him, after which there was no further conversation, while outside the shuffling of feet began to diminish, the running of porters slowed down to mere walking strides, and the voices of officers could be heard calling to one another. In the doorway Goliath's broad back began to twist this way and that, and with an impatient "Humph! Wonder if that boob's got lost?" he disappeared. The wait continued, and sounds indicated that the very last of the passengers had departed not only from the ship, but from the dock. David felt like expressing his impatience with the tardy Mr. Cochran aloud, and himself looked out of the door just as Goliath reappeared with a man in uniform—not a policeman's garb, but that of the ship's chief officer.

"The mate says we can't hold these fellers here all night, but must take 'em out to the police office at the end of the docks," Goliath announced. "I'll get our suit cases and you can make 'em tote theirs, and we'll go."

"Come on!" David ordered his prisoners, and the chief officer scowled at them as if to identify them for future reference as they descended the gangplank. They made their way to the little building at the end of the wharf, which, to their astonishment, was filled with harbor police. It did seem as if Cochran must have been blind not to find it himself. A plain-clothes man, evidently of authority, looked up and smiled with great satisfaction and lighted eyes, as he said: "Hello! 'Crump' Smith and 'Slippery' Murdock, eh? Hope you've got somethin' on 'em, this time, that we can put 'em over for. I've been tryin' to get the goods on them for a long time now."

The disconsolate sharpers scowled like a pair of pirates and sank down on a bench, while the detective called David into an inner office to question him. He listened to David's story and then shook his head doubtfully.

"Something funny about this," he said at last. "This man Cochran's been gone more

than an hour. He's the complaining witness. We can't hold this pair of sharks without him. Not but that I'd like to, right enough. We can detain 'em for a few hours, but no longer. You two men better go and see if you can find your friend that they skinned out of his wad. If I don't hear from you before morning and have to turn 'em loose, I've got a way of keepin' track of 'em so that we can pick 'em up again, when you find your man. What hotel you going to stop at?"

He wrote down the address David gave, and ushered him out. The partners caught a nighthawk taxi and went to their hotel first, and then instituted such inquiries as they could for the missing Mr. Cochran—all without success. Alarmed over his disappearance, and fearing that ill had befallen him, they arose, after a few hours' sleep, prepared to resume their philanthropic quest. They pictured him as having wandered off the dock and having been sandbagged. They feared he might have fallen even into more merciless hands than those of the two callous crooks who had rooked him aboard the steamer. They recalled tales of doping, of shanghaing, of murders done on the Barbary Coast, and dead men thrown into the bay. They forgot the boredom of his gabbling tongue, his tiresome and unquenchable garrulity, and remembered only that he was a simple and unsophisticated old fellow who had shown a touching and homely liberality to a derelict whom he had accidently met. As their apprehensions increased, so did their sense of helplessness.

"The only thing left for us to do," said David wisely, "is to go down to the harbor police and see if they've learned anything about what became of him."

"Good!" said Goliath. "And if they ain't, don't you reckon we ought to kind of stir 'em up by offerin' a reward or somethin'?"

"Sure! We can't balk at blowin' in a little money for that poor old cuss. I reckon we're the only friends he's got in this whole blamed town to look after him and help him out. But—— By the great horn spoon! He ought to be in an orphan asylum or hire a guardian, I reckon."

Glum with anxiety they boarded a Market Street car and rode to the ferry. Glum with anxiety they trudged from there to the police office and, glum with anxiety they entered. The same plain-clothes man they had interviewed in the night lowered a paper he had been reading, looked at them, recognized them, and grinned.

"Well," he inquired pleasantly, "did you find your man Cochran? No? Humph! Guess you didn't; but I did!"

And then, as if unable to restrain himself, he indulged in a great laugh.

"This," he declared, again looking up at their amazed faces, "is one of the best jokes that's blown along the water front for the past year. Sit down and have a smoke. Tell you about it."

The partners subsided limply into two worn and shiny old chairs and gravely eyed him.

"One time," he said, as if to give his story a true narrative flavor, "there was two of the slickest crooks and card sharks who ever flimmed a mutt, sailed on a ship. They'd done it before—lots of times, and got away with many a hick's vacation money. That's Crump Smith and Slippery Murdock. They pick up a rube calling himself Lucky Cochran. Regular backwoods goat. Moss on his back an inch thick. Hay in his whiskers. Birds' nests in his hair. Nice old man that talks all about himself every time he can get any one to listen long enough. Funny old cuss with a sense of humor. Some of the time he's been in Texas. Some of the time, mind you. For—say—the last five or six years.

"This pair of slick guys set out to do him until a busted and dried bladder would look bigger than a circus tent in comparison with what he'll be like when they get through with him. Now, what I guess is that this fine old gentleman thought that he'd found a couple of miners who were worth lookin' after and so hung on to them; but when they didn't prove worth his while, he grins to himself and says, 'I'll devote a few idle hours to this pair of smart Alecks that are cruising the seas of adventure, because it's a rule of mine to make somebody else pay my traveling expenses.'"

He stopped, grinned again, threw his paper to one side, and, lowering one leg that had been crossed over the other. leaned toward them.

"Settling down to business, and all fooling aside," he said with an abrupt change to seriousness, "the man you knew as Lucky Cochran, the rancher, is nobody but 'Peerless' Carfield, the sharpest, cleverest, coolest, shrewdest man who ever skinned a sucker

and then sympathized with him over his loss. He'd gamble with a rabbit for its winter's nest. The only thing that's to his credit is that he'd most likely hand it back after he'd won it. He'd win a squatter's farm, and then, if he wasn't short himself, hand it back to the squat, and tell him how to clear the title.

"Nobody can put anything across with him. He's had 'em all, from New York to New South Wales, and from London to Lima. Crump Smith and Slippery Murdock were a pair of infants in his mitts. He won everything they had, from their bank roll down to their shoe buttons, and then, just as a joke, left 'em hung up with you two standin' guard over 'em when he got off the boat and grabbed a taxicab for the most expensive hotel in this town, and rode away.

"Sorry for him, were you? Well, you needn't be sorry any more. He's most likely forgotten all about you two by now, and is living up at the most swell hotel in this town, in a suite of rooms for which he pays about fifty bucks a day; same rooms that a Russian prince had a year or two ago. If you've got sympathy to waste you'd better hang some of it on to Crump Smith and Slippery Murdock; because if skins were overcoats and this was nothing but mid-summer, they'd shiver in the wind."

The partners, in a daze, got up and walked outside. The docks were busy. Masts showed here and there against the sky line. Teamsters drove straining horses hauling highly piled wagons into the caverns, and the rumble of hoofs and wheels echoed like a song of export in the morning air. The screech of a hundred steam winches told of cargoes being lowered into holds. Off toward the ferry nave the clanging of street cars joined ragged symphony. The giant looked away toward the north, as if scenting forests and mountains and cabins, and then said, "Humph! So that's that! We're always buttin' into somethin' that ain't worth while. And—we thought he was the man that talked too much, and didn't sabe how to take care of himself."

"It's me and you that ought to have a nurse leadin' us by the ears," David replied, then paused, seemed to quest for some excuse, and then scowled upward at his stalwart and time-tried partner, and said admonishingly: "Goliath, you're all right; but —but—it's you that talks too damn much!"

And Goliath, whose habitual conversation consisted of a mere "yes" or "no" cogitated with the utmost seriousness, pondered as if reviewing all the words he had ever uttered, remembering them all, and uttered a long speech. He blinked, wet his lips with his tongue, hesitated, and then very gravely said, "Yep!"

Another David and Goliath story follows in the next number.

THE WRONG LAUGH

"LAUGH and the world laughs with you," is like every other aphorism, axiom, and maxim—it does not always apply. To be good-natured is to have the game of life half won at the start. Moreover, the sunny-tempered fellow is far more popular than the man who looks like an outrider for a designer of tombstones in a low-priced cemetery.

But, if there is a person who roils the soul and riles the heart, who induces a feeling of disgust, who arouses the precautionary emotion of distrust and who convinces all beholders of his insincerity, it is the deluded, spineless individual engaged in laughing all the time. There are laughs which are positive insults to the laugher's intelligence, such as the unamused giggle which welcomes a pointless joke simply because the teller of the anecdote expects the laugh. Then, there is the flattery laugh, the loud guffaw which signifies empty-headed agreement with every and any proposition put forward. Association with these perpetual fountains of meaningless merriment creates a longing for a two-fisted, upstanding he man who can sometimes drag across the entire expanse of his nubbly face a scowl black as the near side of a thunder cloud in August.

The man who always laughs has in him the makings of a first-class crook.

Picaroons

By H. de Vere Stacpoole

Author of "The Iron Man," "The Beach of Dreams," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

Wearied by a cruise in the Caribbean aboard the yacht of his conventional friend, Sir William Skelton, Ratcliffe, a young Englishman, quarrels with his host while they are off Palm Island, and goes aboard the yawl *Saran Tyler,* owned and sailed by two gypsies of the sea, Satan Tyler and his sixteen-year-old sister, Jude, who acts and dresses like a boy, and by most people is thought to be one. After Skelton's yacht has sailed, the schooner *Juan Bango,* owned by a vicious Cuban, Carquinez, and captained by Sellers, his American henchman, anchors near the *Sarah.* Satan has a chart showing the location of an old wreck, supposed to contain a fortune in gold, and makes a bargain whereby Carquinez is to salvage it for two-thirds of the proceeds. He gives Carquinez the chart and tells him that it will be necessary to use dynamite to break through the coral that has covered the wreck. Carquinez agrees to return to Havana for the explosive, and to meet Satan at Palm Island. The *Juan* sails away and the *Natchez* arrives with Cleary, Carquinez's partner, who has a grudge against Carquinez. He tries to learn the location of the treasure wreck. Satan sells him some almost worthless seed pearls for forty dollars, and tells him to follow when the *Sarah* sails.

(A Two-Part Story—Part II)

CHAPTER XV.

UNDER WAY.

HE was rousted out, before dawn, by Satan. The cabin lamp was lit, the table spread, and Jude was bringing in coffee. She seemed in a bad temper and, as he huddled himself into his clothes, he could hear her:

"Knockin' myself about in the dark, that old slush lamp in the galley don't burn worth a cent. Whach you want, haulin' out this hour for?"

And to her Satan:

"Wind will be up with the sun. Where's them biscuits? We've got to get the dinghy aboard, yet, and all that raffle forward stowed, and it'll be light enough, in another ten minits. Breakfast first, though."

"Where's Rat?"

"He's comin'."

Breakfast over, they got up on deck just as the day was coming into the eastern sky. The problem of how to get the dinghy aboard had not occurred to Ratcliffe till now. The *Sarah Tyler* possessed no davits, and though the old canvas boat was as easy to handle as an umbrella, the sturdy little dinghy was a different matter. Standing in the half dark, with a faint wind bringing the smell of the early morning sea, sharp as the smell of a new-drawn sword, he questioned Satan on the subject.

"Get her aboard?" said Satan. "Oh, I'll durn soon get her aboard. Davits? God love you, what do you want them things for?"

"Except for hoistin' fools off the ship?" said the voice of Jude from the darkness. Satan set to on the problem of the dinghy. He had no doubt half a dozen dodges for the purpose; the one he employed was simply to unshackle the main halyards and fix them to the ringbolt on the bow. As they hauled on the tackle, and as if in answer to the creak of block and shrill chanty started by Satan, the voices of the gulls blazed out. The deep-sea fishing gulls had long since started for sea, but the shore gulls, as though waiting for a convoy to follow, were round the stern of the *Sarah.*

The sun was over the sea line now, the wind rising to meet him; and, to starboard, the fresh blue sea, flooding against the wind, showed the *Natchez,* her canvas rising and the fellows swarming at the ropes.

Satan had unlashed the wheel and was standing by it, now that the mainsail was set, shouting directions to his crew; and to Ratcliffe, as he labored with Jude, getting the foresail and jib on her, the truth came, in a flash, that this was the real thing. The lazy peace of the last couple of days had broken all at once. Activity, adventure, and danger seemed suddenly to have boarded the old *Sarah Tyler,* and delivered her as a prey to enormous and unknown forces.

But he had no time to dream. The anchor was still to be had in, and, as he helped with Jude at the windlass—pap's patent that

would have raised a battleship—the thrashing of the canvas, with all sheets slack, and the voice of Satan, came urging speed. Then, when the old kilik was aboard and the sails trimmed, came peace. With the wind on the starboard beam and the canvas hard against the blue, the *Sarah* settled down to her work, Palm Island fading to westward and to sou'west, the *Natchez* with all sail set in pursuit.

Jude's bad temper seemed to have blown away on the wind. The surly look had gone from her face, and as she stood for a moment by Ratcliffe, looking over the weather rail, her mind seemed entirely occupied by Cleary.

"He's blowing along," said Jude, "but he's feeling our pace—not more than holding his own."

Satan, at the wheel, cocked his eye over his shoulder at the *Natchez,* spat.

"Where's your eyes?" asked Satan. "He's overhaulin' us. Wonder he ain't aboard!"

Satan was right. The *Natchez* had the pace of the *Sarah,* at least under present wind conditions and under plain sail. The two boats had evidently never been matched before, and the gloom of the Tylers might have been gauged by their silence. Suddenly, Jude spoke.

"It's her beam's helping her. Try her on a wind and we'd knock flinders out of her. Lord! To think of being beat by that old cod boat."

They held on, the *Natchez* steadily overhauling them, till she was dead level, half a mile away, and drawing ahead. Then, having demonstrated her superiority, she began to reduce sail, so as to give the *Sarah* the lead.

Jude turned away and leaned with her back against the rail, then Satan told her to take the wheel, and went below for a wash.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE STEERSMAN.

Ratcliffe, taking his seat on the bottom of the dinghy, watched her as she steered, the old Panama on the back of her head, and her eyes roving from the binnacle to the luff of the mainsail. The following wind blew warm, and the gentle creak of a block, the slash of the bow wash and the occasional click of the rudder chain, were the only sounds in all the blue world ringing them.

The sturdy little figure at the wheel seemed to have forgotten his existence. He was wondering whether the grudge was still being kept up against him, and what it was all about, and whether this indifference was real or assumed, when a voice made him start:

"Say! Have you swallowed your tongue?"

"No, but I didn't like to speak to you."

"What for?"

"Well, I've heard you mustn't speak to the man at the wheel."

"Mustn't you? Well, you can help to steer the ship yourself, now. Kin you steer?"

"Only a boat."

"Well, it's easy learnt; and you're not much use aboard, unless you can take your hand at the wheel."

He said nothing for a minute, admiring the way she had steered clear of the subject he had started on.

"I don't mind," said he, at last. "I'll learn some time. You can teach me."

Jude let her eyes rest on him. Then, suddenly, and with the vehemence and force of a Methodist preacher driving home a point from the pulpit, she spoke:

"*Air* you stuck to the bottom of that dinghy with cobbler's wax?"

He laughed, and stood up.

"That's right," said Jude. "Now come'n take the wheel. Some time's no time. You've got to learn to handle her now, if you want to. Go behind me and look over my shoulder. That's right."

He stood behind her, wondering what the next command would be. It came almost at once.

"Stick your eye on the compass card."

"Right."

"S'long as the pointer's like that, she's on her course. Now, I'll let her off a spoke or two. Kip your eye on the card."

The pointer altered its indication, and the mainsail seemed suddenly attacked by the ague.

"Now she's on her course again," said Jude, altering the wheel. "Take hold of her. I'll stand by to give you a hand, if you want it."

He took the spokes she had been holding, as she relinquished them, and the first sensation that came to him was the feeling that he had taken hold of something alive, something alive and sensitive as a hare. The

wheel seemed to have a motive power and will of its own, and the infernal compass card to take affront at the least movement of the helm.

In five minutes, he had got the hang of the thing, or thought so. Jude drew off, and took her seat on the dinghy.

"Easy, ain't it?"

"Easy as pie."

The wind freshened a bit, and the *Sarah,* heeling slightly, took matters in her own hand, for a moment, and fell off her course; he put the wheel over too much, and like a frightened horse she went plunging away in the opposite direction, the wind spilling from her sails and the main boom threatening to swing to port.

In a moment Jude was beside him, her hands on the spokes and the *Sarah* on her course again. A voice came from below where Satan, like a sensitive plant, had evidently felt the alteration in their course.

"What the devil are you doin' up there?"

"Learning Rat to steer," cried Jude.

CHAPTER XVII.

LONE REEF.

It was the morning of the third day out, somewhere about four o'clock. The moon had set, and the *Sarah* was lifting against a gentle head sea, breasting the foam from her bows, under the light of a million stars. Satan was at the wheel, Jude below in her hammock, and Ratcliffe at the weather rail, close to Satan.

"What time do you reckon we'll strike the reef?" asked Ratcliffe.

"We're right onto it now," replied Satan, "and if it wasn't more'n a five-knot breeze, I'd heave her to."

"You aren't afraid of running onto it?"

"Lord, no; there's no smell of it yet."

"You mean to say you could smell it?"

"Waal," said Satan, "I don't know if it's rightly smell or hearin' or what, but I'd know it—even with the wind as she is. I reckon it's maybe the water. Shoal water smells different from deep, and it's shoal water right up from four miles to Lone. Feels different, too. There's the sun."

Right ahead, as if touched by a wizard, the stars had faded above the sea line. The sky over there looked sick, a stain on the velvety splendor of the night.

"I've got the smell of her now," said Satan. "Say, will you take a bet?"

"What sort?"

"I'll bet you even dollars Cleary hasn't held on same as we've done, the last six hours. He was droppin' astern, a long way, last time I sighted him. He'll have seen the reef on the chart right ahead of him, and his navigation is no account; hasn't no sea sense. He'll be hove to singin' 'Lead Kindly Light,' and listenin' for the breakers. Whach you say?"

"I'd rather bet on the *Sarah.*"

"Maybe you're right," said Satan. In that moment, far ahead, and as if suddenly sketched by a pencil against the eastern light, they saw the naked spars of a vessel anchored in the dawn.

"That's Cark," said Satan. "Told you we'd find him here, damn swab."

Satan swung his head over his shoulders. Ratcliffe followed his gaze. The sea to westward was empty. Not a sign of a sail.

"Cleary's gone," said Ratcliffe.

"Oh, he'll be nosin' along, soon," said Satan. "He's sure to come close enough to see Cark's topmasts, and then he'll pounce."

He put the helm over, and the *Sarah* payed off to the north, so as to round the northern spur of the reef.

"That's the wreck," said Satan, "that line like a lump of rock."

Ratcliffe, shading his eyes against the now strong sun, could see now the reef, long and foam-flecked, and stretching from north to south, and the line of rock absolutely unsuggestive of a wreck; and beyond the reef, the *Juan's* masts and spars, and about the reef spurs, the gulls flitting and wheeling. But, despite the movement of the gulls and the splendor of the morning, the place struck him as the most desolate he had ever seen.

"Nothing stirring," said Satan, as they rounded the north spur and the boom came over. "Them dam' Spaniards are all in their bunks. Rap on the deck for Jude. Hi, Jude, y'lazy dog, show a leg! Whach you doin'!"

"Comin'!" cried a voice, followed by the sounds of thrashing about, and inquiries of the Lord, to know where her clothes were.

Then, at the hatch, appeared a face blind with sleep. She ran with Ratcliffe to get the lashings off the anchor, helped to let go the halyards, and as the anchor fell and the *Sarah* swung to her moorings, a couple of cable lengths from and outside the *Juan,*

down she sat on the deck, like a person collapsing under a heavy load.

The sight of the *Juan* did not seem to move her at all. Like a dormouse, suddenly electrified into life and movement, the stimulus withdrawn, the mechanism ceased to act. She yawned, turned on her side and hid her face in the crook of her arm, as if to shut out the sun. Satan, whistling between his teeth, stood with his hands on the rail, looking at the *Juan.*

"They're wakin' up," said he.

A fellow, with a red handkerchief round his head, had appeared on deck; he came and looked over the side at the *Sarah,* then he vanished.

"Gone to wake Cark out of his beauty sleep," said Satan. He turned and contemplated the prostrate figure of Jude.

"There's another sleepin' beauty," said he. "Oughta be married to Cark; well they'd look, in the same hammock, with Sellers fannin' the flies off them!"

The figure on the deck turned on its back, stretched out its arms, yawned and then sat up holding its knees. Satan, satisfied with the semiresurrection, dropped below, and promptly the figure fell on its back again, with arms outspread.

"Get up," said Ratcliffe.

"I'm getting up. Say—d'you know where the fishing lines are? Starboard locker. Fetch'm up—an' that chunk of grouper I kep' for bait—in the tub."

"Right."

When he returned on deck, she was drying her head in the sun, having soused it in a bucket of water.

Then they dropped a line.

Away through the diamond-clear water, thirty feet down, they could see the slack of the anchor chain, like a conger, on the coral and sponge. A mangrove schnapper nosed the bait, swallowed it, and was hauled on board.

"He'll be enough," said Jude. "You clean him, while I get the frying pan ready. Hullo—blest if Cark's not putting off a boat." A boat had been dropped, on the starboard side of the *Juan,* and was rounding her stern.

"That's Sellers," said Jude, shading her eyes. "Satan, below there!"

"I'll be up in a minit."

The boat came alongside, just as it had come at Palm Island, same boat, same crew, Sellers just the same.

"Hullo, kid!" cried Sellers.

"Hullo yourself. Thought you was gone to Havana!"

"Thought you was to wait for us at Pa'm Island," said Sellers. "Hullo, Satan, that you? How about your contrac' with us?"

Satan, who had just come on deck, leaned over the rail and contemplated Sellers. Then he spoke:

"Contrac'! Holy George! *What* you say? Contrac'! You daar to hook onto my channel plates and I'll buzz this fish at y'r head. Shove off. What are you doin' here, anyway? Why aren't you at Havana, gettin' the dynamite?"

"Why ain't you waitin' for us at Pa'm Island?" logically responded Sellers. "If you want to know why we're here, I'll tell you. It was a bet I had with Cark."

"Which way?"

"I bet him you'd never wait for us at Pa'm Island, but'd light out for here to raise the stuff, if we went foolin' off to Havana; seems I was right, don't it?"

The impudence of this made Ratcliffe gasp, but left Satan quite unmoved.

"S'pose we quit lyin'," said he.

"I'm willin' to follow soot," replied Sellers.

"Well, then," said Satan, "follow soot off to the wreck, an' get your workin' party on to the business, like hot nails. I'll be over to help you, soon's we've had breakfast; you've no time to waste."

"How's that?"

"Cleary's after you."

This news seemed to take the wind out of Sellers. He sat, for a moment, without speaking.

"How do you know that?" asked he at length.

"He put into Palm Island, not more'n four hours after you'd gone. Said you and Cark had tricked him, and he was after your blood. I told him that wasn't no concern of mine. He asked me had I seen you?"

"What did you say?"

"The truth. Think I'd pudger me soul lyin' for the likes of you and Cark? Told him I was goin' to join you."

"*Sufferin'* Moses! You've put your huff in it this time. Go on and don't stand waggin' your tail. What'd the blighter say?"

"Nuthin'. Didn't say nuthin'. But when I put out, he put out after me. The old *Natchez* was full of a tough-looking crowd, too. They'll drop in on us, soon."

The sight of Sellers' face, at this announcement, set Jude off! She seized the fish and started off to the galley with it, while Sellers, having communed with himself for a moment, spoke:

"Crooked's a bad course to run," said this moralist. "I've always told Cark so. I told you we'd no dynamite aboard; neither we had. But there's a keg of powder in the hold, and Cark reckoned to sample the goods, without your help. There, it's out. You'd have had your share as long as I'd a leg to stand on; honest you would, s'far as I was concerned. And that's all I have to say, personally, on the matter. What I'm gettin' at is this: If Cleary turns up, there'll be a hell of a rough-house. Will you stand for us, if there's fightin' to be done?"

"That depends," said Satan.

"Which way?"

"I'm not trustin' you no more; not without the coin in my hand. Cark's got to plank down something, on account, if it's no more'n a thousand dollars. If he don't, I'll put out for Havana and blow the gaff. You've overhauled the wreck?"

"Yep."

"Well, you can judge what the chances are. You hop back lively as a flea, and tell Cark what I'm sayin'. Gold coin and right into my fist this mornin', or I'll give the show away."

"I'll tell him," said Sellers. "Come over to the reef soon as you're ready and I'll give you word of what he says. I reckon it'll be all right. One thousand dollars?"

"Gold coin; and tell him it'll be double, after eleven o'clock."

The boat shoved away.

"Look here," said Ratcliffe, to Satan. "Suppose Carquinez pays you a thousand dollars advance, and suppose you don't find any treasure? Will you pay him back?"

"Why should I pay him back?" asked Satan. "I've given him the location, and that's worth a thousand, anyway."

"But you said there was nothing on the chart; that it was a fake."

"Lord! I said no such thing. I said that in my 'pinion the stuff wasn't here. But I may be wrong. There's Jude hollering for us to come to breakfast; come along down, and I'll show you my meanin'."

He scarcely spoke, during the meal, and, when it was over, he took the tobacco box from his pocket, and opened the chart on the table.

"Now," said Satan, "I'll show you what I mean by sayin' the stuff may be here, but it's a big sight likelier it isn't. Don't crowd me. Stand behind me, on either side; and keep your eyes on the chart. Well, now, there's Lone Reef, with the creek marked, and the name of her. And there's Rum Cay, to the left; and there's the latitude and longitude wrote up. All plain, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Well, seein' Rum Cay is given, and seein' Lone Reef is down on all the charts and as well known as Cuba, to any sailor man, what did the chap want stickin' the latitude and longitude down for? The chart's not a sailin' chart. A blind monkey wouldn't use it, nor bother about examinin' the latitude and longitude wrote on it. He'd just say, 'Lone Reef is the place I want to get to,' and he'd get there with the ordinary ship's chart."

"Yes."

"Well," said Satan, "in my opinion, the chap that sank the *Nombre de Dios* knew of the old wreck lyin' over there on Lone Reef, and used it as a blind. For the latitude and longitude wrote there so faint that no man would bother to try to read it, isn't the latitude and longitude of Lone Reef. It's a hundred and ten mile out. It's the latitude and longitude of Cormorant Cay; a blasted sand bank, down to s'outh'ard, all shoals and gulls. And that's where the *Nombre de Dios* lies in my 'pinion."

Ratcliffe whistled.

"Of course, I may be wrong," said Satan. "There's no knowin'."

"I see what you mean," said Ratcliffe. "This chap reckoned that any one finding or stealing the chart would take the latitude and longitude written there for granted as the latitude and longitude of Lone Reef, and not bother to examine the figures and verify them—having no cause, indeed, to do so, seeing Lone Reef is so well known, and on all the charts."

"That's how it seems to me," said Satan. "I'm not sayin' I'm right, but that's how it seems to me; and if the chap figured that no one would trouble about readin' and verifyin' the latitude and longitude, as given there, he was right. Pap didn't, and it was only by chance I did, a month ago."

"Have you seen Cormorant Cay?"

"Lord, yes. It's a lagoon sand spit, and the hooker may be in the lagoon, for all I know; or under the sand, for all I know;

or I may be wrong all through, and that may be her on the reef over there. Well, we've got to see. But it seems to me I'm pretty safe, anyway, if I can touch Cark for that thousand."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE WRECK.

After breakfast, leaving Jude to keep ship, they got the dinghy overboard and rowed for the reef. Here, to eastward, the landing was made easy by a scrap of beach a hundred yards long, where the boat of the *Natchez* was lying, having landed Sellers and his working party.

The reef, seen from the deck of the *Sarah,* showed little sign of a wreck; one had to land on it to discover that the long hog back of rock, rising from the creek, had structure. There was not even the indication of where a mast had been; bowsprit there was none; stem and stern were almost indistinguishable; yet, standing there with the gulls flying round him and the lonely tune of the sea in his ears, Ratcliffe knew that the thing he was gazing upon was a ship.

Between the right arm of the reef and the starboard bow of the hulk, a ridge of rock gave access to the deck. While the others crossed over, he took his seat to rest for a moment, and contemplate the thing before him.

To see the Sphinx properly, one should visit it alone. And so with the great wreck of the *Nombre de Dios*—if that were its name—crouching here, camouflaged with rock growth and weed, swollen, sinister in the blazing sunlight, and sung to by the chime and gurgle of the sea. Sunk in shallow water—so the tale ran—raised by that alteration in level constantly in progress among the reefs and islands, freighted with treasure and guilty of the death of many a man—well, the tale here rang true. On board the *Sarah* one might doubt, but here, even in face of that chart which seemed faked, one believed.

It was low tide now; high-tide mark was six feet below the deck level; Ratcliffe tried to calculate how far she must have been lifted, gave up the attempt, and, rising, crossed by the rock bridge to her deck. This bridge of rock was another factor in the insoluble problem; it seemed placed there by some marine architect, without reason, built up out of huge fragments, as if from some fallen peak or spire.

"Step careful!" shouted Satan.

The warning came just in time, for the deck was slippery as ice in patches, where a thin moss had grown, a gray, greasy moss treacherous as Death, and covering the droppings of innumerable sea birds. He made his way aft, where Sellers was standing with Satan and the half dozen Spaniards that formed the working party. Drills and picks lay about, and marks showed where work had been started yesterday.

"It's a foot thick," said Sellers, "whatever it is, and harder than cement. Rock! this ain't coral rock, not such as I've ever seen. Harveyized steel's more like it. And after that there's the deck planking to be got through."

"Well," said Satan, "I told you it was a dynamite job; and if you'd played fair and got the stuff we'd have been a long sight nearer the end of the business, even if we started a week later. But there's no use in talkin' now, and there's no use in messin' about pickin' holes here and there. Your job is to make a hole big enough to sink that barrel of powder of yours. Take me? Sink it half deep, and then lay a fuse and fire the whole lot at once, and risk chances. It's ten to one you'll split the deck right open at one go. As for sinkin' little holes and usin' small charges, you'll be ten years on the job."

Sellers rose up and wiped his brow and cast his eyes over the sea, to westward, evidently with Cleary in his mind.

"Well, I'm not sure you aren't right," said he, "I'll fix it that way, but it'll be a long job, with the tools we have."

"Maybe," said Satan, "and now to the question of them dollars."

"Oh, them. I've spoke to Cark, and he's agreeable."

"Oh, is he! Well, then, I'll go right aboard with you now, while he's warm, and get them dollars into my hand; set your chaps at work and you come along with me."

Sellers hung fire, for a moment; then he agreed, gave the working party their directions, and led the way off the deck, across the rock bridge.

He pushed off, with Satan, in the boat of the *Juan,* Satan asking Ratcliffe to take the dinghy back to the *Sarah.*

"You won't want to be hangin' about

the reef," said Satan. "You'll be more comfortable aboard ship. And tell Jude be sure and wash that old jumper I left on the rail. She's forgot it, for there it's hangin' still."

"Right," said Ratcliffe.

CHAPTER XIX.

MUTINY.

As he sculled up alongside the *Sarah,* there was no sign of Jude. He tied up the boat and came over the rail.

"Jude! Where are you?"

"Whach you want?" came a surly voice from below. She was in the "saloon," for he could hear her moving about.

"You."

Pause. Then the voice came again, mixed with sounds as of plates being put away:

"I'm sick of the hull of this crowd. Washing up and cooking, and you two playin' about."

"Come up on deck."

"Shan't. I'm going to scatter—soon's I've finished clearing away. Life of a dog!"

He lit a pipe and waited.

Presently the companionway creaked, and a head appeared at the cabin hatch. He said nothing while the whole body emerged, stood erect on the deck and shaded its eyes toward the *Juan.* Then, still speechless, it leaned on the rail, looking toward the reef, and apparently lost in thought. She seemed utterly unconscious of his presence—or pretending to be. Then her eyes fell to the water alongside, and the dinghy. The whistling ceased and her face turned to him.

"Say," said Jude, "where did you learn to tie up boats? Give her half an hour and she'd work herself free of that tomfool knot."

"I'll go down and retie it."

"No use in troubling. I'm going off in her, in a minute, and she'll hang there till I'm ready."

"Where are you going?"

"Never *you* mind. You've been playing about on the reef, and you've got to stick here, now, and boil the potatoes. Me, alone here, all the morning!"

"Why, I wasn't more than an hour on the reef—and I never knew you wanted to go. If I had, I wouldn't have gone, honnestly, I wouldn't."

Jude contemplated him a moment, with a more friendly face.

"Well," said she, "I'm going, anyhow."

"But where to?"

"Gulls nesting."

"On the reef."

"Lord no, to the spit away there to east'ard. You can't see it; it's near seven mile away."

"But you can't row there alone."

"Can't I? You bet I can; there and back, by sundown."

"But what will Satan say?"

Jude laughed. "He'll be wild. That's what I want to make him. I'll learn him. Him and his jumpers!"

She took the jumper off the rail, rolled it up, and threw it on the deck; then she dived below and reappeared with a water jar and some provisions done up in a bundle. She had evidently been making her preparations.

"Look here," said Ratcliffe, "if you're going, I'll go, too."

"No, you won't," said Jude. "You've got to stick here and look after the ship—and see how you like it."

"Not I—I couldn't face Satan. Besides, if you want to make him wild, really, he'll be twice as wild if we both go. Besides, again, I'm sick of the ship. Come on, I've never been gulls nesting."

Jude, evidently weakening, put down her bundle. "Well, there ain't enough grub for two," she complained. "I reckon there's enough water, though."

"Well, get some more grub."

She cast her eyes about, in indecision; now at Ratcliffe, now at the *Juan.* Then, with one of those sudden changes so indicative of her, she made up her mind and dived below. Five minutes later she reappeared with another small bundle.

Ratcliffe, during her absence, had torn the back off an old letter; he had a pencil in his pocket, and scrawling "gone gulls nesting on the sand spit," on the paper, stuck the missive to the mast with his penknife. Then, bundling the food and the water jar into the dinghy, they started.

Occasionally, she looked back where the deserted *Sarah Tyler* lay, with the *Juan* seeming now close beside her, and the reef behind them. Smaller and smaller they grew, and more vast the ocean, an infinity of blazing lazulite, without horizon, silent, but sonorous with light. The current was with them.

Satan had made a small mast and lug sail for the dinghy; that was the job he had been engaged on while Jude and Ratcliffe

had landed on Palm Island to get provisions from the cache. He had worked with all the care of a fond mother making a garment for a beloved child. The little mast, scraped and varnished, the sail made of an extra special bit of stuff wrangled from Thelusson, were in the boat, and a breeze now springing up from the sou'west, Jude gave orders to step the mast. Then she took the sheet. He slipped from his seat to the bottom of the boat, and the dinghy, bending to the three-knot breeze, lifted to the gentle swell.

Ratcliffe lit his pipe. Jude, steering, seemed to have forgotten her last trace of grudge against him. It was the first time they had been really alone together, and the companionship that springs from loneliness helped.

"Jude," said Ratcliffe lazily.

"What?"

"This is the jolliest time I ever spent. I've never felt free before, till just now. I'd like to go sailing round and round the world, in this little dinghy, and forget civilization. Do you remember the morning I came on board the *Sarah* first?"

"Them pajamas!"

"Yes, them pajamas! Only for them you wouldn't have laughed at me. And if you hadn't laughed at me, I wouldn't have come aboard, perhaps."

"Oh, yes, you would."

"Why?"

"Satan wanted you."

"Oh, did he? Bless Satan—he made me young again."

"Lord, you ain't so old as all that."

"I'm over twenty-one—and you're only about——"

"Raisin' sixteen," said Jude, with steady eyes fixed ahead, where the gulls above the spit were now well visible.

He refilled and lit his pipe, bending under the gunnel.

"You're mighty fond of that old pipe," said Jude.

"Have a whiff?"

"Not me. I had half a cigar once; Dirk Peterson dared me. It was one of them Wheelings, black, slick-lookin' cigars; he and me an nuther boy'd gone to look at the nigger girls bathin', and clod them."

"Where on earth was that?"

"Vera Cruz."

"Oh. And who was Dirk Peterson?"

"Son of an old chap that run a dridger in the harbor. Yankee, half Dutch; hadn't only one eye and wasn't more'n eleven; biggest liar from here to C'necticut; his face was all chawed up, and he said he'd got it like that, and lost his eye, fightin' with a tiger. Conf'l'ent smallpox was what had done him, so pap said; but the boys believed him till that day I was telling you of. He fetched out a half cigar he'd stole, or picked up somewhere, and a box of waxios, and dared me smoke her. And I lit her up like a durned fool."

"What happened then?"

"Oh, lots of things," said Jude. "First of all, the harbor begun spinnin'. Then it went on till, two ticks more, I'd have been inside out, when Dick shouts to some chaps to come an' look at Jonah tryin' to bring up the whale. That got my goat, and I laid for him, by the foot, and brought him down and near beat the head off him. Then I got sick on him again, and he run home to his mother, with all the chaps after him, wantin' to know about that tiger."

"He couldn't fight?"

"N'more than a Jewfish."

"Have you had many fights with boys?"

"Not me. Not with Satan handy to do the fighting. I'd only to say to a chap, 'you touch me and I'll put Satan on you,' and he'd shrivel."

"Well, I wouldn't care to tackle Satan myself," admitted Ratcliffe. "And Sellers seemed to think a lot of him, that way. For I heard him asking if he'd stand by, if Cleary showed fight."

"Gar'n," said Jude. "Cleary—he's no good. Sellers is no good, neither. There's not a chap in these seas, nowadays, that's got the fight of a tomcat in him."

The crying of the gulls above the spit was coming up against the wind, a lamentable sound across the lone, blue sea.

"We're not more'n a mile away," said the steersman. "You can get a sight of the spit, if you raise yourself; that's it, the white line runnin' north and south; but the gulls don't seem to be as many as they used to be, a year ago. It's a bit early for the full laying season, but there's sure to be turkles' eggs. Better get your shoes and stockin's off, and rall up your pants, for it's shallow beaching, and we'll have to run her up."

They held on, the gulls shouting over them now, and the sigh of the sand spit, fuming to the lazy sea, in their ears. It was full tide and, as the keel touched the sand, let-

ting the sheet go and the sail to flog in the wind, they tumbled over and dragged the little boat high and dry.

CHAPTER XX.

THE SAND SPIT.

That was one of the strangest moments in his life. He had never seen anything comparable to this long, white street of sand, curbed with emerald waves, leading nowhere, lost, useless, desolate, brilliant with a brilliancy that hit the heart as well as the eye, flown over by the white gulls.

"Last time I was here," said Jude, "it was all over gulls' nests, right here in the middle. Now they seem to have gone off to the ends; wonder what's come to them?"

They got the provisions and water jar from the boat and sat down on the sands; it was past noon and cooler, for the breeze had livened up. The outgoing tide was leaving a strip of wet sand, glittering like a golden sword, and the fume of beach filled the air resonant with the gentle rhythm of the waves. They ate leaning on their sides like old Athenians; they had no cup, so they took it in turns, to drink from the water jar. Then he lit a pipe.

"This is jolly," said he.

"Ain't bad!" said Jude.

She made a pillow of sand for her head and then, on her back, with her head on the pillow, lay like a starfish, spread-eagled, her hat over her eyes. He followed suit.

"How about those gulls' nests?" he asked.

"Which ones?" evaded Jude.

"The ones you were going to hunt for."

"Oh, them. Well, I reckon there's dead loads of time."

"Lots. Listen to the sand."

"It's the wind blowing it."

"I know. All the same, this is a rum place. Do you know when we landed here, just now, the first thing that struck me?"

"Naw."

"Well, I felt as if the place was full of people."

"Which way?"

"Oh, I don't know. People I couldn't see. Ghosts."

"Ha'nts?"

"Yes."

"What made y'think that?"

"Oh, I don't know. Somehow it reminded me of a story I'd once read."

"What was the story?"

"About a beach over in the Pacific, where wizards used to go and pick up shells."

"What's them?"

"Chaps that work magic and sell themselves to the devil; they can make themselves invisible, so's you can't see them. And they used to come to the beach and pick up shells, and then turn the shells into silver dollars. You couldn't see them, but you could hear them rustling about, like that sand, and talking to one another; and, now and then, you'd see a little fire blaze up."

Jude, interested, rolled over, rested her chin in her palms, and kicked a bare heel to the sun.

"I reckon you're not far wrong," said Jude.

"How?"

"Well, I've felt the same way here myself; as if there was ha'nts about and if you'd turn your head sharp you'd see some one behind you. Now you've talked of it, I'll be always thinking it, if I come here again. Wish you'd kept your head shut."

She sat up and looked about her.

"Sorry," said Ratcliffe, raising himself on his arm. "But if you come again, I'll come with you, and that'll keep the ha'nts off—unless I'm gone."

"How d'you mean?"

"Well, when this cruise is over, I'll have to leave you both and go home. I don't want to go."

Alone here with Jude, she seemed a different person from what she had been aboard the *Sarah*. The strange antagonism she had suddenly exhibited, and a trace of which had remained up till this morning, seemed to have utterly vanished. Perhaps, it was the "haunts," or the loneliness, or a combination of both, but she seemed subdued.

"Well, I don't see what you want going for, if you don't want to," suddenly said Jude, drawing up her knees and crossing them with her hands.

"Oh, bother," said he. "Don't let's think of it; besides, we'll fix up something. I don't want to go; I've never had such a jolly time in my life, and I'm not going to lose sight of you and Satan—unless you want to."

"Lord! I don't want to."

"Well, that's all right. We'll stick together, somehow, and let the old world go hang; and we'll go hunting abalones and fishing. Let's make plans."

His arm somehow slipped round her waist,

half automatically, just as one puts one's hand on a person's shoulder. When he realized what he had done, he realized, at the same time, that she did not seem to mind; more than that, she reciprocated, in a way, by letting her shoulder rest more comfortably against his. It was companionship, pure and simple, and her mind seemed far away, wrapped in the sun blaze, as with a garment, and wandering, who knows where.

"Heave ahead," said Jude drowsily. "What's your plans?"

"Plans? Oh, I've lots. Let's go round the world in the old *Sarah;* get a couple more hands."

"Where'd you stick them?"

"Well, you've got a fo'c's'le."

"Not big enough for a tomcat. The nigger filled it; he said he reckoned he'd got to stick his head through the hatch to breathe."

"Well, we'll get rid of the *Sarah,* and get a bigger boat."

"Lord! don't you never let Satan hear you say that. She's his skin."

"We'll do without extra hands, then, and work her; the three of us; I can steer all right now."

"Kin you?"

"You know jolly well I can."

"What's the points of the compass? Run 'em off."

"North, nor'-nor'east, nor'east—um——" Jude chuckled subduedly.

"Heave ahead."

"I've forgotten."

"Never knew."

"Well, maybe."

The confiding shoulder rested more heavily against him, as against a cushion, and she began to hum a tune. She seemed to have forgotten the points of the compass, him, everything, just as a child suddenly forgets everything in daydream land.

The absolute contentment of doing nothing, resting, listening to the waves, had fallen upon him, too, with a something else, a sort of mesmerism born of his companion; the strangest feeling, as though Jude were a part of himself; as though he had put his arm round his own waist and a new self—a much pleasanter self than the old one; less stiff, more human, and somehow more alive.

The metronomic rhythm of the little waves falling on the sand seemed to mix his thoughts together and blur them; but he saw Skelton, Sir William Skelton, Bart., he saw a girl he, Ratcliffe, had been engaged to, he saw all sorts of men and all sorts of women, every one he had ever known, it seemed to him, in a nebulous cluster; and they all seemed, somehow, not quite alive. Not dead, but sleeping in the trance we call civilization, their days ordered by the beat of a metronome. Get up—wash—dress—eat—work or play—eat—work or play—eat—work or play—bed—sleep—get up—wash—dress, et cetera. All the figures moving like one, their very laughter and tears ordered, except when they got drunk or went mad. It seemed to him that vivid life was not so much a question of vitality as of freedom.

Was that the secret Satan had discovered—Satan, who had no hankering after great riches, but who was free as a gull? Satan and Jude were gulls. Sea gulls—untameable as sea gulls, and as far from civilization. It was as though his arm were round a bird—quiescent, by some miracle, and allowing him to handle it, and imparting to him, somehow, the knowledge of its vitality—the vitality of freedom.

"What I like about the old *Sarah,*" said he, "is the way she just pots about—with nothing to do."

"Nothing to do!"

"Well, you and Satan can take things easy."

"Oh, can we? That's news! What d'you call easy?"

"You have no fixed work; you can knock off when you like; you haven't to carry cargo, or be bothered with owners, or be up to time. You are as free as the gulls."

Jude took his hand and removed his arm from around her waist, just as one removes a belt. She wanted to shift her position. She seemed to have lost interest in the conversation. Sand had got between her toes, and she removed it, running her finger between them. She had no handkerchief, never used one or needed to use one. The perfectly healthy animal never does.

Then, crossing her legs, like a tailor, and squatting in front of him, she dived in the right-hand pocket of her trousers and produced a dollar, a slick, evil, suspicious-looking dollar. She seemed utterly to have forgotten the gulls' nesting business and how the time was running on, and having little passion for the business, he was content not to remind her.

"I'll match you for dollars," said Jude.

She was no longer the person of a moment ago. She was the harbor Larrikin, the clodder of bathing nigger girls, a person to be avoided by pious boys with possessions in the form of money or kind. The coin span in the air.

"Tails is the bird," cried Jude.

"Heads then."

"Tails, y'owe me a dollar."

It span again.

"Heads. We're quits. Heads again. Heads. Oh, hell! What you want sticking to heads for? That's two dollars I owe you. Tails. Scrumps! that's three. Tails again. That's four. Whach you want sticking to tails for? Why don't you wabble about, an' give a body a chance? Heads. Holy Mike! What's wrong with the durned thing! Five dollars gone on a bang."

"We're not playing right," said he. "We should call alternately."

"What's that?"

"One after the other."

"I'm not going to play any more," said Jude. "I'm broke—the bank's bust, and I kint pay you; not till I get to Havana—unless I play you double or quits. You call; I'll toss."

"Heads."

She sent the coin six feet high, and it fell on the sand—heads.

"That settles it," said Jude. "Ten dollars I owe you; you'll have to wait till we get to Havana, for if Satan knew I was tossing for coins, he'd sculp me. I can get some money out of the bank at Havana, pretending it's for something else; I haven't a magg, an' this old dollar's no use. It's a dud."

"You don't owe me anything," said Ratcliffe. "We were only tossing for fun." The words were no sooner out of his mouth than he regretted them.

Jude flushed red, under her freckles and sunburn.

"I'm not taking your money, thank you," said she; then, breaking out: "What the blizzard d'you think we've been playing at? And what you take me for? S'posin' I'd won, you'd 'a' paid, wouldn't you?"

"I didn't mean anything," said he.

"Y'shouldn't have said it then," said she.

She played with the dud dollar for a moment, tossing it and catching it; then she put it in her pocket, uncrossed her legs, and lay flat, her chin resting on the back of her hands.

He lit his pipe and smoked for a moment, in silence.

"Jude!"

No answer.

"What's the matter with you?"

Silence. He remembered how she had shammed dead on Palm Island, put down his pipe, and crawled toward the corpse. It was rigid, and to revive it he began to pour sand on its head.

"Quit fooling," grumbled a voice; then, as if the sand had suddenly revived memory and galvanized her to life, she scrambled to her feet. "Them eggs—and the sun's getting down and we fooling about!" She picked up her hat. "I'll take this end, and you go t'other."

"But I haven't anything to gather them in."

"Gather them in your hat; and keep a lookout for quicksan's. If you get into one, holler and throw yourself on your back; but you'll easy tell them; they look different from the ornery sands."

"How?"

"I dunno, just different. If you see the sand in front of you looking different, keep clear of it."

Off she went.

CHAPTER XXI.

DISHED.

He struck to the north. Over there, in the north, the sea was of a violet blue, accentuated by the white blaze of the sands. A few yards out a Nautilus fleet was steering with tiny sails set to the wind, the oldest ships that ever floated on the sea, unspoiled by storm and time, just as they were launched in the morning of the world; he watched them, for a while, forgetful of gulls' eggs or quicksands, or the sun now sensibly declining.

Then he remembered Jude and glanced back. Away, far away to the south, he saw her. The sands dipped and rose there, and sometimes she was invisible, and his heart thumped to the idea that a quicksand had taken her. Then she reappeared, and he went on; and, ever as he went, he seemed walking deeper into loneliness peopled with viewless things and half-heard voices.

Sometimes a chiming sound, like the shattered and mingled voices of distant bells, filled the air; it was the singing of the sands. He had not noticed it in company with

Jude; but here, alone, he did. He went on. Something nearly tripped him. It was a great spar, half sanded over, the relic of some ship that had come to grief, maybe, on the spit. He took his seat on it, for a moment, to rest and look about. He fell to thinking what an extraordinarily lucky person he was, and to plume himself on his instinctive wisdom in dropping Skelton and civilization for Jude and Satan, who had led him into a world of things he had never seen, things he had never imagined, things he had half forgotten.

Carquinez alone was a revelation, to say nothing of Sellers and Cleary. There was only one cloud, smaller than a man's hand. But there—where was it to end? It was all very well talking to Jude about sailing round the world, you can't sail out of Time. And the time would come—the time would come——

Jude was winding threads round him, as a silkworm winds a cocoon, tiny threads, but deathly strong, it was almost as though she were becoming part of himself—part of himself and part of the sun and freedom and blue sea. She seemed half built up of those things, and to have the power to make him one with them. Well, there was no use in bothering—so he said to himself. And, as he said it, the cloud no larger than a man's hand swelled and twisted and rolled across the sand spit, before him, resolving itself into a troupe of female relations, male relations, friends—people as remote from Satan and Jude as parrots from sea gulls. What would they say about Jude?

Then came the weird recollection that they had, in a way, actually met; she had met Skelton, the high priest of the whole crowd, Sir William Skelton, Bart. Old Popplecock was the label she had affixed to him, and it somehow stuck and fitted. What label would she affix to his aunts, his two maiden mid-Victorian aunts, should she ever meet them?

A faint halloo, from the south, sent aunts and all other considerations flying. He turned. Jude, far away on the sands, was coming toward the dinghy; she was carrying something and running as if pursued; then he saw her trip and fall.

She was on her feet in a second, and the thing pursuing her had evidently given up the hunt, for she stood examining something she had picked up from the ground, and seemed disregardful of everything else. He waited for her, by the boat, and as she came up he guessed the tragedy. She had been carrying a hatful of birds' eggs and had smashed them when she fell. The hat was eloquent.

"Smashed them every one," said Jude, wading out and beginning to wash the hat. "All your fault."

"My fault! For Heaven's sake, how?"

"Stuffing me up with them yarns."

"What yarns?"

"Ha'nts."

"Was that what made you run?"

"Who was running?"

"You were."

"Oh, was I? Reckon you'd have run, too."

"Did you see anything?"

"Yep."

"What was it?"

"You never mind."

She was evidently in a vile, bad temper, so he took his seat on the sand, waiting for her to cool. Then, hat in hand, she came and sat close beside him, more out of a desire for company than friendship, he imagined. Then, placing the hat to dry, she began examining the sole of her right foot, spreading the toes apart and brushing off the sand.

"Well, I'm awfully sorry," said he at length, "but tell us—what was it you saw, really?"

"A wuzzard."

"What was it like?"

"Nuthin'." Then, suddenly, and as if disburdening her soul: "I hadn't more'n got the last of the eggs when I turned and saw him walking on the sands, little old man with a glass under his arm, dressed queer in a long coat an' a hat on his head like an' I dunno what. I wasn't afraid; thought he was real; and he stuck the glass to his eye, 'sif he was looking out for a ship."

"Yes?"

"Then he went out, pup—like the sniff of a candle—hu—hu——" She clung to him.

"It was all my fault," said he; "talking that nonsense. Don't think of it; it was only an optical illusion."

"He didn't cast a shadda. I remember now."

"That proves it; I've often heard cases like that. Sir Walter Scott saw a man like that once, and he knew it was only an illu-

sion; he had some wine handy and he drank a glass of it, and the thing disappeared."

"I reckon I'd have drunk a barrel of rum, if I'd had one handy," said Jude, drawing away a bit. "Let's get off. Lord! look at the sun! It's half down. Come'n help with the boat."

They got up, and, taking the dinghy by the gunnels, began to haul her to the water. They had not got her more than a couple of yards, when Jude straightened up as though remembering something, and clapped her hand to her head.

"We're dished," said Jude.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE CRABS.

"How do you mean?" said he.

She explained. It was like her to forget and spend the precious time lazing and playing about with "wuzzards." The sun was taking his plunge into the sea, darkness was upon them, and she could not find her way back in the dark. Moon or starlight would be of no use. The thridy spars of the *Sarah* and *Juan,* invisible from the sand spit even in daylight, would only be picked up several miles out. She could not steer by the stars, and there was a great sweep of current, setting sou'east, which might take them to Timbuktu. Satan would have done the business right enough, blindfolded, but she was a night funk, she confessed. Night put her all abroad and mixed up everything in her mind, so that front seemed back and west seemed east, besides filling the world with "ha'nts." She had "near died" of fright, fetching that sack from the cache, the other night. All this, in a lugubrious voice, not far from tears, as they stood facing each other, lit by the remorselessly setting sun.

"All right," said Ratcliffe. "Cheer up! We'll just have to stick here till daybreak. We have some grub left and lots of water. No use pulling the boat farther down; but I expect Satan will be in a stew."

"I reckon he'll know," said Jude. "The weather's all right. He'd scent if we were in any trouble, and he'd borrow Cark's boat to hunt for us. I reckon he's not worrying. If he was, he'd be alongside here, pronto."

Her face was like a buttercup, in the extraordinary light of that sunset. The whole sky was buttercup color. The great sea was seething round the great sun, now half gone, churning and washing round him, a blazing globe sinking in boiling gold.

Golden gulls, golden sky, golden sea, all fading at last, the purple of night breaking through, rushing dark from the west across the sea. The shipwrecked mariners lost their golden faces and hands, and, as they sat down with their backs to the dinghy, and the remains of the "grub" between them, laughing gulls, passing like ghosts in the twilight, hailed them while the stars broke out, to look above the darkness and the tepid wind.

There is nothing like eating to keep up the spirits. Jude got less doleful. In the stir of mind caused by the new circumstances, she had clean forgotten the "ha'nts," nor did she remember them for a moment, now, as she chatted away in an uplift of spirits caused by the food and the recognition that to be downcast was futile.

"I sure am a mutt," said Jude. "Reckon I was born on a Friday—they say mugs are all born on a Friday; we should 'a' been off two hours before sundown, and there I was, talking and listening to your yarns, and here we are on the beach. Oh, mommer!" Then after a long pause:

"What's them stars, do you reckon?"

"Suns."

"Gar'n."

"It's so."

"Say?"

"Yes."

"Did you notis anything looking north, before sundown, or were you asleep, sitting on that spar?"

"I did see something over there; looked like the ghost of a cloud."

"That was Rum Cay, and a sure sign the weather's going to hold. It lifts itself into the sky, like that, evening times; you can see it from Lone Reef, too."

"I wish I had known that, and I would have looked at it more particularly. I was thinking."

"What was you thinking about?"

He laughed.

"My people."

"Which people?"

"My relations."

"What made you think of them for?"

"You."

"Me?"

"Yes, I was wondering what you'd think of them, if you saw them; especially my aunts."

"Well, you take the bun," said Jude. "You sitting there thinking of your aunts and me running with them eggs." She stopped of a sudden, her memory had suddenly conjured up the "wuzzard."

"That chap!" said Jude.

"Which?"

"The one I saw," She wriggled close to him, till their sides touched. "S'posin'?"

"Yes?"

"S'posin', he was to take it into his head to do a walk along here?"

"Don't you bother about him," said Ratcliffe. "I'd kick him into the sea. Besides, he was only an optical illusion; it was my stupid talk did it."

"I'm not bothering," said Jude. "Only it's a durned long time till morning. N'matter." She rested her hand on his shoulder, in all the familiarity of companionship; then she shifted her hand from his left to his right shoulder, so that her arm was across his back, and then she fell silent, and he felt something poking into his left shoulder. It was her nose. She had evidently, under his protection, forgotten "ha'nts" and "wuzzards," forgotten him, even, for she was humming a sort of tune, under her breath.

He knew exactly her mental condition—mind wandering; and it was a strange feeling to be cuddled like that by a person who had half forgotten his existence, except as a protection against fears; especially when he remembered her recent antagonism that had developed so mysteriously, and as mysteriously vanished. He slipped his left arm round her, to make her more comfortable. Then her nose gave place to her cheek against his shoulder, and she yawned. He could feel the beat of her heart, just beneath the gentle swell of her breast; he remembered her coat, which was in the dinghy. She had thrown it in as an afterthought, in case of a change of weather, but had never worn it.

"Hadn't you better put on your coat?" asked he.

"Lord! I don't want no coat."

"But the night air."

"Nothing wrong with it. It's a gulf wind an' as hot as a blanket. Ain't you warm enough?"

"Lots."

"Ever slept out before?"

"Only in a tent. Have you?"

"Which?"

"Slept out before?"

"Heaps o' times. But I wouldn't sleep out in a full moon."

"Why?"

"'Cos I don't want to wake up with my face twisted to one side like a flatfish. Mean to say you don't know? either that or a chap goes looney. But there's no fear tonight, it's only a half moon. The only thing I'm frightened of is crabs; we've gotta keep our eyes skinned for crabs; this mayn't be a crab spit; then again, there's no knowing, but it may."

"What on earth is a crab spit?"

Jude raised her face from his shoulder and sat up a bit straighter, as though the question had roused her.

"Place where crabs come, hun'erds of millions of them, same as Crab Cay. There's crabs everywhere, of course, but not in shiploads same as Crab Cay. Three chaps were drifted ashore there once, and after sundown up came the crabs and fought them all night, and there was nothing but their skeletons left in the morning. We'd better take it turn about to keep watch."

She released herself from his arm, and scrambling about in the starlight on her hands and knees, began to make a sand pillow.

"There you are," said she. "Stick your head on it; I'll take first watch. You be port watch and I'll be starboard."

"No, you won't. I will. I'm not a bit sleepy."

"Neither'm I. Stick your head on it; you've gotta turn in, or you'll be no use to-morrow."

He did as he was bid, and Jude took her place, sitting on the sand close to him.

"Give us a call, if anything happens," said he.

"You bet," replied Jude.

Then he closed his eyes. A moment before and he had been leagues away from sleep; but with the compulsory closing of his eyes a drowsiness began to steal on him. The wind had died to nothing and in the dead silence of the night the sound of the waves, on the mile and a half of spit, came loud and low, rhythmical, mesmeric. It was as though the tide of sleep were rising to drift him off.

Now, suddenly, he was walking in the blazing sunlight, on the spit, and toward him was walking the "wuzzard," a little old man in a cocked hat, with a spyglass under his arm, who vanished, giving place to Jude,

carrying a hatful of gulls' eggs. Then Skelton landed from somewhere, and Jude, turning, was calling him a "pesky brute."

The words broke the dream and he opened his eyes. The moon had just risen, touching the spit, and in her light, seated on the sand, propped up on its stilts, a spirit crab, white as snow, with ruby eyes, was staring at Jude.

Drugged with weariness and ozone, he closed his eyes, for one moment, determined to rise up and drive the thing away in one moment. When he opened his eyes again the sun was rising.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE RETURN.

The gulls were mewing and calling and flighting above him in the blue. He was lying on his back, his left arm out and Jude's head on his shoulder. She had snuggled up beside him for company, and then, regardless of spirit crabs, "ha'nts," and the possibility of crustaceans landing in shiploads to devour them, had fallen asleep.

Her arm was flung over his chest. It was the embrace of a tired child, delightful to wake up to as the freshness of the air and the new life of the world, and the innocence of the flower-blue sky. Delightful as her breath, sweet and warm against his cheek. As he moved she stirred, grumbled something under her breath, shifted her head, so that his arm was released, and turned on her other side, with her right arm flung out on the sand. He stood up. The tide was in, and the dinghy only waiting to be launched. Not a sail or speck upon the sea.

Rum Cay had prophesied right; the fine weather held; but the water was nearly gone and the "grub" was finished; there was no breakfast till they boarded the *Sarah*.

He turned to where the starboard watch was lying, clinging still to Morpheus, and stirred it gently with his foot. Jude moved, turned, grumbled to herself, and then, as if electrified, sat up digging her fists into her eyes and yawning. Then she sat gazing at the sea, as if stunned.

"Come on," said Ratcliffe. "We've got to be starting. All the grub's gone, and nearly all the water. How did you sleep?"

"Oh, Lord!" said Jude, "I've been chasin' round the hull night with a hatful of eggs. I'm near dead beat. Which way's the wind? Sou'east. Must 'a' changed in the night. It'll take us back in two ticks."

She collapsed again comfortably.

"Remember," said he, "the current is against us."

"Oh, it ain't no distance," said Jude, "and a few minits more or less don't count. Wonder what Satan's doing?"

Knowing that it was hopeless to bother till the spirit moved her, he sat down on the sand beside her and began picking up little shells and casting them into the sea.

"Goodness knows," said he. "I'm wondering what he'll say, when we get back."

"He'll start jawing," said Jude dreamily and fatefully, and with her eyes closed. "I can hear him as if I was listening. He'll say 'what you mean leaving the ship and where's your eggs?' No use telling him they're broke. Lord! I'm sick of it all; I'm just going to lay here and die."

He began to drop shells on her chest.

"Quit foolin'."

"Then get up and come on. Let's get it over. It's like having a tooth pulled—the sooner over the better."

Then suddenly she sat up, put on her hat, scrambled onto her feet, took a glance round the sea and made for the dinghy.

"Shove in the water jar," said Jude. He put the jar in, seized the opposite gunnel, and ran her down.

In a minute they were afloat, the sail spread to the wind, Jude steering and holding the sheet. Gulls chased them out, and the beam wind, meeting tide and current, sent boosts of spray on board. It was a rougher passage coming than going, and a more silent one. Ratcliffe, squatting in the bottom of the boat, had little else to do than smoke and watch Jude. Jude, engaged with her own thoughts, and with her eyes skinned for the indications of Lone Reef, seemed absolutely to have forgotten him.

There was no indication of the companion who had slept with her arm round him, who had sat almost lovingly, half forgetfully, with her arm across his shoulder and his arm around her waist. It came to him, suddenly, and with a curious pang, that Jude would never be more than that—a warm companion if cast alone together, just as she might be with Satan, or any stranger her fancy approved of.

Instinctively he felt that there was a barrier, a curious barrier he seemed to have broken through, that night he took her part, and when for the first time in her life, she had confessed herself at fault. A barrier,

that had, however, mended itself. It was as though he had injured her independence. Yet Satan was injuring her independence, all day long, with his orders and what not. Aye, but Satan was her brother, almost part of herself. She would not have banged Satan on the head for kissing her.

He gave up thinking, watching her and how well she handled the boat. The crying of the gulls round the spit had died down, nothing remained but the voice of the sea silent as dumb death, from the blue horizon to the planking of the dinghy where it spoke.

"That's her," suddenly said Jude.

"What?"

"Lone. I kin see the spars of the *Juan* an' the *Sarah*. Rubber, and you'll see them, too."

He turned with his elbow resting on the thwart, and picked out the spars on the sea line.

"And the *Natchez*," said Jude. "Look, close up to the *Juan*. Cleary's put in and we not there; I'd forgot Cleary; didn't believe he'd pick up the place so soon. There he is. Oh, hull!"

"No matter," said Ratcliffe. "It can't be helped."

"Cuss them gulls! If they'd stuck to their laying places, we'd have got the eggs soon's we'd landed and been back last night. Wonder what's been going on?"

"Well," said he, "Satan's all right. Cleary has no grudge against him. If there has been any bother it has been between Cleary and Sellers."

"Maybe," said Jude.

An hour later they were so close up that they could see the reef line and the line of the wreck, with fellows working on it; whatever had happened, business was going on as usual. The three vessels, anchored and swinging to the tide, looked peaceful enough, and as they drew up to the *Sarah*, Satan, who had just appeared on deck, came and stood by the starboard rail, watching them. They fastened up, preparing for an explosion. None came.

"Couldn't get back last night," said Jude, as they came on board. "Left it till sundown, and then I was afeard of the current."

"Afeard of the dark," said Satan. "I reckoned that'd be so. Whar's your eggs?"

"Gone fut; smashed the lot; wasn't more than a hatful. Them rotten gulls had given up nesting, all but at the ends—and, say, Satan—I saw a wuzzard. I was carrying the eggs when I saw him, and then I ran and smashed the lot."

"A which?"

"A ha'nt—little old chap walking on the sands. D'you remember the figurehead on that old bark they broke up last year, at Havana? Chap with a glass under his arm and the other arm wavin' his hat? That was him, plain as my eye. He up with his glass and I let one yelp. Rat'll tell you; he saw me running."

"Well, come along down, if you want some grub. I sighted you more'n an hour ago, and there's coffee waitin'. D'ye see that?" He pointed to a new-washed jumper, drying in the blazing sun, on the rail.

"Well, I was het up," said Jude, "or I'd have landered it before I started."

"Come along down," said Satan.

It came to Ratcliffe that the quietude of Satan, over the business, came less from natural good temper than some other reason. The desertion of the *Sarah* was mutiny and a rank crime; Satan had been left with his food to cook and his jumper to wash. His sister had been off with an almost stranger, for a whole night. Yet he was not displeased.

If Jude had done the business alone, she most surely would have been carpeted. It was evidently his—Ratcliffe's—participation in it that fended off trouble, and turned wrath into complacence. Why? Was it because he was a guest? Not a bit; Satan, had he been angry, would not have bothered about that. He followed down below, and there, over the breakfast table, the Cleary business was cleared up.

"He dropped in, last night," said Satan, "an hour before sundown, and the anchor hadn't more than clawed the mud before he was aboard the *Juan*. I expected the shootin' to begin, but there weren't no fireworks, and after dark I lit out for the *Juan* in the c'lapsible and tied up and boarded her; all the chaps were in the fo'c's'le, eating onions and playin' tunes on guitars. No anchor watch, and the Cleary crowd down in the saloon as friendly as pie, Cark ladling the liquor and Cleary suckin' it down; cigars as big as your leg in their faces, and Cleary, with his thumbs in the arm hulls of his waistcoat, leanin' back laughin'. That's how I found them."

"I told you," said Jude to Ratcliffe, "they'd be kissing each other and——"

"Suppose you shet your head," said Satan. "I'm tellin' you—there they were sittin' all colludin' together, thick as thick, and I sat for an hour with them, and then lit out. Sweet as sugar they were, but I tell you this, I'm as frightened as hell."

"How's thet?"

"Cleary. Y'see, Cark and Sellers aren't much by themselves, but Cleary is the snake's tooth an' poison bug of that combination, now that he's joined in with Cark again. Cleary's Irish gone bad, on the father's side, and drunk Welsh on the mother's; I had his pedigree from pap. Pap said he was a sure-enough thoroughbred of a hellhound, and he reckoned the roof of his mouth was black right down to the heart of him. Well, I've had forty dollars from Cleary, for them rotten pearls, and one thousand dollars from Cark on account of takin's. Now, you see how I am. Supposin' the wreck turns out a dud? D'you mean to say those chaps won't go for me to get their money back? Supposin' the gold is there, d'you mean to say they won't chouse me out of my share?"

"What are you going to do?"

"I worked the hull thing out, last night, before I boarded them; seeing there was no fighting, I concluded they'd joined up an' become friends, then I made my plans. I didn't put out no anchor light.

"Sellers, when I was leaving the *Juan,* said: 'Whar's your light?' 'Run short of oil,' says I; 'kin you let me have some?' He thought I was tryin' to wangle oil out of him, and he closed; said he was run short himself."

"What was your meaning in not putting out a light?" asked Jude.

"Maybe you'll find out," said Satan, "if you keep your eyes skinned and stop askin' questions. Well, that's where we are. They'll have the barrel of gunpowder fixed, by to-morrow, to blow the deck off her, and as soon as they put a light to it we'll know; it's blastin' powder and ought to split the deck to flinders, if they fix it proper. I don't b'lieve it's coral coverin' that deck. I b'lieve it's old petrifacted guano, if you ask me; anyhow, it's hard enough."

"By Jove!" said Ratcliffe, "if that's so it bears out my theory; I came to the conclusion that the old hooker had never been under water, according to that yarn Lopez slung; yet I couldn't account for the coral deposits. I believe you're right. I believe the real wreck is lying at that place you said, that's given in the latitude and longitude; well, see here, why not get the anchor up and light out, right now, for the other place. They wouldn't follow."

"Wouldn't they?" said Satan. "The *Natchez* would be after us like a cat pouncin'. No, I'd rather stick, if it's all the same to you, and see the fireworks. After that, leave 'em to me. There aren't many's got the better of me, when my tail's up; now, then, Jude, if you've done stuffin' yourself, maybe you'll lend a hand on deck; there's swabbin' to be done."

CHAPTER XXIV.

A BOTTLE OF RUM.

Ratcliffe helped in the swabbing and polishing. No housekeeper ever exercised more meticulous care in this respect than Satan; he was a fanatic, where cleanliness was concerned and polish. Witness the brasswork of the wheel, the binnacle and skylight; even paint and varnish were minor gods, compared with Brasso.

About ten o'clock a boat put off from the *Natchez.* Cleary was in the stern sheets, and as she came alongside he hailed the *Sarah.* Satan came to the rail.

"Sellers' going to bust her open to-day."

"I thought he wouldn't be ready till to-morrow," said Satan.

"Just had word the hole's near deep enough, and the star cuttin's from it. He's got the powder off and reckons to fire it at noon; wants you to come an' help."

"Oh, does he?"

"He's a bit bothered about the fuse, not havin' done much of that sort of work, and he reckons you're an ingenious chap, an'll be able to put him wise."

"Oh, does he? Well, I'll be there."

Cleary came over the rail.

"No spittin'!" cried Satan.

Cleary, averting his head in time to send the squirt of tobacco juice overside, instead of onto the deck, looked around. He nodded at Ratcliffe, disregarded Jude, and fixed his eye on the blazing binnacle and the glittering rods of the skylight. "Dandy ship," said he. "Whar you goin' to take the prize?"

"Where your old tub'd be skeered to show her nose; how's the potato crop gettin' along?"

Cleary turned his quid over and allowed his eyes to travel about the deck.

"Waal," said he, speaking with point and consideration, "some likes one thing and some likes another, but I never did see that fandanglin' with frills an' brassworks an' sich lends anythin' to the *sailin'* qualities of a ship."

Jude, raising herself up from Flemish-coiling a rope, blazed out:

"Maybe it don't, to an old cod boat blowin' along with her own smell," began Jude.

"Shet up!" said Satan. Then to Cleary: "Have a drink?"

"I'm willin'," said Cleary; "but thought you was a dry ship."

Satan winked, slipped below, and returned with a bottle of rum, a glass, and a water jar. There were three or four bottles of rum on board. Satan said he kept the stuff for "rubbing his corns." He never drank it. There was also a revolver and a rifle on board. He never fired them. Lethal weapons have their time and place.

Satan, having placed the bottle and jar on the deck, produced another glass from his pocket, filled out a four-finger peg for Cleary, and another for himself.

"Here's luck," said Cleary.

"Here's luck—no *spittin'!*"

They drained glasses.

"Holy Mike!" cried Cleary, his eyes bulging and his face injected. "What sorter bug water's this?"

"British navy, thirty over proof."

Cleary, with one eye shut, seemed turning over in his mind the activities going on in his stomach and, on the whole, approving.

"Well," said he, "I've drunk wasp brandy and one or two nigger dopes—they don't get near it, not in knots. A chap'd want to be a centipede to carry a bottle of that stuff, I reckon. N'more thanky. Well, I'm off; and I'll fly a flag, when Cark gives the signal he's got the stuff ready for the fuse." Off he went.

"For the land's sake, Satan, what made you swallow that stuff for?" said Jude.

Satan took his seat on the skylight edge, then he gulped, then he hiccuped.

"Get your hind legs under you and cart the bottle and the glasses down below," said Satan. "Strewth! Gimme the water jar till I flood my hold."

He drank till Ratcliffe thought he would never stop. Then he went to the port rail and canceled matters. Ratcliffe was about to ask why he had swallowed it, but he checked himself. Jude, who had just appeared again, put the question.

"What in the nation made you scoff that snake juice?" she asked.

Satan took a glance at the sun, at the reef, and at the *Juan*. "Now, then," said he, "finish up cl'arin' away that raffle and get the dinner ready; I've no time to be talkin'."

All the same, work could not prevent Ratcliffe from pondering the dark problem of Satan and his doings. Why had he not put out an anchor light last night? Why had he pretended to Sellers that he was short of oil? Why had he swallowed a glass of rum only to unswallow it again? Then in the monotony of work, his mind passed from these considerations to a state of pleasant expectancy. What would they find in the wreck? And the explosion of the barrel of powder, how would it come off?

He felt as pleased as a boy about to fire a brass cannon, and not sure whether it will burst or not.

CHAPTER XXV.

THEY FIRE THE FUSE.

Satan used a modification of the Deck Bear for cleaning his decks; that is to say, a box filled with stones, having a rough mat nailed under it. The deck having been sprinkled with sand, the Bear had to be pulled backward and forward, after the fashion of a carpet sweeper. This was Ratcliffe's job and he was not sorry when it was over.

Dinner was served at eight bells, and getting along toward one o'clock the *Natchez* and *Juan* were flying all sorts of flags on the tepid breeze, as a signal, evidently, that it was time to get to business. Ratcliffe made out the red and white flag, indicating H; the triangular blue with the white ball, the red cross on a white ground, and the white with the blue square. H. D. V. S.

"What are they trying to say?" he asked.

"Oh, them flags," replied Satan. *"They're* not tryin' to say anythin'. Only flyin' to show time's up. Cark hasn't got a full set of the c'mercial code; wouldn't know how to use them, neither. Now, if you're ready, we'll put off. Jude will stick here to keep ship."

Jude protested.

"Why, you'll see the blow-up from here a durned sight better than from the boat," said Satan.

"I want to see her innards when the deck's off," said Jude.

"Why, Lord bless me, you'll have days to see them in," said Satan. "And there's no knowin' what may happen when the blow-up comes—what with flyin' timbers and muck. I'll come back and bring you off when the powder's fired. I can't say fairer than that."

Sellers was waiting for them on the reef, and Cleary; their boats were on the strip of beach, surrounded by the crews, and a couple of fellows on the wreck were putting the last touches to the preparation of the charge. Sellers was holding what seemed a length of thick, white cord in his hand.

"Here's the fuse," said he. "I had it left over with the barrel, from that last wrecking business we did in the fall. It's a five-minits fuse."

"Oh, is it?" said Satan, handling the thing, "and where's your guarantee? S'posin' it only takes a minit? And five minits is none too much, for the chap that fires it, to get clear of the reef and put out."

"That's true," said Sellers. "And one of you chaps will have to do the firin' business, seein' I'm lame."

"What's lamed you?"

"Fell on the deck, this mornin', over a slush tub one of them d—— dagoes left lyin' in the dark. Near put my knee out."

"Then Cleary will do the trick," said Satan.

Cleary laughed. "Not me. I'm not lame, but it ain't my job; runnin' over rocks don't suit me, and I reckon the chap that lays a light to that thing will want to be a boundin' kangaroo."

"Instead of a damned ass like y'self," said Satan. "Come on, I'll light it. I'm not afeared."

They clambered over the rocks, crossed the rock bridge and gained the wreck. The little barrel had been well and truly laid, the top almost flush with the level of the stuff covering the deck.

"We got right through the deck plankin'," said Sellers, "or to a crossbeam; wood's most dry rotted, and it'll be a nacheral mercy if the powder don't blow the whole coffee shop to blazes, right down to the reef. Here's the hole for the fuse."

While they were examining the fuse hole, Ratcliffe took notice of the cuts radiating starlike from the charge hole that had been made in the deck casing. When he turned again, Satan, with the aid of Sellers, had fixed the fuse. The Spanish sailors who had been at work had taken their departure and were already down by the boats, leaving only four men on the wreck, Satan, Sellers, Cleary, and himself. Satan rose up, clapped the knees of his trousers, as if to knock dust off them, and produced a yellow box of Swedish matches from his pocket.

"Look here," said Ratcliffe, "it's not fair; let's draw lots who'll fire the thing?"

"Not me," said Satan. "I wouldn't trust one of them two with a box of matches, let alone a dollar; now, then, scatter for the boats!"

Then to Ratcliffe, as Sellers and Cleary made off: "Stand by ready to shove the dinghy off, when you see me coming!"

"All right," said the other, "but I'll stick by you, if you like."

"I reckon two chaps don't run quicker than one," said Satan. "Off with you and, if I'm blown to blazes, look after the kid."

When Ratcliffe reached the strip of beach, the boats of the *Juan* and *Natchez* had shoved off. He could see the figure of Carquinez, at the after rail of the *Juan,* and Jude watching from the *Sarah.* He pulled the dinghy down a bit more to the water and then, turning, looked at the wreck. Satan was standing against the sky line. Now he was down on his knees, and now he was up again. The fuse had evidently been fired, but he did not move; stood evidently looking to see that it was burning properly, and then moved off, walking, not running, and not even hurrying himself. Then he came clambering over the rocks, reached the dinghy, and they pushed off.

"Well, you are a cool chap," said Ratcliffe. "I'd have run."

"And broke your leg, maybe; there's no danger, unless a spark got at the powder. The durned thing was sparkin' and spittin' like all possessed, when I left it. I reckon that's why Sellers got cold feet. We're out far enough now." He ceased rowing and they hung drifting.

Ratcliffe looked round. The other boats were far farther out; the tepid wind had almost died off, so that the flags on the *Juan* and *Natchez* hung in wisps. They could hear the wash of the water on the reef and

the occasional lamentation of a gull. No other sound broke the silence of the blue and gorgeous afternoon.

"There she goes!" cried Ratcliffe.

A jet of flame and a column of smoke sprang from the reef, followed by a clap of thunder that could have been heard at Rum Cay. Flying filth and deck planking filled the air, and on top of all came the yelling of a thousand gulls. The dinghy jumped as though from the blow of a great fist. Then silence. And over the reef a filthy dun-colored cloud of smoke curling upward, like a djinn.

Satan seized the sculls and headed for the beach; the boats of the *Juan* and *Natchez,* already under way, were rowing as if for a wager, but the dinghy had the lead. They beached her, hauled her up a foot, and started over the rocks, running this time, heedless of broken limbs, Satan leading like the bounding kangaroo of Cleary's, and whooping as he went. The rock bridge was still intact, but nearly the whole of the after part of the deck was gone.

"Go careful!" cried Satan. He got down on hands and knees and crawling, followed by Ratcliffe, leaned over the break and looked.

Ratcliffe cried out in horror.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE CARGO.

In that vast and gloomy interior the great beams showed like the ribs of some eviscerated monster, and the honest light of day fell sick upon the cargo; a cargo of skulls, ribs, vertebræ, and entire skeletons, piled high as though five hundred men had struggled aft for exit, in one mad rush, and died heaped one upon the other like refuse. A charnal, limey smell rose, poisoning the air.

"Good God!" said Ratcliffe.

"Slaver," said Satan. "What did I tell you? *Nombre de Dios* be sugared! She's an old slaver, wrecked with the chaps under hatches. Here's Sellers!"

Sellers, panting, his face all mottled, followed by Cleary, had gained the deck.

"Boys, what is it?" cried Sellers.

"Gold," cried Satan. "Go careful, for the hull deck's sprung; get on your hands and knees. Gold bars an' diamonds. We're all rich men."

The pair of scoundrels, crawling like crabs, stuck their heads over the break.

"Oh, hell!" said Sellers.

"Slaver," said Satan.

Cleary spat. He was the first to laugh.

"This is putting it over on Cark, ain't it?" said Cleary. "How many dollars d'you think it's cost our firm to blow the lid off this damned scroffagus, to say nuthin' of the time? And he packed me off to Pensacola to get me out of the way! Oh, send for him to have a look!"

"No use sendin'; he's comin'," said Satan, pointing to where the gig of the *Juan* was approaching the beach.

Carquinez crossed the rock bridge and advanced along the deck, clutching his old coat together and making birdlike noises. When he reached the break, crouching like the others, he looked over. The sight below did not seem to horrify him.

"Slaver," said Satan for the third time, turning his head for a moment from the objects that seemed to fascinate him.

"Pst, pst, pst!" said Carquinez. "Vel, I reckon dat is so."

"No gold ship," said Sellers.

"Maybe there was gold in the after cabin," suddenly broke in Cleary, "and the chaps broke through the bulkhead and are on top of it."

"Where's your bulkheads?" asked Sellers. "There was no after cabin to the hooker. It was all one cattle boat below, with niggers for cattle."

"Dat is so," said Carquinez.

The old gentleman seemed taking his setback extraordinarily well. So, too, seemed Sellers and Cleary. They were evidently used to reverses in business, and treasure hunting was wildcat anyway; a thousand to one against the chance of a colossal fortune. He drew back from the break, like a reptile balked and retreating, rose to his feet, and stood contemplating the sea. Satan rose also, as did Ratcliffe.

"I'm off," said Satan. "This bone yard don't please me any; say, what you chaps goin' to do?"

"Von moment," said Cark.

"Which?" asked Satan.

"Cark means how about the contrac'?" said Sellers.

"Which way?"

"Lord! Why, we're left! Left with a cargo of skelentons! And you, why you've got a thousand dollars in your pocket."

"There was nothin' in the contrac' about handin' them back," said Satan. "B'sides

the contrac's bust. That thousand dollars was on account of findin's. Is it my fault the findin' is skeletons? But, see here, you chaps. Give's a few hours to turn the thing over, and come aboard the *Sarah,* along sundown, and we'll have a clack. We're all in the soup, seems to me, and I'm not wishin' to be hard on you."

"We'll drop aboard," said Sellers. Cleary said nothing. After his outburst of laughter he had remained dumb.

"Well, I'm off," said Satan. "I want a drink and that's the truth; the smell of them skeleton's enough to start a Babtis' minister on the booze." Then he turned to Carquinez. "What did I tell you, sittin' in your cabin? Told you I didn't bank on this business. Maybe you'll remember that. Blast treasure liftin'! Leavin' salvage aside, have you ever seen an ounce of gold raised in all these years? There was a hundred million lyin' off Dry Tortugas. Did they ever get it? How many ships has been down to Trinidad huntin' for the pirates' gold? Knight was the last man there; a lot he made of it! It's only the chaps that sell locations to mugs, that make money over this business, it's my b'lief. Well, see you aboard, later on."

Off he went, Ratcliffe following. As they came alongside the *Sarah,* Jude was hanging over the rail.

"What's the luck!" cried Jude as they came aboard.

"Skelentons," said Satan. "Shipload of skulls an' cross bones. Slaver, that's what she was—dead men's bones."

"Lord! And I've never seen them!"

"Well, there's nothin' much to see," said Satan, with the irritating nonchalance of the one who has seen the show. "Ain't worth the trouble of lookin'."

"I want to see them skelentons," said Jude.

"Tell you they ain't wuth lookin' at."

"I want to see them!"

"Oh, well, then, tumble into the boat; tumble into the boat, and I'll row you over."

Ratcliffe watched while the dinghy passed over to the reef; he saw Jude on the wreck, kneeling and poring over the cargo, held, evidently, by the fascination that lies for youth in the horrible.

Then they returned, and Satan ordered the dinghy to be taken on board.

"Are you going to put out now?" asked Ratcliffe.

"Put out!" said Satan with a grin. "Why, I've asked those chaps to come aboard, gettin' on for sundown, and whether or no, if I raised a foot of chain they'd be on me with the first click of the windlass. I tell you we're in a tight place. Cleary said nothin'. You noticed that. But he's goin' to have his forty dollars back, if he knows how, and Sellers' is the same; he wants his thousand. We're held for one thousand and forty dollars, and we're not strong enough to fight them."

"Well, see here," said the peacemaker. "Pay them. I'll stand the racket. It's only a little over two hundred pounds, and I'll give you a check."

"You don't get me," said Satan. "It's not the dollars I'm thinkin' of, so much as the game. Cark played me a low-down trick, lightin' out for here to scoop the boodle. And Cleary laffed at me, with his old cod boat outsailin' us. They've got to pay. B'sides, if I was to hand over that money, I'd never be able to show my nose again in Havana."

"How so?"

"Why, them two would put the laff on me, and it'd be 'what price skelentons,' wherever I went, see? I'd be the mug then. They're the mugs now, seein' they've paid a thousand and forty for what they've got."

"I see. But considering that they'll be after you, if you move, and that we're not strong enough to fight them, what's to be done?"

"Well," said Satan, "when they come aboard, it'll be either to get the dollars back or fight. You've noticed I asked them to come, seein' they'd have come whether I asked them or not. Well, if I can foozle them into hanging on for their answer till to-morrow, I'll give them the slip to-night. Moon's not up till late."

"But they'll hear you gettin' the anchor up, and handling the sails."

"Not with an ear trumpet," said Satan, "if I can only foozle them into waitin' till to-morrow. Now, then, Jude, lend a hand with the dinghy."

CHAPTER XXVII.

CROCKERY WARE.

An hour before sunset, Jude, on the lookout, gave the alarm.

"Sellers' getting ready to come off," cried Jude.

Satan's head appeared at the cabin hatch.

"Where did you stick that bottle of nose paint?"

"Starboard forward locker."

"One minit." In a minute the head reappeared and an arm holding the rum bottle. "Now, mind you, I'm drunk," said Satan. "Fightin' drunk, not to be disturbed on no account. They can call again to-morrow morning." He smashed the rum bottle on the deck. "Leave the pieces lyin'." He vanished.

Jude looked at Ratcliffe and grinned.

"Rub your nose and pretend to be cryin'," came a voice from below.

"What for should I be cryin'?" answered Jude.

"God A'mighty! I'll show you if I get on deck! Ain't I drunk and cuttin' up? What else would you be doin'? *I'll* l'arn you!" A smash of crockery came from below, that made the housekeeper spring to the cabin skylight.

"Quit foolin'," cried she. "I'm willin' to rub the dam nose off my head, but stop smashin' the plates. What have you broke?"

Another plate went.

"I'm rubbin'."

"Here they are," cried Ratcliffe.

Jude's nose did not seem to want any rubbing, nor her face. Descended from generations of crockery worshipers and careful housewives, instinctively hating Cleary, Sellers, Cark, and all their belongings, feeling, with perfect illogic, that they had been done out of the treasure by the "skelentons" somehow through Cark, she was convincing. Satan, with rare art, had worked her up to the part. She was not crying, her mind was raging above tears.

"Hullo, kid!" cried Sellers as the boat ground alongside, and a filthy ruffian with a handkerchief twisted round his head clawed on with a boat hook. "What's the matter, kid—what's up with you? Where's Satan?"

"Who're you kiddin'?" cried Jude, as Sellers came aboard followed by Cleary. "Where the hull are your fenders? Comin' cuttin' the paint off, you and your skullintons. Where's Satan? He's down below, drunk as Billy be dam, and cuttin' the lights out of the ship."

"He's been at the eye wash I was tellin' you of," said Cleary. "Look, he's broke a bottle of it. Lord, don't the place niff."

"Well, drunk or sober, he's got to bail up," said Sellers. "It's my belief he's been spoofin us all along."

"Spoofin' who?" cried Jude.

"Cark an' me."

"Cark an' you! That old leather face an' *you!* Satan been spoofin' you—pair of yeggmen! Satan's straight; the on'y straight man in Havana. Get off this ship. Come in the mornin', if you want to try an' rob him. Off with you now!"

Came the sound of another smashed plate below. Jude made one spring for a deck mop standing handy, twirled it so that the water sprayed from it in a rainbow, and brought it to the charge. Cleary slipped over the rail.

"Off with you!" cried Jude.

"Put down that mop," cried Sellers, now suddenly furious. "Put down that mop, you brazing little wench; go'n get inter your petticoats. You ain't a boy! I never b'lieved it, not for the last six months, an' now I know. You've give yourself away proper; why, look at you, as round as a tub —you're a wumman."

Ratcliffe looked on horrified. Jude, flushed and bright-eyed, had somehow revealed her sex. In her excitement she looked, for a moment, almost beautiful; her tongue had done the rest; the smashing of the plates had brought the woman out of her as a conjurer brings a rabbit out of a hat.

"Put down that mop."

Jude, from rose color, had turned awfully white. Then, with the élan and dash of a gamecock, she charged. The wet swab hit the ruffian full in his flat face, and he fell on the deck with a bang. In a second, he was up and scrambling over the rail. Again she charged, the swab meeting him, this time, full on his stern, and sending him over into the boat like a bag of oats.

A slush tub, fortunately half full, and marked by her prescient mind, was her next weapon. The contents caught Cleary full in the face, and, as the boat made off, the oars all at sixes and sevens, she pursued it with the battery of her tongue till it was out of range. Then she broke down and cried; sniffed, with her arm hiding her face, and then flushed, like a thing of shame, dived below.

Ratcliffe knew. Her sex proclaimed aloud by the shameless Sellers was as a garment stripped off her publicly. On the very first day Satan had stated her case, and she didn't

mind, though he, Ratcliffe, had been a stranger. But it was different now, somehow. It was also as if the end of her boyhood had come. Sellers would, no doubt, proclaim the fact in Havana.

He heard voices from below.

"I don't care if I'd killed him. Wish't I had. Let me alone. For two cents I'd go drown myself. Look at them plates! You've broke the two blue pattern ones, an' the chaney one with the bird on it, the best we had; an' not a cracked one touched. Ain't you no sense?"

"Never you mind. I'll get you some more."

"I'm not wanting more. Them plates were mother's. Much you care; I've gone as careful as walking on eggs with them, and now they're broke an' the old Delf ones left. If you must be breaking and cutting up, couldn't you 'a' broke the cracked ones —an' where's the sense in breaking them, anyhow?"

"Waal, I reckoned it'd liven you up, hearin' the crockery goin'."

"Liven me up! Makes me believe you *have* been getting at the rum, to hear you talk; where's the sense in all your doings, ship stinking of drink and all the crockery broke, and what's the use?"

"I'll show you, after dark. I tell you I want to get away from those chaps, and if I hadn't headed them off, pretendin' to be drunk, they'd have gone through me."

"Well, they'll go through you, right enough, to-morrow morning."

"No, they won't."

"Which way?"

"I'll be gone."

"Gone! Why first click of the windlass and they'll be aboard us."

"You leave it to me."

Silence for a moment, at the end of which Satan's head and bust appeared at the cabin hatch. He winked at Ratcliffe and pointed backward, with his thumb, and down below, as if indicating the domestic trouble.

"There's no sign of them swabs comin' off again?" asked he.

"No," said Ratcliffe, "they seem to have had enough of it."

The rum bottle had broken fairly in two without splinters.

"You might heave the bottle over, like a good chap," said Satan. "I can't show on deck, for fear of those chaps seein' me. It'll be dark, in an hour, and then I'll be up. You can wait for your supper till we get away?"

"Oh, yes," said Ratcliffe. "I'm in no hurry."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

TIDE AND CURRENT.

He lit a pipe. Having disposed of the fragments of the bottle he got the mop and a bucket of water and swabbed the rum-stained deck. Then he took his seat forward and watched the sunset.

Lone Reef seemed well named. Dawn or sunset or the blaze of full day could not take from its desolation; and, this evening, the sinister line of the wreck dominated everything, turning the blaze of sunset to the light of a funeral pyre.

The *Sarah,* moving to the swell, creaked and whimpered and, now and then, from below, he could hear voices; Jude's voice and the voice of Satan; beyond that came the murmur of the reef and the clang of the gulls, and, now and again, a snatch of Spanish song from the *Juan.*

Then the sun passed below the reef, the tide began to draw out, and the *Sarah,* swinging to it, brought to his view the *Juan* and the *Natchez,* ships of dusk in a world of dusk, powdered with star dust. Presently, a light was run up on the *Natchez;* then the *Juan* put up her riding light; then Satan appeared, a dusky form, rising from the cabin hatch, and followed by Jude. They came forward. Jude squatted on the deck and Satan drew close to Ratcliffe.

"Now, if them chaps had any sense in their niblicks, they'd stick out a guard boat," said Satan. "But I've fair put the hood on them, I b'lieve, and they've never twug what I was after, pretendin' I had no oil for an anchor light. Why, them chaps is only fit to be put out to nuss. Haff an hour more and we'll be off."

"How are you going to do it?"

"Knock the shackle off the anchor chain an' let her drift; tide an' current is runnin' four knots."

"But, even without the anchor light, they'll be able to see us by the stars."

"Lord bless you, at this distance they won't be able to see more'n a glimpse of us. We'll go so gradual they won't notice. If they keep a lookout at all, which they won't, ten to one, he'll see us by believin' we're there."

"Lord! I'd love to see their faces in the morning," murmured Jude.

"But won't they go for you, when we get back to Havana?" asked Ratcliffe.

"Not they," said Satan. "They'll say nothin', seein' as how they're done and the laff's against them. Mind you, out here, if I was to stick till to-morrow, they'd be aboard and maybe manhandling us, if I didn't bail up. But back in Havana the thing will be closed, and the accounts wrote off."

The sound of a guitar came through the dusk, crossing the warm wind, the lazy, languorous wind of a perfect summer's night. Seville, that he had never seen, rose before Ratcliffe, firefly-haunted orange groves, lovely women, all skewered together by the remembered words of a ribald song: "When I was a student at Cadiz."

"There goes old Catguts," said Satan. "He's the band aboard the *Juan.*" Then, after a pause: "Well, it's time to get busy," added Satan. "Here, hist yourself and lend a hand."

Ratcliffe got more forward, while they knocked the shackle off the chain. There came a splash. Then the meeting resumed.

"If they heard that splash," said Satan, "they'd put it down to a fish jumpin'. Now you watch them lights."

Ratcliffe watched the amber lights of the *Natchez* and *Juan;* they did not seem to alter position in the least; in the first of the starlight, and the last of the dusk, the spars and hulls of the two vessels could just be made out. Then presently he saw that the lights had drawn a bit more aft and seemed closer together. The feel of the *Sarah* was different, too; she moved freer to the swell.

Now and then the beguiling sea would give the *Sarah* a little slap, no louder than the slap of a girl's hand on the low planking, as if joking with her over some secret shared in common. The sound of the guitar was much fainter, and the spars and hulls of the vessels now invisible, as though they had been dissolved in the gloom. The anchor lights alone marked their places.

"We're all right now," said Satan, "but I'll give them another five minits; got the matches for the binnacle light?"

"Yes," said Jude.

Five minutes passed; then they got the canvas on her, and, Satan at the wheel, taking his bearings from the far-off lights of the betrayed ones, turned the spokes.

"Where are you going to sail for?" asked Ratcliffe.

"Cormorant Cay," said Satan. "I've a fancy to look at that place."

CHAPTER XXIX.

SATAN IN PARADISE.

He had divided Ratcliffe and Jude into watches, port and starboard. Jude turned in first, relieving him somewhere about two in the morning. At six, when he turned out and came on deck, he found Satan at the wheel, relinquished by Jude, and day pursuing the *Sarah* across a wrinkled sea of tourmaline and hinted blue. Away ahead somewhere to the south lay Cormorant Cay, the true tomb, if the chart indications were correct, of the *Nombre de Dios.*

"Not a sign of those chaps," said Ratcliffe, looking back over the sea, clear of Cleary's and Sellers' and their dirty crowd.

"Naw. They'll be just about rousin' up now and rubbin' their eyes."

"You don't think they'll try to follow us?"

"Not likely. They're wastin' time and money, if they cruise after us. What's gettin' me is the fac' that Sellers has spotted the kid for what she is. It'll be all over Havana, and she knows it."

"Look here, Satan," said Ratcliffe. "I've been thinking a lot about the kid and what's to become of her; she can't go on as she is. We must fix up something."

"That's easy said."

"Well, I've grown fonder of her than any person I've ever met, that's the truth; there's no one like her. She's gold right through."

"She ain't bad."

"This sort of thing was all right when she was a child," went on Ratcliffe. "But she's growing out of that. Why, even in the little time since I've come aboard, she seems different, somehow."

"Well, if you ask me," said Satan, "you seem to have made a change in her. She's brightened up, somehow; has more sass in her. She hadn't laffed for weeks, till she saw you in that pajama rig. Then she chummed on to you."

"She did."

"Liked you from the first minit she saw you. There's no two ways about Jude. It's either like or the other thing, right off."

"Well, I'm pretty much the same—and I don't want to lose sight of her—or you."

"How'd you mean?"

"Oh, just that—I'm bothering about when this cruise is over. That's bothering me a lot; well, we'll leave it at that, for the present."

Satan turned his lantern face to starboard, for half a moment, to expectorate right over the starboard rail—maybe also to hide a grin.

"I reckon it'll come all right, somehow," said he. "We ain't much in the world, but we're straight. Reckon you're straight, too. That's all I want."

Toward noon a wreath of gulls in the sky showed Cormorant. Jude was at the wheel, Satan forward on the lookout. Twenty minutes later, Satan came running aft, fetched the old glass out of its sling, and went forward with it.

"There's a hooker on the sands," cried he. "Looks like a small fruiter or suthin', hove up."

Ratcliffe, standing beside him, could see nothing. The sands, owing to their low level, were invisible from the deck of the *Sarah*. Then, straining his eyes, he made out a speck on the sea line.

"Mast's gone," said Satan. "White painted, not more'n fifty ton, and she's layin' in the lagoon. She must have come in over the sand where it narrows to the westward."

"Funny," said Ratcliffe, "if you were right about the *Nombre de Dios* being sunk here, and we come to have a look for her and find another wreck."

"Well, I don't take no shares in the *Nombre de Dios,*" said Satan. "I ran here more for somewhere to run to, than with any thought of the *Nombre;* she's a hundred foot under the sand, if she's here at all; but it's luck, all the same; there'll be pickin's."

He stuck the glass to his eye.

"She's a yacht—that's what she is. One of them small cruisers, not more'n fifty or sixty, and her fittin's will just do for us, if she's not been stripped."

The *Sarah* held on, almost due south. South, east, and west, Cormorant Cay is devoid of danger; only here to the north, do the reefs and rocks show; and it is just here that the only entrance to the lagoon lies.

The sound of the gentle surf on the sands came now, and a full view of the lagoon water, reflecting the sun blaze like a mirror. On the still lagoon, with strange stereoscopic effect, seen between the two sand arms holding off the wrinkled sea, lay the craft, floating on an even keel and showing a stump of mainmast against the sky line. From her lines, she had been a yacht.

"Why, Go' bless my soul, she's anchored," cried Satan. "Derelic', and anchored. The chaps must have got away in a boat or suthin'. There's not a sign of them. Port—hard—port—as you were—steady so."

He ran to let go the halyards.

Another anchor had been bent on to some spare chain; it was hove over, and the *Sarah* came up to it, swinging less than fifty yards away from the stranger. She was a picture, a forty-ton fishing yawl, white painted, gracile as a fish, dismasted, abandoned, and swinging to a taut anchor chain.

The anchor down, Satan stood with his eyes fixed on his prey; Jude, too. They seemed considering her as a butcher might consider a carcass, before he cuts it up.

"Aren't you going to board her?" asked Ratcliffe.

"Have you ever seen a dead b'ar?" asked Satan. "Sometimes a b'ar isn't as dead as he looks. And sometimes a derelic' isn't as empty as it looks; it's a common thing for chaps on the Florida coast to hide in a driftin' canoe and rise up and laff at chaps that come out to collect it. I can't make out that anchor chain bein' down. And I'll just give them one hour, while we have dinner."

When they came on deck again, after the meal, they dropped the dinghy, and the whole three of them put off for the derelict.

She must have been dismasted outside the sands, for not a spar lay in the water alongside; dismasted and driven over by a big wave, her crew clinging to her. On the bow was her name, *Haliotis*. They tied up and scrambled on board. The deck ran flush, fore and aft. The wheel looked all right, but was jammed and immovable. The binnacle glass was smashed.

Satan stood, whistling and looking about him. Then he dived below, followed by the others. The cabin had been left in good order; it was a bit overgilt and decorated, for a plain man's taste, but everything was of the best, and a hanging lamp of solid brass still swung over the center table. The walls were of bird's-eye maple, the cushions of the best blue cloth, and the fittings of the tiny sleeping cabins to match.

There was plenty of stuff lying about, books, clothes, boots; the people had evidently put off in a hurry, not caring much what they took, as long as they got away.

Perhaps, they had taken advantage of a passing steamer.

Ratcliffe picked up a book, a volume of O. Henry. There was a name in it—J. Seligmann. Jude, delving in the starboard after cabin, came out holding up something; it was a pair of boots, womens', patent leather, with white suede tops, and heels three inches high.

"Look at them things!" said Jude with a burst of suppressed laughter.

Ratcliffe stuck his head into the little cabin. It reeked of California poppy as though a bottle of it had been upset; Californian poppy and cosmetic scents; clothes were lying about in disorder; a woman's white yachting cap, deck shoes, lingerie, bursting like froth out of a cabin trunk, gave added touch to the hysterical distraction of the scene.

Jude picked out a frilled garment from the lingerie box, looked at it, rolled it up and cast it with a chuckle in the bunk. Then she reached up and opened the little port. Ratcliffe left her pursuing her investigations, attracted by the whoops of Satan, who seemed pursuing things about the deck.

Satan, with his hair wild, and his eyes ablaze, had rapidly sampled his treasure. Everything he wanted had been left. Had he found the *Nombre de Dios*, with gold to her hatches, it is doubtful if his excitement would have been so intense.

"Look at that," cried he, pointing to the mast winch. "Wantin' it! Should think I had been! Kim along and see." He led the way to a heap of raffle and broken spars forward. "Look at them gaff jaws, galvanized an' covered with hide! And me with old wooden ones creakin' like an old shoe; there's a main sheet buffer, too. Come along to the sail room."

They went to the sail room, then to the galley. Everywhere finds, glorious finds.

After a rapid glance at the multitudinous loot—including, in a little engine room, a 13-15 horse-power, petrol paraffin, Kelvin auxiliary engine, two cylinder, with the shaft running out through the quarter, and a spare Bergius propeller, they came on deck again.

"Look here," said Ratcliffe, "why not tow her back to Havana and claim salvage! She's worth a lot, and she's derelict."

"Not me," said Satan. "Have you ever claimed salvage? First, there's the tow, and we're underhanded. Then, there's the lawyers; what's to stop this chap, Seligmann, whoever he is, poppin' up an' swearin' against me; he'd say he left her with the anchor down in harbor; it amounts to that, though she's derelic' right enough. Not me. I'll take what I want, without no lawyers to help me. She's my meat, by all the laws of the sea, and that's the end of it."

Appeared Jude from the cabin hatch, carrying, as a trophy, a go-ashore hat she had unearthed from somewhere, a crushed strawberry-colored straw hat. Or was it a bonnet? It had long strings and a rose stuck on one side of it.

"Look what that cattawampus has left behind her!" cried Jude.

"Quit your foolin'," cried Satan, "and come along and lend a hand; here, hist these things into the dinghy."

Jude flung the hat down the open skylight, and the rank burglary of the *Haliotis* began.

CHAPTER XXX.

A SECRET OF THE SAND.

It seemed to Ratcliffe, in the days that followed, that he had never known what work meant before. That he, a wealthy and respected member of the British upper middle classes, an ex-Christ Church man, and a member of Boodles, was assisting Satan Tyler in "tearing the tripes" out of another man's yacht, also occurred to him, sometimes, as a fact; a distorted sort of fact, blurred and dimmed by the blazing and brilliant atmosphere in which they were working, the absolute and shocking loneliness that hemmed them in, Satan's personality and Jude's companionship.

Sometimes he imagined a warship, one of those prying, officious little cruisers that do police work, closing up with the Cay, and sending a boat into the lagoon, to nab them.

Sometimes he fell to wondering what Seligmann was like; an American surely, one of the gulf hunters, belonging, most probably, to one of the numerous clubs on the Florida coast, and Mrs. Seligmann, or was it Miss? Or not even that? One thing was certain, Seligmann was rich. They were not robbing a poor man.

At the end of the third day Jude gave out, not from weariness, but from distaste. "Lord! Haven't you had enough of this old truck," said Jude. "I don't feel's if I ever wanted to see a len'th of rope nor a cringle again."

Ratcliffe felt pretty much the same.

"I'll finish the business myself," said Satan. "You can knock off if you like, go'n hunt for turkles' eggs."

"I'm going," said Jude.

"I'll come along, too," said Ratcliffe.

Satan ferried them over to the sands. It was about two hours before sundown, and an easterly breeze was blowing fresh and cool, shivering up the lagoon water and whispering among the sand grains.

Jude walked despondently, as they trudged along close to the sea edge, discovering nothing.

"D'you know," said Ratcliffe, "we've never even started to hunt for a sign of the *Nombre de Dios*. I wonder if she's sunk, really, anywhere near here."

"I dunno," said Jude. "Don't care, nuther. Satan's so full of his pesky old fittings, he's no time to think of anything else."

"Cheer up, Jude!"

"I'm all right."

"No, you're not—what's wrong?"

"Lots of things."

"When we get back to Havana——" began Ratcliffe. She cut him short.

"I don't want to go back to Havana," said she. "Ain't going."

She sat down on the sands, plump, nursed her knees, and stared over the sea, casting her hat beside her. He stood for a moment, then he sat down. He knew at once, knew what had been working in her mind, for days.

"You're bothering about what Sellers said, dirty scoundrel; I'd have punched his head only the whole thing happened so quick and you landed him with that mop. Don't worry."

No reply.

"What's the good?" went on Ratcliffe; then, cautiously and feeling that he was treading on dangerous ground: "See here, there's no harm in being a girl, no more than there is in being a man."

No reply.

A laughing gull passed and jeered at them. Jude followed it with her eyes. She seemed almost unconscious of his presence, and not to have heard his words. He watched her profile against the sky, noticed the eyelashes that seemed longer and more curved up than ever, the nice shape of the head, free of the old Panama.

Then she turned, leaned on her elbow, and looked up at him. Then she looked down. "What made you think I was botherin' about Sellers?" asked Jude.

"I don't know," said Ratcliffe. "I just thought it; I've been thinking a lot about you. I care for you a lot; that's about it."

She looked up at him again, full in the eyes, and with a new expression he had never seen before, a puzzled, half-startled look, like that of a person suddenly awakened in strange surroundings. Then her eyes fell away from him. She took a handful of sand and let the grains fall between her fingers.

Then she threw the stuff away, brushed the palm of her hand clean and sat up. Drawing a little closer to her, he put his hand round her waist, just as he had done when they were on the sand spit, and just as on the sand spit she let it rest there—for a moment. Then, with a queer little laugh, she removed the hand and struggled to her feet.

He rose up and they went on. Without a word. Then, presently, they began to talk about indifferent matters, almost as though nothing had occurred. They found a nest of turtles' eggs, and Jude marked it; farther along they came upon something strange, a sort of platform half covered with sand; Jude said it was the foretop of a ship, sunk and sanded over.

"It's the *Nombre de Dios,* maybe," said Ratcliffe.

"Maybe," said Jude, "it's the foretop of an old ship. Anyhow, see, where the mast's broke off; she's thirty or forty foot under that."

"Not much good to us, even if she is the *Nombre de Dios.*"

"Not much."

The gulls seemed to agree, and the little waves falling crystal clear on the beach.

It was near the end of the spit just here, and the sands shelved out, losing themselves in the immeasurable loneliness of the sea stretching to Mariguana and the Caicos, and the northern shoulder of South America.

Jude, on her knees, with a bit of driftwood, was scraping away the sand from the edge of the sunk foretop, when something caught her eye.

A turtle had landed where they had marked the eggs; it was so far away that it did not look bigger than a threepenny bit.

She flung the bit of driftwood away, rose to her feet, and started running, taking the extreme sea edge where the sand was hard.

Ratcliffe followed. They were half a minute too late, the turtle turning back to the sea and leaving them spent and laughing. She got down on her knees and hived the eggs in her hat, still laughing; he helped, filling his hat and his pockets, and then they started for the lagoon edge, Jude suddenly in the wildest spirits. He has never seen her in such high good spirits; when they got aboard, it was just the same. Even Satan's maniacal passion for old junk, expressed, at supper, in the determination to spend two more days picking and scraping at the *Haliatis,* did not depress her; it only made her laugh.

"You'll be cryin' before you've done, if you go on laffin' like that," said Satan. "What's possessed you, eh?"

Sure enough she was. The words acted like a pin on a bubble. She flushed, pushed her plate away, half rose, and then sat down again.

"You're always going on at me; whach a want me to do? If I'm crying, I ought to be laffin'; an' if I'm laffin', I ought to be crying. I'll laff as much as I want."

Then, logically, she broke into violent tears, rose, and ran on deck.

"What the hell-nation's the matter with her?" asked Satan.

"I don't know," replied Ratcliffe.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE GO-ASHORE HAT.

He had time to think over the matter, as he lay in his bunk, that night. He fell to wondering, among other things, what the spell was that drew him toward Jude and held him. Was it just the power of youth. Scarcely. He had met lots of youth, in his time, and it had not attracted him much; besides, when you have only to look in the looking-glass to see youth, it is at a discount.

Puzzling over the matter, he came to the bedrock fact that Jude, in some extraordinary way, had the power to make him feel more alive than he had ever felt before.

Leaving other things aside, there was an honesty, faithfulness, and simplicity, about Jude, that raised her above the category of ordinary beings. Instinct told him that this compound quality was worth more than all the gold lying under the hatches of the *Nombre de Dios;* more than all the diamonds in the Rand, when combined with that other quality speaking in her level gaze —steadfastness.

He remembered the queer little laugh with which she had freed herself from his hand round her waist. Then he fell asleep and dreamed that he and Jude and a lot of larrikins were lying in wait, by a harbor, blue as the sea off Jamaica, to clod bathing nigger girls. Then he was chasing Jude round and round a tree, only to catch her and find that she was Carquinez.

When he got on deck, next morning, he found the ship deserted. The others were away on the sand bank, and he amused himself by fishing till they returned. Jude showed no traces of the tears of last night, and Satan was elated. He had been examining the wreck wood, and his experienced eye backed the declaration of Jude. It was the foretop of a ship, right enough, and, a hundred to one, so he declared, the foretop of the *Nombre.*

Ratcliffe, wondering vaguely why he seemed so pleased over the find, considering the sand conditions, asked him the chances of raising her. Then, said Satan, seeming to turn his gaze inward upon his awful and profound knowledge of the sea and its ways:

"If you was to get all the dridgers from H'vana to Pensacola and dridged till your eyes bugged out o' your head an' your tongue hanged down to your heels, you wouldn't clear her. She's a sure-enough mug trap."

"How d'you mean?"

"Why, with that story and that chart an' that old foretop I could set half Havana diggin' like dogs for a bone, to say nothin' of private parties an' syndicits an' such things. Maybe I will, too, some day."

They put out, after breakfast, for the *Haliotis* and another load of "old junk." Satan rowed back with it, leaving Jude and Ratcliffe on board, Ratcliffe collecting things forward, and Jude grubbing about in the saloon. After a while, Ratcliffe came to the companionway and down the stairs.

The cabin was brilliant with sunlight, with water reflections through the open portholes playing on the ceiling and polished maple and venesta of the walls; across a pile of truck and bunk bedding, heaped on the table, he caught a glimpse of the upper part of Jude.

Jude, fancying herself entirely alone, and yielding to some prompting or other, had picked up the despised go-ashore hat and put

it on; she was looking at herself in the mirror fixed to the after bulkhead. She was looking at herself, with her head now straight and now tilted slightly to one side; then the head turned, but she did not see Ratcliffe; her eyes were still fixed on the hat. She was looking at it sideways. All her unconscious movements might have been those of a lady in a milliner's shop, trying on a hat in a critical spirit.

She had not heard him coming down the companionway, owing to the fact that he was in his bare feet, and she did not hear him go up again. On deck he took his seat on an old box, upended close to the mainmast stump, and considered the thing he had just witnessed in a philosophical spirit. It was like seeing a chrysalis crack and a butterfly's wing protruding.

What had happened, since yesterday morning, to make her consider the hat at all, let alone wear it before a looking-glass? Had she put it on in derision and to see what a guy she looked? Not a bit. She had made friends with that hat. Those few movements of the head spoke of consideration, not derision, in a language old as the earliest feather headdress, and more universal than volapuk.

For a moment he almost yielded to the desire to go down below and see if the butterfly had really arrived. Then he checked himself. There was time, plenty of time. Besides, Satan was putting off again in the dinghy for another load.

Satan, over this business, like a man in drink, or a lunatic, had his hot fits and cold fits; a hot fit had suddenly come on him. The petrol-paraffin engine had begun suddenly to shout to him that it must be taken. A glorious idea, too, had evolved itself in his brain; why not fit it to the *Sarah,* not there in the lagoon, of course, but in some port. All that was required would be some structural alterations and a shaft hole in the quarter; he reckoned the fitting would cost under three hundred dollars.

He didn't want the thing, really. Masts and sails were good enough for his pottering about work. It was the passion of a woman for jewelry. The *Sarah* would be a nobbier boat with an auxiliary. Sea swank, purely. Exhibiting the only apparent weak spot in his character. That spare Bergius propeller had begun revolving in his mind days ago, "thrud—thrud—thrud, see me drive the *Sarah,* see me drive the *Sarah.*"

Coming over the rail, Ratcliffe saw the new light in his eye, and wondered what it portended.

"I've been thinkin'," said Satan, taking his stand by the mast stump and surveying the heap of stuff collected by the other, "I've been thinkin' it's tomfoolery to leave that engine."

Jude, brought up by the sound of the dinghy coming alongside, appeared at the saloon companionway. She wore no hat.

"Good Lord!" said Ratcliffe, aghast, "you don't mean to say—— But it's impossible! We haven't the means to take it."

"There's enough of the mast left to rig a tackle to," said Satan, "and that hatch leads right down to the engine place. The heavy fittin's are easy raised from the bed plates, and they're not too heavy to go in the dinghy; we can tow her with the c'lapsible."

"But what can you do with the thing?"

"Fit her to the *Sarah,* of course."

"Here, in the lagoon?" asked the horrified Ratcliffe.

"Well, I wouldn't mind if I had the hands and the tools for the job," replied Satan. "Naw—it's beyont me. I'll have to take her to a port, to have it done; not Havana, neither. There's too many eyes in Havana, and chaps that know my business. Vera Cruz is the place. I know a Spanish yard there'll do the job."

"The year after next," put in Jude. "Supposing you *do* manage to get it aboard, you know what the dagoes are. And you'll knock the inside of the *Sarah* to flinders. She won't be the same boat with that old traction injin in her. I wish we'd never struck this Cay."

She sat down on the coaming of the skylight and folded her hands. Ratcliffe had never seen her do that before. He stood torn between two things, the desire to please Satan and the desire to please Jude; pulling on the side of Jude there was also the sure foreknowledge of the heavy work that would be required. That did not frighten him, but it did seem to him that they had done enough and ought to be satisfied. It was like burglars going for the kitchen boiler after having removed the plate, furniture, and very bed linen of a house.

All the same, he could not but admire Satan. Time was pressing. It was quite

possible that a salvage boat might poke her nose into the lagoon, at any moment. Satan knew this as well as he, yet it did not move him.

"It's not a dago yard," said Satan, evading the traction-engine dig. "It's French. And I've been wanting an auxiliary for years. Pap was with me, only he was offle slow over business. And here's one for nix. I'm goin' down to have a look at her." He dived below.

Jude sat brooding.

"Never mind," said Ratcliffe. "It's not a big engine, and he and I will be able to do it with a tackle. I'm not going to let him put you to work on it."

He was cut short by Satan's voice calling him to come below. Down below, he had to follow all sorts of details pointed out, details proving the desirability of the prize and the miraculous ease of its removement. Then they came on deck and put off for dinner. But Satan was never destined to lift that engine. Fate had fixed it to its bed plates more securely than screws and nuts could hold it.

CHAPTER XXXII.

CLEARY!

Dinner was over, and Jude had run up on deck. Suddenly her voice came down through the open skylight.

"Below there! Cleary's coming!"

Satan jumped from his place like a man shot. Next moment he was on deck. Jude pointed and handed him the binoculars she had been using.

"That's them," said Satan, after a long look. "Cuss the swabs!" He handed the glasses to Ratcliffe.

Away to the north two sails cut the sea line. With the aid of the glasses two vessels leaped into view; a topsail schooner and a smaller vessel of fore-and-aft rig. Even with the glasses he could not have been sure that these were the *Natchez* and the *Juan,* like a pair of evil dogs hunting in company; but Satan was sure; so was Jude.

"They're coming dead for the Cay," said Jude. Satan said nothing.

Having smoked for a while in silence, Satan turned to his companions. It was a boast of Satan's that he had never lost a spar, a fact partly due to luck, partly to his foreseeing eye; like a good general he had plans for all eventualities.

"They won't be in the lagoon for a couple of hours," said he, "with this wind and all. Come on aboard the old tub."

"What are you going to do?" asked Jude. "Sink her at her moorings?"

"No time; besides, they'd see her on the lagoon floor. It's up anchor, and let her drift on the sands."

"What's the good of that?"

"Oh, Lord! don't stand jibberin'. I've got my plan. Into the dinghy with you."

They rowed over to the *Haliotis.* They set to, got the anchor in, secured it, and rowed back to the *Sarah.* Then they watched the *Haliotis* drift. The tide was going out, she was close to the eastern arm of the spit, and that arm had a bend in it toward the narrowing entry. Satan reckoned she would take the sand a hundred yards or so from the entry, and he reckoned right.

But they had no time to watch her; the deck of the *Sarah* was lumbered with stuff that had to be stowed away out of sight. It took an hour before everything was shipshape and snug, and by that time the oncomers were close in, their sails big-bellied with the wind, beating up for the entrance. They came through, the *Juan* leading, the *Natchez* some two cable lengths behind. Then with canvas thrashing and the gulls yelling round them, they dropped their anchors; the *Juan* to starboard of the *Sarah,* and the *Natchez* farther up the lagoon. Ratcliffe had expected demonstrations of hostility. There were none.

They could see Sellers directing the fellows forward, and they could make out Cleary on the deck of the *Natchez;* then they saw Sellers drop below and, through the binoculars, they could see Cleary as though he were only a few yards off. He was smoking and giving orders to the hands. Then he came and spat over the rail, and stood looking toward the *Sarah,* with his eyes shaded; having finished this inspection, he, too, dropped below.

"I'd a sight sooner they'd shook their fists at us," said Satan. "They know they've got us, sure."

Then Sellers reappeared on the deck and the *Juan* dropped a boat.

"Here he is," said Jude, "and whether he's got us or whether he hasn't, he ain't coming aboard this ship."

She ran forward and fetched the mop from the hole where it was stowed.

"Let up," said Satan. "I don't want no

fightin'. I tell you, I've got a plan to chouse the blighters. I don't want no mops in it."

"He ain't coming aboard," said Jude.

As the boat of the *Juan* came alongside, Sellers, in the stern sheets, raised his hand, in a lordly fashion, and slightly, as befitted a superior taking notice of an inferior.

"Hullo, Satan!" cried Sellers as the bow oar hooked on.

"Hullo, yourself!" replied Satan. "Whach you doin' down here away?"

"Tell you when I get aboard," said Sellers. "Why, there's the kid! Hullo, kid!"

"Claws off," cried Jude. "You try to come aboard and I'll land you with this mop; you can talk from the boat."

Sellers sat down again in the stern sheets.

"She won't let you aboard," said Satan, speaking as though Jude were not present. "You shouldn't have sassed her the way you did, over there at Lone."

"I'm sure I beg her pardon," said Sellers. "I'm trooly sorry to have trod on a female's sussuptibilities. But what I'm wishin' to say is this, and it's as easy said from here as on deck: you've got to come aboard the *Juan,* you and that thousand dollars you've had from Cark, to say nothin' of the coin you've had from Cleary, an' be tried by co't-marshal an' take your sentence. If you don't I'll board you, me and Cleary, an' go through your ship an' fling the lot of you in the lagoon. D'you take me?"

"I'll come," said Satan. "I want to have a talk with Cark, anyhow."

"And he wants to have a talk with you."

"Right. Off you go, and I'll follow."

"Swab!" said Jude. "Are you going to pay them that thousand dollars back. I'd sooner chuck it in the lagoon."

"I'd pay a thousand dollars to see Cark done in the eye," replied Satan. "Where's the damage? I've hived more than two thousand dollars' worth of stuff off that blistered derelic'. You leave them chaps to me."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"I'LL TAK'!"

Ten minutes later, Satan and Ratcliffe boarded the *Juan.* Cleary was already on board, down in the cabin with the others; Cark and a bottle of gin were presiding at one end of the table. Satan, with a nod to the company, came to the table and took his seat, motioning Ratcliffe to take the seat opposite to him. It was like a meeting of a board of directors, and the table just held the six comfortably.

What followed struck the unaccustomed Ratcliffe with astonishment—the amiability of it. It might have been a card party, with Satan the loser—momentarily.

"Well, gentlemen," said Satan, "what's to pay?"

There were extra glasses on the table, and a box of cigars. The cigars were pushed along by Sellers, as he spoke.

"There's Cark's loss of time," said Sellers. "Not to say mine and Cleary's. We tried for you round Rum Cay, when you gave us the slip, and then there was the run down here. A thousand dollars to us that means, and five hundred to Cleary."

"Makin' it two thousand five hundred and forty," said Satan. "I'm agreeable. And the derelic' is mine."

"Which derelic'?" asked Sellers innocently.

Satan absolutely disdaining to reply lit a cigar. "She's worth all ten thousand dollars," said he. "And what's the salvage on that?"

"Y'mean that old dismasted catboat stuck on the sand there?" said Cleary. "Not worth five. B'sides, she's our meat."

Satan dropped Sellers, and turned to Carquinez. "You'll maybe explain," said he. "You know the rights of the law. If you try to collar that hooker, I'll come in with first claim, and here's a gentleman will back me in law expenses. You know him—Mr. Ratcliffe. Holt and Ratcliffe."

"I'll back you," said Ratcliffe.

"And it seems to me law is not your lay, Cark," went on Satan. "We came in here, yesterday, and boarded and claimed that hooker, and I was fixing the tackle for towing when you blew along. The thing's as clear as paint. She's ours for salvage, and you're not in it."

"Look here," began Sellers violently—then he closed up. Cark had given him a kick under the table. Then there was silence, for a moment, during which these two scoundrels seemed to brood together, telepathically. Then Cark spoke, addressing Satan.

"Will you take the air on deck, for wan moment, with your friend," said Cark.

"Sure," said Satan. A few minutes later they were called down again.

"See here," said Sellers, acting as spokesman for the others, "we don't want to bear hard on you, but we've been at a big loss over this business."

"And who let you in for it?" asked Satan. "Haven't you been chasin' me since last fall, over the *Nombre.* Was it my fault she weren't there?"

"Well, anyhow, we're losers. But I'm coming to the derelic'. You'll never be able to do the tow with the *Sarah;* why, the *Sarah* ain't bigger than her, and you're underhanded, anyhow."

"That's so," said Satan.

"Well, what I propose is this," said Sellers. "We'll drop claims for the run down here, and only ask a thousand and forty of you, and you drop claims on the derelic'."

Satan laughed.

"Maybe you don't know she's got an auxiliary in her, worth four thousand dollars if it's worth a cent. She's broke her propeller, but she's got a spare one on board, and if I knew anythin' of injins I'd drive her back on her own power. No, I sticks to the derelic', if that's the best you can offer. And here's your dollars—though I'll have to give you my check for the extra money."

He produced a bundle. Then with his hand on it:

"If you choose to take the derelic' for what she's worth, and call it quits, I'll trade. One or the other. I'm not set on that tow. But there you are. You know the chances."

"I'll tak'," suddenly broke in Carquinez. And the business was ended.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE VANISHED LIGHT.

A week later, toward sundown, the *Sarah* came up the half mile channel and dropped her hook in Havana harbor close to the old anchorage of the *Maine.* A Royal Mail boat, passing out, gave her the kick of its wash as she settled down to her moorings. A custom's boat dropped alongside, and the custom's men, hailing Satan as a friend and brother, came aboard and transacted business with him in the cabin. The wind blew warm, bringing scents and sounds across the vast harbor, fluttering the flags of the shipping. Ratcliffe, standing at the rail, dazzled by the brilliancy of the scene before him, knew that his cruise was over.

He remembered the morning at Palm Island, when he boarded the *Sarah* first. And the picture was still fresh, in his mind, of the *Haliotis,* as they had left her in the lagoon at Cormorant, Sellers and Cleary and their men swarming about her and tinkering her up. They intended to ship the spare propeller and bring her along under her own motive power to the nearest port, Nassau in the Bahamas.

They had been so busy with the engines and the hull that they had never noticed how completely she had been stripped. They were unconscious of the fact that she had been left with her anchor down. He could still see them, like ants, laboring in the sun, at the task set to them by the grimly humorous Satan.

Satan had won the game they had forced on him. Holding, as he did, a thousand and forty dollars, the "tripes" of the *Haliotis,* and the secret of the mug trap, to be disposed of, perhaps, later on, for a consideration. Satan would, no doubt, set other unfortunates digging for the *Nombre* just as he had set Cleary and Sellers tinkering and towing at the *Haliotis;* just as he had held up freighters for a bunch of bananas; just as he had made Thelusson and his crew careen and scrape the *Sarah;* just as he had made Ratcliffe an accomplice in his plans, and a handy man to help him in his works. Yet, the funny thing about the scamp was the fact that he was absolutely dependable, when not dealing with companies or governments or derelicts. Ratcliffe would have trusted him with his last penny.

Dependable if you took hold of him by his handle, and not by his cutting edge. Trustable, if you trusted him.

Then Jude came up in her harbor rig, that is to say, boots and a coat. "Satan's clacking away with the customs an' the port doctor man," said Jude. "You can't see across the cabin, with the smoke, and I had to change my rig in the galley."

"You going ashore?" asked Ratcliffe.

"No," said Jude, "Satan's going. I've got to keep ship. You going with him?"

"I suppose so."

Appeared Satan, followed by the port men, who tumbled into the boat and rowed off.

"Goin' ashore?" asked Satan. "Well, I'll row you to the wharf after I've had a bite of supper. Jude'll bring the boat back, and we can get a shore boat off, for haff a dollar."

Half an hour later, just as the electrics

were springing alive, and the anchor lights of the shipping marking the dusk-blue sky, they started. They stood on the wharf steps, for a moment, watching Jude row off. Then they turned to the town.

Satan knew the place as well as the inside of his pocket, and as he trudged along beside Ratcliffe, under the electrics, across plazas, or through shortcut, cutthroat-looking byways, he pointed out the notable features of the place. Dutch Petes', the Alvarez factory, the great opera house, the Calle Commacio, the cathedral. They passed Florions, with its marble tables, drinkers, and domino players, and Satan suddenly hove to.

"Where d'you want to go now?" said Satan. "D'you want drinks?"

"No, I don't want drinks," said Ratcliffe. "Come over here."

A blazing cinema palace shone across the way, and they entered, Ratcliffe paying. The place was in black darkness. A cowboy shooting up a bar, was on the screen, and a man with an electric torch led them to their seats. Then they sat watching the pictures, Satan criticizing the actors, sometimes, in a loud voice, and not always favorably. The cowboy shot himself off the screen, the lights flared up, for half a minute, went out, and the pictures resumed.

Ratcliffe felt a nudge, and in the darkness Satan's voice, muted now, came in his ear.

"Say," whispered Satan. "Did you see him?"

"Who?"

"The chap that dropped you at Pa'm Island."

"Skelton!"

"That's him. He's sittin' right a' front of you."

Skelton here! But where, then, was the *Dryad?* Had he wrecked her or what? The darkness, filled with native Havana scents, became tinged with the atmosphere of British respectability. Skelton at the pictures! Why, he ought to have been at the opera, or one of the theaters, or walking on the *alemada*, digesting his dinner and thinking of tariff reform or Anglicanism. It seemed impossible. Yet, when the light flared up again, there was Skelton, sure enough, sitting with another man. They were just starting to leave. Skelton wore evening clothes, covered by a light overcoat. Ratcliffe rose up and, followed by Satan, pursued him, touching him on the shoulder, outside, and in the full blaze of the lamps.

"Good God!" said Skelton. "Ratcliffe."

"Just got in," said Ratcliffe. "Had a ripping time. Where's the *Dryad?*"

"Up at the wharf, coaling," replied Skelton, absorbing Ratcliffe's rough-and-ready garb, the cloth cap he was wearing, and Satan. "I'm staying at the Matanzas, but I go aboard to-morrow morning, and we're off in the evening. What have you been doing with yourself?"

"Oh, having no end of fun. We found an old treasure ship and blew her up, and found she was full of skulls and bones. You know Satan?"

Skelton, who had ignored Satan, acknowledged his existence by a little nod.

"Who's your friend?" asked Ratcliffe, glancing at Skelton's companion, who had removed himself a few paces.

"Ponsonby—diplomatic service. See here, come on board to lunch, to-morrow—one-fifteen."

"Right."

"I have some gear of yours."

"Right. I'll see about it."

" 'Night."

" 'Night."

Off he went.

They had seen enough of the pictures, and, having no inclination for cafés or taverns or gambling shops, they made back toward the wharves, Satan walking in profound silence, Ratcliffe thinking. The whole evening, he had been followed by a miserable sort of half depression; it had attached itself to him, first, on the deck of the *Sarah*, born of his return to civilization; it had managed to decolorize the past few weeks, and demagnetize Jude.

His conscious mind had never quite gauged the hold that Jude had managed to get upon him. And this subconscious devil, rising at the touch of civilization, like a gas bubble from his conventional past, had burst, with spoiling effect, robbing the *Sarah* of her romance and sea charm, and the past few weeks of their brightness. Jude had dimmed with everything else, become part and parcel of what seemed an illusion.

It was while sitting at the pictures, in black darkness, with a knowledge of Skelton's presence, that the atmosphere began to clear, the waves to beat again on Cormorant Cay, the gulls to fly and call—and Jude to come back to life. He heard again

that queer little laugh of hers as she removed his hand. He felt again the warm body that had rested confidingly against him, away back there on the sand spit.

And there she was out on the black harbor, alone in the *Sarah,* while he and Satan were watching the pictures. Suppose some lumbering sailing craft, being towed to her moorings, or some incoming mail boat, were to smash into the *Sarah*—and they were to row off and find nothing—no Jude.

The thought almost made him rise from his seat to leave the place. But he could not explain to Satan. So he sat on till the lights flared out. And, all the time, mocking the pictures on the screen, came pictures of Jude, all sunlit, real, fresh as herself.

Then, as they pursued their way to the wharf, after leaving Skelton, the impatience increased. The darkness of the night, the blaze of the town, the gay life of the streets and the revelry of the cafés, all seemed sinister and banded in a conspiracy against him and the lonely little figure of Jude. Away out there in the darkness, alone, she was waiting for him. It came to him that Jude was the one sole thing he wanted in the cruel, cold, electric-lit world—and he had left her.

They passed through narrow streets, like the streets in an evil dream, and blazing streets hideous with noise. Then, at last, they reached the wharf, with its amber lights spilling on the black waving water. Satan hired a boat and they put off, two dagoes rowing and Satan at the yoke lines.

The *Sarah* was anchored a mile out, and the vast three-mile harbor, vague in the starlight and circled by the hills, seemed to Ratcliffe more immense than when seen by daylight.

"I can't make out the light of the *Sarah,* nohow," said Satan.

A clutch came at Ratcliffe's heart. The clutch of something cold and malign, that had seemed following him ever since Skelton's presence had made itself felt like an evil omen. They were so far out, now, that the sounds of the town and wharves had died to nothing. But still the creak of the oars in the rowlocks kept on. Then came Satan's voice. "That's her, over beyond them three lights on the starboard bow."

Ratcliffe breathed again, and his heart leaped in him, as he picked out the light. Satan altered their course. Then they hung silent, Ratcliffe's eyes on the light and his hand in his pocket, feeling for dollars to pay the boatmen.

"What's there to pay?" asked he.

"A dollar, seeing there's two of them," replied Satan. "*Sarah,* ahoy!"

"Ahoy!" came Jude's voice, and a lantern swung over the side.

Satan bundled on board and Ratcliffe crammed five dollars into the hand of the stern oar; then he followed, and the fellows pushed off.

"Took it without fightin'!" said Satan. "Lord's sake, what's come to them?" Then he bundled below to make some coffee.

Jude snuffed the lantern out.

She was moving away from the side, and away from Ratcliffe, when he caught hold of her round the body. She did not resist him. He held her close to his heart.

"Jude."

"What is it?" asked Jude, with a sudden catch in her breath and speaking in a whisper. "Whach a' want?"

Then his lips met hers, full.

Five minutes later Satan, making his coffee over the Primus stove of the *Haliotis,* heard a struggling sound, mixed with stifled laughter, and Ratcliffe appeared at the cabin door. He was dragging Jude in, she was half resisting, and her face was hid in the crook of her arm.

"Satan," said Ratcliffe, "I'm going to marry Jude."

"God help you!" said Satan.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE WEDDING PRESENT.

The blushing bride-to-be of last night, hiding her nose on Ratcliffe's shoulder, as they sat together on the couch before Satan, while he taunted her with the fact that now she'd have to get into skirts, had turned back into Jude, this noontide. She was busy getting the dinghy ready to row her fiancé off to the *Dryad,* for his lunch with Skelton.

She was over the side in her, busy and humming a tune as she worked, bailing out water, fixing the cushions, and so on, while Satan watched her in a brooding manner over the rail. A ghastly fear was working in the heart of Satan, the fear that Skelton might want the dinghy returned.

"Now, mind you," said Satan, "and bring the boat back. I'd sooner lose me head than

that boat. If you come back without her, I'll chuck you in the harbor. I'm talking straight."

Ratcliffe, who had just come on deck, dressed for the occasion, came to the rail. Jude looked up at him and laughed. He had seen her laughing, before. He had seen her surly, meditative, brooding, weeping, flushed with anger, grumbling. But he had never seen her with a look like this—happy.

Since last night, something had come into her eyes that made her, when her eyes met his, beautiful. It was as though a lamp had been suddenly lit inside her, and the magical thing was the knowledge that he himself was the lamplighter. He had created this new something, that spoke to him right out, right to his heart, right to his soul.

He got into the dinghy, nodded to Satan, and they started, Jude at the sculls, her trousers rolled halfway up to the knees, and her old Panama on the back of her head.

"Go slow," said he. "There's lots of time." Then, when they were out of hearing and he was alone with her at last:

"Jude."

"What?"

"D'you remember yesterday you asked me if I was going away, now the anchor was down?"

"Yes."

"What would you have done if I had?"

"I'd 'a' drowned myself in the harbor," said Jude, without a moment's hesitation. "What's the good of asking?"

"When did you begin to care for me a bit?"

"D'you remember the sand spit?" asked Jude. "I dunno—maybe it was beyond then. Remember the cache?"

"When I chased you round the tree and kissed——"

Jude screwed up her lips.

"You gave me an awful bang on the head."

"You frightened the gizzard out of me," said Jude. "And I wasn't the same after —that night."

"I remember. I heard you telling Satan that ha'nts were chasing you."

"You were the ha'nts."

"But you didn't care for me then. Remember you said derricks were only good for hoisting fools off ships with."

"I reckon it was a sort of caring turned inside out," said Jude. She turned her head to see if they were making for the *Dryad.*

"You're letting her off her course," said she, "unless you're making for that brig."

"I'd just as soon make for her as anywhere else," said he, altering the course, "unless it was the sand spit. Jude."

"Yep?"

"Imagine if we were alone on the sand spit, you and I, just as we were that day, instead of in this rotten old harbor. Let's go there."

"I'm willing."

"When?"

"Soon's you like."

"We can get a tent and grub and Satan can take us there and come back for us. Damn—here's the *Dryad.*"

The first officer of the *Dryad* was leaning over the rail watching them, the stage was down, and Jude brought the dinghy alongside. Then, on the stage, he watched her rowing off. He waved his hand to her, and she replied. When he reached the deck, he found Skelton also at the rail.

" 'Morning," said Ratcliffe. "That's Satan's sister."

"Which?" asked Skelton. "That—er—person in the boat?"

"Yes. But you saw her on deck, down at Palm Island, didn't you?"

"I had forgotten," said Skelton, dismissing the subject.

There were no guests, Ponsonby was to have come, but he was indisposed. Yet, the luncheon was just as formal an affair as though a dozen had been present instead of two. Halfway through the meal, however, Ratcliffe's spirits began to brighten, under the influence of Perrier Youet and the harlequin thought that began to dance in his head.

"I am going for a honeymoon to the sand spit, with Jude," was singing in his head.

Skelton, in asking Ratcliffe on board to luncheon, had considered himself a most forgiving individual Leaving aside their little quarrel at Palm Island, remained the fact that Ratcliffe had left his ship, deserted him for the company of those Yankee "scowbankers," and to make matters worse, Ratcliffe seemed to have enjoyed the exchange.

Now, in closer company with the delinquent, he was beginning to regret his forgiveness. As a result, his manner had stiffened; he felt irritated and bored.

The steward had withdrawn, having placed the dessert on the table, and Skelton was in the act of carving a pineapple,

in the only way a pineapple ought to be carved—that is to say, by tearing it into pieces with two forks—when Ratcliffe, who had been staring at the fruit as though hypnotized, suddenly broke into a chuckle of laughter.

The pineapple, connecting itself, maybe, with canned pineapples robbed from the storeroom of the *Haliotis*, had suddenly brought up the vision of Satan.

Satan in a new guise—Satan as a matchmaker.

All sorts of things, some almost half forgotten, rushed together to clothe Satan in this new garment. He remembered Satan's solicitude for Jude's future, Satan's complacency, when he and Jude had gone off to the sand spit together; his conversations about Jude, the complete absence of surprise with which he had taken the business of last night; a hundred things, and all pointing in the same direction and to the fact that Satan had wished the business, just as he had wished the dinghy away from Skelton, just as he had wished Ratcliffe on board of the *Sarah Tyler*.

He, Ratcliffe, was part of the sea pickings of this gypsy, part and parcel with bunches of bananas, pots of paint, sail cloth, mainsheet buffers, cringles, and so on. He was annexed to fit Jude just as the mast winch of the *Haliotis* was annexed to fit the *Sarah*. Jude herself had declared that Satan had brought him on board because he "wanted him."

Skelton paused, in his operation on the pineapple, and stared at the other.

"I beg your pardon," said Ratcliffe, "but something has just struck me. So horribly funny, I couldn't help laughing. Anyhow, the joke is against myself. Look here, Skelton, I want to tell you something. I'm—I'm—going to marry a girl."

"Indeed? But what is there horribly funny about that?"

"Nothing. It's not that; it's something else. But let's start with that. I'm going to marry that girl who rowed me over here to-day—Satan's sister."

Skelton laid down his fork, all his starch had vanished, surprised out of his life. He seemed suddenly to grow younger and more natural looking.

"Good God!" said Skelton, staring at the other. "You don't mean——"

"I do. I don't know why I am telling you, but there it is. You can't understand in the least—couldn't hope to make you."

Now Skelton, with his starch off, and in an emergency, was a sound man, with a heart as good as any ordinary mortal's.

He had an eye that no little detail ever escaped. He had seen Jude at Palm Island, he had heard her speak, he had seen her half an hour ago, and Ratcliffe's manner left him in no doubt as to his absolute earnestness. He pushed the pineapple away, and rose from the table.

"Come into the smoke room," said he.

In the smoke room he rang for coffee. Not a word about Jude. Dead silence. Then, when the coffee was brought and the door closed, he turned to the other.

"Ratcliffe, you can't do this thing. I know. Let me speak for a moment. You are your own master, free to do as you choose. But I must speak. I like you. Our temperaments are dead different, and we don't make good companions, but you have many sterling qualities, and I don't want to see you come a mucker. You can do a thing like this in two minutes, but two hundred years won't get you out of it, once it's done. Take sugar in your coffee? Yes, I remember. See here. I had a young brother, once, who was going to have done just the same. Absolutely ruin himself. I managed to stop it, saved his future and his name.'

He picked a cigar out of a box and, coming to a dead stop in his remarks, cut the end off.

"My dear fellow," said Ratcliffe, before he could continue, "I know absolutely and exactly how you feel on the subject and what you would say. I've felt it myself, and said it to myself.

"I began to get fond of her almost from the first. If you'd been in my shoes you would have been just the same. No one could help getting fond of her. Then, after a while, I found how I was drifting, and I said to myself, 'It's absurd.' I pictured all my female relations, and so forth, and my position in the wonderful thing you call society."

"Don't sneer at society," said Skelton gravely. "That's the easiest sort of cant that ever folly put into a man's mouth. Go on!"

"You're right," said Ratcliffe. "All the same, society galls one, at times when the thought of it comes up against something

alive and fresh and free from snobbery, like Jude. Well, things went on and on. I hadn't much time for thinking, underhanded as we were. And that was the fatal thing. For I absorbed her without thinking. Not her face or body, but her character. You know that underhanded and close together on a tub like the *Sarah,* character is the thing that shows and counts, and, at every hand's turn, hers showed up and got a tighter grip on me. It wasn't a character all jam, either; but it was a thing to count on, and real as the sea. You can't understand."

"I can," said Skelton, humoring the other. "A fine character."

"Oh, Lord, no," said Ratcliffe. "Don't get away with things. Real, that's the word."

"But my dear man——"

"I know what you are going to say. She can't speak king's English. Well, I'm going to teach her. She's dressed like that. Well, I'm going to dress her properly, after a while."

Skelton suddenly showed a flash of irritation.

"Come up to the point," said he. "Are you, after what I've said, still fixed in your purpose? Are you going to marry her?"

"As soon as ever I can get a priest off to the old *Sarah,*" replied Ratcliffe.

"That is your last word?"

"Yes."

"Very well," said Skelton. He lit the cigar, which he had been holding unlighted in his fingers, and became almost amiable.

"Very well," said he, "go ahead. After all, it's not my affair. But I'll be interested to know how you get on. By the way, I have some gear of yours on board."

"Take it back, will you, like a good chap," said the other, "and leave it with the yacht people at Southampton. I'll pick it up there, when I return."

"You are coming back?"

"Oh, rather. But not for a year or so, maybe. I've a lot to do, and when you see us next, maybe you'll agree——" He stopped short and relit his cigar, and they hung silent, each engaged in his own thoughts.

Now, on the warm sea-scented air entering through the open ports, came a voice. It was the voice of the second officer, addressing some one over side.

"Hi, there! Bring her round to the quarter-boat davits. She's to come aboard."

"That's the dinghy," said Skelton. "I told them to bring her aboard. I'll send you back in the pinnace."

Again came the voice: "Hi, there! Are you deaf? Bring her round to the quarter-boat davits. She's to come aboard."

Then Jude's fresh young voice: "Gar'n. She's ours, old Popplecock gave her to Satan; whach a'talking about?"

"Very well;" came the other's. "You wait till Sir William comes on deck."

Skelton, with a grim smile, turned to the door. He pointed to the clock on the bulkhead. "I'm going on deck," said he. "See that clock? Promise me to stick here for two minutes, by it, and think right, over the matter, for the last time. Don't let anything I have said weigh with you."

He went on deck and, keeping clear of the rail, entered into conversation with the first officer. Three minutes passed, and Ratcliffe's head appeared at the saloon hatch.

"Going?" said Skelton.

"Yes," said Ratcliffe.

"Right. You can keep the dinghy. It's a wedding present. Luck."

"Same to you," said Ratcliffe.

He gripped the other's hand, and the grip was returned. The two men had never been so close to each other before, never would be again.

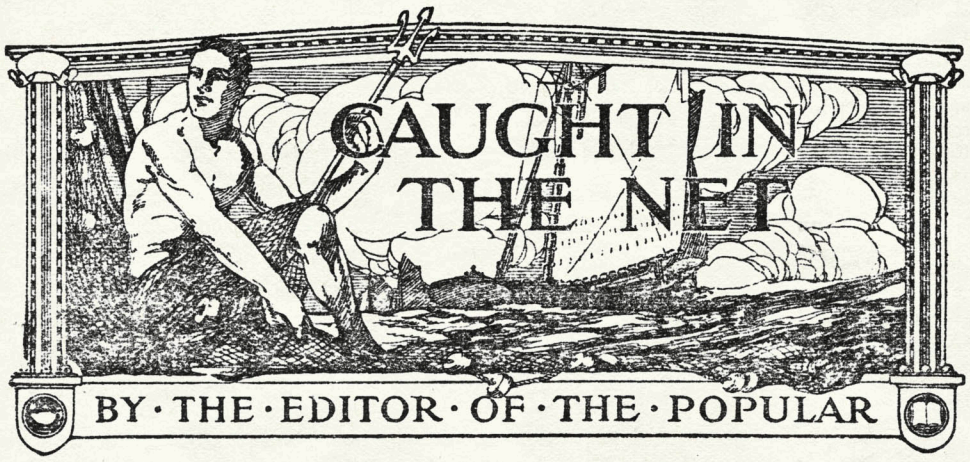
Two hours later the *Dryad,* queening it over the satin-smooth harbor, dipped her flag to the humble little *Sarah,* and the *Sarah* dipped her flag to the *Dryad,* and some one in the *Wedding Present,* lying alongside the *Sarah,* waved a hat.

Skelton, at the after rail, fixed his binoculars on the hat waver. It was Satan.

THE END.

MOTHERS OF WARRIORS

CAREFUL investigation recently has discovered that there are now only twenty living mothers of the men who fought in the Confederate army during the Civil War. A majority of these old ladies are more than ninety years of age.



RESTORATION OF RAILROAD MORALE

THOUGH none of us relished the recent increase in railroad rates, that increase seems already to be taking on the appearance of a blessing in disguise. Perhaps the most important result of it is the improvement of the morale of both the railroad executives and workers. For it is upon them that the main burden of restoring the efficiency of the roads must fall. Already they are facing their task in the proper spirit of "Work and Save," that should be the watchword of us all. And, to these men in their struggle with their problem, it is vital that we give our full coöperation. Until the railroads are in good working order again, the country will not properly function.

It is comforting to note the progress already made. From an average of twenty-two car miles a day in freight carrying—an average daily mileage of twenty-two miles for every car in the system—the executives promise to raise the average to thirty. This is equivalent to the addition of one hundred thousand cars to the equipment of the roads. Twenty-two car miles a day was the standard at the end of government control. As for actual performance, in this respect, the Western roads have already approximated the new standard, and, only recently, the report was made that, during July, the Atlanta, Birmingham & Atlantic R. R. averaged over forty-four car miles a day, in freight-car movement, and averaged thirty-three tons a car—as against an average, for all lines, in 1919, of twenty-nine tons. A further increase, in car service, has been effected by the roads, through a reduction of the average number of hours consumed in car repairs. Though Eastern roads are not reporting as much progress as Western ones, it is only fair to remember that they confront difficulties much greater than those of Western lines, some of these difficulties arising out of conditions over which the workers and executives have no immediate control.

If problems of the transportation system, in general, are by no means solved, it is none the less further reassuring to know that they have been thoroughly analyzed, during the past year or two. Railroad men have a thorough-going idea of what is necessary, even if it is not at once do-able. They see, in particular, that the railroads alone cannot cope with the future, though this does not really raise any question of the survival of the fittest. The classifications into which freight divides itself fall in so naturally with the various modes of transportation that the increasing volume, in each class, tends fully to employ all available facilities in each class' natural division of transportation, and so destroy destructive competition. For this reason, railroad men are actually encouraging coastwise shipping, and are even advocating river, lake, and canal carrying. In short, the railroads seem to be cheeringly imbued with the sane idea of teamwork, and with the idea of thinking more of the nation's interest as a whole than they have in the past. This spirit, in itself, cannot but assist in the improvement in morale.

THE COUNTRY'S SUGAR

NOTWITHSTANDING the high price of sugar, during the past year, due in part to the transportation situation, there has been far from any scarcity of the commodity in the country. The total of sugar, for the fiscal year 1919-20, including both that produced within continental United States and that imported from other countries, was over eleven billion pounds. After deducting exports to all other countries, this left us a net amount of some nine and a half billion pounds for domestic use. This refers to both cane and beet sugar, and means that the per capita consumption, here, for the year was 90.6 pounds, as compared to eighty-two pounds in 1919.

Our imports for the year, in cane sugar, coming from over forty countries, amounted to close to nine and a half billion pounds, a record-breaking figure. In continental United States itself the cane production was 250,000,000 pounds, while the beet-sugar production was one and a half billion. A new development in the trade was the importation from foreign lands of some 14,000,000 pounds of beet sugar, since January, 1920. In 1919 scarcely more than 1,000 pounds of this were imported.

Our total exports, for the fiscal year, of nearly one and a half billion pounds, exceed by nearly 30 per cent the corresponding figure for last year. There was an increase in the total value of 61 per cent—from $81,000,000 in 1919 to $131,700,000 in 1920. It is interesting to note that the exports to war-ravaged France, of 700,000,000 pounds, as compared to our exports of only about 1,000 pounds to her for the year ending June 30, 1914. Since the outbreak of the war France has led all other countries as a market for American sugar, the nearest to her being the United Kingdom. Other countries taking refined sugar from us, the past fiscal year, include the United Kingdom, 360,000,000 pounds; Switzerland, 60,000,000; Norway, 70,000,000; Greece, 50,000,000, and Spain, 40,000,000. The total value of our exports was $130,000,000. The calls upon this country, this year, were relieved, to some extent, by the increased output of beet sugar in Europe, particularly in Belgium and Czecho-Slovakia.

Most of our sugar, of course, is imported, the imports being almost entirely cane sugar. Cuba was the chief source of supply, this year, the imports from that country amounting to nearly seven billion pounds, as compared to the former high record of five and a half billion pounds in 1919. The total value of our imports in cane, for the year, was about $900,000,000. One can take a certain lugubrious interest in the fact that the average import price of sugar has increased from two cents a pound in 1914, to nine cents in 1920. The average export price was 3.6 cents in 1914, as against nine cents in 1920.

In this country, the bureau of crop estimates has reported an area of 530,000 acres now under cane sugar cultivation, and an area of 978,000 acres in sugar beets. The estimated crop, in the latter field, is put at two billion pounds for next year. The cane production here, for next year, is estimated at 240,000,000 pounds.

H. C. OF L. IN STRANGE FIELDS

WHILE the problem of the high cost of living has been facing nearly every civilized country, for several years, news has come recently that the problem is at present felt keenly in remote regions. In Central Africa, where live stock is given in exchange for wives, a desirable wife costs eight cows now, whereas before the war the price was four cows. Earlier than that time, the price was one or perhaps two cows, and, still earlier, a good wife could be bought for several spear heads.

It is reported also that the hoboes, in this country, are worried over the H. C. of L., and that many of them have been unwillingly forced to work in order to live. These brothers of the road often found, in the last year or two, that the scraps of food given at back doors, when they called to ask for it, were getting smaller and smaller. The rising cost of all necessaries made housewives use much of what they formerly gave or threw away. Since prohibition the hoboes are worse off. In the old days they could eat a satisfactory meal at the free-lunch counter of saloons, in town and cities, after the expenditure of five cents for a glass of beer. Now that source is done away with, and the ex-hoboes are confronted by the necessity of working.

THE OPEN AND CLOSED SHOP

MUCH excitement, while a strike of longshoremen was on, was caused, lately, among employers and labor unions, by an announcement in the newspapers that a strong committee of large firms in the transportation trades, in one of our big seaport cities, where these trades are unionized, had planned a campaign for the "open shop." In employing workers, private police were to be brought in to quiet possible riots, it was said. There were also rumors that employers in other cities were anxiously awaiting the result.

Later, however, the chairman of the committee denied emphatically, through the newspapers, that the committee ever contemplated any open-shop crusade; stating, further, that there was no intention of importing private police. It is believed, however, that plans to meet certain contingencies were considered. There are three systems of employing bodies of workers. The first is the closed shop, by which the employers agree to hire union workers only. The second is the open shop by which they agree to pay union wages, the employees working under union conditions, but refuse to discriminate against nonunion men. The third is the nonunion shop, by which the employers refuse to recognize the union, directly or indirectly.

About thirty years ago, when the unions were not so powerful as they are now, there were many members of unions working under the open-shop system, though there were also many closed-shop concerns. It was held, by open-shop employers, that discrimination against nonunion workers, some of whom might object to joining a union, was unfair. It was the business of the union, they held, to unionize the workers.

The law of supply and demand sometimes proved inimical to the unions. When there was a very low demand for workers, in any industry, nonunion workers who were willing to work for lower than union wages, were able to compete successfully with the union workers, the demand for labor being much lower than the supply.

In all cases in which the workers are employed directly by the government, there can be no recognition of the union. The agents of the government, when employees are competent, cannot discriminate against or in favor of any class of workers. Employers who are in favor of the open shop hold that this rule should apply to private employers and their employees. They contend that the closed shop tends to antagonize employers and employees, and means constant danger of strikes, and that the risk of strikes would be less under the open-shop system, even in cases where the union might exceed the nonunion workers in numbers. On the other hand, labor leaders contend that, under the closed-shop system, agreements with employers are more binding, as in the open-shop system the union has no control of the nonunion workers. The employers cite cases where union men went beyond union control.

THE UBIQUITOUS PRESS AGENT

TWENTY-FIVE or thirty years ago, the theatrical press agent, in the big cities of the United States, appeared to be at the summit of his power. Nearly every device conceivable was used to keep a number of theatrical women stars before the public. The milk-bath story was trotted out until it ceased to be new even to casual newspaper readers. It was devised first by the press agent of a lady star, whose name was often before the public, in unexpected ways. She took a bath of milk every morning, in her bath tub, and arranged with a local milk dealer for delivery of the milk daily. The main part of her press agent's story was that she was sued by the milk dealer for the amount of a bill for the milk used, which she was supposed to dispute. Reporters were sent at once to interview her and the press agent was there to jog her memory.

Another long-tried press-agent story was the tragedy of the star's lost umbrella, the gift of a dear friend and, sometimes, the unexpected finding of it again. Certain actresses, seeking publicity, lost such umbrellas or similar articles so frequently, that the newspapers lost interest in them. Then, of course, there were stories of lost jewels, miniature watches, or other gifts from dear friends, or perhaps, a canine pet which had disappeared.

More subtle methods are now used by the press agent. News came from Vienna, recently, that a well-known Berlin actress, appearing in Vienna, had made an offer through the press, in the form of a letter to an unknown thief, who had stolen from the hotel, in which she stopped, a pearl necklace belonging to her, asking him to return it, and undertaking to pay him its full value. The letter, which appeared in the newspapers, was addressed "To my unknown visitor." Some of the hotel employees were arrested on suspicion, by the police, but the lady insisted that such "crude methods" be abandoned. So the letter was sent to the newspapers. She told the reporters that she could not think of appearing on the stage, without the necklace, and her press agent no doubt agreed with her. Yes, the press agent is still very much alive and active, in civilized cities, everywhere.

THE MODERN BILL SYKES

WHEN Dickens wrote his novel, "Oliver Twist," in which Bill Sykes, the housebreaker, plays such a prominent part, there were, and may be still, foul slums, in London and other large cities in England, containing criminals, whose fathers and sometimes their grandfathers were also criminals, and where an environment of sordid crime surrounded them from the moment they were born. The lawbreakers living in these slums, of whom Bill Sykes was one of the worst types, were looked on as a hopeless class. If any of them tired of law-breaking, and tried to reform, there were more barriers against them being received in decent communities than against criminals, here, who are trying to reform and live honest lives. People in the United States, as a rule, are more inclined to overlook the past, in cases where lawbreakers are trying to reform, than in Old World countries. Men here who have served prison sentences, and have subsequently reformed, have been successful in business and received in respectable communities, after a lapse of time.

In London there are probably fewer slums, now, of the kind Dickens described, than in his day. But the Bill Sykes type of criminal is not dead, though the world has been growing better, as a whole, notwithstanding the reaction following on the war with Germany. The Bill Sykes type, in another form, also exists in this country. The unprecedented number of robberies, often accompanied by cold-blooded murders, in different parts of the United States, within the past year or more, show that there is a modernized Bill Sykes, here. Unlike the old type, he often dresses well, lives in good hotels, and has a hired or stolen automobile ready to take him to the bank, office, or house he intends to rob and also to furnish him with a means of escaping, when the robbery is accomplished. He carries a revolver and generally has an armed assistant, and goes for higher stakes than his Old World prototype. In brutal cruelty and callousness, in committing crimes, he fully equals the latter.

These robberies do not necessarily show that human nature is growing worse, on the whole. It is only that, if the war stimulated the patriotic impulses of the people of this country, which drew millions of them into the war to fight Germany, the abnormal excitement, caused by the war, seems to have stimulated, in another direction, the lawbreaking activities of the modern Bill Sykes and his kind.

POPULAR TOPICS

THE United States again has declared war, this time against rats. Surgeon General Cummings says that there are too many rats living at our expense—that each person in the country supports one of these four-footed dependents. He also says that it costs each of us a cent a day for rat food. In addition to this great and unnecessary burden, there will be, until the rats are exterminated, a slight but ever-present danger from bubonic plague, which ship rats bring into the country from foreign ports. The public health service is going to furnish States and cities with plans for rat proofing buildings and wharves.

OUT in Wyoming there are, in each thousand of population, three hundred and ninety-four people who are depositors in National banks. This is the highest average of any State, the average for the entire country being one hundred and ninety per thousand of population.

MUCH of the money that the public will pay the railroads, in increased passenger and freight rates, will be used by the carriers for the making of needed improvements and the purchase of new equipment. In the next year the railroads of the country intend buying 1,800 locomotives, 22,000 open-top cars, 30,000 box cars, 3,000 refrigerator cars, and 1,200 passenger coaches. This new rolling stock will cost $726,000,000, but should do much to increase the efficiency of our railroads.

AMERICAN ships are now carrying a full half of our foreign commerce. In 1914, ninety per cent of it was carried in foreign ships. But there is plenty of room for expansion. We carry about two-thirds of our sea commerce with other North American countries, and somewhat less than three-fifths of our commerce with South America. With Europe, however, we carry only a third of the total, and considerably less than half of our commerce with Asia, Africa, and Oceania.

CANADA is entering upon a period of tremendous development. Immigrants are needed badly. It is said that, to take care of her war debts, our neighbor must double her population, within the next ten years. Her food production has reached large figures this year. Canada's wheat crop is estimated at 262,338,0000 bushels, as against last year's 193,260,400 bushels; the oat crop at 496,966,000 bushels, as against last year's 394,387,000 bushels.

IMMIGRATION into the United States, almost stopped by the war and severely hampered by after-war conditions abroad, is now increasing. In the year that ended June 30th, some 800,000 potential citizens passed through the immigration station on Ellis Island, New York. This is far short of the 1,285,349 newcomers who arrived during the record year, 1907, but a great increase over the figures for the year that ended June 30, 1919, when only 141,132 immigrants came into the country, by way of New York.

ELECTRICITY is now being used to guide ships into harbor, in foggy and stormy weather. A sixteen-mile cable has been placed in the channel that leads to the entrance of New York harbor, and along this cable, in bad weather, an electric current will be sent. By means of wire coils hung over each side of their ships, wireless operators will be able to catch the radio emanations from the cable, and thus guide their ships safely to port, despite the weather.

EXACTLY what effect woman suffrage will have on the nation's politics, is a matter of personal opinion. But one thing is certain—the enactment into law of the Nineteenth Amendment will add the names of 26,883,866 women to the voting lists, provided, of course, that each woman takes advantage of her opportunity to have a voice in the country's affairs.

DESPITE the somewhat unsettled state of British affairs, Premier Lloyd George is considered fairly safe from assassination. An English insurance company recently has insured him against death, in this manner, at a premium of one-half of one per cent for a year. When King Edward VII. visited Ireland, in 1902, insurance against his assassination while on the trip cost one-tenth of one per cent.

They Shall Not Pass

By Henry C. Vance

Author of "The Sneeze Play," "Blondes and Brunettes," Etc.

"Brownie" Parks, fight impresario, did seem to have a little rebate coming to him from Bessemer's fans, only he ought to have arranged better for keeping it

WHEN yours sincerely was about shin-high to a duck, mother, probably fearing that I might grow up to be all pulchritudinous, like Paul Swan, poked a red-hot flatiron in my countenance by mistake and said household implement left a scar above my right eyebrow, which I'll most likely carry to the cemetery with me. The scar has a fraction less than nothing to do with this yarn, except that it makes me resemble a hard-boiled guy with a grouch, and with me looking so tough, like I might have did my teething on a chunk of pig iron, I don't see how them guys had the nerve to look me in the glims and pull what they did. But they done it.

Along in the early days of my kidhood, when I was but a few years removed from Storkville, I had a craving to become a street-car conductor and ring up the nickels. Later in life, when I had passed my minority and had got the street-car job, I suddenly realized that ringing up the nickels wasn't so much fun, after all, and with me having a acute stroke of paralysis in my ringing arm, the officials put me wise to the fact that the company had decided to try to struggle along without me.

So, with nothing on my mind but a derby and a bumper crop of dandruff, I finally drifted into the prize-fight game and into this Bessemer, Georgia, except, of course, Bessemer ain't the real name of the city, but the alias. In them days, I thought I could spot the late Solomon a coupla hundred words of wisdom and go right to the head of the class. I was one of them birds that figured what I didn't know was still young and innocent hieroglyphics.

I puts my best dog forward, in this here Bessemer, gets my clean shirt out of the laundry, dolls up in the best duds I got, and tries to look like a whole crate of currency. A visit to the sporting editors of the city, during which I do a little plain and fancy fake reminiscing about the fights I had staged from, Seattle to Savannah, and the first thing I know they've got me all wrote up as a box-fighter impresario and a king of promoters. As a matter of fact, about the only thing I had been able to promote, a few weeks prior to my Bessemer début, was a periodical ham sandwich, with a occasional sinker and cup of java. And there's too much waste in doughnuts, due to the hole, to make 'em very fillable as a food.

Still, you got to hand it to a guy, on a sterling silver platter, what can put up the old bluff. My nerve tonnage was a scale wrecker and, by my superfluous amount of stall and gall, I convinced them scrivners that I was the handies' guy at box-fight promoting, since Eve's husband and she was roughing it in Eden.

"Did you ever know Tex Rickard?" one sporting editor interrogates me, that first morning.

"We was fraternity brothers in the school of experience," I smiled.

"And Jack Curley?"

"Yep, I knows the whole lay-out, from Alexander to Zerkzeeze."

"You seem to be pretty well acquainted with the land of Glove."

"I ain't an old man," I replies, "but I've been buddying with scrappers ever since John L. Sullivan was the champion fistic massager of his day. I've seen 'em come and I've seen 'em go, and I've traveled around, from pillar to coast, but this Bessemer looks good to me, and I think I'll hitch here indefinitely, and a few months."

"So you're going to promote fights here, Mr. Parks?"

See! That's me, "Brownie" Parks.

"I think I shall," I replies.

"Well, luck be with you," said this pen-pushing pep producer, and I can tell, by the way he grips my hand at the finish of our conflab, that he's with me on this deal, for a half of an eternity, at least.

And, say, maybe I didn't hop away to a grand start as a promoter, in this burg. With nothing in my pockets but the seams, I starts looking up a scrap between two

heavies. "Knock-out" Smith was in his prime then, and I signs the rube to come South and hook up in a ten-round go with "Young" Dinty, from New Orleans. I press-agented Knock-out off the boards. Much had already been wrote about Knock-out being as green as a coupla lawns, before he started out in this prize-fight game, and now that he was one of the chief razzum-gazzums of the squared arena, everybody wanted to see him, though realizing, all the time, that this Young Dinty didn't have no more of a chance than a pint at a wake.

That first fight was a killer, financially, and when I had collected all the box-office jack and paid the millers, I had about twelve hundred berries left. Gobs of joy! It was the first real jack I'd ever herded, and, right off the reel, I began to have myself some visions of a villa on the Chattahoochee, and the like. You see, the Chattahoochee is a small-time river in this Georgia, and it's so muddy you could bottle it and sell it for beer, any day in the week.

But, take it from me, I didn't know the capacity of them Bessemer citizens for passes. They was fonder of paper than a sty of goats—or maybe it's pigs that comes in stys.

Now, if you've ever been mixed up in the theatrical game, or have staged anything where a fee is required at the door, you might have a inkling of the weakness of the human race for passes. The pass evil is bad, in every town in the country. And the mogul who is free with passes is in just as bad a fix as the baseball pitcher who is free with 'em.

Get me right, as I go along, though. Inhabitants of this Bessemer is the most generous souls this side of the Planet Marse, when it comes to spending they money. But, the idea I'm trying to convey is, that no matter how much dough-ra-me the average citizen of this well-known universe has stored away in his knickerbockers, and no matter how many times he's willing to buy on everything else, he has a perfect mania for riding in on a pass, when it comes to amusements.

Give a fella a coupla free ducats marked, "comp," or "press" or something, and he's prouder of 'em than he is of his bank roll, said roll sounding like a telephone number or a auto license or something when you see it in print. Don't ask me the how of it, but it's human nature, the country over.

It's the big boys that fall hardest for the gratis ducats. And, I soon found out that Bessemerites had all contracted chronic attacks of that well-known disease, seven-year gimmeitis. Just as soon as I staged this first mill and got a little jack in my pocket, naturally, I thought the best way to get solid was to get acquainted. Them first twelve hundred berries had gave me a vision of a gigantic bank roll, and I'd just about decided to make this town my permanent home.

On my second show of fisticuffing, I'd made so many friends that about one-fourth of the house was a paper audience. They could think up more excuses for panhandling a fella out of a pasteboard, than a landlord for raising the rent. Done it all in good faith, too, mind you, and was the affablest geeks you ever saw about it. And me, I was affable to the core, too.

It didn't take no prophet or the son of a prophet to see that my profits, on that first fight, was going to take a course in dwindling, if this here pass craze was kept up. Well, betwixt the second and third fights, I made more new friends, and on top of that it looked like the deputy-sheriff badge crop was a bumper one. The three scribes of the town had got twenty passes, each, for the first fight. They went to forty for the second, and, on the third, they raised the ante to sixty each. Of course, I couldn't raise no squawk about press tickets, cause the newspaper boys was the blokes who had put me in business.

The mayor had to have a flock of tickets, and the aldermen had they itching palms outstretched for a dozen or so of "admit ones." The county officials, the members of the school board, and what not, craved admission without kicking in with the coin of the realm.

It peeved me much to see a fella upholstered in a fur-lined coat, driving his big car up to the curb, and passing in with nothing on his mind but the war tax. These business boys had anywhere from a hundred thousand to a half million, in hard cash, and here was I being called upon to *set 'em up*, when all I had in the world was a part of that first dozen hundred bones I'd made out of that first fight. After the third fight, I had about four hundred bucks left, and I was in a coupla quandaries as to what I should do. I had one more fight scheduled,

though, and I decided to stick with it or bust.

Billy Streeter is a old showman, who has mixed and mingled with me since I hit town, and Billy is a pretty wise bird. I'd often discussed matters with him, so I hunts Billy up for advice. This Streeter person was once a Shakespearean actor. I think he was one of the excavators in the cemetery scene from "Hamlet," and he's got a great habit of saying, "By the eternal gods!" on all occasions.

As usual, I finds Billy down at the Capital City Garage, parked around a little coal burner in the office. He's there by hisself and alone, and as I makes my entrance, Billy looks up from a two-bit novel and says:

"By the eternal gods! It's Brownie Parks, the box-fight promoter. What you got on your mind, other than a pint or so of hair tonic?"

"Nothing in particular, Billy, I was just out for a morning stroll."

"By the eternal gods!" he says, "just let me get on my topcoat, and I'll walk with you."

So Billy slams on his benny, and we hikes out toward North Avenue. We hadn't gone far, when I starts to get this here worry off my chest. I clears my throat and begins:

"Billy, there is more ticket moochers to the square inch, in Bessemer, than in any town in the world."

"By the eternal gods, you're right! I trouped with a carnival company for years, and was two seasons with Honey Boy Evans' show, but take it from me, brother, I've never seen it as bad as it is in this town."

"Billy, I've been losing money on my last two fights, and from the way the thing looks now, it seems to me the bumperest crop of comps is to be harvested in this coming go, than at any time since I've been in your well-known midst."

"But, by the eternal gods, what you gonna do about it, if any?"

"Well, I've been thinking," I says, "that even the worm is going to turn over sometimes, and that it's a poor rule that won't work both ways. Meaning, of course, that after me getting the double cross, on three occasions, it's up to me to hang a trick on the gentle populace."

"But how you gonna frame it?"

"Well, these folks are generous to a fault, in a way, ain't they—even if they wouldn't spend a dollar on a ticket, on a bet?"

"Correct."

"But they've got a craving to carry around complimentary tickets, ain't they, with press or something wrote out on 'em in bold relief?"

"You tell 'em, I'm hoarse," chimes in Billy.

"And, a considerable portion of them fight fans is men of means."

"But, by the eternal gods, Brownie, what are you driving at?"

"Simply this: I'm going to load that house up with paper, at the Monday night fight. Everybody who asks me for a comp is going to get it. Then, after I get all them people in that house, I'm going to play on their sympathies."

"Unfold the plot still further."

"When everybody is seated and feeling good, I'm going to announce that the Society for the Homeless Heathens of Hindustan, or something, is in need of funds, and the president has asked me to take up a collection. Then the case notes will begin to fall in the old hat. See?"

"But, by the eternal gods, how's this gonna help you? Won't this here society get all the jack?"

His ignorance kinder exasperates me, but I blocks a yawn with my right palm and utters: "Billy, your denseness is worse than the foliage of the Everglades. They ain't no more such society than there is trees around Verdun. I get all this filthy lucretia as a free-will offering, and the next morning, with the lettuce in my satchel, I pulls a perfect imitation of a cyclone and blows."

Billy pulls a crate of chortles on the way back to town, and I can see that the idear is such a novel one that it has aroused his admiration. And, back at the old garage we parts company, Billy saying as he left me:

"Brownie you ought to be in a street-carnival business. A gentle grafter like what you are, with a knack for thinking up brand-new schemes to fleece the public, would be able to assemble enough currency to play hare and hounds with, from here to the suburbs of Jericho and back."

The night for the big bout arrives upon the scene just as the calendar had predicted it would. And, oh, boy, maybe we didn't fill 'em in to the well-known rafters. True to my predictions, however, about two-thirds of that house was paper, and the managers of the two box fighters was up in the air, like a coupla blimps or something. I'd gave 'em a guarantee, mind you, but with a chance

at twenty-five per cent of the gross per each. They'd docked in town, fully expecting to work on the percentage basis, but when they saw that stream of comps rolling in at the turnstiles, their jaws began to sag, and they realized they wouldn't take nothing away from Bessemer but the guarantee.

Near the ringside I counted ten of the biggest business men in town, and I'd seen these here birds as they entered with the little free pass in their hands, holding it proudly, so that all could see, just like a newly rich does her first solitaire. And as I stood there, I began to study the faces of these guys, these men who had Kid Crœsus backed off the map when it comes to juggling jack. Here were men who were sure public spirited, who had so many diamonds in their shirt fronts that they were really top-heavy, and who were there with the little old hop, skip, and jump when it comes to charity. They would cough up for any just cause on earth, outside of buying tickets to anything. It's a good study in psychology, or something. It's too deep for me, and I couldn't never figure it out, but ask any wise boy what has ever spent as much as two weeks in any box office, and he'll back me up in my contention, until the kine canters home.

Billy Streeter is there, and he gives me a eye full of winks.

"By the eternal gods, you've got a great audience for plate passing, Brownie," he accosts me.

"Yes, this was what they would surely refer at as a throng in the old days."

"And you're gonna sing your *swan* song, and *duck?*" he asks.

"Yep, I'm pulling anchor in the morning. With the moochers working me for a good thing, all the time, the legislature would have to appoint a coupla more receivers in bankruptcy just to look after me personally, if I stay."

"It's always worse the first hundred years or so."

"And, by the way, Billy, when I makes my little speech, I want you to pass the hat. Get a coupla good assistants and come up to my office, in the morning, and I'll give you five per cent of the gross."

Billy roared. He always laughed with the muffler off, and his haw-haws resounded through that building, until I was real embarrassed.

"By the eternal gods, Brownie, your proposition sounds just like the one the white man made to the darky. He told the darky he'd like to sign him up to steal coal on a fifty-fifty basis. But I'll be damned if I don't do it, just to help a old comrade."

And, with this little deal fixed, I strolls down to the entrance to coax the remaining stragglers in. The doorman is having an argument with a little dried-up fella wearing a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles that made him look top-heavy. This bloke didn't have no free ducat nor nothing, but he was hell-bent on getting in to see that fight without the expenditure of even war tax.

"Don't you recognize the press?" he says in dignified and haughty tones.

"Sure, bo; have you got it with you?"

The little shriveled-up deadhead flew into a coupla tantrums, at this. But me feeling like he at least ought to drop two-bits into my prearranged free-will offering, I grabbed him by the elbow and ushered him in.

I give 'em a duo of good prelims before the main bout. "Spike" Kelly knocked "Battling" Barnett out in the sixth of a eight-round go. He knocked the Battler as cold as the exterior of a igloo. And coming right on the heels of this "Paradise" Williams, a smoke pug, rang the bell with a solar-plexus special, in the seventh stanza. "Lumbago" Stewart was his opponent, and Lumbago quit the fight then and there with what one might term as stomach trouble. So, with the crowd all hilarious and everything, over these two good prelims, and feeling happy and generous, I crawled through the ropes to make my announcement.

I wasn't never no Richard Piercing Hobson, when it comes to elocuting, but, believe me, a fella can just naturally think up more words and how to say 'em, when he is talking for dollars and cents—more especially the former—than at any other time in his well-known life.

So, I climbs through them ropes, with my eyebrows akimbo and my knees chattering just like a fella's teeth in perfect thirty-six below zero weather. If you've ever tried to make a maiden speech before a crowd of roughnecks you know what I mean. But the family wallet was on its last gasp, and I knew it was do or die.

"Ladies and gentlemen," I starts. Then I remembers there is not one iota of women in the house, so I backs up and commences again by saying:

"Gents!"

Some bloke hollers: "Thanks!"

Realizing that a pause has been my downfall in these first two attempts to get going on that recitation, I hops in, this time, right from the jump, with:

"Boys, I know that you're all a bunch of good fellas, and that deep down in your hearts, you'll vote the straight humanitarian ticket, and I gotta proposition I've been asked to put to you. A society has been formed, in sport circles, to care for superannuated prize fighters; men who have thrilled the ring bugs, with their work, but who, through some misfortune, after their days of usefulness in the ring, have gone broke and broken in health. Now this S. P. R. V. organization, meaning, of course, the Society for the Protection of Ring Veterans, has came to me with a plea, and asked me to pass the kelly around over the audience. You fellas have all got money, and I know you're strong for the men what have made ring history, and want to see them comfortable in their old age. If it's agreeable, now, I'll have the hat passed."

I could tell, right off the reel, that them fellas has swallowed the bait, hook, line, sinker'n everything, so I was anxious to get the good work started.

Billy Streeter was standing close down ringside, and I yells at him: "Mr. Streeter, will you be so kind as to get the hat going?"

"By the eternal gods, I'll be tickled to death to do it," said Billy, with a heavy tonnage of fake fervor in his voice, "and, not only will I pass the hat, but I'll start this free-will offering with a ten-dollar bill."

And with that, the shameless Mr. Streeter dropped in the property ten-dollar bill I had gave him, and, with two able assistants, starts over the crowd. I could see them business men flipping bank notes into that hat with all the nonchalance that Doug Fairbanks falls off a eighty-foot precipice, or that terrible Theda uses the soul of a vamped victim for a footstool.

Believe me, brother, although it was just about nine o'clock in the evening, I was beginning to see the light of day, and I had visions of buying a railroad ticket right away from that town, on the following morning, with a stack of currency keeping the family toothbrush, and my other shirt, company in that there grip of mine.

After my five per cent solicitors had made the rounds, the main bout of the evening was served. "Muscadine" Tate, one of the most promising heavies in the ring was battling "Cyclone" Wilkins. I don't know why they dubbed him Cyclone unless he shook the building so much, when he hit the floor. It took old Muscadine just two and a fraction rounds to beat this Cyclone into a pulp.

That night I counts up in the box office, and I finds that the gate money, for the fracas, had only netted enough to pay my guarantee to the fighters, with a little over for the prelims, the rent, cards, advertising, et cetera. Having totaled up the legit receipts, I turned my attention to that hat money that Billy Streeter and the boys had collected.

I've had many pleasant little jobs, in my lifetime. I was once sampler in Tim Tucker's bar, and that was one sweet, soft snap. I thought I had about reached the zenith of pleasant occupations, when I was official booze tester, but I gotta admit, and I ain't never had any symptoms of miseritis either, that counting them scads was one of the most saloobrious pastimes I've ever engaged in. Although perspiration was rolling off me in tidal waves, as I set there in that stuffy little box office and counted, I didn't mind it one iota. The clink of them silver pieces was music to my cauliflowers. You see, I hadn't booted one a-tall, when I figured that, deep down in their hearts, these cits wasn't hard-boiled eggs. Each and every one of 'em would probably of bought drinks in the old days until the third rail wabbled and the barkeep turned twins.

After I had negotiated that stack of currency and had totaled up the figures, I finds that I have obtained exactly twenty-four hundred dollars and some odd cents from this coop d'état. I quit the auditorium pulling a D. Fairbanks' special, in the grin line. I had visions of a rattler carrying me away from this here comp-crazed city, before lunchtime on the morrow.

Of course, my conscience gave me a few uppercuts and chin jabs, before I dropped off to sleep that night, because I realized that I had secured this jack on false pretenses, seeing that there wasn't no such organization as the Society for the Protection of Ring Veterans. But I dismissed old man conscience with the thought that I'd been double-crossed all along by the Spongers' Union, so I dropped off to sleep and had myself a flock of sweet dreams about hitting Broadway.

The sun was streaming in when I wakes in the morning, and I knew that I had to

pull a camel and get a hump on myself if I catch that morning train. I hops out of bed like a shot and throws my clothes on. I slams my belongings in the grip, making ready to pull a quick get-away, after I have hot-caked and coffeed my face. And to be doubly sure that my twenty-four hundred berries are intact, I looks in the grip and the jack is all there, just as safe and sound as a old-line insurance policy.

And, just as I'm admiring that bale of mazuma, there comes a sharp tap on the door, and I almost jump out of my skin, it's so sharp and sudden. I slams my grip shut, and says: "Come in." And in walks three of the most sinister-looking guys I've ever lamped. Them babies looked like a trio of the illest omens in captivity.

The bloke in front was a big hefty guy, about six feet two, with eyes as blue as indigo and lips as thin as the slice of ham in a regulation lunch-counter sandwich—and with over six feet of perfectly good altitude and enough avoirdupoise to stock the line on a football game.

"Good morning," says the leader, as he looks at me, under the lids of his eyes. "My name's Harkreader," and he extends a hefty hand and squeezed my right lunch hook till it ain't no bigger than the handle bars on a velocipede.

"Mine's Brownie Parks," I gulped, but, somehow or other, I had a pet premonition that it was gonna be mud shortly.

"I guessed as much." He was smiling dryly and, with no ado, he jerked his thumbs toward his two companions. "Mr. Milkweed and Mr. Donahoo."

This here Harkreader guy clears his throat, and says kinder casualtylike: "I'm the president of the S. P. R. V., Mr. Parks, meaning, of course, the Society for the Protection of Ring Veterans. Mr. Donahoo is secretary, and Mr. Milkweed is treasurer."

It don't take no vivid imagination to picture my predicament. I couldn't think of a form thing to say, and I spent about five minutes in saying it, this horrendous Harkreader human meanwhile looking at me, through them narrow slits in his lids, in silence, with me standing there before him, feeling very much like the first six letters in nausea. Finally I interrogates à la feeble:

"Well——"

"Oh, nothing special," rumbles this Harkreader person. "Only, we heard you took up a collection for the S. P. R. V., at your boxing show last night, and that the free-will offering netted twenty-four hundred dollars. Feeling that you might not want the responsibility of keeping that large amount of the society's funds, any length of time, we called by to take it off your hands."

I had a covey of realizations that I'd been trapped. Also, in these here dark financial moments, it seemed to me that I could see something bulging from the gentleman's hip pocket, which resembled artillery. I'm hep to the fact that the jig is up, cause owing to the fact I took up a fake collection and hum-bugged the public, I can't squeal, so I reaches into the grip and hands forth its contents. I was too damned scared to hold out any on them dangerous-looking babies.

This Harkreader assembles this bundle of currency, and without attempting to count it, smiles and says:

"Mr. Parks, you have no idea how us officers of the S. P. R. V. feels toward you for the part you played, in appealing to the audience last night, for such a just cause. Our hearts are filled with gratitude for the noble way in which you came to the front, and I will feel it my duty, at the next national convention of the S. P. R. V., to nominate you for honorary life membership to the society."

I gropes for a chair, and books passage on the Swoonville Limited. The blow had been too much, and there is damn little—if any—vitality, in this world, that could stand a shock like that, without kissing the canvas for a count of ten, or more. When I finally came to, Billy Streeter was in my room and was slapping a ice-cold wet towel in my face, very much in the manner that "Baby" Ruth swings at one coming down the groove. Billy, realizing that I was in my head again, says:

"Who was them fellas I seen out in the hall, Brownie? I seen 'em busy fifty-fifty-ing a bale of soft money."

Then I up and tells Billy the whole story, thinking, of course, he'd be chock-full of sympathy. When I've finished my story he looks at me with a Nome stare and demands:

"What about my five per cent?"

"You can either draw a draft on President Harkreader of the S. P. R. V.," I advises him, "or take the pass privilege to my next boxing show for it. I don't give a damn which."

The Scent of Justice

By Laird Stevens

A good dog story is one of the best of stories. "Pete" seems more like a human than a dog, though—stanch and loyal from muzzle to tail-tip. If you are a hunter and lover of the woods, Pete will have an added hold on you

THE fir tops, on the crown of Chanchelula, were giving a very good imitation of a young forest fire, because the level sunrise rays struck them at the back and glowed through, as "Pete" and his red-headed master gained the top of the ridge. The air was cold and clear, only a slight haze showing in the cañon to the south.

Pete stopped at the fork of the trail and sniffed the floating air currents. A riot of odors rewarded him. Pine needles, old and new; ferns on the north slope, spicy wood smoke from a mile distant cabin, the moisture from last week's thunder shower, one dim, strange smell which he could not identify. Then, suddenly, on top of that came yet another smell, not so strange to him. Ah-h-h, perhaps—— Yes, it was!

All aquiver with the canny nervousness of those sharp-eared Collie ancestors, who had tended sheep in the Hielands, for bare-kneed McNabs, Pete leaped toward his master. Pete's brown eyes were twinkling with expectancy. His tightly strung muscles explained the situation, to his boss, far more clearly than could any spoken word.

The red-headed one—rather short, lithe, with a compact driving swing to his shoulders—dismounted, threw his horse's reins over Gray Eagle's head, and yanked the carbine from the saddle boot.

"Go to it, old-timer!" The voice had a cool snappiness, a good deal like the Sierra air. "If you think a four-pointer's in there, why, so do I!"

Pete was on his way. The taint on the air became strong and rank, as he neared the depths of the thicket. The sharp breeze brought it to him, in little eddies. Ah, here it was at last—the track itself! The flavorsome scent, on ground and weeds and bushes, told him that a wary old buck—doubtless a four-pointer, at least—had made trail here, on his way in from his night-time feeding grounds to the daylight hiding place.

Now, a mongrel-bred cur, from the valley ranges, would have promptly waked the echoes with hysterical yapping, and rushed blindly through the thicket, on the down-hill trail. Then would have come a crashing jump or two, the tinkle of a dislodged wedge of granite, and an hour later, a panting, tired pup would have crept abjectly back to acknowledge his loss of reputation.

Nothing so crude as this in Pete's methods. He had studied deer, for years, and he knew, without further thought, that the buck had made his bed below a certain overhanging rock, right in there on the crown-line of bare, sliding shale at the cañon head. Pete tested the scent trail only far enough to confirm his judgment of the buck's position; then made a wide detour down the hill, to leeward, and came straight up-wind on the scent.

Below, in a little open glade between two tamaracks, he drew suddenly to a stop. It was that other unidentified smell again, but far more distinct than before, and he had run into a little pocket of it, caught there among the pine trunks. This time it aroused a thrill, along his back, that meant the danger feeling; he had had reason to worry about that smell, or, at any rate, to distrust it, some time in the past. But it was not now of the first importance, and the hidden buck was; also Pete was likely to be a dog of one idea. He poised on one forefoot, and looked up. Outlined against the sky, were Dewey, the pack mule, and old Gray Eagle, standing quiet on the ridge. The red-headed one sat motionless on a rock, carbine across his knees, and the clouds of smoke from his pipe floating gently skyward. He saw Pete, and waved his hand in a signal of assent. Then he rose from his seat. Pete darted forward, the worrying smell forgotten. The trap was ready to spring; now for the fun.

He plunged headlong into a clump of second-growth black oak. Hardly had he taken a step into its depths, before he heard the ring of hoofs on stone, the crash of trampled brush, and the slithering swish of hard

horns forced through the still hanging autumn leaves. Now, and only now, did Pete begin to bark. The quarry was up, the red-headed one should be so informed; noise was the principal thing, therefore he made noise.

"Chack-a-lack!" He heard the rattle of the breech mechanism of the carbine. He redoubled his efforts, putting on his best burst of speed. A rabbit scuttled wildly out of his way, a fawn plunged off down the hill, but he gave to neither the slightest attention. The scent, now grown gigantic by body heat and fear, guided him unerringly.

"Whang"—the carbine cracked like a Brobdingnagian whip. "Whang—whang—s-phe-e-e-e!" Something was wrong. That was the sound a bullet made, when it struck a rock and glanced into the air. The bullets from the red-headed one's carbine seldom made that sound. And he was shooting fast, too. Pete had not heard him shoot so fast before. "Whang—sphut!" Ah, that was better! That meant a blood trail, easy to follow; a fight in the brush, lasting anywhere from minutes to hours; the hills would again reëcho to the rifle report, and he, Pete, would be watching approvingly, while his master dressed the kill.

As he crashed through the last enveloping tangle of brush, and gained the crown of a rocky little ridge, he saw, plunging weakly, not fifty yards ahead of him, the grandfather of all bucks. As the buck reeled into the bottom of a shallow draw, Pete passed him, slashing at the ham strings with a lightning swing of his pointed nose. The buck, old warrior that he was, saw, for the first time, something tangible to fight. Gone was all semblance of fear. With every hair slanted the wrong way, he turned on the dog in a furious charge. Pete, as it happened, was expecing just this, and he promptly retreated under the spiny branches of the spreading chaparral, well out of the way of the hoofs and daggerlike antlers.

With a snort of disgust at the cowardice of such a contemptible enemy, the buck turned again to flee. Pete nipped him again. With a bellow, almost like that of a bull, the buck threw himself headlong into the bush; Pete slipped out on the opposite side. A raging fury, all fear and precaution flung to the four winds, the buck charged again and again at the collie.

A less deerwise dog, in a half dozen minutes, would have been cut or speared to shreds. Not so Pete. This was his profession; his expertness at holding a "bad" buck at bay had formed the basis of many a story around the evening fire, in the ranger camps. Ignorant of this, he yet had his past glories to sustain with two persons—himself and his master—and he sustained them.

Eyes constantly on the buck, Pete depended on his ears to tell the approach of his master. He heard the brush crack under a stealthy tread, no great distance away, and found time to wag an excited welcome, his nerves tensing in expectation of the death shot.

It came; the game old buck fell, a crumpled heap. Pete rushed in for the throat hold, pridefully shaking and worrying, expectant of his master's cheery hail. Instead, his nostrils were suddenly overwhelmed with a strange human smell. He identified it, now, as the combined effluvia of man sweat, wood smoke and cooking odors. He had sniffed it, aforetimes, around Indian cabins, sheep camps, and latterly had learned to link it with anger and insults and threatened fights. For the Forest Service was bringing law into lawless lands, and the settlers were resentful. Pete felt hands grip his body, he was slung roughly aside, and a hoarse voice bade him, "Git out o' here!"

He whirled, with a snarl. A slouchy, bewhiskered mountaineer stood gloating over the buck. Before he could make up his mind what to do, redhead appeared, hurtling down the side hill, with great jumps.

"Same old trick, Folsom?" Pete knew the red-headed one was boiling mad.

The frowzy mountaineer spoke slowly, ingratiatingly, with a whine in his tones that set Pete's teeth on edge. "I killed the deer fair, Mr. Reynolds. I didn't know your dog was after him."

"That's a damn lie, Folsom. You've pulled this stunt on too many men already. Thought you posed as a friend of the service. Get out of here—hunt up your own deer!"

He turned contemptuously away, and, opening his knife, began to split the skin up the inside of the buck's forelegs. Pete saw the flaming hate that turned Folsom's vacuous face into an evil thing. Folsom paused, took a step toward the ranger, thought better of it, and turned up the hill. Pete heard his incoherent mutterings, for several minutes. It troubled him. His joy in the hunt was gone. Men were surely queer animals. Now, two dogs would have come to grips promptly, absolutely without

preliminaries, over the dead buck. The air would have been full of flying hair and dead leaves, for a few minutes; after which, the victor would have triumphantly watched the vanquished go away from there, whimpering. Clean, quick, and conclusive, no muttering or other such foolishness.

Then his master tossed him a choice tidbit or two, and Pete gradually dismissed the mountaineer from his thoughts. The buck was dressed, loaded on the mule, and once more they hit the trail. Homeward-bound, Pete knew. That was the unbroken rule. To kill but one deer at a time, and to take it straight in to the station, where the meat could be economically handled. Such was the law of clean living.

As the little cavalcade wound up the steep slope out of Rattlesnake, Pete plodded sleepily in the rear. The sun was well up, by now, and it was hot. The dust rose in eddying swirls, frescoing Pete's sweaty eyes with a rim of gray. He inhaled the floating powder, and it made him cough. The critical point in the homeward trail drew near. Pete became wary, caught the red-headed one not looking, took a chance, and started on the trail of a certain old doe who made her home at the Beaver Creek lick.

There was an enmity of long standing between him and this particular old doe. The pleasure of seeing the old lady gather her skirts about her, and run, was always the bright spot in Pete's homeward journey. He found her, flushed her out of her comfortable bed under the black oaks, and had her well started on the way toward Trinity County, when a steely note in his boss' voice brought him back to the trail, in well-simulated humiliation. Pete reasoned that if the master was still peeved, the thing to do was to humor him.

But the play spirit had come to the surface, and, just as the trail began its steep downward dip into Howard Creek, a fat, gray squirrel dropped, with a plop, almost under Pete's nose. Now that was a challenge no dog could resist, be he never so tired. Pete made a wild grab at the squirrel, missed, and scrambled frantically, in pursuit, over a wide detour, that brought him back into the trail, near the creek bed, a hundred yards ahead of Gray Eagle. Here the squirrel leaped to safety in a leaning alder, and volubly chattered his disgust, while Pete trotted along the trail, never deigning an upward glance. And—just then came the man-smell again; the scent of the mountaineer was in the cañon.

Pete stopped and looked back. He was just in time to see Dewey, ordinarily a peaceful plodder, run crazily forward, on the narrowest part of the bluff trail, crowding in between Gray Eagle and the upper bank. The lead rope, fastened by a loop to Redhead's saddle horn, drooped over the downhill side, as was proper; but when the mule attempted to charge past, wide pack and all, the rope was drawn tight over the ranger's leg and wrapped around the horse's rump.

Gray Eagle, vicious old cow pony, scared out of his wits by the mule's wild dash, clamped his tail viselike over the rope, and began a frenzied lunging. As he bawled and bucked, the ranger strove vainly to get clear. Pete, across the creek, was watching anxiously when the inevitable misstep came. Horse and rider plunged off the ledge in a shower of rocks and dust.

The lead rope broke, leaving Dewey free, and innocent looking, as all mules are. By the time Pete got there, the horse was up on his feet, apparently unhurt. But the redheaded one lay sprawled inert, one leg twisted queerly back, under him.

A faint sound, like that of a snake crawling through grass, attracted Pete's attention from behind. Pete did not turn his head, as a human being would have done. His ears had told him of the approach of something, his instinct warned him of danger; so he put the entire strength of his wiry little muscles into a leap forward, and to one side. Just in time, too. A heavy oak limb, whistling through the air straight at his head, hit him instead on shoulder and foreleg, bruising and paining but breaking no bones.

So well timed had been his leap that the blow did not even knock him down, although he landed with the hurt leg dangling and useless. As he gained the comparative shelter of a big bowlder, Pete took time to look back. He saw Folsom's leathery face, framed with its crop of pale, scraggly whiskers, peering over the edge of the bank. Folsom raised his rifle quickly as Pete halted, but slowly lowered it again. Pete, vague with pain, wondered why. He knew the terrible danger in that long rifle and his own helplessness against it. Loyalty to his master, and an insane fury at the attack on himself, urged him to give battle; but years of experience, as a hunter, told him it would be

useless to attack the man on the bank above him. An animal has no answer to a gun.

He crawled back into a crevice in the rocks. Hidden by an overhead tangle of briers, his sharp eyes lambent pools of hate and helpless fury, he watched the mountaineer, who by now was clambering down the bank toward the unconscious ranger. Pete's leg was hurting exquisitely and blood dripped from his lacerated foot, but not by the slightest move or whimper did he betray his presence.

The mountaineer stood over the ranger, peering closely at the motionless body. Pete felt the satisfaction in his vindictive eyes. The dog, safely hidden, knew that he would be unable to keep from betraying himself, should Folsom touch his master. He shivered, once, when the man's implacable eyes, in their roaming survey, seemed to encounter his own.

Folsom did not linger. He turned and climbed carefully up the bank, stepping from bowlder to bowlder. Pete, from his hiding place, kept tab on every move he made. The rank smell of the mountaineer's unwashed body stung the dog's nostrils. Cramped from his position in the rock crevice, and burning with thirst, from the fever of his injury, Pete scarcely waited until his senses told him Folsom had gone to a safe distance. He crawled from his hiding place to a welcome pool in the creek. Here he sank into the cool depths, submerging his wounded limb and drinking in great gulps. An inarticulate sound caused him to look up, nerves aquiver. His master had moved slightly, and was talking in a queer, thick, unsteady voice. Pete was out of the water like a shot and to the ranger's side.

Pete's tail nearly wagged itself off, as the ranger opened his eyes with a conscious light. The man reached out a hand, then tried to sit up, but slipped back with a gasp. "Tough luck, old-timer," he murmured, and Pete licked his hand. The red-headed one made another effort, and succeeded in propping his shoulder against a round rock. Slowly his eyes traveled over the creek bed, the bluff above, and the scars at the trail edge that told the story of his fall. Pete's eyes followed his; if only he could guess the truth! But the man's gaze returned with no flare-up of suspicion or anger in his eyes, and Pete knew he had missed the truth. Indeed, there was nothing to show.

Pete winced under redhead's stroking, and the man turned his eyes on him, for the first time, and saw the poor, bruised foot held gingerly from the ground.

"You hurt, too?" he muttered. "How'd that happen, Pete?" His eyes turned ramblingly, and the dog knew his thoughts were wandering. "You were up ahead—Dewey jumped—and Eagle started to make a fool of himself. I guess—guess you got back in time to take a hand. I'm hurt."

The ranger called Pete to him, and pointed to the animals now browsing nearby.

"Take 'em home, old-timer! Home, boy!"

Orders were given by men to be obeyed by dogs. That had been the rule of Pete's life, and though there was nothing he longed for, more than to lie in the cool creek bed and lick his injured foot, he limped over to the animals and began to bark. He had driven them before; Gray Eagle first showed interest, then Dewey, after which they obediently started off up the trail. As Pete reached the turn he looked back again. He saw his beloved master start to wave him on, hesitate, clutch at the bowlder for support, and then fall prone.

Sorrowfully, the dog turned away toward home. His shoulder and leg were getting stiff; they hurt so he could not touch the foot to the ground. His other feet also were getting raw on the bottoms. Altogether, he was in unutterable misery.

The horse and mule stopped at a little swamp, to drink, and Pete cast his tired, pain-racked body down into the cool mud. Oh, how he wanted to stay there and rest! As soon, however, as Gray Eagle finished his drink he resumed his limping walk. Dewey stopped to steal a few bites of the lush grass, at the swamp edge, and Pete nipped him savagely. The dog was so stiff and moved so slowly that the mule's whizzing heels missed him narrowly.

Slowly the weary miles fell behind. The summit of Baldy was reached in time to show the sun, a lurid disk, sizzling out of sight behind Old Bear Mountain. Burning with fever, almost blind with pain, Pete staggered wildly in his endeavor to keep up. He could not fall too far behind. The animals might turn from the trail. He *must* keep them in sight. A spiny chaparral limb tripped him, and he fell headlong, striking his wounded shoulder cruelly on a rock. In spite of himself, he whimpered with misery. As he got to his feet, he reeled and nearly fell again. Seconds elapsed and, as his dazed

brain cleared, he realized he was off the trail and heading straight away into the darkening timber. By a supreme effort of thought, he realized his whereabouts, sensed the trail uphill, forced himself to hobble back at increased speed, and once again was in step behind the mule.

An hour, two hours, eternity it seemed, and still he half-consciously staggered along at his task. At last a consciousness of something familiar began to beat on the dog's deadened senses. The whinny of horses, the bay of hounds, and the shrill, excited barking of a half-grown pup. Pete's chest bumped a protruding limb. He forgot his injured leg, and put it down to brace himself. As it buckled under him, he fell headlong in the dry grass beside the trail.

"Hank" Belden, the gray-haired assistant ranger, woke from his sleep, with ranger-like promptness, at the trampling of hoofs and the jingling rattle of bit chains and packsaddle trappings. "Boss is late," he yawned. "Wonder where he's been." The next moment he was on the floor, scrambling for breeches and boots at a little gray-eyed woman's voice:

"Hank! Oh, Hank! Oh, boys! Something's happened. Billy's not here!" Mrs. Reynolds stood at the gate, as Hank, and the other occupants of the bunk house reached the corral where Gray Eagle and Dewey stood quietly blinking in the light of the lantern.

Hank took prompt stock of the situation. "Eagle's been down." He flashed the rays of the light on the gray's scarred legs and hips. "Queer, though; Eagle would have stopped if Billy had said 'whoa.' Or even if he didn't stop, Pete wouldn't have let him run off from the boss. It surely does look as though Billy may have got hurt."

"Mule's lead rope's broke," called a man.

Just then Hank's pup set up his shrill yapping. He charged back up the trail a few feet, but as soon as the outer circle of the lantern light was reached, he returned, bristles up, growling in what he no doubt thought was bravery, but which really more resembled terror. Hank strode out the trail, carrying the light. "Sic 'em, pup!" he said. "Go get' em, boy!" Thus encouraged, the pup ventured a little farther. He stopped yelping, growled once, sniffed, and then, recognizing Pete, catapulted himself at him, joyfully, fawning an effusive welcome.

As Hank ran forward, the light revealed Pete stretched on his belly, panting. The horses were home now; Pete didn't want to move. He was scarcely able to give his tail a feeble wag, as Hank dropped on his knees beside him. He attempted to stand up, and the effort made him yelp. Hank dropped the lantern and turned to the rangers, all uncertainty gone from his voice.

"Get your horses, boys. One for me, too. Hop it, now. I'll look the dog over, to see if I can get any idea of what happened."

The rangers broke for the horse corral. Hank took Pete up gently and carried him to the office. Here, under a good light, he looked the dog over. His practiced fingers felt for broken bones, and though, at times, it hurt woefully, Pete never offered to bite. But, although he liked this grizzled old ranger, almost as well as he did his master, he wished himself back with that master lying among the rocks of Howard Creek.

There was much ringing of telephone bells, excited talking, and gathering up of blankets and ropes and guns. Again Hank came in the office, his spurs rattling on the hard floor.

"I wish you could talk, dog," he said. "You could tell us a lot, couldn't you, old fellow?"

Pete understood, but his weary muscles would not raise him from the floor. He knew the only way to tell them was to go back and show them where his master lay. Twice he attempted to get up, but it was no use. He dragged himself toward the old ranger's feet, with a pitiful little whine. His tail tapped the floor, and something in his eyes made Hank turn his head away. "I know, old boy," he said, "I know. You did all you could. God knows not many humans would have done as well. Wish I knew how you got that shoulder."

He turned, shaking his head, and Pete heard the thunder of hoofs as the horses swept out of the station yard, under the urge of quirt and spur.

The little gray-eyed woman bustled into the room, with a pan of bread soaked in cool milk. How good that was! Pete had not realized he was hungry until he lapped up the first taste of the cool, sweet fluid. He began to feel better now. The food seemed to put new life into him. He submitted, with a sort of solemn dignity, to the ministrations of the woman, as she bathed his injured leg with hot water and bandaged the bleeding foot. In general, he did not

care much for women, they were apt to be too fussy, but this one was gentle and kind.

She left, and Pete curled himself for sleep with a sigh. How long he slept he did not know. When he awoke, the sun was streaming brilliantly through the east windows of the office. He heard the tramp of horses and the subdued voices of the rangers. He got to his feet and found that, though stiff and sore, he could hobble along very well on three legs. He went out into the yard, as the rangers came in, four of them carrying a stretcher on which lay the red-headed one, covered with blankets. He was muttering to himself, in a low, never-ceasing monotone, and, though Pete barked and wagged his welcome, there was no answer.

They carried him into the house, a brown-bearded man, with a little satchel, fussing importantly after. There were many strange men around, talking and getting in the way of the scurrying rangers, who were working rapidly, at different commands of the important man.

Nobody noticed Pete, and he felt that he was in the way. He went out to the horse corral, where he would not be bothered by the fawning familiarity of the pup, and curled himself in the sun for another nap. All morning, a steady stream of men and women, on horseback, was coming and going. He knew they were friends come to see if they could do anything for his beloved master, and he let them come, paying little attention.

The sun was warm and drowsy. He did not hurt so much now, and he dozed off, half oblivious to his surroundings. Into his consciousness there slowly beat a consistent impression of danger near. To whom or from whom he did not as yet know, nor did he fully realize which of his keenly developed senses was sounding the warning. At last he was fully awake, sniffing the air.

The unmistakable odor of Folsom was in his nostrils. Faint but certain. Where did it come from?

He stood squarely on his feet, injured and bandaged leg forgotten. Every hair on his back stood straight up, as his nose searched the air currents, carefully, painstakingly. The hate that surged through him and obliterated every sense of pain or fear called to his aid all his great hunting science. Ah! At last a stronger air wave gave him the location. Something in his brain told him —and no human being can ever understand why this is so—that the scent was going away, not coming.

Forgetting all else but his desire to warn the rangers of this man, Pete dashed through the chaparral, toward the river trail. He did not follow the curve of the trail itself, because he would lose time, but took a straight shoot, with the scent as his guide, for the river bank. All he wanted now was to get sight of Folsom, and then his baying would bring the rangers. It always did. In his urge to get through the clinging, entangling brush and vines, he forgot the steep bank where the horse trail went down to the rocky ford. The thick cover persisted to the very brink of the bank, and Pete crashed through the last bush, like a bullet.

He felt himself falling and clawed with all his might at the sand and pebbles. For all his frantic efforts, he still was conscious that he had been in time to head Folsom off. He broke into a perfect fury of hoarse barking.

An unshod hoof "sputted" against a dust-covered rock; and, around a shoulder of jutting granite, appeared an unkempt pony, bearing a bewhiskered figure that slouched in the saddle.

Pete charged.

Folsom's horse, never very gentle, whirled back up the trail to avoid this clawing, snapping ball of rage that had hurtled out of the brush almost under his nose. As he turned, he put one hind foot too far out on the edge of the narrow trail. He lunged wildly, the loose rocks gave way, and both hind feet went off. With a startled curse, Folsom, losing his own balance, jerked savagely at the heavy Spanish bit. Up went the pony's head; Pete sprang, and horse and rider turned a complete back somersault. Twenty feet below were the rocks. The horse raised his head once, groaned, and lay still. The man never moved.

There was a rush of hoofs. A hurrying ranger dismounted, ran past the dog, and scrambled down the bank to the inanimate thing below.

"Both dead," he said, as he slowly removed his hat. "In the name of God, how do you suppose it happened."

Old Hank did not uncover. "Legally, son, it's an accident. But I know it was justice. Down in Howard Creek I found the bloody stick that crippled the dog."

The Devil's Chaplain

By George Bronson-Howard

Author of "Yorke Norroy, Diplomatic Agent," "From Dusk to Daylight," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Milliken and Billiken, belonging to "The Crime Trust," an organization headed by a man known as "The Devil's Chaplain," go to lonely St. Kilda's Island, on the Maryland coast, to help "Septimus Six," anacharist and chemical genius, escape from Pryble Prison. Young Alan Allenby, who loves Guilda, Six's daughter, who has disappeared, sees Billiken kill a man, and, after Six is released by bribed guards, the crooks kidnap Alan and escape in a speed boat. Meanwhile, in New York, Guilda has eluded her Crime Trust guards long enough to communicate with Yorke Norroy, secret agent. Ulric Ulm, of Norroy's staff, follows Guilda into an apparently vacant business building near Broadway, and is made a prisoner in headquarters of the Crime Trust. Six and Alan also are taken to headquarters, and the Chaplain induces Six to continue earlier experiments in the making of synthetic morphine. Ulm is overheard telling Alan that he is a government agent. Alan makes friends with Milliken and learns that all the members of the crime organization are drug addicts, and that the Chaplain controls his subordinates by controlling the illicit drug traffic. Six wants Alan as an assistant in his work. When Alan is taken before the Chaplain, he sees Ulm, his mind a blank, and, to save Guilda from an operation that will leave her in the same state, agrees to become a drug user, to help Six, and not to tell him of Guilda's imprisonment. The bureau of narcotic drug addiction is burglarized, and a card file containing the names and photographs of twenty thousand drug addicts stolen. A note reading, "What are you going to do about this, Mr. Y. N.?" is left, and Norroy knows that it was written by "The Devil's Chaplain."

(A Four-Part Story—Part III.)

CHAPTER XVII.

HOW YORKE NORROY CHANGED PLACES.

IT was a cold day, early in 1919, a day of unexpected snow and sleet, hard for poor folk, the homeless, and those soon to be, the unemployed.

Unemotional as the fashionable world believed him to be, carefully cultivated as was his indifference of manner, Yorke Norroy was not proof against the pity that caught him by the throat, as he passed by a long line of such unfortunates, a "bread line." The snow that had carpeted the city in white velvet, overnight, had frozen underfoot, a chilly sort of carpet for shoes almost soleless. Overhead, the snow's dreary foster sister, the chilly sleet, was shooting frozen arrows at the holes in the threadbare gear that flapped soddenly about the meager limbs of the "line."

There they stood, teeth chattering, bodies trembling as of the ague, waiting. As Norroy looked back, after going his way, his supply of silver exhausted among them, he thought these must be about the most pitiable people in a whole city full. He was forgetting, entirely, the sight he was on his way to see. A few moments later, and a few blocks away, he was quick enough to change his mind.

This sight was pitiful enough, at any time. Even in the brightest sunshine of the balmiest spring day, these people were pitiful. It was a "line," too; a queue of waiting ones, longer than that of those who were there for bread. Hunger and cold had had their way with these faces, also; but, to their ravages, was added another set of lines, that bespoke, even more, an urgent need, an emotion far more acute than want of warmth or starvation.

Norroy's way was undoubtedly leisurely, his eyes active the while, as if in search of some one. But at no time did he receive an answering stare. These folk had long since passed the day when they were equal to meeting their fellow creatures, eye for eye. For by their very presence in this line, they confessed to the world, at large, that they had nothing to lose in either reputation or self-respect. That their need was equal only to their inability to procure what they needed elsewhere, in private. For here, and here only, at the Worth Street clinic, the city doled out drugs to the absolutely penniless, or sold at cost to those who could manage the minimum price asked.

Now they were about to receive their reward. From within, the double doors were slowly swung back. A dolorous murmur of expected relief came undulating all along the line.

Norroy shuddered. Was this the best these spiritless shells of men and women could do, in the way of a cheer? They eyed, with a longing so intense it was painful to watch them, the lucky ones at the head of the line. Then all expression died out, again. They began shuffling spiritlessly along, as one after another was admitted.

"Yah!" the tailender, a wan-eyed creature, greeted him, as Norroy made his slow progress of the block, back to the end of the line again, "if I could afford a benny, like that there one of yore'n, I'd 'a' bin at the croaker's hours ago. Watcha hangin' round here with a Dunlop cady and a pair o' kicks like them fer; hey? Thish yere is fer people can't afford to *pay* a croaker. Why 'unt yuh hock the benny, and beat it upta 'Doc' Peavey's and git yourself a ducket fer a man's-size dose? Er if yore gunta go *in*, why 'unt yuh stand in line, and quit stallin' yore a dick or sumthin'. There's another of youse stallin' guys. The bot' of yeh gimme a pain!"

Norroy noted not for the first time, another, beside himself, who teetered uneasily back and forth along the Worth Street line. The rude speech of the wan-eyed, waxen-faced tailender, called Norroy's attention to him again, just as he seemed finally to have made up his mind.

This person, as he came nearer, pulled his coat collar higher, his hat lower. In him, apparently, shame had yet to die, altogether. And now that Norroy saw him at close quarters, his heart leaped high. Enough was revealed of the newcomer's face to tell the secret agent that here was the sort of man he had come to find. All the better, for the purpose Norroy had in mind, that he should retain some remnants of his tattered self-respect.

"Aw, come on," said the tailender who had spoken before, transferring his disgust to the newcomer, a heavily bearded, straggly mustached, but extremely young man, in an overseas service overcoat, now in the last stages of threadbareness. "You ain't like this guy here. His benny and cady and kicks ain't the kind that oughta be in thish yere line-up. Wouldn't catch me here getting frozen to death, if I was him."

"Where *would* you go?" Norroy inquired politely.

"Doc Peavey's, on Poleaxe Street, right erround th' corner from here. On'y charges four bits fer a ducket, an' gives yuh a jab fer luck." The wan-eyed, waxey-faced creature was watching Norroy eagerly. "Come on," he said suddenly. "I'll show *you*—an' *you* stake *me*."

"Right," said Norroy with equal suddenness, "I'll stake you—and you, too." He turned to the man in the threadbare service overcoat who stared at Norroy as one who spoke in some language unknown to him.

"Am I to understand that you are offering to pay for me?"

Norroy nodded. It was his rule to keep an impassive countenance, otherwise it would have lit up at the fellow's intonation. It bespoke breeding and education.

"Yes; you *are* to understand just that. So please come along," said Norroy abruptly.

He would have preferred giving the waxy fellow the amount needed, and bidding him be off to the popular Peavey's. But, lest there be watchers and listeners, in the interest of the enemy, he needed some plausible excuse for having been in the line-up and for quitting it. And the excuse of Peavey's would serve.

"I just hit New York, from the other side," he observed, at random, as he hurried along, hard-put to keep pace with his guide and retain any semblance of dignified progress. "My supply was short, and the hotel doctor declined to prescribe morphia. Told me I'd have to come here. So here I am."

"What? Aintcha got no registration card?" demanded the wan creature, stopping suddenly at the corner. "Aaaw, hell! Peavey won't prescribe, less'n you got yore card. They watch him too clost. Yuh gotta dog it overta Prince Street, 'fore yuh git any ducket from 'im. You git yore jab an' no more——"

"I'm in no hurry," said Norroy hastily. "I can wait."

"*I* can't," said the bearded young man weakly. He wavered, his eyes filming. "I've been without it for over twenty-four hours."

The film had become moisture. The man, big and bearded though he was, was weeping weakly, like some chastened child. A shudder shook the fellow from head to foot. He spun, teetotumlike, slipped on the snow, fell heavily, and lay there.

"Taxi," Norroy countered briefly, commandeering a passing cab. "Here, driver, help me in with him. Here—you!"

Nothing could have suited Norroy's book better than this accident. Providing, of course, that the man did not die. Silencing the wan-faced one with sufficient cash to pay a pair of Peaveys, and so leaving him, Norroy bade the driver go north. The corner turned, Norroy opened the cab door and leaned out to give a more explicit address. He then drew the blinds that hid him and his companion from driver and passers-by alike, took out a waferlike watch in one hand, the stranger's pulse with the other.

Its faintness and irregularity seriously alarmed him. This was no time to wait for doctors. Norroy determined to take a certain chance. With deft fingers, he rifled the pockets of the shabby service greatcoat. The man wore only a waistcoat beneath it.

Norroy's fingers closed upon a packet, fastened together with rubber bands. It had been further secured from loss, by a button and buttonhole clumsily sewn, the man's own work evidently. At the sight of the legend, that had been gilt letters upon the packet's soft, gray-suede backing, Norroy elongated his eyes. The gilt was nearly all gone, but there could be no mistake about the outline of the flag and of the words: "My discharge from U. S. Service."

The secret agent flicked the rubber bands away, unfolded, and read the inclosed papers. His look of habitual calm forsook him. Never would he have dared to ask of Providence that she pick for him, from among so many pitiful people, the one person so consummately made to order for his purpose. An ex-captain, A. E. F., a volunteer, who had seen the toughest sort of service; one who had been decorated by three governments. His papers showed he had been badly wounded and gassed, and, of course, gave his full army record—including hospital records.

And now—this!

Norroy saw only too clearly how it was that Captain Christopher Cotton, really through no fault of his own, had been in the "drug line" that morning. Wounds, unspeakable pain. Morphine from doctors—anything to deaden that pain, and then—the habit.

If, when Norroy came a-seeking that morning, he could have described the ideal man for his purpose, he would not have dared to aim so high as C. Cotton. But, since he *had* found him, the secret agent was glad, at least, that this unfortunate young officer and gallant gentleman would soon know that his suffering had not gone for nothing. C. Cotton was about to serve his country again; this time against enemies within.

But at what a cost! Norroy wondered if Cotton would find it worth it, even though he, Norroy, knew it was. And, suddenly he found himself wondering if finding Cotton was really the accident it seemed. Were not all such so-called coincidences, after all, only the working out, in its infinite details, of a giant purpose; one that, as our forefathers believed, always had the man ready, whenever there was the need for him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONCERNING CHRISTOPHER COTTON.

To him who had been "dear old Kit Cotton," in more than one dugout opening off that long stretch of Duck-Board Lane that ran its melancholy way from lower Flanders to upper Lorraine, the line of demarcation between threatened delirium and later dreams had been as slight as the same line between dreams and awakening. When the nightmare, leading toward a delirium that could have ended only in death, had been terminated by Norroy's skillful ministrations, C. Cotton had glided peacefully into slumberous reminiscences of days when war was not and college campuses were; days when his ivy-entwined study walls overlooked a gathering place, all green.

In those days there was nothing noteworthy in a young senior lying luxuriantly at full length, in a noble tub so full of water piping hot that it would seem he floated. But, as this water began to soothe the ache in bone-chilled weary limbs, arms that ached from wounds but recently healed, legs that had twisted and contorted from other and later agonies; part of his brain was dumb, leaving it to the other parts to tell him that he was lying in the reeking mud of a Picardy *abri,* and dreaming. Dreaming the favorite dream of all cleanly inclined members of the A. E. F.: hot water, hot water, and again hot water; enough to cover an unclean, itching, cold, and toil-worn body, in its entirety. Surely a dream, this! Had there ever really been that much hot water in the whole wide world?

In that strange hinterland where one is neither quite awake nor quite asleep, and certainly neither sane nor normal, C. Cotton allowed things to have their way with him. It was but natural that such a dream should include soft, flesh-caressing pajamas, the donning of which required no effort on his part—as is the way of dreams. And the sort of softness in beds and downiness in pillows that goes with such gear.

What more natural, too, that in such a dream mind, there should come the suggestion of a soft musical patter overhead; rain on the roof. And, to the tune of such a crackle and such a patter, words should be set, pitched in just that low, restrained key that caused one to think they belonged to folk anxious for a fellow's comfort.

That sort of folk held one's wrist and decided what more could be done for one's comfort. And did them! Until you drifted away out of—— Not out of the dream! That would be too cruel, yet! Especially when, away at the back of everything, you knew well enough there was something quite too painful to remember; something you woud *not* wake up to, not yet. Memories of slinking down side streets; avoiding decent people's eyes. Memories of—— Waking in hell could be no worse than—— Oh, God!

No!

"Steady, old fellow. You don't help yourself any when you let out a yell like that. You're all right. I've had the surgeon general on the wire—an old Washington friend—and he says your case is one of the saddest he's heard yet. Meanwhile, he's sent a day letter that will result in rescinding your discharge. They'll probably put you on the retired list, on full pay, until you are entirely cured, and half pay after. There's a great specialist, right down on Long Island, who cures cases like yours, and off you go to him to-morrow. To-day, if the doctor says you can stand the trip. Your troubles are all over. Mine are only beginning. Try to lie still and keep your face straight, or I'll never make it."

That some one sitting by his bedside had been able to say so much to C. Cotton, without any interruptions from that gentleman, was due to a variety of reasons. First, the fire was actually there, instead of being part of the dream. Secondly, so was the sound of rain drops on the roof. Thirdly, there are things, in sight, not in the dream at all; good things; rugs and books and pictures and flowers. Yes, flowers; even though it is winter.

All this is staggering enough. So much so that, this time, C. Cotton is speechlessly sure that what he has heard about the drug is true after all. He never had one before, what the vulgar call a "dope dream." But, undoubtedly, he is having one now. How can he doubt it when, looking down at him, and talking all the while, is the face he has been accustomed to see of mornings in his shaving mirror. And this face is not attached to his own body at all, but to that of the slim, elegant gentleman who is telling him fabulous things about being friends with surgeon generals, and such incredible stuff.

So Captain Christopher Cotton sinks back on his pillow, and stares. Which is just what Mr. Yorke Norroy wants him to do, for now he takes a pair of tiny scissors, from his make-up tray, and clips away a vestige of side whisker that makes the outline of his face too round.

"That's right. Lie just as you are. For reasons I will presently give you in detail, it is absolutely necessary, for the good of the service, that I pass myself off on a certain nonconfiding pack of scoundrels, as yourself. And if you behave very beautifully, you will hear all about it in a minute."

Norroy continued the task of his complicated make-up, his fingers hastening to complete it before C. Cotton's countenance should become more mobile. Now—the mind behind it all asleep—it was a mere mask. Which was just what Norroy wanted; that being the mask *he* was endeavoring to assume. And so to continue for the next few days—or weeks—months, maybe.

The art which one may attain in make-up is better believed, nowadays, than before the Great War; when secret agents, spies, and the like were supposed to have no other source than the invention of the fertile melodramatist. Hence, the opinion of C. Cotton, when he woke, was that he was looking at his own face—or rather, that appearance he had recently made his own. Norroy had only to inject a trifle more paraffin to give the nose the exact characteristics of Cotton's, at the various angles shown in the three-sided mirror before which he worked. A final clipping made the straggling beard a trifle more untidy.

"It'll do, Jean?" asked Norroy of his valet.

"Of a certainty, *maitre.* Shall I clear away?"

"Not until you've made the passport pictures. That was the style of photograph used on the registration card, was it not, Captain Cotton?"

"You mean——"

Small wonder C. Cotton stammered when he remembered the ignominy of the day when, to procure the drug, any longer, he was notified that he must present himself on Prince Street, with two photographs of himself. One had been pasted upon the file card, the other upon that one he now carried; one that certified him as a bona-fide addict, and that permitted physicians to prescribe narcotics for the person presenting it, provided his appearance corresponded with the photograph thereon. To write himself down "Addict!" Forever after, to know that that information was part of the nation's files!

Norroy knew why the blood blazed about C. Cotton's cheek bones and said no more, only nodded to Jean; who went to a corner cupboard, returning with a tall tripod, which he set up, placing the black box of a camera thereon.

"With your permission, Captain—just look at me, and copy my blank expression as best you can. Then turn your face to Jean—that's all. Now, Jean——"

Twice the camera clicked, then Jean went his way. Norroy lighted a cigarette, and seemed prepared to answer questions. But the former captain of the A. E. F. was too confused, too nonplused, to ask them.

"Well," Norroy asked, handing back to Cotton the card that bore his official photograph, "if I presented that at the nearest drug store, would I do?"

Something that thickened his throat kept C. Cotton from doing more than nodding again. His attempt to smile was pathetic.

"You have no objection to my use of your name and identity, for a few days, have you?"

"You will not be taking *my* name, or *my* identity," C. Cotton managed to struggle out at last. "I grew that beard to disguise both. The name I used, on my 'addict' card, is not my own, of course."

"I gathered all that from the card." Norroy nodded. "C. Christopher is the ticket, isn't it? And the address? That I suppose is correct? Now, I suppose you want me to explain the purpose for which I need them? Eh?"

The secret agent gave Cotton's shoulder a reassuring pat. Poor devil! How he must have suffered.

"Frankly, then," said Yorke Norroy, "you are speaking to one of your own. I was a divisional intelligence officer overseas. Now I am back at the old work. At present, all the various civilian intelligence services are attempting to control the illicit traffic in drugs."

He saw that Cotton shivered, and again averted his eyes.

"There is some one on the other side," Norroy pursued, his face darkening at the thought of his powerful and as yet unknown adversary, the only man who had successfully combated him, "who seems equally interested in controlling that same traffic. But differently. From many sources of information, I have come to believe in something as seemingly fantastic as a crime trust. Whoever the man at the head of this crime trust is, we must give him credit for tremendous efficiency in organization. His identity is unknown, even his headquarters. It is my task to supply this missing information."

He spoke as calmly of this as you or I would speak of whom we should invite for dinner, this day or week.

"This illicit opium is evidently all coming from a single source, and one so well protected, and provided with so much of it, that there are not enough buyers, even yet. So the last exploit of my unknown enemy has been to raid the office files of the bureau of narcotic registration, and provide himself with twenty-odd thousand new names. The names of those who, it is to be imagined, have hitherto procured the drug in the legal way, through reputable doctors and druggists. One naturally infers that the next step will be to get in touch with this twenty thousand, trusting—as he may well do—that they will not reveal so precious a piece of information as the way to obtain an unlimited supply. You, yourself, would not have done that, would you? Am I right?"

"I'm afraid you are," answered C. Cotton, his voice low.

"With the result," Norroy continued, "that a habit that had been started in you would have become permanent. Once permanent, that use of a large quantity each

day, a quantity to be obtained only from one source—a secret one—would have made you the abject slave of the person who controlled the source of supply. As it is, of course, you can be cured. Have no doubt of it."

"You are sure?" asked C. Cotton, trembling, his cigarette falling from his shaking hand. "Why, I've been told it's irretrievable. That once——"

"All nonsense," Norroy answered him positively. "As you will soon see, when you go to the right sort of sanitarium. But to resume the larger aspect of the case: relying on an addict's desire for more than the law allows him, and on his desire to dispense with a hateful identification card that tells his secret, every time he had need of the drug, this person who heads this aggregation I call the crime trust, will sooner or later get into communication with those whose names are on those cards stolen by his orders. But, just suppose one of those was *not* an addict. Suppose he was—well—myself. This crime-trust person probably figures out something of this sort. No one knew he was going to steal these cards—therefore, each name on the cards is bona fide. Therefore, the crime-trust head thinks himself protected from impostors, masquerading agents. Do you begin to see why I wish to borrow the name and identity of your sorrowful days?"

Evidently C. Cotton saw, and approved, from his appearance of smiling attention. It was then that the valet secretary, Jean, returned with two wet photographs, which he had clipped against a background of black pasteboard, the heads severed from their shoulders. Norroy stared at both, then handed the pasteboard silently to Cotton. The ex-army man's face wore a puzzled look as he glanced up from it.

"Are these both my photographs?" he asked.

Norroy showed his pleasure in a light laugh; then handed him the second black pasteboard, on which another pair of wet photographs had been pasted. The same face overtopped both. But one pair of shoulders were in pajamas, while the other pair was clad in a smartly cut coat.

"The same two," said Norroy, smiling. "All I seem to need are the clothes you wore, when you had your own picture taken. Are they the same as those you wore when I found you?"

"All except the coat to the suit which went to the pawnshop this morning to get the money I needed at Worth Street," Cotton answered in a low tone. "Now I think of it," he went on, as Norroy began discarding his Cork Street clothes for Cotton's well-worn apparel, "is there—is there anything else I can do to help you—to prove my gratitude?"

"Just tell me whatever story you used to account for yourself, and your presence where you were," Norroy answered, emerging from behind the screen, buttoning up the frayed waistcoat that Cotton had worn beneath his service overcoat. "I see you have written yourself down 'Artist—Illustrator.' "

"Fortunately I can draw: I am an architectural draftsman by profession," Cotton explained, "and when I found I must earn some sort of living, without letting my friends know, I picked up a few desultory dollars, here and there, among the cheaper sort of magazines—the kind with a few pages of fashions and second-right serials—making head and tailpieces, initial letters, all that sort of thing. I can imagine, from the skill with which you made up your face, that you will have no trouble to do as much as that, if it's necessary."

Norroy nodded.

"You've had a hard time," said Norroy sympathetically. "But, at least, you have the consolation of knowing that, if Fate was unkind to you, its unkindness may be the means of helping many others. It almost looks as though Fate had you made to order for the sort of person I needed. No friends in New York, not even a regular residence. I suppose you haven't even been at your present place very long."

"A few weeks. It was the cheapest I could go," answered Cotton. "It won't hurt you to take some few of the little luxuries you're accustomed to. And another suit of clothes. I had only one suit of civies. Take my advice and do."

Which Norroy accordingly did.

Half an hour later, a taxicab dropped the pseudo "C. Christopher," as Cotton called himself on his card and at his lodging house, to account for the initials on his kit bag, carrying the shabbiest sort of dressing case, on the corner of one of the crookedest streets, amid that maze of crooked streets known as "old Greenwich Village."

Slowly he made his way toward No. 212 River Street.

CHAPTER XIX.

MR. EALES, ESQUIRE.

Two weeks later, one of those days, and in one of those locations that made it easy for one to believe himself in London, rather than New York, Yorke Norroy, viewed all of his little world that was visible through the grimy panes of an attic front window.

No. 212 River Street had been built, no doubt, in pre-Revolutionary days; a high, narrow house with a steep, sloping roof. From this the attic windows protruded in such a way that they seemed to have been squirming their way out and had at last succeeded in getting half of their bulk into the open. There was one advantage to such window construction, however. One forever on the watch, like Norroy, could see whatever was happening on both sides of the street below. In all directions, too, for No. 212 was a corner house, with four of these overgrown specimens of dormers to Norroy's room.

Norroy sat like the plotting magician in the midst of the maze. From his window he could see six streets that had started in his direction in seventeen hundred and something. Changing their minds, they had doubled back on their tracks.

Every nation on earth had its representatives, among those who loomed up under the street lamp below, their faces revealed momentarily in its light, a patch of yellowish incandescense upon the sea fog, which lay over the lower city. Every nation that is, except America. With the fog rolling in, and the crooked lamplit streets, and the old houses, and the Babel of nationalities, it was indeed very like London's unsightliest quarter, Limehouse.

As he watched, Norroy fell into a train of thought that carried him back a decade, to the days when, in opposition to five of the wickedest men in Christendom, he had brought off a coup d'etat in the vicinity of that more or less wicked neighborhood, that had, to quote one of the wicked ones, "stood every policeman in the city on his head."

He had been luckier in those days, he thought, sighing. Or maybe it was only younger. It was close upon two months, now, since that brazen-faced bit of kidnaping at Prybyl Prison; since Guilda Six had warned him of the "crime trust;" since Ulric Ulm had disappeared as utterly as if the earth had opened under him.

Not the trace of a clew either, except that one given so unwisely and with such sheer effrontery, by this masterful crime-trust fellow himself. For, when the Hall of Records robbery had occurred, and that insolent message was left for him, it was no difficult thing, considering what Guilda Six had told him—and remembering old Six's transactions in synthetics before his arrest—to correlate the two occurrences: Six's escape, and the theft of the addicts' cards.

Norroy knew as well as Alan Allenby, now, what it was that "they" had brought Six back to do. If ever they got a good start with their synthetic morphine, he realized that the republic would be well on its way to ruin. What else would it mean, when, instead of dodging custom's officers to bring the stuff in, it could be manufactured easily and inexpensively in the States.

He dismissed the unwelcome thought, with an effort, and left the window for the open fire. That was one good thing about these old houses. Every room had its fireplace. Noting that there were precious few sticks in the basket, he picked up the late resident's shabby cloth hat, and reached for the blanketlike service overcoat. He was slipping an arm into this when he heard a step on the stair.

He stood tense, expectant. The footsteps had not ceased at the floor below, but were coming straight on to his own floor. A knock came on his door. Norroy pitched hat and coat into a corner and slipped into a chair by the fire. As he called "Come in," he began to whittle aimlessly at a piece of kindling. The door opened. Some one halted on the threshold. Norroy, neither ceasing his whittling nor looking around, addressed this person as one who intrudes.

"Now, Mrs. Lammy, for Heaven's sake, what's the use of coming up here every day. I expect my remittance any time, now, and when I get it, you'll get your rent."

The harangue was delivered in the querulous voice of one who is long-suffering.

"Close the door, can't you? Isn't it bad enough I have to take my last few cents to heat this old barn of a place, without you trying to get some of my heat for your old halls, too!"

This time the stranger interrupted. At the sound of the voice, Norroy turned. The stranger was an oily appearing Eurasian, a third or fourth-rate edition of the splendiferous Chard. That is to say, his clothes were

the sort placarded in the public prints. His speckless, fawn-colored, cloth-topped shoes revealed that he had come in a cab.

"It's not your landlady, Mr. Christopher," he said, with an unplaceable foreign accent, nearer Portuguese than anything else. "This being yours truly, Mr. Charles Eales, Esquire, who you have got some correspondence with, yes?"

At the mention of "correspondence," Norroy got quickly to his feet, eagerly welcoming the stranger. Mr. Eales allowed himself to be led to a place near the fire. Before seating himself beside him on the only other chair, Norroy returned to the door and locked it.

"Did you bring any of the stuff with you, Mr. Eales," he asked, with ill-concealed eagerness.

"It is not so difficultless," Mr. Eales responded. "No, Mr. Christopher, there are to be more carefulnesses observed until that is to be done. Oh, crumbs! I infer so, undoubtless." Mr. Eales, Esquire, giggled as one who has a good joke all to himself. "Besides, Mr. Christopher," he continued, "I infer, as I hear you make speakings to me, believing I am landladies, how sure I am to be it will be profit dealing, to supply you! Not?"

Norroy eyed him scornfully. "To pay for a room is one thing, to pay for what one must have is another," he declared, smiling a cunning smile. He explained this, by producing from an inner pocket of his shabby waistcoat a small roll of bills, pinned there with a huge safety pin.

"Examine that," he urged complacently.

Mr. Eales, Esquire, did. The roll held five yellow-backed bills.

"I always keep that much ahead, for the stuff," Norroy explained. "I never think of touching that B. R. except to invest in more of the same. But that was not why I wanted to see you! not altogether. From the note I received from you, you seemed to suggest that you had a large amount of stuff to sell. I know of a market you haven't any idea of. Long before I got your letter, I was thinking that, if only I could connect with some one with a large supply, I could show them how to turn over their money twice, in two twos. How about it?"

While Norroy talked, Mr. Eales, Esquire, had been going through certain maneuvers, which Norroy professed not to notice. He identified them immediately, however, as the Eurasian's attempt to inspect one of many photographs, in an envelope that he had taken from an inner pocket, and was shielding with one hand. From the fact that he smiled from ear to ear, when he slipped the envelope back in place, Norroy concluded he was fully satisfied.

"What was it you were saying of demand and supply, Mr. Christopher?" he giggled again.

"You read my letter, didn't you, Mr. Eales? Well, then, didn't I say in it that I was prepared to take a large amount myself, and asked what arrangements could be made to take over a consignment for sale?"

"Yes, yes," agreed Mr. Eales, and again he giggled. "But I do nothing with letters, Mr. Christopher, regardless. Now, I have no more to do except say come into cab with me, go to man who send me here. To him you speak about letters. So!"

Mr. Eales, Esquire, arose and left, giggling.

Here, exulted Norroy, was action at last! In half an hour, or thereabouts, he would have ascended two, or maybe more, of the steps that led to the genius in charge of the operations of the crime trust. First, this contemptible little Eales: naturally they would use their most worthless members for the first step.

This baffling enemy of his was slowly emerging into view. He followed Mr. Eales, down the creaking stairs, to the waiting cab.

CHAPTER XX.

DOMINICK DEEMS.

Their cab—which proved to be no cab at all but somebody's well-upholstered coupé, once he was well within it—made its way through the labyrinth to the south side of Washington Square, and up the west side of it, passing Georgian and early Victorian residences, with high front steps, that practically put the drawing-room on the second floor.

The cab proceeded at a leisurely pace across north Washington Square, and continued its way along Waverley Place and up University Place, crossing where, high above Broadway, topping an ancient and snow-covered church, a bell was tolling for the dead. The cab continued along streets whose houses were built in an earlier age. When a house was put up with some idea

of beauty and permanency. It finally drew up before a pleasant, ivy-covered, old house, with white woodwork, brass knocker and door plate, and narrow, two-slabbed wide, worn doorstep, all as English as you please, in that least-known of all New York "squares," Rutherford. Here, like its sister Gramercy, a few blocks westward, the houses were built around a central garden, inclosed by high, spear-headed railings. As Old World a spot, this, as any in all New York. It was evident that Mr. Eales, Esquire, meant him to descend, and accordingly Norroy did. On the brass doorplate the secret agent read the name, "Dominick Deems, M. R. C. S., M. D."

The door was opened by just the sort of manservant one would have expected, in such a house. Eales spoke no word but nodded violently. Whereupon there was not the slightest doubt, although it was done unobtrusively, that the butler's gesture dismissed him, and with a certain curtness and decision.

"I leave you here, then, Mr. Christopher," he said, in his queer Portugueselike accent, giggled again, and went his way.

"Doctor Deems will see you at once, sir," the butler informed Norroy, leading the way through a wide hall with a spindle baluster, up the Old World stairs, and into a study lined with books, and closing the paneled mahogany door behind him. Norroy sat down, breathing hard. That such a place as this should be only the second step of his journey, amazed him! What would he unearth at the top?

"So that's it! By——"

He had suddenly realized why it was that the doctor was the next one this prudent crime organization would have him see. Disguises have their limitations. There was no possible way of disguising oneself that would prove to a medical man that one who wasn't *was* a user of drugs.

There was only one possible way out. He was not sure how either his heart or his stomach would stand the sort of a dose an addict would be likely to take. But he must risk it. It could do no more than make him sick. Even that could be explained by the story he meant to tell: that he had gone so long without it.

He must be quick about working himself up to the proper emotional pitch, though. His supernormally keen ears heard rubber-soled footsteps in the hall. He covered his eyes with both hands, put every thew and sinew on the strain, and began to rock himself to and fro. Low moans escaped from him every little while. He was apparently oblivious to the entrance of Dominick Deems, whom Alan Allenby would have recognized, readily, as the smocked surgeon who had sat in the anæsthetist's chair during those terrible moments while the unconscious Guilda Six lay on the operating table.

"Mr. Christopher," he murmured, silkily suave, his most professional sympathetic manner. He recognized, or thought he did, the symptoms from which Norroy seemed to suffer. Especially when a long-sighing yawn, that appeared to hold Norroy's lower jaw open in a tetanuslike grip, completed the simulation.

"Doctor, please, quick! I shouldn't have come without taking my dose. Give it to me, please! I have an awful 'yen.' Quick, doctor, please! A half grain." Norroy mentioned the amount in some trepidation. A quarter grain, he knew, was the usual therapeutic dose.

"Where do you generally take it?" Dominick Deems asked, approaching the secret agent with the anodyne he seemed to crave.

"In my hip, ever since a needle poisoned both my arms, and required an operation. But I'll take a chance in the left arm again, now."

Norroy knew that the trifling wounds he had received from bits of flying shrapnel case, while acting as divisional intelligence officer in France, would present about the same appearance after probing, as the wholly fallacious arms described. He rolled up his left sleeve, revealing them, and set his teeth behind a forced smile of anticipation.

"There," said Dominick Deems pleasantly.

While the doctor was cleansing and returning the various parts of the Pravas outfit, Norroy found his teeth unclenching, his body relaxing, himself slipping back to a position of languid ease in the great leather armchair. He became conscious, not of the sickening depression he had set his teeth to meet, but of a feeling of distinct euphoria. All his senses seemed supremely heightened. Numerous small objects scattered about on the shelves, ordinary enough ornaments, took on an appearance of beauty. The cigarette he found himself lighting tasted more than usually well. Yet, it was none of his carefully sun-ripened Smyrna tobacco, but some average trade brand.

His mental processes quickened. Or so it seemed. Phrases leaped to his lips ready-made. He was compelled to take himself in hand and crush down the idea that this pleasant fellow, Deems, was the sort ideally created to be his best friend. He checked himself on the brink of personal confidences. With an effort, he put the false euphoria aside, held himself to the necessity of what he was there to do.

"Feel better now?" asked Deems, smiling; then tossed him a small, unmarked vial he took from a small medicine case. "There's enough to last you for a few days, since you seem to have run short. Now what is this you have written?" He consulted Norroy's letter. "You speak here of a market for our wares, of which we are *unaware.*"

"Doctor Deems," he said gravely. "Can I trust you with a secret?"

Deems nodded.

"Am I to understand from your letter, then, that you, or whoever you represent, have a large and steadily increasing supply of opiates? And that you are looking for those to whom you can have a steady sale?"

"Why—er—yes," admitted Deems, "you might put it that way. If we are sure they are *safe.*"

"*I* registered, as an addict, doctor, only because my finances were so low I couldn't afford to pay what my friends were paying," said Norroy. "So I changed my name, and came down to a poor quarter of the city, grew this unlovely beard, so I wouldn't be recognized, and cut loose from everything and everybody I knew. Now, remember, you have passed your word of honor! Here is what I actually am, or was."

He handed to Deems the bundle of papers, wrapped in the army discharge of Captain Christopher Cotton, which he had first examined while their owner lay senseless on the opposite seat of the cab. Deems' ordinarily dull eyes sparkled, behind the amethystine lenses that surrounded them, with a reflected wine-colored light.

"You will see how it was I acquired the habit," Norroy explained as Deems turned over the various carbon copies of hospital transfers, discharges, and the like. "When I went to France I had no more idea of using morphia than a babe unborn." He went on suiting his phraseology to the character he was playing, and explaining how the drug was first given to wounded soldiers or those badly gassed.

Deems listened with eyes alight; while Norroy, after sketching out his own story, told how one or two officers, thus enslaved, had arranged with a brother medico in the Canadian army, passing through New York, to buy the stuff in quantity from Canadian wholesale houses, bound by no controlling laws, and how they took turns going to Canada to get it.

Norroy concluded by saying that the number of these officers had so increased and so large a quantity had to be bought that it was now necessary for two or three or even four to go to Canada. He, himself, he said, could no longer afford to pay both for the drug and the railroad trip. Many of the others felt as he did. Not a man, in the lot, but who would welcome the chance to buy in the States. And he, C. Cotton, could put Doctor Deems, or whoever he represented, in touch with this most desirable market. What about it? What would be his percentage?

Yes, it was detestable. But Doctor Dominick Deems was too far gone, in the use of the drug, himself, to see it. At the tale's conclusion he rose, extending his hand.

"I think we can do business, Captain Cotton," he said, returning the packet of papers.

"Mr. Christopher, please," urged Norroy, his eyes alarmed. "Remember your word of honor, Doctor Deems."

Deems' next speech was a startling one:

"Have you any objection to going blindfolded?"

"Where?"

The doctor's laugh was an embarrassed one. "No doubt you will know in good time," said he. "But I would not dare take you there without the chief's permission unless you went blindfolded. If you object, please say so. I will arrange matters so you may meet him here, perhaps to-morrow. How about it?"

In the city of four million or more souls, there must have been many happy men that day. And perhaps there were many men with more reasons for happiness than Mr. Yorke Norroy. But of one thing you may be sure. Mr. Yorke Norroy was actually the happiest in all New York. For, within the next quarter hour, he was back in the closed car that had brought him to Rutherford Square. True, no sooner had he entered, than Deems pulled down the curtains and, then and there, proceeded to tie up Norroy's eyes with a skill that did honor to appren-

ticeship as an interne, when he learned to tie bandages.

But what of that? Yorke Norroy was at last on his way to face, in his own bailiwick, the unknown genius at the head of this great criminal organization.

In another hour that person would be anything but unknown. The Federal hawk would pounce at last. It was all the reserved and indifferent Mr. Yorke Norroy could do to keep from singing aloud.

CHAPTER XXI.

HOW ALAN CAME AT MIDNIGHT TO HIS LADY'S BOWER.

About half an hour or so before midnight, on the day before Mr. Yorke Norroy set off on his voyage from Rutherford Square, Guilda Six put aside the book she had been reading since "Nurse Selina" had left her, for the night, extinguished the waxen tapers on the reading desk, and began to prepare herself for bed.

Guilda's bed, like the other solid pieces, of carven teakwood, was set in a curtained alcove, and was also bedecked in blue, canopy and curtains, both of *tapestrie Chinois*. This, as well as the intricately carved frame of her full-length mirror, were part of a set once domiciled in a royal pavilion of the Forbidden City, long before a Chinese Republic was ever dreamed of.

In fine, the affair of this room and its plenishings had cost Master Milliken and his associates weeks of incessant labor, not to mention the risk and infinite care attending the original purloining. Guilda Six had everything she wanted—except freedom. And she should have been accustomed to going without that. For by the time Mr. Yorke Norroy became active, in interfering with the Chaplain's little game, Guilda had been in durance some six months or so.

At this late hour of this particular evening, when she was utterly enchanting in some affair of appliqued embroidery on pinkish Chefoo silk, the faintest of faint knocks came on the door outside. She listened intently until it became plain to her that the knuckles of Alan Allenby and none other were responsible for its repetition.

Whereupon she hastened to the door. It had been the Chaplain's custom to allow Alan to visit her for an hour, daily. He had promised this, and it was his boast never to break his promise. But this meeting had been always in the presence of Selina, undutifully described as "dragon," by Miss Guilda. And hitherto, Alan's visits had been about teatime.

Lately there had been no visits at all. For the past three days, she had been told that Alan was far too occupied with her father, to cease work for any excuse excepting absolute exhaustion. She had been further informed that this fact should make her glad. Once the formula was finished, and in the Chaplain's possession, Alan, her father, and herself were to be transferred to "the yacht." A cruise was then to begin, a world cruise, one whose end would find them in residence in their own home, near one of the Mediterranean pleasure cities, Cannes for choice.

By that time the Chaplain and his horde would long since have quitted the Broadway block, and such secrets as the three possessed could no longer harm them. The prospect should have appealed to her. But, it did not. Live luxuriously on an income derived from such a source? Not likely! Alan's attitude, in the matter of this income, had been a sorrow second only to the fact that her father should be the source of this new scourge that was to be let loose on the world. Her heart began beating faster, as she crossed softly to the door and drew the inner bolt.

Not that this bolt was at all necessary. Milliken had put it there purely for her own satisfaction. Besides, it was an ornamental affair, in hammered brass, that looked well against the ivorylike paneling. The door was doubly secured without it. Selina always turned the key in the lock outside, before pocketing it. Then there was the central electrical device that double-locked each door. This was operated by the man on shift in the "lock room," a private switchboard, not unlike the sort used in small telephone exchanges.

Guilda was well aware that Alan knew all about this double-locking device. Before employing their own keys for opening any doors, it was necessary for the members of the organization to signal their intentions to the man on shift, by the use of the private Morse code, that stood for each member's name. Were the key inserted absent-mindedly, without remembrance of the electrical device, a shock to the owners arm would instantly ensue, a shock that was apt to make a deep impression on his memory.

Besides which, Alan had no key to her room. That, she knew well enough, was turned over by Nurse Selina to whoever happened to be on shift in the lock room. Nevertheless, almost automatically, she shot the bolt. As she did so, Alan, who had turned the knob beforehand, came in rather more suddenly than he had expected. Quickly, almost noiselessly, he closed the door behind him.

"Speak low," he warned. "Milliken's shift, and he not only loaned me the key, but threw off your switch. It seems a shame to take advantage of him like this, Guilda. He thinks all I want is to see you, alone."

His cheeks were burning as he said this. So were hers.

"But, of course, you must have some better reason than that to come to me at this hour," she said, trying to speak coldly. "Is —is—my father——"

"No," he reassured her. "To-morrow afternoon the Chaplain returns from Long Island. And the formula is complete, successful, waiting for him. Once it's handed over——"

He spreadeagled both hands, eyeing her gloomily, forehead wrinkled, expression harassed.

"I have it here," he said, and produced a tiny parchment-bound booklet which she snatched eagerly from his listless fingers.

Its contents were utterly incomprehensible to her. She saw only a row of figures and another of symbols that, more or less, resembled Chinese ideographs, and might as well have been for all the meaning they conveyed to her.

"I copied it from his penciled notes, tonight," Alan explained. "I learned that sort of fancy lettering from old Doctor Botany. I used to help him label his drugs and copy out his best prescriptions. You know that was how I picked up therapeutics enough to be helpful to your father, when we were at St. Kilda's. I wish now," he added gloomily, "I wish I'd let it alone."

"Why?"

"Why," he broke out with an intensity that the constant practice of a month enabled him to keep from being shrill. "Why? Why so that all this wouldn't be up to me, that's why. With this formula, synthetic morphine can be made wholesale, at three dollars a pound. When the present price is nearly three hundred. If millions of people use it, at that price, how many more will use it at the price the Chaplain can sell it at? Why, under some trade name, it will be bought and sold as freely as common table salt. This stuff"—he struck the formula from her hands—"will make a nation of hopeless addicts in a year. Remember, the original effect is decidedly pleasant. Don't forget that I am compelled to use it, whether I wish or no, once each day. Don't forget: I *know.*"

The remembrance of what this boy was doing, for her sake, inspired her sudden tenderness.

"Dear, dear Alan," she said, and suddenly caught his head between both her hands, and kissed him. For the moment he forgot and held her in his arms.

"Don't think I regret anything," he said huskily, pressing his cheek against her hair that lay loose about her soft neck and thin, childlike shoulders.

He knew now what it meant, really, to be tempted: had known it for days and days. His mind was continually tortured by thoughts of what it would be like to have her always with him under a Southern sun, near where that alabaster pleasure city of the Prince of Monaco rises supreme above the Mediterranean, its marble palaces agleam against the Cote d'Azur's blue and gold.

He, Alan Allenby, who for all he came of a race of sea wanderers, had never known any place but St. Kilda's, might be of these peacocks of the earth if he willed. Yes, and might ruffle it, with the best of them, with a girl like this on his arm, and a pocket full of money.

And that little bit of parchment would do all that for them. He had only to hold his hand. After all, somebody else, some day, was bound to hit on this same formula. Why should *his* happiness be sacrificed? The memory of that dreadful half hour came again and he shivered.

"What's wrong, Alan?" asked Guilda.

"It's like this, Guilda," he said, straining after a sober sort of speech. "By some lucky fluke or the other—one of those Roentgen-ray affairs—we hit upon something better than what we were looking for. Or, I should say, something worse, I suppose. Your father set about a reanalysis, saying in that slow preoccupied way of his: 'If I'm not mistaken, this should eradicate pain more swiftly than an opium product!'"

"And will it?"

Alan nodded.

"I knew a better way than reanalysis. I carried some of the stuff over to Chard's and told him to try it out on somebody. Well, a certain pair of 'boosters' came in—shoplifters, you know—the Bingleys—Fannie and Bill. They had been chased by the police, and were all in. So Chard tried it on them."

"Yes?" Guilda prompted, for he had stopped, and was looking at her with tired eyes.

"It worked," he went on wearily, "worked better than the usual. I heard Fannie say: 'Fine! What is it, a new lot just opened?' Chard said it was just some new stuff, and he only had enough left to try it on himself. He, too, pronounced it superexcellent. In fact, he said, 'Opium contains a drug called narcotin, that has never before been separated from the opium. You don't get it in morphine. This stuff is like morphine with narcotin.' And, indeed, that's just about what it is. So I came to you to decide what we should do."

His eyes refused to meet hers. Until she spoke, and when she did, so sweetly and so gravely, he stared, a dull ache, in his heart, for what he was losing.

"If we can save my father from committing a crime he does not realize, it's your duty to do it, of course. What is *your* plan?"

"Well," he said savagely, "I shouldn't tell you, if I could help it. I can tell you that! It isn't fair that everything should be put up to us like this. It makes a fellow feel as though there isn't any such thing as a God. For if we do what I have in mind to do——"

"You forget I haven't heard it, yet," she reminded him.

"Well, here it is. I can't break my oath not to tell your father anything of your being here. You can tell him *everything*. Tell him how he has been 'used,' how you have been *mis*used. Tell him that we should destroy the formula we have made, and refuse to make another.

"We are the only two who know, yet. If I give the Chaplain the formula to-morrow, he will use his immense organization, for manufacturing and distributing illicit drugs, to get it to the people. And with those twenty thousand more names and addresses he has stolen from the Hall of Records, the United States and Canada will be sown, far and wide, with the drug before the authorities know anything about its existence. There isn't even a law to control its use. Remember, *it is not a derivative of opium at all.*"

He paused to get his breath. He had rattled this out excitedly.

"I am sewed up and sealed, so far as your father is concerned. I can tell him nothing. So before I handed over this deadly piece of paper to the Chaplain, and started such a terrific engine of destruction, I just had to come to you. You see, don't you?"

He was sitting, staring at the floor, elbows on knees, hands clutching at his crisp hair. She crossed to him silently, bent over, and kissed him.

"Yes, Alan, boy. We must hurry now. How does one get to father's room?"

"Remember," he warned her doggedly. "You are giving up all hopes of happiness for us——"

"Selfish happiness," said she sadly. "Neither of us would be here now, Alan, if that sort of happiness was for us. You ought to know that."

Her eyes held him. He wanted to protest, but somehow he dared not disappoint the expectancy in those shining eyes. In the same dreary monotone, he repeated the formula she desired.

"Now, destroy that thing, and never tell a soul of it. Take me to father."

She was pointing to the vellum-bound book of parchment. He uttered a sharp cry.

"No, no; don't destroy it, Guilda! After all, it's only evil when used evilly. Opium itself is one of the greatest blessings as well as one of the greatest curses. Think of the awful pain the wounded and gassed would have——"

"Yes, yes," she interrupted; she did not want to think of it. "Give it to me. I know where I can hide it where no one will ever find it. One of these ornaments, that looks solid, is really hollow and loaded with lead to make up the weight. No one else knows. Not even you. Turn your back and shut your eyes. Now wait a moment. There, that's safe enough! I shall tell father it is destroyed, and beg him not to make another."

"But the Chaplain must not know you have been there or poor old Milliken would suffer," said Alan hurriedly. "You must make your father promise to tell the Chap-

lain he has decided not to make the stuff after all. But——"

He stopped; then said wearily:

"Somehow, the Chaplain will worm it out of some one of us, anyway. He is a devil, but he is a genius, too."

Alan broke off suddenly as he heard the single golden chime of the Chinese clock.

"Milliken is off-shift at one o'clock. You have only half an hour to get there, convince your father, and return. God, what a risk for you!"

But she only kissed him, and pointed dumbly to the door. As silently as two midnight mice on an uninvited expedition to another's pantry, these two stole through the long unlighted halls and corridors, following the pencil point of light from Alan's torch, shaped like a fountain pen. Alan reached the first dead stop; seemed, to Guilda, to play with the paneling, until he slid a portion of the center back. Stepping into the aperture, he engineered the opposite entrance; stopping on the other side, to explain to Guilda how to close them permanently, on her return.

He sighed relief, when they reached the professor's door. But, once he held Guilda in his arms again, it seemed that all this risk had been insane; that he must gather her in his arms and run swiftly back with her, locking her in so she could do herself and him no harm.

Yet, although his heart seemed weak and queer, and his eyes hot and burning, he could only say he was sorry he could not remain outside to see her back, but that his remaining away from Chard's was only increasing her risk and Milliken's. That was their parting, as they believed, for all time.

CHAPTER XXII.

ALAN, ULM, AND TOM LEE.

Alan was never to know just how the next adventure of the night came about. Alan was perfectly well aware that Chard's rooms were in the next house. Alan's conscious brain knew it, anyhow. What his subconscious brain knew, no one knows, not even Alan. Certainly, what occurred could have happened on no other night.

After leaving Guilda, Alan remembered nothing, accurately, until he found himself before a door which he believed to be Chard's. It is not every night that one leaves one's sweetheart for "the last time," expecting never to see her again, this side of eternity. So Alan may be pardoned for forgetting that Chard's rooms were another flight down and that he had yet to descend the stairs. The two floors were very similar, both having been part of the one-time hotel. So when Alan paused before a certain door, and pressed the button beside it, he imagined he was going through the usual formula for entering "The Palace of the Oriental Pleasure."

He had no reason to believe differently when he heard the click that released the lock. Milliken had nothing to do with the interlocking device that gave access to Chard's. This was worked by the Eurasian himself, by a little push button by his desk, for he had so many visitors, at certain hours, that had the man on shift to attend to *them,* he would have had time for no one else.

The click came but the door failed to open. It was then that Alan saw a key in the lock; mechanically, he turned it, although it was then he began to see something strange in the affair. Why should Chard and his horde be locked in?

He turned the knob. But no lantern-lighted space lay before him, sweet with the sweetest of acrid smoke of opium. The room was firelit only. And before the fire sat a single figure, in the attitude of the deepest dejection, the slender, boyish figure of a young man with a crop of corn-colored hair.

"Ulm!" Alan ejaculated; "Ulric Ulm."

"Well?" responded Ulric lifelessly. "What now?"

Ulm just stood there, waiting. His eyes looked as though he would never view anything with any interest again. A few more months like this, and he would be dead.

"It's Allenby," stammered Alan, although he was aware that Ulric had been operated on; that his memory was gone. But, before he realized that it was useless, a light came into Ulm's eyes, that showed he remembered.

"Allenby!" he said. "Alan Allenby. God! You don't know how glad I am to see you again."

Ulm was able to realize that something was wrong, from the look in Alan's eyes. During that most dreadful hour of Alan's life, when the girl he loved lay on the operating table, Alan had been convinced by Ulm's vacant stare, and the other manifestations of the absence of his own individuality, that the story told by the Chaplain was true.

That the young secret agent had, indeed, been operated on and reduced to a condition of "artificial amnesia."

Had Alan believed otherwise, he would not now have been a nightly frequenter of the place he hated. That the use of the drug had its pleasurable side to a beginner, only made him hate his imposed task, all the more, for being able to extract any pleasure from it. Had he not been able to console himself, by the thought that it was for Guilda, he would never have gone through with it, he knew. Had he not believed that, had he dissented she must have faced the ordeal of the knife, he would have fought the fight of his life in Deems' "surgery" sooner than submit.

"What's wrong with you, Allenby?" demanded Ulm in some alarm.

"For God's sake, Ulm," muttered Alan. "What are you? A ghost? What—the operation—the——"

"What's wrong with you, boy?" asked the other, his eyes amazed. "Or rather, what's wrong with me, that you stare at me like that? I'm no ghost. I wish I were," he added bitterly, "then, maybe, I might get out of here."

"What—what's happened to you since I saw you?" gasped Alan.

"Why," returned Ulm thoughtfully, "nothing much of anything. They woke me up later that night and gave me another injection. I fought against it, but one of them held me—the big fellow——"

"Milliken?"

Ulm shook his head. "Sounds like 'Toothpick' or something——"

"Kewpick?"

"That's it. Well, that son of Anak held me down while the little man with the eyes gave me the shot. When I came to again, I was here. That's all."

"But you—you—remember everything?"

"Remember? I should say I did. Look here!"

He crossed to a little buhl table, and showed Alan an improvised calendar in handwriting.

"There's the day I came here," he said. "There's every succeeding day marked off. Two fellows come in, twice a day, generally, when they're here, accompanied by a pair of roughnecks. One wears a green jersey, one a blue one——"

"Mike and Isidore," said Alan dully. "Yes."

"And while Mike and Isadore hold me," said Ulm bitterly, "the big fellow gives me an injection of morphine. No use fighting. They just hold me down. The worst of it all is I look forward to it. Damn them," cried Ulm, a sob in his voice, "how they grinned the day I didn't struggle. It was about three days ago."

"I know," said Alan somberly.

"Then when they came the next day, I put up a real fight. They had to knock me out before they could dose me. After that I gave it up. I'd sooner be dead than have that habit fastened on me. It knocks out the conscious brain. But what can I do?"

"Damn them!" Alan burst out.

Alan turned swiftly to Ulm.

"I can't stop and explain now," he said. "But I'm going to take a long chance. Follow me. If they catch us at it, it can't matter much."

Wondering, Ulm followed Alan into the hall. Alan raced along it silently until he came to the panel. Finger to lip, he explained its workings to his companion, then returned to Ulm's room.

"Now, listen," Alan adjured him. "That girl you followed, you know, Miss Six, Guilda Six? Something's coming off tomorrow that may be the end of me. I'll try to stop in here later, but I don't think I'll be able to manage it. Here's what you must do: Guilda's room is in the last house. You open the second panel the same way as the first, the one I showed you. Her room is fourth from the end of the second passage."

"I don't dare leave your door unlocked now, before your breakfast comes, and the others. But, to-morrow afternoon, on my way from the laboratory, when the Chaplain sends for me—he'll return from Long Island, around five o'clock—I'll unlock it and give the signal to the man upstairs. When you hear a knock with my knuckles follow, you'll know it's me. You wait a few minutes, then go straight to the girl's room. Give this signal, and the door will be opened for you. Sounds like a fairy tale, doesn't it?"

But it was a sorry sort of smile, that one of Alan's, as he showed Ulric the knock by which he announced himself to Guilda and the keeper.

"There'll be somebody with her: a woman. Tie her up and gag her, if necessary. I don't know what to tell you to do then. You can't escape, I guess. Neither can

she. But if you're there to defend her, its something, anyhow. Good-by, old man."

Ulm sensed something serious behind Alan's manner. "But you——" he began.

"I don't imagine there'll be much of me," said Alan with a wry smile, "after to-morrow. I've got to go now. Cinderella stuff. Stroke of midnight, and all that. So long!"

An old church bell, near by, was chiming midnight when Alan entered the alcove where he and Milliken were usually to be found at that hour. He was boiling with anger, not against the Chaplain, but against Milliken. Somehow, he had not believed the big fellow would play so scurvy a trick on him. And when the big fellow came into Chard's, jovial and good-natured as ever, and winked at him, Alan could somehow only believe that he, too, had been deceived.

"Well, did you enjoy your evening, young pal?"

Alan nodded, managing to smile back.

Then there was silence, save for the click of cooking needles, the sizzle of suey-pow on hot clay bowl, the bubble-bubble of the big bamboo. All around them, other men whispered; whispered of deeds which detective headquarters of a dozen States would have given a year's wages to hear.

But the events of the evening were not over for Alan, as yet. As he lay, with eyes half closed, a hand was placed on his shoulder from behind.

"Congratulations" came in the soft Oxford English of Tom Lee, the Rhodes scholar from Oxford. Certainly Cecil Rhodes had never meant to educate any one to be the Chaplain's secretary. Alan saw the yellow hand, with the long, tapering finger nails, resting on his shoulder like the claw of the Chaplain, reminding Alan he held him fast.

"When I left Curate's, where I lunched to-day, I encountered the worthy William Bingley—on Broadway naturally," Tom Lee stated in his easy Oxford accents. "He was enraptured over a new variety of what he calls the 'white stuff.' As we strolled together, he told me of some white tablets Chard had 'tried out' on him—to use the excellent Mr. Bingley's locution. Chard said they came from you, so an hour or so ago, I went to congratulate you."

Alan's head was whirling. What a night! Tom Lee's succeeding sentence smashed Alan's scheme of successful conspiracy as one destroys an elaborate edifice of toy blocks.

"I came," he said, smiling, "just after the victorious formula had been dispatched. The good professor informed me that he had sent it to the Chaplain, a scant quarter hour before I came in. I suppose you discovered he is not back from Long Island until to-morrow?"

"Yes," Alan answered him mechanically. "Yes."

It was all over, Alan told himself, in the same dull way. Well, at any rate, he had discovered that the operation for artificial amnesia did not exist. They could not intimidate him again by making him think they would operate on Guilda.

Alan became conscious that Tom Lee had crossed to the nearest couch, in the near-by room, and that there was a great amount of chattering going on about him. Those who were the nearest him came over from their couches and bunks, buzzing about him, asking for confirmation of Lee's report. He eyed them hopelessly, remembering, in dull dismay, that every one of this hungry horde was financially concerned in Six's success. Six's success, they had been told many times, meant millions to be divided among them.

And he, Alan Allenby, stood between them—and *that!* What wouldn't they do to get that formula from him? He stared blankly at the many faces, half revealed in the luminous shadows of the room. And then one of them launched his bolt.

"Where is the formula?"

"Yes," Tom Lee added benignantly, "you may as well give it to me. I will be the first to see the Chaplain on his return. The professor says he gave it to you to deliver, not knowing of his absence."

"I locked it away," he said sullenly. "Anyhow, I mean to give it to the Chaplain myself. I want to talk to him about what he promised, when it was finished."

As the others resumed their places, with appropriately profane rejoinders, the news spread to the other rooms. Whereupon they ceased to be a place of whispers. Before he left the place, that night, Alan had nodded and flung back affirmative monosyllables a score of times. For the first time, he asked Milliken for the use of the pipe oftener than the big fellow thought necessary. He eyed Alan disapprovingly. Presently, he leaned

across, and, after assuring himself he had no listeners, whispered in Alan's ear.

"Better look out," he said. "What I've been giving you—between you and me—hasn't been enough to give you a habit, you know. If you get away from it now—your work being done—you won't have any habit."

"His work being done!" Alan thought bitterly. Yes, it could be that way. The girl he loved, money enough to last, a sea-going yacht! But, no! That infernal conscience! He hated it, that damned conscience. Why couldn't he——

But he couldn't! So that ended that.

But he could and did demand, and get, more opium from Milliken. Anything to make him forget the thoughts that tortured him. And in time, the opium brought surcease, and he slept.

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN WHICH YORKE NORROY SAYS "OPEN SESAME."

One who did not know Mr. Yorke Norroy very well, might have wondered where his great reputation for adroit chicanery came in, had they watched him, from the time he entered the closed motor car, in Rutherford Square, until the time he left it, before the real-estate office of Cantilever. Not that he knew anything of Cantilever, or his real-estate office. His eyes were much too securely bound for that. Nor did Norroy make any effort to loosen the binding about his eyes, or otherwise attempt to identify the place he was entering. Which would seem most reckless.

Thus the reasoning of the average man; forgetting that Mr. Norroy's specialty was getting in and out of surprisingly tight places, with amazing expedition.

By the time Norroy and his cicerone were within the Cantilever domains, Cantilever, who had been aware of their approach, had pushed aside some old furniture, disclosing the most ordinary sort of a trapdoor, leading to the old-time cellar over which the shack was built.

Deems locked the door behind him.

"The chief come in yet?"

"Near an hour ago," returned old Cantilever grumpily. "Who's this fellow?"

"Chief's orders," returned Deems crisply. "Didn't he say he expected me to bring some one."

"Guess he forgot all about *you,*" was Cantilever's contemptuous answer. "That chink secretary of his met him outside and told him something, by glory! First time I ever see him excited. But he sure was, this time. The formula's ready. Yes!"

Cantilever flung up the trapdoor.

"Better unbandage him now, hadn't you? He can't see anything, now I got the blind down. Damn' awkward getting him down that ladder, if you don't. And through them narrow passages."

"I was just going to," returned Deems, "when your news took my breath. Now, Mr. Christopher, if you don't mind."

He removed the medicinal gauze which he directed Cantilever to stow away in the rickety desk. Norroy, in possession of his sight again, let his incurious eyes flicker over Cantilever and his scrubby excuse for an office. Then, following the beam of the doctor's pocket torch, which revealed the sort of subterranean entrance that has not changed since the days of Aladdin, he stepped carefully, backward, down the ladder and into the dark depths below. When his foot struck the soft dirt floor of a damp-ish cellar, Deems followed him.

Old Cantilever, squatting, surveyed the pair safe on the cellar floor. Then he dropped the trap, spread a strip of carpet on it, and, after raising the blind, sat himself upon his stool.

Norroy followed Deems through narrow lanes, between a great assortment of bales and boxes, piled almost to the ceiling. In an open lighted space in the cellar's center, several young men, in expensive shoes and carefully creased trousers, coats off, and aprons over waistcoats, were packing porcelains in excelsior, preparatory to boxing them to figure as freight. These young men nodded careless recognition of the doctor, who nodded back, not slackening his pace at all.

At the end of the subcellar, they came to another ladder that led up to the level of Byrd's underground arrangements. Deems held the torch, bidding Norroy climb before him. Norroy obeyed, and scrambled over a wooden platform at the top. This led to a sort of tunnel, which extended onward, under Byrd's yard and stables, having been dug to make the connection with the Byrd cellar.

Deems joining Norroy, they traversed the length of this earth-smelling place, which terminated in a heavy door. Deems un-

locked this, after pressing the black button on its lintel, several times. This door gave upon the identical place into which Ulric Ulm had been entrapped a month or more before. The door clicked behind them. Norroy started.

"That's the electric shift," Deems explained. "The doors of this house are double-locked by an electrical contrivance. You noticed me press that black button? That told the shift man who I was. If I'd tried to use the key without notifying him, I would have got a shock that would have numbed my arm for an hour. Oh, we're pretty well protected here," he commented with a self-satisfied smile, watching Norroy closely.

Norroy seemed pleasantly surprised by this precaution.

"I don't suppose it would do anybody any good, anyhow," he said carelessly. "If he tried any of his little games, he'd be recognized as an impostor by some one of your guards, wouldn't he? Or somebody, in the halls? Like those young men we just passed, for instance?"

Now it was decidedly unlucky for Doctor Dominick Deems that, on that particular day, there had been so steady a stream of drug buyers, that, before Norroy came, he had dispensed the last of his daily supply. When it came to taking his own dose, he had been compelled to use heroin; which was what he had given Norroy. But Deems' dose was one that would have killed the secret agent. And, forgetting that the relative strength of heroin is almost double that of morphine, he had overdosed himself, dulled his senses. Otherwise he might have noted something sinister in Norroy's manner.

As it was, he was not sufficiently alert to doubt the wisdom of answering Norroy's questions.

"Why, no," he returned with a fatuous smile, as though he, himself, were responsible for the elaborate precautionary measures he extolled. "The code number is enough. It is changed every week, you see? But for being recognized in the halls, you haven't any idea of the number of people in this organization. A trusted agent from one of the other cities may drop in, any day. He calls up a certain number, and the chief assigns him a number. This is given to the shift man—and there you are. So it isn't necessary to have any one on guard. You have no idea how large the place here is."

And he smiled sleepily, and started up the cellar stairs, having halted to finish his explanation.

"No, I have no idea now," said Norroy with suppressed exultation. "But I'm going to mighty soon."

Came a change in the tenor of his tones.

"Get those hands up as high as you can. Keep trying to touch the ceiling with them. Don't hesitate! I'm in earnest. And this Webley has a hood—notice? That hood's a silencer. When I fire you won't even know you're dead. Don't you think you'd better do exactly as I tell you?"

Norroy had his second finger of one hand on the trigger, thumb on the hammer of the flat, heavily hafted black weapon. The other hand snatched the torch from Deems.

"Now! Back to that door! Not one single word, or I'll have to finish you off. Just listen—carefully. Show me your code name by pressing that black button again."

The point of light was blunted against the lintel and spread out in a circle, around the bit of hard black rubber referred to.

"Very slowly, now, so that I can read the code. Signal your man as if you had come in, got what you wanted, and were going out again. Then they won't be looking for you upstairs. Get your finger on it, quick!"

Doctor Deems decided to obey.

"Next the keys. You put the bunch in your trousers' watch pocket, didn't you? Now, when I hold up the right key in this bunch, nod. This little Yale? Good!"

Norroy had placed the torch on an upper ledge, behind him, before plunging two fingers into the key pocket. He placed and turned the key. The door swung open. Norroy did not close it. Without removing his eyes from Deems, he reached out a slender forefinger and pressed the outside button once, twice, and so forth, making the dot-and-dash Morse message that stood for the doctor's name. This mendaciously asserted that the door was closed.

Followed a click. Norroy eyed his enemy triumphantly. The man on shift would believe Deems gone, now. But somehow he must dispose of Deems.

Leaving the electric torch where he had placed it, he circled around the enemy, and prodded his back to remind him that the Webley was in lethal readiness. Shifting the gun to his left hand, he unfastened the doctor's belt and braces. With one, he tied

his prisoner's hands; with the belt, he strapped his feet.

His handkerchief; not his usual sort but a yard or so of white silk, which he carried in anticipation of using as a mask, if necessary; added to the doctor's smaller one and with a pencil to convert it into a sort of tourniquet, served as an excellent gag.

It was finished. Deems was completely helpless. Smiling secretively, as one enjoying a joke all his own, Norroy made a swift tour of the cellar. He found a small bin, behind the disused furnace, an excellent hiding place, for the dust lay thick within and without it. No one ever seemed to go in the direction of the furnace.

Norroy returned to the resident of Rutherford Square, and giving devout thanks that Deems was small of stature and light of weight, the secret agent shouldered him. But there was a decided difference between bearing an obedient limp body, and one that was an active bunch of squirming muscles. Norroy was compelled to threaten, breathlessly, before he got Deems into the bin.

Before betaking himself upstairs, he completed an arrangement that might have mystified any one not experienced in espionage. He took from one pocket a small microphone arrangement, a circle of hard, black rubber, which he placed on a ledge, on the other side of the door by which he and Deems had entered, the door at the end of the tunnel which he had purposely left ajar, his "get-away." From another pocket he took a bit of red chalk, with which he made a tiny arrow on the frame above the door.

As he reëntered Byrd's old cellar, it was apparent that, as he progressed, he was paying out an all but invisible line of khaki-colored cord. Occasionally he stopped to hang this cord over some projecting ledge, keeping it always above the line of vision.

With infinite caution, he climbed the cellar steps. Before emerging on the landing above, he pushed the door slightly ajar with his Webley, which he withdrew from its holster for this purpose. As he pushed, he peered through the interstice between door and jamb, just above the lower hinge.

All was darkness under the great glass dome five stories above. Norroy listened and heard only the sounds of an old deserted house: the creaking boards, the mouse-haunted wainscots. Presently he applied his torch to the interstice and saw the emptiness beyond.

He emerged into the sea of space just as Ulric Ulm had. Looking up, he saw a single star through the dusty dome so far above. He began to climb toward it.

TO BE CONCLUDED.

MILLER DISLIKED EVASION

WHEN young Gilbert Miller was "casting" the opera "Monsieur Beaucaire," which he triumphantly produced first in London, he proceeded on the theory that singers who had a thorough knowledge of history would give the best performances. He had an idea that they could impersonate the beaus and beauties of Bath with precision and sympathy, if they were acquainted with the events and atmosphere of the gallant days of old Beau Nash.

Following this reasoning, he asked one of the applicants for the rôle of *Winterset*: "Pretty well up on history, are you?"

"What's that?" the singer came back with some heat, resenting the producer's implied doubt of his having been thoroughly educated.

"Do you know anything about history?" Miller put the query again.

"Oh," the applicant informed him coolly, "I guess I know as much about history as you do."

"I understand," insisted Miller suavely; "but I asked you: do you know anything about history?"

The Wedding of Chan Fah

By Lemuel L. de Bra

Author of "Mock Don Yuen Meditates," Etc.

Mock Don Yuen is again faced with a problem. Mock Don takes his time about acting, but when he does he starts something

LEE SO, the principal wife of Mock Ah Yut, heard her husband's shuffling step in the hallway, and opened the door for him.

"Aih!" cried Ah Yut. "May the rotting bones of your father's ancestors be rapped with hammers! Must you always jerk the door open just as I reach for the knob?"

"Ts, ts, honorable husband! It was but last night you scolded me because I forgot to open the door for you."

An angry retort came to Ah Yut's tongue, but he silenced it. Lee So had spoken with unusual boldness. There must be a visitor in the house. Ah Yut stepped in, and at what he saw, his nostrils dilated with sudden fury. Lim Toy, that fat marriage broker, whose mouth was always full of gossip, and whose stomach was always full of other people's tea and cakes, sat at the table by Chan Fah.

Since it was the hour of midday rice, Lee So began placing dishes on the oilcloth-covered table, while Jue Yoke, the secondary wife, started fanning the charcoal fire. Chan Fah arose quickly. When her foster father had seated himself on his opium bunk she handed him a bowl of fragrant Sou-chong tea. He sipped it noisily while he meditated on the probable reason for Lim Toy's visit.

"How is your health, venerable sir?" inquired the marriage broker.

Ah Yut glared at her over his tea bowl. "Is that all you came to ask?"

"Oh, no!" Lim Toy took another sugared almond. "I came to tell you that I have found an excellent husband for your foster daughter, Chan Fah."

Ah Yut stopped with the tea bowl at his lips. His slant eyes widened, then narrowed to mere slits of jet. Was it possible that the marriage broker had not heard of Chan Fah's betrothal?

Ah Yut had certainly heard enough of it! He had given his cousin, Mock Don Yuen, twenty-five cans of smuggled opium and sent him into a trap laid by the customs officers. Mock Don Yuen had slipped out of the trap and left Ah Yut in it. To pay for getting out of jail, Ah Yut had been obliged to sign a paper betrothing Chan Fah to Mock Don Yuen.

Since Chan Fah was not only a very pretty girl but was also well educated, Ah Yut had counted on getting at least two thousand dollars betrothal money from one of the rich merchants of San Francisco's Chinatown. To give her to Mock Don Yuen merely for getting out of jail had caused Ah Yut to lose much face. How he had racked his brain for some way to evade that hateful contract!

It suddenly occurred to Ah Yut that the marriage broker either did not know that Chan Fah had been betrothed, or she knew of some way Ah Yut could slip out of his bargain with Mock Don Yuen. Eager to save his face, and to profit by it if possible, Ah Yut chose to believe the latter. He set the tea bowl on the table and reached for his opium pipe.

"When you speak of finding a husband for Chan Fah it saddens me much," he said. "Never have I thought of her walking out of my door. She is my hundred thousand of gold; and I could not bear to part with her." He turned to Chan Fah. "Go to your room at once!"

Chan Fah's great dark eyes were on Ah Yut in puzzled wonder. She was a very attractive girl in her Chinese way. Her embroidered jacket and trousers were of the finest Hang-chiu silk. Since she was yet a maid, her glossy, black hair was pleated in a queue with gold and jade ornaments. Her earrings were of the finest Yunnan jade, and her face had the beauty and purity of old ivory. She arose at her foster father's command, hesitated as though to speak, then with bowed head went to her room.

"What you say is true," Lim Toy granted, although she knew it was false; "but one owes something to one's children. And I

have found a very rich husband for Chan Fah."

"Perhaps so," said Ah Yut, reaching for his little *hop toy* of opium.

"It is Lee Bow Art, the son of Lee Fong."

Ah Yut paused with the *yen hok* almost in the opium. He changed his mind and began scraping the pipe bowl with the flat end of the opium needle.

"Of course, Lee Fong is not so rich as some think," went on Lim Toy, divining Ah Yut's thoughts. "Still he could make a very good betrothal present. And although I believe Chan Fah has never seen Lee Bow Art, he has seen her many times. Often when Chan Fah went into the store of Lee Fong to buy preserved dragon-eye fruit, Lee Bow Art watched her from behind his father's latticed counting room. He would make a very good husband for Chan Fah."

"I know him! *Haie!* He is as ugly as a toad and has the manners of a pig. I shall ask a very large present. Not that I want the money myself. It will all be returned to Lee Bow Art through clothing and jewelry I shall buy for Chan Fah's trousseau."

"Yes, that is the custom," admitted Lim Toy, although she knew Ah Yut had no such intention. "Well, since you think favorably of the matter, give me Chan Fah's age; and when I have seen the astrologer I will return and you can name the sum you consider a suitable present."

"I will name it now," said Ah Yut, laying down his pipe. "I don't propose to have you here all the time gossiping with my wives."

He wrote on a piece of paper:

Chan Fah, born fourth year Kwang Hsui, second month, eleventh day.

"I shall ask a betrothal present of two thousand dollars," said Ah Yut, handing the paper to the marriage broker. "I will pay your fee if the matter is arranged at once; if you are as slow as usual I shall probably change my mind and not marry Chan Fah at any price."

Lim Toy took the paper and walked her way in haste. She went straightway to the store of Lee Fong, told Lee Bow Art of the matter, and had him write down his name and birth date. She took these two pieces of rice paper to the astrologer. It was four o'clock when the marriage broker again climbed the stairs to the home of Ah Yut.

"Venerable Mock Ah Yut, the astrologer, finds that the birth dates of Chan Fah and Lee Bow Art agree and that good fortune will attend their marriage. But Lee Fong says all he will pay is one thousand seven hundred and fifty dollars."

Ah Yut pretended to be very angry, and he threatened to break off negotiations; but all the time he was thinking that one thousand seven hundred and fifty dollars from Lee Fong was better than nothing at all from Mock Don Yuen. He leaned forward and spoke quietly:

"Of course you know that Chan Fah is already betrothed to Mock Don Yuen. How does Lee Bow Art propose to deal with him?"

Lim Toy chuckled. "That is simple. Every one knows that when Mock Don Yuen slipped out of that trap he took with him your twenty-five cans of smuggled opium."

"Why remind me of something I cannot forget?"

"Because Lee Bow Art has written to the customs officers, saying that Mock Don Yuen is a smuggler and telling them to go quickly to his rooms and search. They will find the opium and take Mock Don Yuen to prison."

"How can Lee Bow Art do such a vulgar thing? I would like to see Mock Don Yuen in prison; but since when do our people run to the white officials with tales? We tell the foreign devils nothing; no, not even about our worst enemies. *Haie!* It would be more honorable to hire a hatchet-man to wait for Mock Don Yuen some night, in the Alley of Lingering Shadows!"

"True. But the younger generation does not see things that way. And, anyway, the thing is done. There is no reason why you should not profit by it."

"Very well," said Ah Yut finally. "It is none of my affair. Here is the letter of the three generations, naming the parents, the grandparents, and the great-grandparents of Chan Fah. I shall expect the same for Lee Bow Art without delay."

When the marriage broker had gone, Chan Fah walked boldly from her room and approached her foster father.

"Honorable father, are you really going to betroth me to Lee Bow Art?"

"Have I not said so?"

"Yes; but you also said only a few days ago that I had been betrothed to Mock Don Yuen."

"What is that to you?" cried Ah Yut

angrily. "You are to marry Lee Bow Art, the son of Lee Fong, the rich merchant."

"But——"

"Silence!" roared Ah Yut. Then, seeing that Chan Fah's eyes were flashing with rebellious anger, he adopted another course. "Is it any of my fault that Mock Don Yuen broke his word with me? He says he does not want you. He prefers his old books. He asked me to find some one else for you. I have done so. Ts, ts! Marriages are a nuisance!"

For about the time it takes to sip a bowl of hot tea, Chan Fah stared at Ah Yut. Then, slowly, and with bowed head, she went to her room. She crossed the floor and stood by the window looking down at the shuffling throng on Dupont Street, which she scarcely saw, for the waters of sorrow filled her eyes. After a time she took up her Chinese guitar; but when she ran her jeweled fingers across the strings there was no echoing song in her heart. And so she stood there crying silently—not because she was to marry Lee Bow Art, whom she had never seen; nor because she was to walk out of her foster father's house, of which she had seen quite enough. It was because she had not forgotten, could never forget, a tall, stately Oriental who, with courtly grace, had bowed and taken from her hands the parting cup of tea, and who now said that he did not want her.

II.

It was nearing the hour of evening rice. The sunlight streaming through the west window of Mock Don Yuen's study struck in a splash of gold on the brazen censer that stood by the tiger-fur rug, and seemed to rest reverently on a gilded scroll that hung at the left of the great, carved study chair. Seated in this chair, his hands folded across his stomach, his thin, priestlike face impassive, and his long, black eyes fixed on the scroll, Mock Don Yuen studied the characters of the *Ta Hsueh*—"The Chart of the Great Study"—and meditated gravely on its ancient precepts.

At a small teakwood table, where he would not disturb the meditations of Mock Don Yuen, sat an apple-cheeked boy with saucy, black eyes. Before him lay a Business College Arithmetic, open at percentage and discount; but Ah Din, being hungry, was thinking very little of the things a young banker must know, and very much of what a young boy likes to eat. And so it happened that as Mock Don Yuen finished the ninth reading of "The Four Offenses Against Politeness" he paused in his meditations and, looking around, saw Ah Din leaning back in his chair, his head perked to one side, birdlike, and his red tongue licking the sweet sap that oozed from a piece of Chinese sugar cane the boy held poised above his eager face.

"Haie-e!"

Ah Din jumped. The sugar cane disappeared into the long sleeve of his blouse. He bent over his arithmetic.

For about the time it takes to clean an opium pipe, Mock Don Yuen frowned severely; then a slow smile came to his lips, a smile that lighted warm fires of tenderness in the man's dark eyes and illumined his face with a strange, spiritual beauty.

"Idleness and gluttony are twin sins, my little slave," he said in musical Cantonese. "The superior man is never guilty of either. It is true that the stomach is the seat of wisdom; but do you think to put wisdom in yours by stuffing it with sugar cane?"

Ah Din swung his white-stockinged feet beneath the chair and pored over his book as though he had not heard.

"When I forced my loyal cousin, Ah Yut, to give you to me as a slave it was that you might devote your hours to profitable study. You wish to become a banker. Therefore, learning, honesty, and dignity of carriage should be your object. To attain wisdom, one must think. What is that book you have?"

"Modern Business Arithmetic."

"Modern! Tt, ts! Do these white foreign devils see virtue only in modern things? Do they not know that the very best arithmetic you could study is our own *Chou Pei,* which was written three thousand years ago?"

"They do not know anything about the ancient Chinese books, sir scholar."

"Kuai! What ignorance! Do they not read *Kung-foo-tsze?"*

"They know about him; but they call him Confucius. And they do not think he was so great as one of their own wise men."

"How stupid! What is their wise man's lofty surname?"

"Jesus Christ."

"What a strange family name! I have heard it somewhere. Yes, on reflection, I recall it was but yesterday. A white foreign

devil was passing Lung Tow's meat shop. He was gawking in the window as they always do. When he fell over a crate of live ducks I heard him mention that wise man's name. Now, in this honorable college of American Business, will they teach you the *San Tze Ching?"*

"No, sir scholar."

"Ts! Ts! What a stupid school! In the Middle Kingdom every schoolboy memorizes the *San Tze Ching.* It is a very elementary book, full of the things a child should know. I was but a boy of five when I learned it, yet the first sentence is still fresh in my memory: *'Man commences life with a virtuous nature.'* "

"That may be true in China, sir scholar," ventured Ah Din; "but in this country all the people are 'born in sin.' The white-faced teachers of the mission say so."

"I do not question the statement," said Mock Don Yuen, nodding his head sagely. "In a land where people do not honor the ancients, there must be much evil. As *Kung-foo-tsze* said: 'The moderns can do nothing more than expound the gems of ancient wisdom.' "

"And that," said Ah Din, with the assurance of youth, "is just why the white foreign devils say China is behind the times —because we are always looking backward. You know the wisdom of China. You have told me all about that Great Chart, some of whose precepts were written four thousand years ago; yet you know very little of what is going on to-day. But, Mockie, old top" —Ah Din affected a prodigious yawn and dropped into English—"that's nothing in my young life."

Before Mock Don Yuen could make reply they heard the sound of heavy footsteps in the hall. Some one tried the door, found it locked, and rapped sharply on the panel —not with his knuckles; it was a swift *rat-a-tat* with the ends of his finger nails.

"Haie!" exclaimed Ah Din softly. "Customhouse devils!"

"But the rapping was Chinese."

"That was just to fool you, sir scholar. The customhouse devils learned that trick long ago. What shall I do?"

"Open the door, of course."

"But they will search for unstamped opium. They may have heard of the twenty-five cans you have hidden in your room."

"What of it?" Mock Don Yuen spoke with firm kindness. "Admit the officials."

Ah Din had already shoved his feet into his slippers. He arose and started for the door; then, as the pounding ceased, Ah Din hesitated. A voice in English demanded admittance on threat of breaking down the door. Ah Din delayed no longer.

Three men strode into the room. One of them went straight through to the rear room, one closed the door and stood with his back to it, and the other surveyed the study and its two occupants. Ah Din recognized him as Customs Agent Dan Bremer.

"Suey gon how!" said Bremer sharply. "Customhouse officials! We take a look-see. You catch-em *pin yen,* eh?"

Above anything else under the sun, Ah Din hated the sound of pidgin English. He drew up proudly.

"I do not understand you, sir. Will you be kind enough to speak English?"

Bremer grinned. "Oh, all right, kiddo. We're going to search this place for smuggled opium. Get that?"

"I gotcha, Steve," retorted Ah Din. "That's more than you'll get."

Bremer looked steadily at Mock Don Yuen. The strange Oriental sat very straight in his high-backed chair, calmly wiping his glasses with his green silk handkerchief.

"Who is that man?" asked the official, with some show of respect.

Ah Din told him.

"Does he smoke opium?"

"Four or five pipes a day. There is the layout."

Bremer walked to where the layout rested on a stool by the opium bunk. The stool, he noticed, was of Chinese ebony inlaid with mother of pearl; and the layout tray was richly lacquered. He picked up a five-tael can and examined it closely. In the bottom of the can was a small quantity of black, gummy substance. Around the sides of the can, and over the lid, was the customs stamp.

"First-grade Macao opium, or I'm no judge," muttered Bremer. "I wonder how many times this can has been refilled with smuggled stuff?" He gave Ah Din a knowing wink, but the boy pretended he did not notice. "I'm going to take a look around," concluded the officer, and began searching.

Mock Don Yuen replaced his green silk handkerchief in the left sleeve of his blouse. He laid the glasses on the table; for, al-

though the officials were only foreign devils, Mock Don Yuen could not be so disrespectful as to don the glasses in their presence. He turned to Ah Din.

"Do these officials understand our language?"

"No, sir scholar."

"Then do exactly as I say. Sit down at your table. Take up your book. Preserve your tranquillity."

"But, sir, my stomach is cold with fear. My father has no doubt told these officials that you have smuggled opium in your room. They will find it, and you will have to go to prison for a long time."

"I have hidden it," returned Mock Don Yuen quietly. "Let us see if the foxes find the burrow of their prey." As he reached for his long, tasseled tobacco pipe, he saw that Bremer was searching the sandalwood chest. "Hearken to me, Ah Din," Mock Don Yuen went on, placing a pinch of tobacco in the tiny bowl of the pipe; "do not even look at the officials lest they think we fear the result of their search." He lighted the pipe with a burning punk he took from the censer. "You were saying, I believe, that the white foreign devils think we are backward in many things. How can that be? We trace our civilization back forty centuries."

"I do not know," Ah Din managed to say.

Mock Don Yuen blew the ashes from the bowl and refilled it. The customs agent was sounding the wall above the opium bunk.

"I have observed that the white foreign devils are often very vulgar. It is true that my own life has been spent in fruitless pursuits, unredeemed by a single virtue; yet I was like the master, *Kung-foo-tsze.* I loved the past, and I questioned it earnestly; I loved learning, and I sought it with simple faith."

The Federal officer was taking Mock Don Yuen's books from the shelves, flipping the pages, and throwing the books on the table.

"So it seems to me they are often lacking in courtesy and knowledge," went on Mock Don Yuen. "In passing one on the street, he insists on turning to his right, when as any one knows one should always turn to the left. I have seen white men lift their hats when they meet a woman of their acquaintance, which, of course, is a very disrespectful thing to do. They have not learned the proper ceremonials."

So speaking, Mock Don Yuen kept his face toward Ah Din, but his eyes were on Bremer. The officer, with rude hand, had raised "The Chart of the Great Study," and he had found beneath it an opening in the wall that appeared to be an old chimney hole. Bremer looked closely at the crumpled paper that had been stuffed in the hole. It was covered with dust. But the customs agent knew this trick. He removed the paper, and peered into the sooty opening. With a grunt of disgust, he replaced the paper, and dropped the chart back into place.

"Which reminds me," Mock Don Yuen was saying; "I have not yet attended to the ceremonials for my marriage to Chan Fah."

Ah Din sat up quickly.

"Aih! I had forgotten. Sir scholar, when I went home after school to get my copy of the 'Thousand-word Classic,' I saw the marriage broker, Lim Toy, just going out. Chan Fah was weeping. My father was saying something about a fee. I followed Lim Toy. She went straight to the home of Lee Fong who has been trying to buy a wife for that ugly toad he calls his son, Lee Bow Art."

Mock Don Yuen's long eyes widened, then narrowed slowly to mere threads of glittering black. "You should have told me that matter before," he said severely. "What is the official saying now?"

Bremer had called his men together. "No use, boys," he told them. "I don't know whether we had a bum steer or not. The stuff may be here, but we can't find it without tearing the whole place to splinters. I don't intend to do that on an anonymous letter from another chink. I'd give a dollar to know what they've been chowing about all the time."

A moment later Mock Don Yuen said:

"Go quietly into the hall, Ah Din. Make sure that the customhouse officials no longer look back."

Ah Din opened the door. A man almost fell into the room. It was Ah Yut.

Mock Don Yuen frowned, and there was an edge to his courteous greeting. *"Ts'ing tso.* Please be seated, estimable cousin."

Ah Yut muttered his thanks. He sat down on the stool Ah Din put out for him, and removed his slippers. He had seen the customs agents leaving, and he tried to mask his thoughts from the keen eyes of Mock Don Yuen.

"You are well, venerable cousin?" Mock Don Yuen inquired.

"I am not so well, learned cousin. I was walking for the good of my health; and, passing your door, desired to enter and inquire after your welfare."

"You honor me greatly. I am not yet in prison, as you observe. Your visit is quite opportune. I was about to call on you. Some filthy scavenger has run with tales to the white officials and told them about the opium I have in my room. Two persons are greatly interested in seeing me go to prison. You are one of them; the other is Lee Bow Art, to whom you have betrothed Chan Fah, although she was already betrothed to me."

"I didn't tell them," put in Ah Yut stoutly.

"No. You have the heart of a snake, honorable cousin; but I do not believe you would do such a heinous thing. It is more like one of the younger generation, some one who has become vulgar and discourteous by mixing much with the white foreign devils. Yes, it is more like Lee Bow Art," concluded Mock Don Yuen. Then he spoke sharply: "Chan Fah was betrothed to me under the Chinese custom. I shall marry her. The rude feet of a grocer's son shall never tread on my little flower!"

Mock Don Yuen strode to "The Chart of the Great Study." He lifted one corner, removed the crumpled newspaper, and drew up the sleeve of his blouse. Cautiously he thrust his arm down into the chimney as far as he could reach. Unhooking a looped string from a nail that had been driven between the bricks, Mock Don Yuen drew out a sooty canvas bag.

"Here is your smuggled opium," said Mock Don Yuen coldly. "I want none of it. I kept it only to teach you a lesson. But, alas, rotten wood cannot be carved; neither will courtesy avail with such as you. Now walk your way. But I warn you: say nothing of this to Lee Bow Art."

When Ah Yut had gone, Mock Don Yuen exchanged his study cap of Hang-chiu silk for a plain Mandarin cap of black satin with a single red button.

"What can you do, sir scholar?" inquired Ah Din. "My father has already betrothed Chan Fah to Lee Bow Art. They will hasten the wedding. And I do not want Chan Fah to marry that fat toad."

"Preserve your tranquillity, my son. Do not disturb the harmony of our evening meal. Since you are so fond of bamboo sprouts we shall have a bowl of *Mo Goo Gai Soon Fan Gong*. After which I shall leave you. I must find a foreign devil pawnshop."

Ah Din looked up, puzzled. He started to speak, but for some reason changed his mind and held silent.

III.

When Lee Bow Art's father was advised of the wedding date, as set by the astrologer, he sent the betrothal money, one thousand seven hundred and fifty dollars in gold, to Ah Yut. The next day he sent other presents of fine tea, lichee nuts, preserved dragon-eye fruit, and roasted fowl and pork; and Chan Fah's foster parents made presents of some very fine Swatow tea bowls, a grass-seed pillow, a silk bed curtain, and other household things, sending them to the home of Lee Bow Art's parents. At no time did Chan Fah's parents meet the parents of Lee Bow Art; and, of course, Chan Fah was not to see Lee Bow Art until the wedding day.

None of the parties concerned thought of going to the foreign-devil officials for a marriage license, for such things are unknown in China; and the *fan quai* officials were too busy with more important matters to bother about Chinese weddings. Under the Chinese custom the wedding was complete with the acceptance of the betrothal present, save for one thing: the delivery of the bride to her future husband.

Chan Fah had been taught to read and to do embroidery and to be saving of rice and flour. She had been drilled in the *Nu Erh Ching* and other girlhood classics; and she knew by heart every word of the "Three Dependencies" and the "Four Virtues" and the whole duty of a good wife. When Ah Yut sent her to the American school she was very much afraid at first; but since she was quick to learn, and made many friends, she soon came to dislike many of the ways of the Chinese, although still doubting the propriety of some of the ways of her white sisters.

"You are an unfilial little beast," Ah Yut said to Chan Fah on the morning of the wedding day. "Your eyes should be filled with the waters of sorrow because you are to walk out of my house forever; but, instead, I hear you singing and laughing and playing love songs on your guitar."

"She cried bitterly the first day, honorable husband," Lee So came to the girl's defense. "She is a good girl, and has worked hard preparing her trousseau. Perhaps she is glad she is to marry a young man like Lee Bow Art, instead of Mock Don Yuen."

"You are wrong," spoke up Chan Fah quietly. "I do not want to marry Lee Bow Art; and it is wrong that I should be forced to marry a man I have never seen."

"He is very rich," championed Ah Yut; "and he is not so bad looking."

"Who cares for his money?" cried Chan Fah. "Must I love a toad because his father put gold in his ugly mouth?"

"But you will be happier with him than with Mock Don Yuen who has reached the age of forty and cares only for his books."

"Mock Don Yuen is a gentleman!" Chan Fah broke in, her dark eyes flashing like jewels. "He would be kind to me, and I would be happy with him even if he were as old as—as the Mother of Heaven Temple!" And, too angry to say more, Chan Fah stamped her foot as she had seen her white sisters do, then ran to her room.

Before Ah Yut could speak, several of Chan Fah's girl friends came in to see her, as was the custom. When they had gone into Chan Fah's room, Ah Yut sat in moody silence, smoking many pinches of tobacco in his long, tasseled pipe, and meditating on what Chan Fah had said. Perhaps, after all, it would have been kinder to marry her to Mock Don Yuen than to send her to Lee Bow Art, who would not appreciate her and who would no doubt abuse her. This was a disturbing thought. Ah Yut turned at once to his opium pipe and soon restored his peace and tranquillity.

When Lee So went into Chan Fah's room to prepare her for the wedding, she was not surprised to find the girl lying on her bed, her hands and feet bound with silk cords, and her girl friends laughing and joking and begging Chan Fah not to leave them. Chan Fah took it all in good grace; and, when she had been released, she said not a word while Lee So dressed her in a robe of plain white, which is the Chinese symbol for mourning. Then, because Lee Bow Art was unmarried, and Chan Fah was to have the honor of being his first wife instead of a mere concubine, or secondary wife, Lee So took a band of scarlet cloth and wrapped it about the girl's head.

Chan Fah cried softly when Lee So led her out of the door, and she seemed to be frightened when she saw the musicians in their gay attire, the friends of the family just behind them, the two waiting carriages, and the curious crowd of white people with staring eyes; but when she saw Ah Din by one of the carriages, she raised her head and tried to smile at him through her tears.

Because there were no red sedan chairs in San Francisco, the top of the hired hack had been covered with a piece of red silk. Chan Fah was placed in this carriage and the door locked. Then Lee So took her place with the friends and relatives between the musicians and the red carriage. Ah Din, being the younger brother, was to ride alone in the other carriage behind Chan Fah. When all was ready, the flageolets and drums began an old Chinese wedding march, and Chan Fah was being delivered to the house of Lee Bow Art.

Ah Din, wearing a crinkling new satin blouse, a new pair of embroidered slippers, and with his poll freshly shaven and his face shiny from a careful scrubbing, perched himself on the edge of the carriage seat and muttered a queer mixture of Cantonese and American schoolboy slang; for Ah Din's stomach was cold with sorrow and his head was hot with anger. He did not want Chan Fah to marry Lee Bow Art, and he had tried to get Mock Don Yuen to do something about it; but Mock Don Yuen seemed always too busy reading his strange old books to discuss the matter.

So confident was the boy that the learned scholar could save Chan Fah, if he would, that when the wedding procession was halted by a stalled cable car, directly in front of where Mock Don Yuen lived, Ah Din slipped out of the carriage and ran upstairs to make a last appeal. But Mock Don Yuen was not at home.

A few of Lee Bow Art's friends had made him small presents, so they gathered at his home and waited eagerly for the delivery of the bride. Some of the older Chinese, who had not forgotten the customs of their home land, hid Lee Bow Art's wedding clothes and made him redeem them with trifling souvenirs. This made him very angry, for he had no patience with the Chinese customs. He swore he would eat none of the red eggs which were being cooked for him, although, as any one knows, red eggs at wedding feasts always insure good fortune and many sons.

Lee Bow Art's young friends had mingled with the white foreign devils and, like him, they had become impudent and disrespectful. Thus, while the groom was indifferently worshiping at the family altar, they stole the tangerines and lichee nuts and copper *cash* that had been strewn in the marriage bed and which would have insured the bride and groom fruitfulness and wealth.

They were scuffling over the last coin when Lee So came puffing up the stairs. She knelt at the feet of Lee Bow Art, told him the bride was waiting, and begged him to go down and receive her.

Lee Bow Art took his lyre-shaped fan and ran down the stairs. Lee So followed. If the groom should consent to receive the bride, it would be Lee So's duty to take Chan Fah on her back and carry her into the house lest the bride's feet touch the threshold and bring misfortune to the house of Lee. When the groom and the bride's mother had gone down the stairs, the wedding guests placed a pan of burning charcoal at the head of the stairs so that Chan Fah would be purified by passing through the fumes. That done, the guests waited for the bride and groom to come.

Quite a crowd had gathered around the wedding procession, so Lee Bow Art suspected nothing when he noticed several Chinese standing rather close to the door of the red-topped carriage. Holding his head up haughtily, Lee Bow Art approached the cab. He raised his fan and rapped sharply on the door.

As though that were a signal, one of the Chinese by the cab stepped up and opened the door. With no little surprise, Lee Bow Art recognized him as Mock Quong, a cousin of Mock Don Yuen, and one of the elders of the family of Mock.

Chan Fah was crouching in the farthest corner of the cab. Her eyes were so filled with the waters of sorrow she could scarcely see the men at the door.

"*Ko sing a?*" inquired Mock Quong, although he had known her since childhood. "What is your lofty surname?"

"I—I am of the family of Chan, named Fah."

"Remain in the carriage," ordered Mock Quong sternly.

He closed the door, and turned to Lee Bow Art.

"*Aih-yah!* What a shameful thing! Don't you know that this woman is already the wife of Mock Don Yuen?"

Lee Bow Art's mouth fell open, and his eyes bulged like a toad's. "That is false!" he managed to say. "She was betrothed to me."

"She was betrothed to you after the Chinese custom. That would be binding in China, but it means nothing under the laws of this country, as you very well know, since you make such a boast of your English education. When Mock Don Yuen heard how you and Ah Yut planned to rob him of Chan Fah who had been betrothed to him, he took her quickly to the mission. A foreign-devil priest married them under the foreign-devil laws. You are too late, and can do nothing. Go back into your house and tell your honorable father I will settle the matter with Ah Yut and that the betrothal money will be returned."

Lee Bow Art stood still, his eyes filling with anger.

"I do not believe this, Mock Quong. To marry under the foreign-devil laws, one must have a license and——"

Some one stepped quickly from behind the red-topped carriage. It was Mock Don Yuen. The great scholar stood very tall and straight; and the black satin blouse and mandarin cap seemed to heighten the dignity and severity of his countenance.

"The foreign-devil license," said Mock Don Yuen sternly, "is here." He drew a folded paper from his sleeve and held it up where all could see.

Lee Bow Art could read English quite well. He saw the words "Certificate of Marriage." He saw the imposing gold seal of the foreign-devil laws. Without a word, he turned and went his way back into his father's house.

It was again nearing the hour of evening rice. The last rays of sunlight seemed to linger reverently on "The Chart of the Great Study," gilding its strange characters of age-old wisdom.

Chan Fah handed her husband a bowl of steaming Felicitous Spring tea.

"I am very happy, honorable husband," she said.

Mock Don Yuen bowed gracefully.

"Where the lily blooms, there the sunshine seems brightest," he told her.

The door was flung open, and Ah Din pranced into the room.

"'Lo, Mockie!" he sang out, flinging his school cap at a peg. "'Lo there, sis!" Then, as though he had suddenly remembered his Chinese manners, Ah Din bowed low and spoke in musical Cantonese:

"May you have ten thousand sons and grandsons!"

About to accept the tea Chan Fah poured for him, Ah Din's bright eyes chanced to light on something Mock Don Yuen had tacked on the wall in the place of honor at the left of "The Chart of the Great Study." It was the certificate of marriage that Mock Don Yuen had shown to Lee Bow Art.

Ah Din had never seen one before. He drew nearer, and read aloud:

"This is to certify that David Jason, of Hamptonville, State of Massachusetts, and Annie Martin, of South Forks, State of Massachusetts, were by me united in Holy Matrimony according to the ordinance of God and the laws of the State of Massachusetts, at Hamptonville, Massachusetts, on the seventh day of October, A. D. 1873——"

"Aih-yah!" cried Ah Din chokily. "Master—a mistake! Jason—why, that's the man who runs the pawnshop!"

Mock Don Yuen gave the boy a severe look.

"There has been no mistake. You told me that at this pawnshop I could buy anything the white foreign devils use. When I asked for a certificate of honorable marriage, the foreign devil laughed; but when he saw I was prepared to pay for it, he went upstairs and got this."

"But Mock Quong said——"

"Exactly what I told him to say. Do you think I have time for such nonsense as a marriage before a foreign-devil priest? Chan Fah was properly betrothed to me; under the Chinese law she was mine. All that remained was to have her delivered to my house. In order to do that peacefully, I arranged to deceive Lee Bow Art with this old foreign-devil certificate. Then I sent word to Chan Fah that the lily would never be seen in the burrow of a toad."

"Well, I'm a son of a gun!" exploded Ah Din.

A slow smile came to Mock Don Yuen's lips, lighting warm fires of tenderness in his dark eyes and illumining his face with spiritual beauty.

"Go now, little slave, and bring me my Book of Ancient Odes," he said gently. "It is three days gone since I studied poetry. Ts, ts! Kung-foo-tsze was right: 'Weddings are a nuisance.'"

"OH, SUGAR!"

A FEW months ago we advised or hinted that it would be a wise move for our readers to get interested in bees and honey production. Like Oliver Herford, we felt that it was a good time to retire to the country and keep a bee. For sugar promises a flight in prices equal to its cost in the Middle Ages, when it was a rarity and a luxury indulged in only by princes.

Originally, honey was the universal sweetener, and it was used for every purpose. Use of coffee and tea in northern Europe was directly responsible for the introduction and consumption of sugar. In 1700 England consumed only ten thousand tons of sugar.

Honey can be used for anything that sugar is used for. It is especially adaptable for cookery. In many ways honey is more healthful than sugar. It does not tend to destroy the teeth as sugar does and it is very digestible.

A Pittsburgh chemist announced not long ago that he had discovered a way to manufacture sugar out of sawdust in a period of about ten hours, at a cost of three cents a pound. A kind of intensely sweet sugar has been discovered growing on certain pine trees up in British Columbia, which is valued at sixty-six dollars a pound, and is being investigated by the United States department of agriculture as a possible source of sugar. So the world is looking out for sweeteners.

Of course, it would be some bother to establish a little apiary of your own, but the care of bees is not exacting or tiresome. Since writing our former editorial on bees, we have been informed that Texas needed no advice of this kind, for it produced nineteen million pounds of honey in 1919, and hopes to equal if not beat that record in 1920. Many of the other States might follow Texas in this particular.

The Ship of Hate

By Arthur Tuckerman

Author of "The Hand of Ming," "The Radio Call from Kupang," Etc.

Senff, of the *Progreso*, waited a long time for the revenge he craved. It would have been better for him if he had waited longer. The tang of the sea fills this tale

HAVING no doctor on board, the captain of the American oil tanker, *Metatoxet*, dropped anchor in the roadstead, off the sunbaked town of Haifa, in a last and desperate effort to save the life of young Trent, his wireless man, and sent him ashore on a stretcher with a raging fever to the one and only hospital in the place. Three hours later the *Metatoxet* received urgent orders to report to Aden and she steamed away leaving Trent behind. She never came back for him.

After five weeks of suffering, Trent was discharged as cured. He walked out of the white-walled hospital into the scorching heat with a mere semblance of his former health, only to find himself penniless, friendless, and jobless in a small Syrian coastal town; there was no American consul nearer than Aleppo, and he found no one in Haifa to whom he could turn for assistance. For three weeks he paced the cobblestone quays searching for a ship on which he could work his way back to some European port; but Haifa is an obscure spot on the trade map of the Levant, and he found only a few brown-sailed native barkentines engaged in local trading.

One night, a month after his recovery, he entered one of the Syrian cook shops where the townspeople were wont to gather for their evening meal, and there, under the yellow rays of the oil lamps, he saw to his joy a ship's officer. The man's appearance was not altogether prepossessing; he was dark-skinned, unshaven, and very shabbily clothed. For a time Trent hesitated to approach him; then realizing that here was a precious link of communication with the outside world he threw pride to the winds and strode across the shop, through the thick tobacco smoke, to where the man was sitting.

His name was Dirgas and he proved to be the first mate on a Spanish tramp that had reached Haifa late that afternoon. He listened to Trent's story politely enough and replied in good English.

"I am sorry," he said, "but we don't carry wireless on our ship. However"—he hesitated an instant as if doubtful whether what he was about to say would please Trent—"however, we need a steward or a cabin boy, a general helper to serve the meals and assist the cook. We lost out cabin boy at Jaffa; the little devil ran away to another ship." He chuckled reminiscently. "We are bound for Naples, and I can arrange to take you with us if you wish. How does that suit you?"

Trent was silent for a moment. It was a pretty big fall from wireless operator on a four-thousand-ton tanker to cabin boy on a small tramp, but a glance out of the door at the squalid streets he had paced for a month helped him reach a decision.

"I'll take it," he said. "I'd do anything to get away from this hole."

Following the Spaniard's instructions, he wasted no time and went down to the port early the next morning to locate his ship.

His first impression of the *Progreso* was far from reassuring. The weather helped to add to his depression, for overhead the sky was a dull slate color and a cold wind was sweeping in from the sea; the *Progreso*, tugging at her anchor chain and bobbing like a cork even in the shelter of the roadstead, looked very small, very old, and very dirty. Now and then she was entirely hidden from his view by the opaque clouds of yellow smoke that swirled down from her rusty black funnel. He learned later that this wretched old hulk had once been a splendid Atlantic freighter; now in her old age she was being worked to death by a man who cared not enough about her to holystone her decks once a year. There are tragedies in the lives of ships as in the lives of men.

He went back to the hospital to gather his dunnage and returned to the quay an hour later, where he hunted up a boatman to row him out to the *Progreso*. As they approached her, Trent saw that she had a very light cargo, for her Plimsoll mark was

showing above the gray-green water. His first close view of her was more discouraging than ever.

Dirgas met him at the taffrail and conducted him immediately to the ship's galley. Trent learned that he was to sleep in a little cubby-hole off the galley, half of which was occupied by the cook. A glance at the forecastle showed him that he was lucky. As he stood looking mournfully about his quarters, the cook came in, a little pale-faced cockney, obviously glad to find another English-speaking soul aboard the ship.

"Take my tip," he remarked, after they had talked together for a few minutes. " 'Op it from this blarsted tub as soon as we gets to Naples. I must 'ave been bloomin' well off my 'ead when I signed up on 'er."

"What's wrong with her, anyway?" asked Trent.

"Everythink's wrong with 'er. The orficers is a parcel of scum and the crew's a gang of bloomin' cutthroats."

When Trent served his first meal to the officers in the little mess room up forward, he had a good opportunity to size them up. He felt inclined to agree with Wilkins, the cook, and he thought he had never before seen so horrible a looking human being or one that so filled him with repulsion as the *Progreso's* captain.

Captain Ugo Senff was a tall man—well over six feet—but the perpetual stoop to his lean shoulders belied his height. It was his face that attracted notice, however; he had evidently been the victim of some terrible accident in his youth. His massive white forehead was dented in the center with a deep cavity, and each cheek was furrowed by a horrible scar that spread from ear to ear. His was but a mere semblance of a nose, while his mouth was permanently twisted into a crooked, mirthless grin that bared his long, yellow teeth.

Trent spoke of him afterward to the cook.

"Keep out of 'is way," said Wilkins. "Senff 'ad a terrible accident when 'e was second mate on a British ship, years ago. When 'e came out of the 'orspital 'e found that wimmen and children screamed at the sight of 'im, while men all turned away the moment they 'ad finished their business with 'im. Nobody wanted to be 'is friend. It was a tragic thing. After a while 'e managed to get a berth on a collier and 'e worked 'is way ahead, just by 'is own bloomin' cleverness. But 'e 'ad a 'ard time and 'is disfigurement began to prey on 'is mind."

Wilkins paused to touch his forehead significantly.

" 'E began to 'ate all men. 'E crushed the ones that dared to oppose 'im and 'e made use of the weak. 'E even got 'old of this 'ere ship in a dirty way. 'Ad the luck to salvage 'er, and 'e claimed such a bloomin' lot from the poor little Spaniard what owned 'er that the man was forced to give Senff the ship."

His voice lowered as he became confidential.

"I've seen men kicked to death aboard this ship, and not a soul dared to pipe up when we reached port. Why? Because we all know 'e wouldn't 'esitate to knife a chap what split on 'im. 'E keeps 'alf 'is crew by blackmail; Dirgas for instance. That man stabbed a lascar in a Cadiz bodega; 'e was justified as it 'appened, but Senff—being the only other soul that saw 'm do it—'olds 'im under 'is thumb with 'orrible threats. Oh, 'e's clever, all right."

Trent soon discovered that the morale on board was very low. The crew went about their work sullenly, hating the officers. They in turn treated the crew like dogs. The only thing which seemed to bind them all together was an intense hatred for Captain Senff.

Nearly a week after she had left Haifa the *Progreso* called at Alexandretta to take on a mixed cargo of olive oil and raisins. Dirgas went ashore for a few hours but Senff remained on board. At noon Trent was in the captain's cabin receiving instructions, when Dirgas burst in, greatly excited.

"Captain," he cried, "while I was ashore I came across an Englishman who was touring the coast, surveying trade prospects. The man was stranded because there is no Messagerie boat due for several weeks. He was very anxious to get back to England, and he offered fifty English pounds for a passage on the *Progreso* to Naples. Can we take him?"

Senff gazed out of the cabin porthole, rubbing his chin meditatively. "I've never taken passengers before," he said. "But it's a good price. We could put him in the cabin on the poop deck. What's the man's name?"

"Yarrow, captain. Henry Yarrow, of London."

Senff's back was turned to Trent, but there was a tiny mirror on the cabin wall,

and in it he caught a glimpse of Senff's face. An extraordinary change came over it as Dirgas mentioned the Englishman's name. His thin lips curved into a cruel sneer, into his eyes came a gleam of malevolent hatred that made Trent stare at him aghast.

He answered Dirgas without turning his head.

"Certainly. Bring Mr. Yarrow on board as soon as possible."

An hour later Trent saw the passenger, a thick-set middle-aged man wearing tropical clothing and bringing with him all kinds of small hand baggage.

The *Progreso* put out to sea at four bells, in the teeth of a rising gale. The passenger went to his cabin immediately and was not heard from again that night.

The next day was dark and raw with no signs of the storm abating. The coast of Cyprus was in sight for several hours, and to Trent the ship seemed to be making little progress when he compared her speed with the *Metatoxet's* seventeen knots. At noon it occurred to him to go aft to see if the passenger needed anything.

He made his way aft along the greasy deck. Halfway down the narrow stairs leading to the cabin in the poop deck he stopped suddenly, a startled look upon his face. From the cabin at the foot of the steps he heard a low, long-drawn moan. He hurried down and rapped at the door.

"Do you need any help in there?" he asked.

And as if in answer he heard very faintly from within:

"For God's sake——" Then the voice ceased.

The door was locked. As he stood wondering how he could force his way in, he heard hands fumbling at the lock, and an instant later the door opened very slowly and very cautiously for a space of three inches. Captain Senff was gazing through the narrow opening at him, his face white with anger.

"You!" he snarled. "What in the devil do you want, spying around the ship in this manner?" He spoke in excellent English.

"I beg your pardon," said Trent quietly. "But I am not spying. I thought I heard some one call for help."

Senff seemed to realize the logic of the answer.

"Oh, all right. I am taking care of our passenger, myself. I will send for you, if I need you; otherwise don't come sneaking around this part of the ship. Now go about your business."

Trent stumbled up the stairs in mingled rage and perplexity. What could Senff be doing in Yarrow's cabin, and what was the significance of that dreadful helpless cry he had heard? He hurried back to the galley and told Wilkins what had happened, not forgetting to mention the incident in Senff's cabin the day before.

"The captain's a bad one," Wilkins said. "You'd do well to keep your eyes peeled while you're on this blarsted ship, I'm tellin' you."

By eight bells the storm had increased, and during lunch hour the *Progreso* was lurching from side to side in such a way that the fiddles which Trent had placed on the mess table were useless to prevent the crockery from crashing to the floor.

"Keep in the galley," Senff advised him during the meal, "and don't go out on deck in this weather. I don't want any of you damned landlubbers with a broken leg on my hands."

His words were meant for Wilkins also, who was in the saloon at the time. Trent thought the captain was rather going out of his way to look after their welfare.

Three hours in the evil-smelling confines of the galley gave Trent a splitting headache that afternoon, and ignoring the captain's advice, he slipped on a reefer coat and stepped out onto the hurricane deck, just as the sun was setting like a great coppery ball beneath the gray-green sea. He made his way slowly forward against the gale of wind, hugging the inner edge of the deck closely, for the *Progreso* was still shipping heavy seas at frequent intervals.

As he rounded the corner beneath the flying bridge, he got a full view of the forward deck. It was a dreary sight with its closely battened-down hatch coamings, sea-drenched capstans, and rusty deck tackle. His attention was suddenly attracted to a group of figures gathered at the foot of the foremast; through the curtain of flying spray and the gathering darkness Trent could see that these men were standing around something which lay upon the deck. As one of them stepped aside suddenly, to dodge a shower of water sweeping down from the ship's bows, he saw what it was they were looking at—the inanimate huddled-up

form of a man. Trent caught a glimpse of a ghastly white face, a forehead marred by a great crimson wound.

As he watched them, one of the men gave the unconscious figure a brutal kick in the ribs, and he heard a coarse laugh. He ran back toward the galley, his whole being in revolt at the brutality he had just witnessed. Wilkins stopped Trent just as he plunged forth from the bunk hole behind the galley with a Colt automatic in his hand.

" 'Ere! None of that!" he shouted, grabbing him by both shoulders. "Where are you going with that thing, Trent?"

Trent, his eyes agleam, told him what he had seen.

"The dogs have got Yarrow out on the forward deck. The man's unconscious, and they're kicking him! Maybe I'm only the steward on this hell ship, but I'll show them they can't treat a white man that way, as long as there's another one to help him!"

"Look 'ere!" said Wilkins desperately. "Noble feelings is all very well, and I agree with all you say, but don't you understand that the moment you was to threaten, or oppose, or interfere with any one of the scum that's runnin' this ship your bloomin' life wouldn't be worth that?"

He snapped his fingers eloquently.

Trent put his weapon into his pocket slowly, realizing with a kind of dull despair that Wilkins' common sense had probably saved his life. He knew that Senff would have little compunction about killing him, if it suited his ends to do so.

He served the evening meal to the captain and his underlings with a sense of self-degradation. Even as he waited on them he noticed with a thrill of horror some tiny bloodstains on Senff's frayed shirt cuff. After the meal was over he said to Wilkins in a fierce undertone, as they stood together in the galley:

"Some time pretty soon I'll get to the bottom of what's going on aboard this cursed ship!"

Wilkins was frightened for a moment at his outburst. Then he stepped across to where Trent stood and grasped his hand.

"I don't know what it's all about, mate," he said simply, "but you're the only decent man aboard this ship, and I'm with you as far as you go."

This exhibition of faith from the little cockney gave Trent new courage. He turned in at midnight, but he was unable to sleep. At three bells he slipped on his clothes, lighted a cigarette, and left the bunk room for a stroll on deck.

The angry cross sea had changed to a monotonous rolling swell, and the gale had died down to a pleasant breeze that gave him new life as he paced the hurricane deck. After walking for a quarter of an hour he stopped, a moment, idly to watch the myriad red and yellow sparks that were being scattered broadcast from the funnel by the night breeze. Suddenly he became riveted to the spot where he stood; the cigarette in his hand burned down to the edge of his fingers and scorched them; from some point far, far away, like the mere wraith of a sound carried on the wings of the wind, he heard a faint agonized cry—the same cry that he had heard in the morning from Yarrow's cabin.

Although it came from a very great distance, the sound seemed to emanate from some spot behind where he stood; instinctively he wheeled around on his heel and found himself facing one of the four hooded ventilators grouped about the ship's funnel. He gazed at it for an instant in a puzzled way, not taking in its relation to the sound he had just heard. And then, once more, the awful cry was repeated. Trent realized that it was borne up to the boat deck through the ventilating shaft from some place far down in the interior of the ship.

He left the deck immediately and went into the bunk hole where Wilkins lay asleep. Very quietly he extracted from his little pile of belongings his Colt automatic, and crept softly away.

The few dirty oil lamps that lighted the interior of the ship had long since been extinguished and his progress down the long passage running through the center of the vessel was consequently very slow. At last he came to a small door, almost amidships, through which he could hear the distant throbbing of the engines. He opened the door and found everything pitch dark within, except for the faint gleam of a light far below; he managed to grope his way to the edge of the narrow spiral stairs that led down to the engine room. He grasped the flimsy railing and started on the long climb downward.

As he progressed on his descent the heavy chunk-chunk of the reciprocating engines became louder, and by the faint light of a lamp halfway down he saw a great arm of

shining steel revolving slowly past him. He continued to descend, leaving the lamp far above him. He had nearly reached the bottom of the stairs when he stopped abruptly, his whole body atremble with horror; he heard that appalling cry of distress once more, very much nearer to him this time and coming from some place in the depths beneath where he stood.

He ran down the remainder of the steps at reckless speed and a moment later found himself in the engine room of the ship. The place was in semidarkness, lighted here and there by the feeble rays of lamps fastened to the walls; the heat was terrific and the steel floor beneath his feet trembled with the vibration of the massive machinery. In the distance he heard the chief engineer humming a monotonous song as he went about his work, but the man was far off, buried somewhere in the depths of the machinery, and it was evident that he had not heard the cry from below.

Groping in the semidarkness, Trent found the boiler passage, and a moment later emerged in the stokehold. For an instant he was blinded by the yellow-red glare from the open furnace doors; the roar of the fires was deafening as he clung to a ventilator shaft and tried to get his bearings.

Three gaunt figures—stripped to the waist—were heaving coal to the flames; now and then one of them paused to wipe the sweat from his brow with a piece of oily waste. Trent's eyes were instantly fixed on the man nearest him, whose head was bound up in a bandage thickly clotted with blood. He stood, leaning on his shovel, the sweat pouring down his great white chest, his whole body swaying unsteadily; there was a look bordering upon insanity in his staring, blue eyes. A sudden red flare from the furnace lighted up his features; it was Henry Yarrow.

He turned toward a dim figure standing somewhere in the shadow of a bulkhead behind him.

"I can't go on—I can't—I'm dying."

Captain Senff stepped forth into the glare of the furnace, laughing fiendishly.

"Go on!" he shrieked. "Go on till you drop dead! That's what I want you to do, you——"

It suddenly dawned upon Trent that Senff's reason had left him, that the man was stark staring mad. Even as he watched, he stepped forward and struck Yarrow full in the face with the butt of a revolver. Yarrow seemed dazed and unable to defend himself; he stared at Senff with a look of bewildered agony, while the blood ran down his cheeks, and then fell in a crumpled heap on the floor.

Covering Senff carefully with his automatic, Trent leaped out from the boiler passage.

"Shoot up your hands!" he shouted. "I don't give a damn whether you're the captain of this ship or not; I've caught you with the goods this time, and you're going to pay for it!"

Senff wheeled round sharply and faced him with a foul curse, then seeing Trent's weapon, he backed slowly to the wall with his hands above his head. Trent was just about to congratulate himself upon having done a good job when a huge black figure with a distorted, grimy face, leaped upon him from behind the bunker bulkhead and bore him to the ground with a grip upon his throat.

The man—a giant lascar stoker—was strong, brutally strong. To Trent, as he fought for his life against the unknown giant, it seemed that all odds were against him. They rolled across the black coal-strewn floor, hitting, kicking, tearing at each others throats in a fierce, primeval struggle; knocking their heads against the hard steel plates of the furnace. Senff, drawing a revolver from his pocket, waited quietly for his opportunity to shoot Trent without hitting his assailant.

Trent, fighting for his life with the lascar, suddenly heard the report of a revolver at close quarters, but no bullet touched him. He became aware of a white figure standing over them as they struggled and clawed at each other's throats. The figure raised an arm, and something bright flashed in the red glare of the furnace. It crashed down within an inch of Trent's head, striking his opponent square in the face; the lascar's grip on Trent's throat relaxed. He slowly dropped on his back and lay very still.

Trent rose unsteadily to his feet, his face covered with blood, his clothes torn to shreds, and stared thunderstruck at Wilkins, the cook, who was standing beside a bulkhead smiling grimly at him, with a blood-streaked shovel in his hands.

"I got 'em both," he remarked quietly. "Shot Senff and bashed this chap's 'ead in with a shovel. Luck was in my way tonight."

Trent found Senff's body at the foot of the boiler passage, a clean bullet hole in his forehead.

"What brought you down here, Wilkins?" he asked unsteadily.

"Never you mind that. I 'appened to be awike, and when you come to get your gun I just followed you. Don't let's waste time gassing; that chap Yarrow is in a bad way. I'm going to fix 'im up with some brandy."

For a few moments Trent was lost in thought while Wilkins bent over Yarrow in an effort to revive him. Then he said abruptly: "I'm going up to see Dirgas—tell him what's happened. You stay here and look after Yarrow."

"Right-o. But be careful. Like as not 'e'll try to knife you. You'll find 'im in 'is cabin abaft the chart room. The light was burning when I come down."

Trent raced up the boiler passage, and three minutes later emerged on the boat deck. The fresh, salty air revived him as he hurried toward the first mate's cabin. Without ceremony he burst open the door. Dirgas leaped from his bunk as he bolted in.

"Senff's dead," said Trent and told him what had occurred.

"Thank God!" he said. "Thank God he's dead at last. That man had a terrible hold on me. He ruined my life for the last seven years to suit his own ends, because he had seen me kill a man accidentally in Cadiz. But Senff was not a sane man, Señor Trent. He hated all men, no matter who they were, on account of his diseased mind——"

"Tell me about Yarrow," interrupted Trent. "That's what I want to know."

"When Senff was twenty-two he was second mate on a British tramp. At that time Yarrow was master of the same ship. One night while they were lying off Algiers Yarrow found Senff in the fo'cas'le beating the cabin boy to death for some trivial thing. Yarrow was slightly drunk at the time, but even then he couldn't stand the sight of such brutality. So he picked up the nearest thing to him, a heavy ship's lamp, and threw it at Senff; it hit him full in the face, and the glass broke. When Senff came out of the hospital two months later he found himself disfigured for life."

Trent shuddered slightly as he thought of the dead captain's face.

"The thing grew on his mind. He had great difficulty in getting a berth on any ship, and he found that men avoided him. He had no friends. For Yarrow he conceived a consuming hatred that finally resolved itself into an insane determination for revenge.

"Years passed and the day before yesterday, by a trick of fate, Yarrow—now a successful shipowner—walked straight into his hands at Alexandretta. You saw him come aboard. When Senff learned who his passenger was something seemed to crack in his brain.

" 'I'm going to make this man suffer as I suffered for ten years as a sailor,' he said. Bribing four of the worst men in the crew, he lashed Yarrow, who is fifty-five years of age, to the masthead and left him there in a gale. He made him do all the filthiest tasks he could find on board his ship, and, as a final blow, he had him dragged from his cabin to the stokehold, where he made him work like a dog for six steady hours. There you found them together."

Trent looked sharply at Dirgas.

"You could have stopped this business, couldn't you?"

"No. I tried to, but Senff threatened to kill me if I interfered."

"And what are your plans now?" Trent demanded.

Dirgas gazed out of the porthole watching a new day dawn in a sudden burst of gold over the calm sea.

"I will sail to Barcelona and turn the *Progreso* over to the man from whom Senff stole her. Then you and I will make a full report to the authorities. I think that is the only thing to do."

Presently they heard a gentle knock at the door. Wilkins entered, bearing two steaming cups of coffee.

"Mr. Yarrow's coming along splendid," he said. " 'E's been talking with me and 'e said we'd done noble."

"Wilkins, you're a wonder!" said Trent. "I'm afraid I didn't appreciate you at first. You spend half the night battling with a bunch of fiends down in a hellhole—incidentally saving my life—and then you serve breakfast the next morning just as if nothing had happened!"

A faint smile spread over Wilkins' pale face.

"A good cook," he remarked, almost sententiously, "don't let nothing interfere with 'is art."

That Singing Singhalese

By Rothvin Wallace

Author of "Black Art," "Done in Yellow," Etc.

Mr. Pinkwiddy decides to manage a little lecture tour. Clothes may not make the man, but this lecturer's failure to follow instructions as to costume certainly brought on complications

ANYBODY who has opinions regarding the potent benefits of luck, or the antithesis thereof, may profit by due observance of certain incidents relating to the unexpected meeting between Mr. Horatio Pinkwiddy and the Reverend Ephraim Moan. As an immediate consequence thereof, it may be said, both thought they were in luck.

"Rev'rend," beamed Mr. Pinkwiddy, "this sure is luck."

"Bruddah," gurgled the Reverend Moan ecstatically, "I sho 'nuf does espress ma agreements wif yo' sent'ments, countin' I's pow'ful in need ob de lend ob a loan ob bouten fo' dollahs, an' yo' look lak a gemman wif dat many money in hes pocket."

"That four dollars is easy, brother," purred Mr. Pinkwiddy with a continuance of his enigmatic smile.

"I ain't axin' de lend ob de loan ob dat money fo' no pupposes ob offahin' ma sehvices in retaliashum," hastened the reverend suspiciously. "I is gwine tuhn it back to yo' dollah fo' dollah, jes' lak de Good Book say dat 'one good tuhn desehve anuddah.' Yas, sah, 'deed I is. Fac' is, bruddah, I is embahassed fo' de emoluments accruin' to ma boahdin' house landlady, ontil I gets ma fee ob fibe dollahs fo' a sehmon I is gwine delivah, come nex' Sunday mohnin'."

"That's all right, rev'rend," assured Mr. Pinkwiddy. "I'd just as lief make it ten."

"Hol' on heah, man!" cried the Reverend Ephraim, as Mr. Pinkwiddy took a large roll of bills from his purple serge pants pocket and ran down through a stack of twenties, until he found a well-used, dog-eared ten-spot. "I is suspishum yo' is got some ulterium designmunts. Is yo'?"

"I sure have, brother," laughed Mr. Pinkwiddy, thrusting the tattered greenback into the black, clawlike hand of the reverend. "I've been looking for a man like you these many days, just to lay fame and fortune in his lap."

"Now, I knowed yo' hab got retaliashums in yo' mind, bouten some kind ob wohk yo' is gwine ax me to pehfohm," wailed the reverend.

"Ain't work," protested Mr. Pinkwiddy. "This is pleasure I have in mind."

"Yo' is gwine pass me out cash money, jes' fo' pleasuah?"

The Reverend Ephraim gave his benefactor a look of searching doubt. He knew Mr. Pinkwiddy of old; in fact, had lent his aid to more than one of Mr. Pinkwiddy's elegant get-rich-quick schemes, and memory reminded him that, whenever there was any easy money floating about, Mr. Pinkwiddy got the most of it. The other fellow usually had the work to do.

"Yes, reverend," said the grand traveling president earnestly, "I am going to pass you out a lot of cash money—and easy, too."

"Is dat got to do wif de Great Intonashumnal 'Sosiashum fo' de Pertectshum ob Freebohn Negro Ahmehicans?"

"Somewhat, reverend. The Great International stands behind my brand-new idea for the uplift and benefaction of our grand and noble race."

"Huh!" The reverend was thoughtful for a moment, while he scratched his long, bony nose with an attenuated forefinger. "How come dat easy money in ma directshum, an' whut is I gwine got to do agin' yo' profits?"

"I am going to make you a great Singhalese lecturer," said Mr. Pinkwiddy quietly.

"A—a—a whut yo' gwine mak' me?"

"A great Singhalese lecturer," repeated Mr. Pinkwiddy grandly. "But let us go where we may discuss my proposition quietly, and have the enjoyment of sipping a cup of tea, like English gentlemen, while we enter into the intimate ramifications of this erudite and learned subject."

"Dat's high-soundin' langwidge," replied the reverend. "But I is gwine agitate ma stummick wif catfish an' hot waffles an' a piece ob lemon pie, 'stiden dat English gem-

man cup ob tea. It sho' will ease ma soul to set down in de Lobstah Palace Restauraw, 'countin' de fac' I ain't et none wuf speakin' ob sence las' eb'nin', when ma boahdin'-house missus say she's gwine discomboberate ma appetite ontil I pays dem fo' dollahs back money. An' Bruddah Pinkwiddy, I is gwine remahk yo' is de mostes' blessedes' angel in a stohm—lak de Good Book say, yo' sho' does mak' a stitch in nine dat sabes time, 'cause I's got a hongah stitch in ma innahds whut ain't got no time to wait."

While the Reverend Ephraim appeased his ravening appetite, and Mr. Pinkwiddy sipped his cup of English gentleman's tea, while puffing fragrant smoke from a gold-tipped cigarette, it may be well to elucidate somewhat as to the recent activities of the grand traveling president of the Great International Association for the Protection of Freeborn Negro Americans. Mr. Pinkwiddy, as usual, after making a killing, was not satisfied to let well enough alone. Memberships in the G. I. A. P. F. N. A. had come good, and he had unloaded a fair parcel of bonds in the elite darktown section of the city of his latest operations But there was more to be had, he figured—and to a facile business brain, what could be more immediately productive than a high-falutin' lecturer from overseas?

For a moment, Mr. Pinkwiddy was handicapped by lack of acquaintance with any such personage. But that was of small matter with a person of his attainments. What to do? Why, go to another city, corral a colored adventurer who could fill the bill, and dress him up to fit the part.

The fact that the white folks' newspapers were full of the doings of European gentlemen of learning, who had come to the United States to express what they knew, for two dollars plus war tax per each applicant at the box office, was sufficient to assure him that the great negro race would give liberal patronage to a lecturer of its very, very own. And what better could Mr. Pinkwiddy do than to provide a sure-enough, honest-to-goodness pseudo Singhalese?

Mr. Pinkwiddy had heard and read something about those natives of Ceylon. He knew, for instance, that they had a very ancient place in the history of that mysterious Far East, about which so much had been written in the public prints. He remembered that, in the late war, certain Singhalese troops, preferring the carve-'em-up form of combat, had adorned themselves with necklaces fashioned from the fingers and ears of fallen foes, thereby arrogating a romantic interest that their less colorful brothers in arms failed to attain. He had information that they were generally sharp-featured and very black. Also, he had been told that, in the apparel of peace on their spicy isle, they affected white robes and turbans.

Ergo, Mr. Pinkwiddy determined to engage a very black, sharp-featured negro, bedeck him in a white robe, prepare a lecture for him, and turn him loose as a sure-enough Singhalese, come to this here land-of-the-free-and-home-of-the-brave colored lady and gentleman, for the especial edification of the members and friends of members of the Great International Association for the Protection of Freeborn Negro Americans.

As afore stated, Mr. Pinkwiddy had the elite of darktown going, and going good; but his avaracious soul demanded better than that. So, he had previously put out a few gentle feelers, similar to that propounded to Mrs. Heliotrope Gravy, president of the Ladies' New Thought Culture Society and Free Food for Poor Babies' League, who had just got a courthouse divorce with seven dollars a week steady alimony, and, therefore, was doubly popular in her set.

"Mrs. Gravy," broached Mr. Pinkwiddy politely, fingering the near-diamond horseshoe in his yellow cravat, "I have notions that it would be wise and sapient, not to mention opportune, at this auspicious moment in the progress and advancement of the world, to present, within our charming and intellectual midst, a European lecturer of high standing, who could educate us on the signs and cults of our brotherhood from the far corners of our sphere of usefulness. Don't you, now, Mrs. Gravy?"

Thus, it may be noted, Mr. Pinkwiddy gave further evidence of his ability to don high society manners, and to spiel in a manner that befitted the college-educated man that he professed to be. Mrs. Gravy, as a consequence of his forensic smear, blinked rapidly, adjusted her gold-plated, window-glassed lorgnette with dainty fingers incased in No. 9 white kid gloves, and set her mind to answer.

" 'Deed I does, Mistah Pinkwiddy," she

agreed fervently. "Whichebah yo' says bouten dem deep subjec's ob discoahse am meet wif ma sent'ments. Whar yo' gwine git de new cult?"

"Oh, I have no thought or purpose of introducing any new cult into our midst, but I——"

"Den whar yo' gwine git de cultshure?"

Mrs. Gravy focused her lorgnette in an attitude of owlish inquisition. Mr. Pinkwiddy gathered her meaning, and smiled in his superior way, showing just enough of his frontal gold tooth that, from repeated observations in his mirror, he knew to be becomingly effective.

"From that tea and spice-laden island near-by and adjacent to the great nation which is called India—that mysterious island of Ceylon," answered Mr. Pinkwiddy gravely.

"Now, comin' to brass tacks esplanashum, jes' whut is yo' meanin'?" demanded Mrs. Gravy.

"Meaning that I have knowledge of a Singhalese gentleman, of our color, who is come from that island of Ceylon, and who might be induced and enjoined to pay us the honor of a series of lectures on and upon subjects which are designed to benefit and aid us."

"He would git up on a platfoahm stage an' mak' talk?"

"Exactly, Mrs. Gravy."

"Law me!" As the full light broke on Mrs. Gravy, her rotund, intellectual face spread in a smile that flooded her expansive nose with bewitching wrinkles. "Jes' now I reckomembah readin' bouten a 'pohtant white socassety lady which is got her recent divohce, lak me, habin' a sensashumnal lob affaiah wif a gemman speakah f'om de lan' obah de seas." Mrs. Gravy sighed with happy anticipation. "Law me!" she added.

"Then you approve of and recommend the proposition which I have proffered?" hastened Mr. Pinkwiddy.

" 'Deed I does, wif all ma heaht," was Mrs. Gravy's hearty assurance.

Mr. Pinkwiddy needed no more encouragement than this, for Heliotrope sure was the undisputed leader of the gay, money-spending coterie of her ultra-fashionable set.

Which leads us back to the Lobster Palace Restaurant in the neighboring city, where Mr. Pinkwiddy sipped his English gentleman's tea and puffed his gold-tipped cigarette, while he watched the Reverend Ephraim Moan greedily stoke away a double portion of catfish, fried in egg and cracker dust, and half a dozen large waffles, smothered in molasses.

"Yes, rev'rend," beamed the elegant Mr. Pinkwiddy, "I sure regard it as a lucky and fortuitous stroke of fate and destiny when I had the pleasurable enjoyment of meeting up with you. I came here looking for a Singhalese lecturer, but without knowing where I was to find one, and trusting to kind luck to aid and abet me in my search and quest."

"Is dat job yo' gwine gib me got any bizness to do wif ma perfesshum ob chu'ch preachah?" inquired the reverend, between expellations of catfish bones from his capacious mouth.

"Quite a bit—quite a bit, and a whole lot more, in a certain respect," said Mr. Pinkwiddy.

The dour countenance of the reverend brightened considerably, and he forked his last fish by the tail. "Dat mak' me pow'ful glad," he mumbled. "But how come dat Singinlese subjec', bouten which yo' mak' remahk?"

Mr. Pinkwiddy flecked a bit of ash from the lapel of his purple serge coat, crossed his green silk-clad ankles, caressed the would-be diamond horseshoe in his yellow necktie, and proceeded with the elucidation of his scheme.

"Den all whut I is got to do am stan' on de platfoahm an' talk, lak I was one ob dem peeples f'am—whur yo' say?"

"That's all."

"An' I is gwine be all dress up, fancy-lak?"

"That's the way, rev'rend."

"How many money is I gwine git fo' dat—dat is, I mean cash money, countin' on an' discountin' all de promises which is ain't?"

Such suspicions on the part of another would have aroused the instant indignation of Horatio Pinkwiddy; but Horatio knew that the Reverend Ephraim knew him, and he had to swallow his pride and play accordingly. He had recollections of a certain deal in gin in which the reverend fared rather badly, and he had no wish to be called to account. Therefore, he pondered before replying.

"Well, brother," he said at length, "I'll be liberal and generous, on and for the reason that the party of the second part is you.

I'll say you shall get five dollars cash money for each and every lecture, plus fifty per centum of the net and final proceeds thereof. Is that satisfactory and sufficient?"

The Reverend Ephraim called the waitress and ordered two pieces of lemon pie before answering. In these matters of business, he wanted time to think before committing himself.

"Dat's all right whut yo' say, bruddah," he exploded finally, "but how much is it sho' cash money which I gits?"

"Five dollars per each lecture," repeated Mr. Pinkwiddy patiently, "and, in addition thereto, fifty per centum of the net——"

"Hol' on, now, bouten dat net. All I knows bouten nets is dat somebody gwine be caught, an' I ain't no pooah fish, lak de Good Book say was multiply to feed de multitude."

"Certainly and of course you are not," hastened Mr. Pinkwiddy. "The net profit means that which is accruing and aggregating after the necessary and legitimate expenses of an undertaking have been met and defrayed."

"Huh!" The reverend mulled that while he shoveled a couple of slabs of lemon pie into his cavernous face. "Yo' speak lak a lawyah representin' a income-tax retuhn to de guv'ment; but dat don' ansah ma specified question, as to whut 'mount I is gwine git plus dem fibe dollahs?"

Mr. Pinkwiddy explained further to the pseudo Singhalese, and, by the time the lemon pie and a large cup of coffee had been absorbed by that erudite gentleman, he seemed to have made his meaning clear.

The fiduciary agreement thereby settled, Mr. Pinkwiddy proceeded further to explain the details of his plan.

"'An' yo' say dis am moughty lak preachin'?" asked the reverend.

"Mighty like preaching," agreed Mr. Pinkwiddy.

"Dat's gwine call fo' some singin', den; an' if dey's any preachah dat hab graced de Mefodis' an' Baptis' pulpits which is mo' bettah as a hymnal leadah dan I is—well, I ain't gwine take ma hat off to him, nohow. Yo' say dis Singinlese man, whut I represents, is come f'om de i'lan' ob Ceylon; an' right now I reckomembahs a chu'ch hymn which is singed bouten dat vehy place. Lissen heah!"

The reverend cleared his throat, threw his head back, and offered a demi-baritone sample of voice disculture that, for volume at least, would have made Caruso and Gorgoza weak by comparison. Before he could be restrained, he proceeded:

"F'om Greenlan's icy mountains,
To India's coral stran',
Gawd call us to delibah
De debil f'om de lan'.
Whut, dough dem spicy breezes
Blow obah Ceylon's isle,
De mostes' things dey pleases,
An' onlies' man am vile."

The reverend was about to open up on the second stanza, when the proprietor informed him that a policeman was looking in at the window, and that he did not want his Lobster Palace Restaurant raided for disorder. However, Mr. Pinkwiddy poured a little balm on the back of offended Gilead, when he told Ephraim that he might do a singing part, along with his lectures. Mr. Pinkwiddy knew the love of his race for anything that seemed to be musical, and, as the reverend offered as much in the way of noise and melody as a camp-meeting choir, his vocalization was apt to prove popular.

"Now, den, bouten which is I gwine espress mase'f in de platfoahm lectsuah?" the reverend wanted to know.

"I shall attend to the lectures and the subjects thereof," replied Mr. Pinkwiddy. "All you will have to do is to read and interpret them in the order in which I intend for you to deliver them to the eager public."

"W-w-whut yo' say? I's got to read dem lectsuahs?"

"Certainly; that's easy."

The reverend scratched his head contemplatively.

"I—I puffeahs to speak offhand, wifout no notes, jes' lak I says ma sehmons," he protested.

This suggestion, however, Mr. Pinkwiddy overruled without ceremony. He had his own notions about the subjects of those lectures that he had in mind, and he wasn't going to let any offhand-speaking preacher spoil them for him.

"Well, as to dat questium, mo' is to be spoke latah," conceded the reverend. "Whur I gwine git dem elegant robes yo' manifest is propah I should weah upon de platfoahm stage?"

Mr. Pinkwiddy thereupon entered into the final chapter of instruction. He told the reverend to seek a quiet, moderately priced dressmaker, and have her fashion for him a simple gown and turban of white cotton,

then to buy him a four-bit string of red glass beads. Mr. Pinkwiddy calculated that the said robe and turban should not cost more than ten dollars, and, therefore, he considered himself quite liberal when he parted with a twenty-dollar bill, the difference being to maintain the Reverend Ephraim in comfort during the succeeding few days, until he should be called to perform the duties of a platform-speaking, singing Singhalese.

Having completed these details to his satisfaction, Mr. Pinkwiddy returned to the neighboring city whence he had come in great glee, and reported his success forthright to Mrs. Heliotrope Gravy.

"Does yo' mean to espress yo'se'f, sho' positiveable, dat us is gwine hab a hones'-to-goodness singin' Singinlese in ouah midst, Mistah Pinkwiddy?" she asked incredulously.

"We surely are, Mrs. Gravy," he replied.

"Law me!" sighed Mrs. Gravy, tapping her left forefinger with a contemplative lorgnette. "Whut mought his name be?"

The question brought Mr. Pinkwiddy up with a shock. For the moment he was stumped. That important matter was one of the things that he had overlooked—a name for his great singing Singhalese. It would have to be something fancy, of course.

"I—I can't just call that name to mind now, Mrs. Gravy," he stalled. "It is a very odd name, as befitting a gentleman of culture and education from the far-famed island of Ceylon; but I have it among my papers and documents up at the hotel. Yes, ma'am."

"I bet he's moughty han'some," insinuated Mrs. Gravy.

"Well—yes, some folks might call him such, depending on the way they look at matters of the sort."

"Whut he look lak?"

"Tall, dignified bearing, wears a white robe and turban, as befitting one of his high caste and position."

"Kin us talk wif him?"

"Sure can, Mrs. Gravy. He speaks with a decided American accent, on account of his long association with the more or less learned professors at Harvard and Yale institutions, in consideration of his engagements in education extension work."

"Law me!" gushed Heliotrope softly. "Whut day dat learned singin' Singinlese gwine 'rive heah?"

" 'Bout Friday noon, I calculate."

"Den I is gwine call a meetin' right away ob de Ladies' New Thought Cultshure Socassety an' Free Food fo' Babies' League, ob which I is de chaiahlady, an git mase'f 'p'inted by vote to head a c'mittee which is gwine meet dat gemman at de train fo' receptshun pupposes."

"That is a splendid and an elegant idea, Mrs. Gravy," approved Horatio earnestly. "I, too, shall call a meeting of our local grand lodge of the Great Association for the Protection of Freeborn Negro Americans, and also have a reception committee appointed."

Needless to state, Mr. Pinkwiddy was enthusiastic about the plan. Indeed, things were coming better than he had hoped possible. For with Heliotrope Gravy at the head of the Ladies' Reception Committee, the success of the Singhalese lecture project was assured. By one of his swift processes of mental calculation, he now figured that he might get as many as three lectures out of the town, with box-office receipts probably as high as a hundred dollars a night.

That would foot up thirty dollars for the hall, fifteen for the reverend—in so far as he was concerned, there weren't going to be any "net profits"—with possibly fifteen more for incidental expenses, leaving him a clear gain of two hundred and seventy dollars. With that he would be content to move off and take a rest for a spell, provided some alluring crap game didn't roll him into bankruptcy.

The very next thing to be done was to select a high-sounding name for that singing Singhalese. Again luck rose up to smite him; for, in passing the stage entrance of the white folks' opera house that afternoon, he saw the very words that appealed to his imaginative mind. The swinging doors, through which they took in stage scenery, were open, and, on one was printed in large letters the single word: "Noloa." On the opposite door he beheld this striking inscription: "Fing." Ah! Then, that should be the name of his singing Singhalese—Noloa Fing. It mattered not to Mr. Pinkwiddy that this might be the name of some noted performer for the white folks' opera house. And, anyway, the white folks weren't interested in nigger doings, such as he was promoting.

But he must find a title with which to prefix that high-sounding name. Somewhere, he remembered, he had heard that "nabob" was a title that they hitched to some high-

class gentlemen over Ceylon way. Anyway, it sounded well, and, forthwith, Mr. Pinkwiddy rechristened the Reverend Ephraim Moan, "Nabob Noloa Fing." He was so pleased with his conclusion that he rushed right down and hired the Society Shimmy and Fox Trot Parlors for the coming Sunday night—Saturday already having been taken for the Fancy Dance Ball—and hastened back to his hotel, there to prepare copy for the next issue of the *Colored Courier.*

To insure publication of his elaborate press notice, Mr. Pinkwiddy also framed an advertisement that, he estimated, might cost as much as two dollars. He didn't much care about the expense, but, to get results, he figured that he could risk cutting his net profits a trifle. And it was an amazing "ad" that Mr. Pinkwiddy conjured—calculated to make his noble race sit up and hold its breath. It read:

THAT SINGING SINGHALESE!
NABOB NOLOA FING

Will appear in person next Sunday night, at eight o'clock, under the auspices of the Great Association for the Protection of Freeborn Negro Americans, in the Society Shimmy and Foxtrot Parlors, giving an educated lecture in which he will tell everybody everything they want to know or hear about. Tickets twenty-five and fifty cents and one dollar, plus war tax. Come one, come all.

NABOB NOLOA FING.
THAT SINGING SINGHALESE!

It scarcely need be said that, on the following day, darktown was all stirred up with excitement, which was greatly augmented by the personal activities of Mrs. Heliotrope Gravy. Secretly, she had set her mind on a love affair with that Nabob Noloa Fing, just like the divorced white society lady, about whom she had spoken to Mr. Pinkwiddy.

Before evening, there was not a man, woman, or child in the ultra set who was not asking questions about Nabob Noloa Fing, that Singing Singhalese. And Mrs. Heliotrope Gravy was doing her best to share the honors that come to fame.

"Does I know Mistah Fing?" she flung scornfully at a select coterie of the Ladies' New Thought Culture Society and Free Food for Poor Babies' League. "Co'se I knows him. Me an' him was quite intumate whiles I was in N'Yawk, jes' aftah gittin' ma dovohce. An' he sho' am de grandes' man —m-m-m-m!"

Mrs. Gravy, it may be explained, had gone to visit her sister back in the country, immediately following her notable episode in the courthouse, but had given it out that she was taking a little trip to New York to quiet her unstrung nerves.

"Dat bein' de case," remarked Mrs. Elvina Doolittle, wife of the proprietor of the Tonsorial Barber Emporium, "I calc'lates dat us mus' hab a big 'ceptshun c'mittee, to do Mistah Fing de honahs dat he deserb."

"Two's enuf," retorted Mrs. Gravy with an air of finality.

And despite all the murmurings and grumblings and growlings among the ladies, Mrs. Gravy's determination prevailed. And, furthermore, she so packed the meeting that the two members of the reception committee consisted of herself and Miss Citronella Ducktoe, the kindergarten school-teacher, who was notable as being the smallest, ugliest, blackest, and most physically unattractive member of the Ladies' New Thought Culture, et cetera, et cetera.

Mrs. Gravy knew her business. She wasn't going to have any rivals for the attentions of Mister Fing on that committee, not if she knew it. No dressed up, perky huzzy like Mrs. Doolittle was going to stir a spoon into her preserves, and, if it came to the point, she didn't mind saying so. That, however, was not necessary. As usual, the superwisdom of Mrs. Gravy prevailed, when she told them that Mister Fing was a very modest man, who would be made uncomfortable, if too many fair friends should greet him at the railway station.

Mr. Pinkwiddy, meanwhile, was occupying himself in various ways—describing the famous expected visitor to all who applied for information, writing pieces about him for the *Colored Courier,* selling tickets, and preparing the lectures which were to be delivered. He suffered, during this period, one slight shock. In passing the stage entrance of the white folks' opera house on a second occasion, he noted that the swinging doors were closed, bringing those two words—Noloa Fing—together; and this is what he read:

NO LOAFING.

However, that was a small matter—if nobody else got on to it; and Mr. Pinkwiddy's life was made up of taking chances.

As the time approached for the grand entrance of Nabob Noloa Fing, that Singing Singhalese, it became imperative for Mr. Pinkwiddy to be ready with the first lecture that he expected to be delivered. As to basic principles, these lectures were simple; but it required some thought to apply them to local conditions. The chief points necessary were introductions and perorations. The actual lectures had been culled from the white folks' newspapers, published in N'Yawk and elsewhere.

One of these lectures merely was a speech delivered by a well-known ex-food director in Europe, for whom some of his friends had expressed presidential ambitions. The address was made before a prominent engineering body, and dealt with the economic problems of post-war conditions, with worthy advice as to the proper solution of those problems.

A second lecture simply appropriated the talk of a frequent candidate for the presidency on the Democratic ticket, on the occasion of the anniversary of his sixtieth birthday. This one went into the subject of prohibition, and other reforms that were designed to be of vast benefit to the great American people, white, black, yellow, and other colors.

The third contemplated discourse required little more concern than to clip from a newspaper a public utterance by a notoriously famous Anti-Saloon League official, who excoriated a certain church in particular, and utterly damned legislators in general.

Mr. Pinkwiddy, it must be admitted, was distinctly up to date in his choice of subjects, and was not lacking in a discriminatory selection of respective authorities. All that now remained to do was to get the Reverend Ephraim to the scene of his projected activities, give him a whirl around town, that he might be seen and admired by the eager populace, and put him through a simple rehearsal in the reading of those elegant, erudite lectures.

It didn't matter if he were unable to read with any great force of expression. He was supposed to be foreign, and Mr. Pinkwiddy had read of at least one foreign lecturing gentleman who could not intelligently express his own thoughts in English. And since the white folks had excused this gentleman and still thought him great, there was infinite promise for the Reverend Ephraim Moan, alias the Nabob Noloa Fing, alias that Singing Singhalese.

An explicit letter of instruction to his vicarious Singhalese directed that personage to make his appearance on a train arriving at noon on the following Saturday. Mr. Pinkwiddy inclosed a form telegram, which he told the reverend to send back to him at once, by wire, that it might be shown to the faithful for advertising purposes. This telegram was addressed to the "Honorable Mr. Horatio Pinkwiddy, Esquire," and set forth: "I will take pleasure in being present within your august midst on Saturday, the twenty-fourth instant, at high noon."

That was fine; but the reverend spoiled the effect by adding a line of his own: "If you is got any gin, sabe me a dram."

Although it might not be the part of wisdom to exhibit this gem of literature among a mixed wet and dry populace, the receipt of the telegram gave Mr. Pinkwiddy assurance that the course of his scheme was running smoothly.

On the designated date, the committees of the Ladies' New Thought Culture Society and Free Food for Poor Babies' League and the Great International Association for the Protection of Freeborn Negro Americans, headed, respectively, by Mrs. Heliotrope Gravy and Mr. Horatio Pinkwiddy, were at the station half an hour before train time.

With this committee arrangement, Mr. Pinkwiddy and Mrs. Gravy were to walk arm in arm down the line, and be the first to greet the nabob. Behind them, Miss Citronella Ducktoe was to bear Mrs. Gravy's huge bouquet of wild, wild flowers and her light cerise silk wrap, leaving one of Heliotrope's freshly chalked, kid-gloved hands free to shake with that of the nabob, while the other should remain free to toy coquettishly with her newly shined lorgnette.

As the minutes ticked away, the atmosphere became more redolent with excitement, perfume, tobacco, and other odors. Behind the stalwart committee crowded five hundred or more ladies and gentlemen of the ultra-elite, the possibly elite, the sub-elite, and other unmentionable social sets —all fixed to do vociferous honor to that widely heralded Singing Singhalese.

"How us gwine know him when he step offen de train?" squealed an excited voice in the outer edge of the mob.

"He is wear a white gownd an' a big, white tuhban," shouted a neighbor in reply.

There was no doubt, therefore, as to the purely dignified apparel expected of the Nabob Noloa Fing. He should wear a white robe, and a turban of the same immaculate kind. That, surely, was settled.

Fifteen minutes before the scheduled arrival of the train, the Friendly Fife and Drum Symphony Band and Ochestra struck up "Hail, the Conquering Hero!" in noisy rivalry to the vocal outbursts of the populace. Then, piercingly shrill above the racket, sounded the whistle of the locomotive that was drawing that Singing Singhalese to fame and glory.

Mr. Pinkwiddy raised a tenderly manicured, heavily jeweled hand, to enjoin respectful silence. The crowd stood at breathless attention. Came the grating crunch of iron brakes, and the train—a wheezing dinkey, two passenger coaches, four assorted freight cars and a caboose—made portentous pause beside the sagging platform of the station. It was a tense moment. Mr. Pinkwiddy's heart beat a little faster, and he felt the unfair hand of Heliotrope tremble on his arm, even while she essayed a pose of nonchalant ingenuousness, and manipulated her lorgnette in her best high-society, elite manner.

Then, from the train, emanated cheers and laughter. These came from the white folks, whose heads filled the windows of their section. Simultaneously, from the "jim-crow" car, stepped a lean, attenuated caricature of a man, whose appearance froze the blood of Mr. Pinkwiddy. The few negroes in the black car echoed the white folks' cheering, but the reception crowd that awaited the coming of that Singing Singhalese stood in patient silence, wondering just what was happening.

"Whur dat Nabob Fing?" cried a little negro on the platform.

There was no answer. The Nabob Noloa Fing, that Singing Singhalese, was in the midst at last, but none except Mr. Pinkwiddy recognized him. Instead of in the heralded white robes, the nabob made his entrance in the garb of a Scottish Highlander—and a very disreputable-looking, badly dressed Highlander, at that.

Atop his pointed, kinky-haired pate sat a tam-o'-shanter of the hue of a withered sunflower. His tartan consisted of a scant fold of plaid gingham. His sporran appeared to have been fashioned from a woman's abandoned hand bag, covered with the back of an old fur glove. His kiltie was but a cut down—or up—khaki skirt, that disclosed a good ten-inch expanse of thin, black leg and bony knee, beneath which garnet golf stockings wrinkled their desultory way into a pair of once-white tennis shoes.

"Hoot mon!" yelped the reverend, with a wide-toothed grin, dancing up to Mr. Pinkwiddy. "Heah I is!"

In sight of the multitude, and with high stakes hanging in the balance, Mr. Pinkwiddy could not allow the paralysis of surprise to interfere with speedy action. He had to think of something, and think it quickly. He flung off the tremulous, kid-gloved hand on his arm and leaped forward, seizing that smiling, Singing Singhalese in what appeared to be a fond embrace. At the same time, he hissed into the large cauliflower ear of the reverend:

"What t'ell! You've jinxed the game! Y'gotta make a speech! Tell 'em how come you got the funny clothes! Tell 'em——"

"Res' yo'se'f easy, bruddah," smiled the reverend, pushing his general manager off. "Dat speech makin' is whut fo' I is paid."

"Tell 'em why you ain't in those white Singhalese robes, like I said," sibilated Mr. Pinkwiddy. Mr. Pinkwiddy then could do nothing more than to step back in trepidation, while he mumbled a perfunctory presentation of Mrs Heliotrope Gravy.

"Howdy do, sistah!" cried the reverend happily. "I sho' is please to meet up wif yo'. An' how am yo' child'un, ma'am?"

Mr. Pinkwiddy gave him a painful kick on a tender shin, as Mrs. Gravy allowed her chalked glove to be finger-printed in the reverend's grasp.

"Yo' is so—so enginew, Mistah Fing," she simpered coyly. "It do me honah to mak' a interductshum to yo' 'quaintanceship."

"Dat's fine, now," uttered the "Hoot mon" Singhalese. "Pehmit me to hab de pleasuah ob makin' presentments ob ma public an' privut sec'tahy, Missus A. Luna Moon."

The reverend side-stepped, and, to Mr. Pinkwiddy's further consternation, there appeared a vision that he had not contemplated. She walked modestly behind the distinguished pseudo Singhalese, attired in a flamboyant yellow gown, and carrying a large and obviously heavy carbetbag. She opened up a wide, shiny-toothed smile, and none could deny that she was a most pulchritudinous yallah gal.

"I is please to meetcha," she remarked.

"Howdy do," bowed Mrs. Gravy, more or less frigidly.

Mr. Pinkwiddy just glared, and slipped the reverend another heel tap on the same sore shin. The crowd had its eyes on this by-play, and gave forth a murmur that sounded ominous.

"Make that speech," growled Mr. Pinkwiddy savagely.

And the reverend proceeded to make the speech.

"Bruddahs an' sistahs," he began, "I is come to perclaim de gospel ob lub an' freedum, which am de right ob de black race in de persuit ob life an' libuhty an' happiness. Dat's de truf. Dis heah clo'es which I weah am de distinguishin' mahk ob a impohtant race ob mankind, which am one an' a whole in paht ob de great empiah which I hab de honah to disrepresent. Times is when I is please to weah de gahments ob ma own Seelawn i'lan'. Dey is times when I feels lak white folks Britishahs, an' den I is lak to put on deys clo'es, as is now, when I appeah lak a Scotch Singhalese gemman. So heah I is, prepeah to tell yo' all whut I knows, an' Gawd be me'ciful to ouah souls, amen. Now, I is gwine lead in dat blessed hymn, 'Lead, Kin'ly Light,' whiles de collectshum is took up by——"

Mr. Pinkwiddy silenced the reverend with an exceptionally painful shin attack, and, to direct attention, shouted: "Three cheers for Nabob Noloa Fing!"

The cheers were given lustily, after which Mr. Pinkwiddy motioned for the Friendly Fife and Drum Orchestra to perform, and hustled the reverend down the receiving line. Then, before further complications could arise, he shook loose from Mrs. Gravy, pushed the reverend and his "public and private secretary" into a waiting flivver, and commanded speed in reaching the solacing seclusion of his quarters at the New Ethiopian-Astdorf Hotel.

On arrival there, Mr. Pinkwiddy's first act was to procure a room for Mrs. A. Luna Moon. Then he led the reverend off to the privacy of his own bedroom, and made remarks that may be better imagined than expressed in print.

"And who—who—who," thundered Mr. Pinkwiddy, "is this female woman, which you introduce as Missus A. Luna Moon? And where did you get and acquire her, and what for is she at all?"

"Jes' lak I say," replied the reverend urbanely. "She am ma public an' privut sec'tahy. An' Afroditee, she been a big he'p——"

"Aphrodite!" snorted Mr. Pinkwiddy. "Who you mean, Aphrodite?"

"Dat huh fu'st, Gawd-given, Christshum name—Afroditee. Dat whut I am privilege to call Missus A. Luna Moon." The reverend took a proud and dignified turn about the room and paused to admire himself before Mr. Pinkwiddy's mirror.

"Sit down!' snapped Mr. Pinkwiddy, and the reverend's pipe-stem legs almost did likewise as they doubled up and dropped him into a red plush patent rocking-chair. "I have got some and many more interrogations to pass in your direction," added Mr. Pinkwiddy. "Who is this Aphrodite Luna Moon person, I ask and inquire of you, once more and again?"

"Afroditee jes' whut I say—ma public an' privut——"

"Where'd you get her?"

"She was ma dressmakah till come de time when I 'p'int huh ma public an' privut sec——"

"Your dressmaker? Please explain how come, and what you mean thereby?"

"Waal, I is gwine tole yo' de truf bouten dat. Is you got dat dram ob gin which I axes yo' fo' in ma wire telegram?"

"You never mind about gin. Answer and reply to my inquired question."

"Yas, sah." The reverend crossed his bare knees and cleared his throat. "Pow'ful dry on de th'oat, dat train ridin'," he muttered.

Mr. Pinkwiddy glared. "You see and observe these here fingers?" He projected a finely manicured hand and worked the digits into the semblance of a wicked claw. "Well, you're going to find them powerful dry on the throat, too, if you don't express yourself according to the which and why of the manner of my designation. How come, now, reverend?"

"I's gwine tole yo'," simpered the reverend meekly. "Dis hear Afroditee am de dressmakah to which I is reckommend fo' dat Singhalese gownd yo' say I is got to weah. Right off, me an' huh is git moughty sweet on each yuthah; an' den, when I fade away dat joyful ten-dollar-spot yo' designate is fo' de white gownd——"

"Meaning to say you were shooting craps, reverend?" Mr. Pinkwiddy looked almost terrible in his rage.

"Yas, sah. I jes' couldn' he'p makin' a roll ob dem blessed bones. But lemme esplain mo' bouten Afroditee. When she know ma perdickamunt, she say whut's de use mak' a gownd nohow, cause she is got gahments f'om huh abandoned husban' which would fit me fine. Yas, sah, dat's whut she say. An' dese heah is dem, whut he weah as leadah ob de Black Bagpipe Band, aftah he retuhn f'om de wah. He was pipin' good, ontil Afroditee done bus' him wif a flatiohn, 'mountin' he was makin' mo' noise dan fambly suppoht money."

"Then," replied Mr. Pinkwiddy frigidly, "you stole his clothes and ran away with his wife—eh?"

" 'Deed, no sah." The hollow eyes of the reverend opened wide with amazed reproach. "Us jes' agree dat dem clo'es was no good to nobody else undah de ci'cumstances, an' dat a pop'lah lectsuah man is got to hab a public an' privut sec'tary, iffen he's gwine mak' de impresshum dat hes standin' an' 'pohtance c'mand in de c'munity. Dey-foah, I hiahs Afroditee fo' de sum ob six dollahs a week wages, plus de espense money dat it requiah to tote huh f'om place to place."

Mr. Pinkwiddy was contemplative. There was some reason in this argument, after all.

"Where'd she get that yallah gown?" he demanded.

"De goods ob dat was belong to a white lady fo' which she do dressmakin'."

"Meaning she stole it, then?"

" 'Deed, no sah. Dat white lady done owe huh fo' dollahs or mo' fo' past dress sewin' wohk, an' Afroditee, she jes' figgah dat offen she 'propriate dem goods, she ain't do nuffin mo' dan pay huhse'f."

Mr. Pinkwiddy was somewhat mollified, but by no means pleased. Before he could exactly decide what he should say to the reverend by way of reproof, a bell hop knocked on the door and announced that Mrs. Heliotrope Gravy was calling. Mr. Pinkwiddy met her in the parlor.

"Who dat big-toof yallah woman wif de Singin' Singinlese?" she demanded without prelude.

Mr. Pinkwiddy treated her to the enjoyment of one of his most conciliatory smiles, and proceeded to explain the situation in his most honeyed words. "Of course," he concluded, "every great lecturer, like the Nabob Noloa Fing is, has got to have his private secretary, for which and to whom he pays cash wages each per week."

"Dat's all right, den," said Heliotrope, with a smile that assured him of her sincerity. "I is come to extend de pleasuah ob a invitashum to yo' an' Mistah Fing fo' a tea pahty which I is gwine hab at ma house dis aftahnoon. Don't hab to be no privut sec'tahy mussin' in on dem soshul affaiahs, is dey?"

Mr. Pinkwiddy assured Mrs. Gravy, to her infinite delight, that there was no necessity for the attendance of Aphrodite at this society function, and informed her that he and the nabob would be charmed to be present.

"Waal, den, I is got ma limoseen waitin', an' de clock say ten cents mo' plus each click. Kin yo' gemmans please huhhy up an' git ready?"

To the unbounded joy of Mrs. Gravy, Mr. Pinkwiddy declined to go at once, under press of great business urgencies, but he graciously directed the reverend to accompany her in the flivver taxicab that she held waiting at the door. There were, indeed, certain matters that he regarded as of immediate importance. He wanted, first, an opportunity to have a private interview with that public and private secretary, to assure himself that she had no bug up her sleeve, liable to fly forth and bite such a dignitary of the community, for instance, as Mrs. Heliotrope Gravy. Also, he wanted to feel out the populace, to determine the temper regarding the reverend's grand entrance in the garb of a Black Bagpipe band master, whereas he had been expected to appear in robes of virgin white.

In these respects, Mr. Pinkwiddy found great comfort of mind. Mrs. A. Luna Moon was not at all what her name might imply in the white folks' lexicon. She was, in fact, a meek little woman, who admired the reverend for his great learning and important station, and didn't want to make trouble for anybody. Then, the surprise of seeing the distinguished visitor in clothing other than that expected, seemed to titillate the risibilities of the elite population, and had proved a good ad, rather than an evil venture. Ergo, Mr. Pinkwiddy was quite satisfied. Things were coming out all right, after all.

Before going to Mrs. Gravy's tea, he returned to his hotel and changed his yellow cravat for one of more modest pearl, which he had read was the correct thing at after-

noon functions. Also, he brushed up his high silk hat, which, surmounting his purple serge sack suit, he considered extremely *de rigeur.*

Twirling a light bamboo stick in his silk-gloved hand, he arrived at the scene of Heliotrope's festivities—or almost arrived, it might be said more correctly. Certain noises emanating from the window of the drawing-room caused him to pause before entering and peer cautiously within. And, forsooth, caution was the part of wisdom, as the noise-maker-in-chief seemed to be no other than that Singing Singhalese. He was singing, too, in his best and loudest camp-meeting voice, and accompanying his words with a thumping foot pat and a double hand-clap that sounded slightly more in keeping with a dance hall than with the sentiment of his utterances.

As Mr. Pinkwiddy looked, his amazement grew. Among the score in the room that he recognized were the Baptist preacher, a deaconess, and two deacons from the Methodist Church, the garage keeper's wife, and the daughter of the pool-room proprietor—all members of the ultra-smart set. They formed a singing, hand-patting circle around the reverend, whose Black Bagpipe uniform was a sight to behold. His plaid gingham was twisted about his neck, one of his garnet golf stockings had fallen to his shoe top, his disheveled sporran dangled wildly and got all mixed up with the swish of his khaki kilt. He was going good, in real, old-fashioned camp-meeting style, while his cracked baritone bellowed forth:

"De gospel train am a-comin';
Oh, sinnah, don't be vain——
Come on an' git yo' ticket,
An' git ready fo' de gospel train.
Den git aboahd, little childrun;
Git aboahd, little childrun;
Git aboahd, little childrun——
Dey's room fo' many an' mo'."

Mr. Pinkwiddy recognized this as mighty fine country-nigger stuff, but it took him several minutes to determine whether it was getting across with the sophisticated town crowd, or if the folks were just making a fool of the reverend. To his pleased surprise, he saw that it was getting across, and that, by his exhortations, the reverend had made himself the hero of the hour. Whereupon, Mr. Pinkwiddy ventured to knock for admittance to the charmed circle. Really, it was too true to be good. The reverend had made an actual hit. Mrs. Gravy, in the excitation of the moment, so far forgot her dignity as to clap Mr. Pinkwiddy familiarly on his purple-serged back, and to remark:

" 'Deed, Mistah Fing am jes' de grandedest, sweetest man whut is."

Others were unstinting in the expression of similar sentiments. Mr. Pinkwiddy began to have visions of six, instead of only three lectures, and to wonder where he might pick up some extra ready-written discourses, suitable for presentation by the increasingly famous Nabob Noloa Fing.

"How'd you hypnotize Mrs. Heliotrope Gravy so soon?" Mr. Pinkwiddy asked pleasantly, as they returned to the New Ethiopion-Astdorf after the tea.

"I didn't hypentize huh," chuckled the reverend. "But whiles us ride in dat motah taxi which she call huh limoseen, us git moughty sweet on each yuthah. Dat's a fac'. I tell huh all I knowed bouten dat i'lan' ob Seelawn, an', 'countin' all de allymoney whut she got, I jes' sneaks obah de suggestshun dat maybe us got mahhied an' fly dar, iffen de lectsuah bizness am de cash money success whut me an' yo' mak' expectments fo'."

"Meaning you asked Mrs. Gravy to marry you and be your wife, sure enough?"

The reverend hesitated and looked a bit sheepish.

"Waal, sah, not perzactly. Us jes' kin' ob leabe it lak a lady an' gemman's 'greemunts."

Mr. Pinkwiddy whistled. Here was another complication, on which he had not calculated.

"Are you cognizant and aware of the geographical place and location of that island of Ceylon?" he asked.

"Not jes' perzactly," admitted the reverend; "but I tell Missus Gravy it's a vehy beootiful spot, down bouten Flohida ways." She say iffen allymoney money am good dar she's gwine go."

"Good Lord!" murmured Mr. Pinkwiddy sententiously.

After supper that evening, Mr. Pinkwiddy overheard a slight colloquy between the reverend and Aphrodite that was somewhat disturbing, and inclined him to the belief that the saffron Aphrodite had not been altogether disingenuous in her previous statement to him.

"Who dis heah Heliotrope Gravy pusson?" she demanded.

"Oh, she jes' a fool socassety lady whut's

call a patronizer ob aht, lak us is got to offah," explained the reverend.

Which led Mr. Pinkwiddy to remark to himself that he would have to watch the reverend's step more or less closely, to prevent an untimely outburst of conflicting feminine emotions. Meanwhile, he handed to the reverend the first lecture that he was to deliver—newspaper clippings neatly pasted on sheets of paper—and bade him read it several times, at least, before going on the platform. It was a grand, elegant speech, originally prepared and delivered by the gentleman who, although not ambitious to be a candidate for the presidency of the nation, felt that the public might be interested in his views as to how the affairs of government should be conducted.

An hour later, Mr. Pinkwiddy found the reverend sitting in an attitude of close attention, while Mrs. A. Luna Moon, his private and public secretary, read the lecture aloud to him. At the moment, this did not impress Mr. Pinkwiddy as being an incident of importance. He had occasion to think of it on the following evening.

Came, then, the night of the great event. Everything, so far as the master of ceremonies could see, was running as smoothly as fresh molasses from the back of a hot griddle cake. The reverend, accompanied by his public and private secretary, was safely ensconced in the little dressing room behind the platform. Society was pouring forth in vast and unexpected numbers.

Mr. Pinkwiddy, sitting on a high stool at the box window, was raking in a plethora of quarters, four-bit pieces, and dollars. Every seat in the hall was sold, and the stragglers now were buying twenty-five-cent, standing-room-only tickets. Although, by rough calculation, Mr. Pinkwiddy figured that he had taken in about one hundred and forty-seven dollars, he was just a little bit regretful that he had not made the price of standing room fifty cents, instead of half that sum. He was calculating dreamily what the difference in his favor might have been, when a dapper little negro stepped up to the window and laid down two bits.

"What's that under your arm, brother?" inquired Mr. Pinkwiddy genially, as he passed out a standing-room ticket.

"Dat's ma bagpipe music," replied the little negro pleasantly, and pushed his way into the hall, through the jam about the door.

A few minutes later, Mr. Pinkwiddy became conscious of the sound of a feminine voice emanating from the hall. That seemed strange, for it was about time for the reverend to open up his discourse, following a few introductory remarks by Mr. Eliphalet Hornblower, president of the local lodge of the Great International Association for the Protection of Freeborn Negro Americans. Mr. Pinkwiddy realized that these remarks should have been made by himself; but there was nobody of his acquaintance with whom he cared to intrust the proceeds of the box office.

Hearing a feminine voice, therefore, he thrust the ticket receipts into his purple serge pockets and took a peep inside; and to his pained astonishment, he beheld Mrs. A. Luna Moon in the center of the rostrum, explaining that it was her business to sit beside the great Singhalese lecturer during his discourse, in order to prompt him from the manuscript if, at a critical moment, his command of the English language should fail him. However, this seemed to go well enough with everybody, except Mrs. Heliotrope Gravy, who, Mr. Pinkwiddy observed, was behaving rather nervouslike in the end seat of the third row, left.

And then came the big moment. The Reverend Ephraim Moan, alias the Nabob Noloa Fing, alias that Singing Singhalese, made his entrance. He was all slicked up for it, too. The wrinkles had been pulled out of his garnet golf stockings, his white tennis shoes had been chalked, his bare black knees had been scrubbed until they shone in the gaslight, his kinky pate showed a severe part down the middle, his expansive face wore a smile that revealed his boundless joy and his perfect composure. Indeed, the reverend was in his element when appearing before a kindly and sympathetic congregation. The cheers and handclapping were all that even he could desire, and his lean form bowed repeatedly in proper acknowledgment. Aphrodite was smiling, too, and everybody seemed pleased. Then——

From the rear of the hall arose such a screech as none present ever had heard before. It was as if a dozen shrieking demons had loosed their tongues at once; and Mr. Pinkwiddy, amid the confusion, saw that bagpipe-music thing, that the dapper little negro had carried, swell up and then deflate itself under its owner's arm, even while said

dapper little negro set up a yell that welled above the growing din.

"Dat's ma clo'es!" he shouted. "Dat's ma wife!" he added shrilly. "But I wants ma Black Bagpipe Band clo'es whut dat niggah on de stage is got on!"

Mr. Moon attempted to dash forward, but found himself suddenly in the grasp of two stalwart ushers. Half of the crowd was on its feet, and a full half of that number was shouting. Mr. Pinkwiddy, through the black maze of faces, saw the reverend's long legs streak it across the platform and disappear in the wings. Aphrodite was not slow to follow. He observed, also, that Mrs. Gravy left her seat, and was pushing her way to the stage door. In less time than it takes to write about it, Mr. Pinkwiddy was at that same door. It was a time for swift action, for circumstances, he knew, were leading up to a speedy riot.

"Pull that curtain!" he shouted to Mr. Hornblower, at the same time stepping between the reverend and Mrs. Gravy.

"What d'you mean, put that woman on the stage?" he demanded angrily. "Why didn't you read that speech, like I told you?"

"I—I—' fo'git ma eyeglasses," spluttered the reverend.

"You—you——" Mr. Pinkwiddy paused, for want of adequate expletive.

"Yo' jes' lef dis boy alone," interposed Mrs. Gravy. "Mistah Fing bin vamped by dat yallah, no-count, wide-toofed, designin' wench. Dat's whut. Come on, Mistah Fing, us gwine to dat lubely Seelawn i'lan' an' lef dem no-good niggahs to fight by deyselves. Ma limoseen is waitin' at de do'."

And before Mr. Pinkwiddy could raise a voice of protest, she had thrust the not unwilling reverend through the street door and was gone with him. Mr. Pinkwiddy, incidentally, was too busy to follow. He heard cries from the front, in the unmistakable voice of the outraged Mr. Moon, who continued to demand the return of his Black Bagpipe Band clo'es. In a moment, Aphrodite fell, sobbing, on his neck. Mr. Hornblower was asking what he should do to pacificate the rising storm in the audience.

"Tell them—tell them to be cool and calm until I have opportunity to address them," instructed Mr. Pinkwiddy.

Then he turned to the weeping Aphrodite and snatched a bill from his pocket. He thought it was a ten, but a little luck remained with Aphrodite. It happened to be twenty dollars, and Mr. Pinkwiddy hadn't time to make change.

"Here, you," he said, thrusting it into her hand, "take that and ease yourself homeward. I've got to look about a little."

While Mr. Hornblower was telling the audience to be cool and calm, pending the address of Mr. Pinkwiddy, that gentleman took the course previously traversed by the reverend. And as the reverend had vanished, so did Mr. Pinkwiddy.

The distance was five miles, cross country, to the next town, and walking was rather hard on patent-leather shoes. But, under the circumstances, Mr. Pinkwiddy didn't mind. It would be safer, and, withal, more comfortable, to await a train there than to attempt any cooling process on the aggrieved Mr. Moon and the late lecture audience.

Anyway, Mr. Pinkwiddy figured that he had net cash profits, over and above all incidental and other expenses, of eighty-three dollars and seventy-two cents. The lecture business wasn't so bad, at that.

Mr. Wallace will have a unique story, "Not Guilty," in the next issue.

THE MENTAL AGILITY OF MR. KNOX

PHILANDER C. KNOX, United States senator from Pennsylvania and formerly secretary of state, began the practice of law in Pittsburgh. In those days he won all sorts of cases, particularly jury trials; and the mercy he showed opposing witnesses was infrequent. Once, defending a woman who was being sued for divorce, he saw the necessity of rendering the husband's testimony ridiculous.

"You claim," he said in a chilly, steellike voice, "that your wife drinks whisky?"

"Yes," snapped the witness; "she drinks whisky—barrels of it!"

"All right," agreed Mr. Knox. "How about you? Don't you drink whisky?"

"That's *my* business!" snapped the husband.

Still unruffled, Knox proceeded: "All right; have you any other business?"

Old Bill

By Henry Herbert Knibbs

YOUNG Sam went broke and hoofed it out of town,
When, on the mesa trail, came riding down
His partners of the range, a cowboy crew
Rough-witted, ready-fisted, tough, and true,
But bound to have their joke—and Sam was it,
And didn't like their talk a little bit.

"How, Sam? You took to walkin' for yore health?
Or, mebby-so yo're lookin' for yore wealth,
Prospectin' like, and gazin' at the ground;
Good luck, old-timer—when you git it found!"

Another puncher turned as he rode by
And made a show of dealing, low and high,
But never said a word—while Sam, he cussed
And watched his outfit kicking up the dust.

Sam wished he had some dust safe in his kick.
Last night he'd spread his wages pretty thick
In town—and what he seemed to overlook,
A gambler from The Dalles promptly took,
Even to young Sam's outfit, horse and gun,
Then Sammy quit because his dough was done.

Yet, as that cavalcade of punchers passed,
Old Bill, the foreman, and the very last
To pose as a Samaritan, came by,
A sort of evening twinkle in his eye,
Pulled up and told the youngster what he thought
About the easy way that he'd been caught;
Called him more names, with adjectives between,
Than ever had been either heard or seen
Till then—then slowly finished, "which, my son,
Was comin' to you, now you've had yore fun.
Take this here lead rope."
Sam he mouched across;
"I seen you done that gambler for my hoss."

Bill nodded—once—and slowly rolled a smoke:
"Yes. That there Dalles gent would have his joke;
He run five aces on your Uncle Bill,
But he ain't runnin' now—he's keepin' still."

Sam gazed at Bill with wide, astonished eye;
"You plugged him!" Bill just gazed across the sky
And pulled the flop of his old Stetson hat.
"Well, son, there's some alive would call it that.
Jest fork your hoss, set straight, don't bow yore head,
Or tell the boys a gosh-durned word I said.
Come on! *Yo're* livin' yet, and you are young;
But you'll be older, next time you git stung."

Bill drew his gun—poked out an empty shell,
And Sam rode thoughtfullike, for quite a spell.

Cloud-Man's Hunt

By Buck Connor

Author of "Smilin' Chaupo," "One-Glove Wilson," Etc.

Here is a dramatic tale of Indians who do not forget, through the years. Cloud-Man's hunt was a stern one

YEARS ago, when the Sioux ranged in the Dakotas, when most of the frontier towns were log trading posts, Cloud-Man, a subchief of the Brulé Sioux, made his medicine for an antelope hunt south of the Platte River—a tentative dead line, seldom crossed save by war parties of the Sioux or Pawnee braves. Packs-the-Medicine, Brave-Bear, Bear-Dog, and some old men, to serve as camp tenders, rode with Cloud-Man.

Five sleeps from the Spotted-Tail Reservation, the hunt scouts reported large herds of game.

"Lakotas," Cloud-Man addressed the Indians, "the white war chief says we may hunt here. Our enemy, the Pawnee, say we shall not."

"Haw!" grunted his little band.

"Packs-the-Medicine had a dream. He dreams none shall go back," the subchief told them, and scanned the southern horizon.

Game had been plentiful. The Sioux party with pack animals, loaded with meat, had started for their camp—each happy in his heart.

"Huh-wah!" exclaimed Cloud-Man, and swung his quirt.

"Pawnee!" chorused the warriors, and drummed their ponies' ribs with moccasined heels. They knew what that soft blue smoke, rising from behind the farther hill, meant. They turned, sharply, to the left, and skirted the hill that masked their camp from the open plains, and followed the deep-cut coulees until they were behind the enemy raiders; then they dismounted.

Digging into a buckskin pouch, Packs-the-Medicine brought forth a pipe. Grimly, he filled it with kinnikinnick, as Brave-Bear prepared a "fire stick" to light it.

Packs-the-Medicine took several deep-drawn puffs. He blew one to the sky, and one toward his feet, and solemnly murmured, *"Wi-can-tanka!"*—To Thee, Great Spirit—as the Sioux squatted in a circle around Cloud-Man. Packs-the-Medicine took another puff and passed the pipe over his left arm to Bear-Dog. When the pipe had made the round of the small council, Cloud-Man rose to his feet. Dramatically, he drew his blanket tight around him and said:

"Lakotas, shall we turn back to our lodges like old women, or shall we paint for the trail, and let the Pawnees hear once more the war cry of the Sioux?"

Not a voice answered his question. One by one the little band dropped their leggings, pulled off their scalp-lock shirts, and smeared their bronze forms with paint. From their tiny ration packs they ate "jerky," and then mounted and rode to the destroyed camp.

Nothing was left of their village, save the charred tepee poles and the scalped tenders. They did not stop, but followed the bunched horse tracks across the prairie, to the south. On and on toward the dim outlines of a mountain rode the warrior band, chanting their song of the war trail. Farther and farther behind them the soft blue smoke of burned lodges faded into nothingness. Then night closed in. The prairie land became dark. But the Sioux rode on.

In the heavens of the south, Cloud-Man saw four stars. One star shot into space and fell, streaking the dark sky with its course. That star Cloud-Man named. Three stars fell. Three stars Cloud-Man named. One star that he named did not fall. That star told the chief that one brave would return. Dawn broke and found the Sioux on the bank of a small stream. As Cloud-Man's pony sniffed fresh tracks, they reined into a draw, where they would eat and rest until nightfall.

In the late twilight they gathered their horses and followed the trail of their enemy.

"Cola," said Packs-the-Medicine, "I had a dream. Cloud-Man saw three stars fall in the night."

"We are four Sioux who follow the Pawnees," Brave-Bear replied.

Four suns from their destroyed village on the Platte, Cloud-Man drew rein, and pointed at a flickered reflection—a light that

shone from the tepee tops against the dark night. Silently, each warrior crawled to the ground. Carefully, they felt for bows and arrows. Slowly, they advanced through the brush toward the enemy camp. Packs-the-Medicine, alone, was left to guard the ponies.

Suddenly, a rifle flame streaked the darkness. A dog yelped. Warriors ran from lodge to lodge, shouting cries of alarm. Packs-the-Medicine sat there and watched. Peering into the night, he crooned a song for his companions.

When the last red streaks of daybreak died into sunlight, Packs-the-Medicine saw Cloud-Man and his followers taken from the camp. Crouching behind a clump of brush, he waited until he saw them placed against a tree. Pawnee warriors, with bows and arrows, stepped off several paces. Raising his eyes to the sun, Packs-the-Medicine softly crooned a guttural war song—so softly that it seemed to melt into the air as it left his lips. Then he turned his head and crawled through the brush to the horses. He knew that the war trail of his brothers would end only in the darkness of the Great Beyond.

Back at the Spotted-Tail Reservation, he told of the antelope hunt. He spoke, reverently, of how Cloud-Man and his braves had met the grim death torture.

"*Lakotas,*" Packs-the-Medicine finished, "Cloud-Man saw three stars fall in the night. We were four Sioux who followed the Pawnees. But Cloud-Man's children shall not forget."

The story of Cloud-Man's hunt had all but become legendary with the Sioux, when Packs-the-Medicine, now an old man, and Walter Cloud-Man, a grandson of the subchief, joined Buffalo Bill's Wild West. The old man came with Walter Cloud-Man as adviser to his friend's grandson.

While the show was playing in Oklahoma, many different tribes of Indians visited their red brothers. Many powwows and many dances followed the many peace smokes.

A mid-summer morning found the organization in Pawhuska—a town close to the Pawnee Agency. Many Pawnees rode into the village, and camped near the show grounds. The shrill staccato notes of a bugle sounded first call for parade. Gold-leafed chariots and wagons, drawn by fancily trapped horses, followed the band wagon to the street, in the morning parade.

Walter Cloud-Man, grandson of the subchief, in a wonderful headdress of black-tipped eagle feathers, that trailed over each side of his paint pony, rode at the head of his Sioux warriors, as they fell in behind the stagecoach. Perched upon the front seat of the coach, sat Packs-the-Medicine—too feeble to ride his war pony—scanning the crowd that lined the streets.

Along the route of procession, Walter Cloud-Man saw the sprinkling of Indians. Some Osages and Otoes sat humped over in wagons, or wrestled with half-broke bronks that shied at the noises of band and calliope.

Cloud-Man's keen eyes noted there were many Pawnees along the street. Packs-the-Medicine saw them, too. But his right hand did not hail them in the sign of peace, nor did any of his band show signs of greeting.

Along about the time when the band was playing the first overtures—when the working crew is busy tearing down the horse tops and cook tent—Walter Cloud-Man, with his face hidden in the cowl he made of his blanket, walked around the circus lot. When the crowd began to line the midway of the side show and the front door, he stood in the darkness and watched each Indian that passed through the main entrance, and made mental note of their tribal dress.

Just before the show had gotten well under way with its performance, a light shower fell over the canvas. It drove most of the idlers to shelter—even canvasmen and grooms rushed to the dressing rooms, or stood in the eves of the big canopy top.

Every one sought cover from the rain except some Pawnee Indians, who were camped back of the circus lot, on the commons of Pawhuska. They had tired of the free exhibitions of the side shows, and were on their way to their camps.

Walter Cloud-Man, with several of his band, met the Pawnees in the shadow of a large building that stood off to one side and on the path the Indians traveled to their tepees.

"*How?*" one of the show Indians greeted the blanketed enemy.

There in the dark they could barely see each other, but being Indian and accustomed to meeting in the darkness, they recognized each other.

Cloud-Man and his men stepped forward to shake hands. But they didn't. When hands met hands, the Sioux, with a rapid

twist of the Pawnees' arms, soon had them at their mercy.

Hurriedly, the show Indians bound the enemy hand and foot. Quickly, they rushed them to the side of the large building. In the deep shadow of the farther side, they found an entrance to the basement. Without a word or murmur from the enemy, they were hustled down the creaking steps.

Cloud-Man struck a match. In its dim light he saw four large brick pillars—supports for the upper floor of the old ramshackle building. To these, he ordered the Pawnees lashed with lariat ropes taken from cowboy saddles.

Another match was struck on the brick pillars—and by its glare, Cloud-Man scanned each enemy face. Deep-set in his black eyes was rekindled savagery. He stood there like a thunder-smitten pine. Finally, his voice broke silence.

"Wolves," he called them by their Indian name. "Many, many moons, many summer grasses, and many winter snows have come and gone since my ancestor—Chief Cloud-Man of the Brulé Dakota tribe—made a hunt south of the Platte. Your old men have told you many times of the Sioux hunters they captured and tortured and then scalped, alive."

Each Sioux murmured a prayer to the Great Spirit, as Cloud-Man recalled the tragedy of other years. Without another word from Cloud-Man, the show Indians gagged the enemy.

Carefully, Cloud-Man nicked each Pawnee's cheek with a knife. Another took from his medicine pack a paste and daubed the tiny wound with the potion that was used in the days of the warpath to poison arrows.

"Cola," Cloud-Man spoke to his braves. "The Great White Father's laws forbid us hunting here. The scouts have found our game."

"Haw!" grunted the braves.

Slowly and quietly, they filed out of the building and across the commons to their tepees.

Two weeks later, as Buffalo Bill's Wild West played the closing date of the season, a ticket seller showed Cloud-Man a daily with the report of finding the Pawnee bodies. He gave the paper to the young brave, who tucked it away in the folds of his blanket.

Packs-the-Medicine, old and feeble, sat on a tepee bundle and watched his aged squaw packing their belongings. When young Cloud-Man came up and read him the account in Sioux, the old warrior blinked into the light, as memories carried him back to the fatal hunt.

Shading his eyes with his right hand, to see that none but his people heard what he was about to say, he began:

"Chief Cloud-Man hunted below the Platte. I had a dream. Cloud-Man saw three stars fall in the night. I, alone, returned to his people. Cloud-Man's children have not forgotten."

"Haw!" the Sioux approved.

Another story by Mr. Connors, "The Broken Peace Pipe," will appear in an early issue.

ALL ABOUT AN EXPLOSION

TOM GARRISON was the star witness of a property owner in a suit against the owners of a powder mill for damages caused by a big explosion. Tom, while working at his appointed task in the mill, had been picked up by the force of the explosion, knocked senseless, hurled through a window, catapulted to the top of a tree, dropped through a network of telegraph wires, and landed on a rocky hillside, sustaining a lacerated face, three broken ribs, a crushed arm and a broken leg, besides numerous minor bruises and abrasions.

Counsel for the complainant calculated that Tom's story, recited in all its harrowing details, with due emphasis on the various stages of his flight through the air and with artistic elaboration of his sufferings, would move any jury to tears for Tom and to a million-dollar verdict for his client.

"Now, Tom," the lawyer began, "tell the jury, in your own words, all about the explosion and what happened. Tell 'em everything."

"It was this way," replied Tom: "I was sitting at my bench; there came a big fuss; and the doctor said, 'Here, swallow this.' "

The Black Grippe

By Edgar Wallace

Author of "The Daffodil Enigma," "The Million-Dollar Story," Etc.

Here is a tale of what has never happened, but which might happen to a whole city any time. There is no need to tell you how well Mr. Wallace knows how to write

DOCTOR HEREFORD BEVAN was looking thoughtfully at a small Cape rabbit; the rabbit took not the slightest notice of Doctor Hereford Bevan. It crouched on a narrow bench, nibbling at a mess of crushed mealies, and seemed perfectly content with its lot, in spite of the fact that the bench was situate in the experimental laboratory of the Jackson Institute of Topical Medicines.

In the young principal's hand was a long porcelain rod, with which, from time to time, he menaced the unconscious feeder, without, however, producing so much as a single shiver of apprehension. For the third time in a quarter of an hour Bevan raised the rod, as though to strike the animal across the nose, and for the third time lowered the rod again. Then, with a sigh, he lifted the little beast by the ears and carried him, struggling and squirming, to a small hutch, put him in very gently, and closed the wire-netted door.

He stood staring at the tiny inmate and fetched a long sigh. Then he left the laboratory and walked down to the staff study. Stuart Gold, his assistant, sat at a big desk, pipe in mouth, checking some calculations. He looked up as Bevan came in.

"Well," he said, "what has bunny done?"

"Bunny is feeding like a pig," said Bevan irritably.

"No change?"

Bevan shook his head, and looked at his watch.

"What time——" he began.

"The boat train was in, ten minutes ago," said Stuart Gold. "I have been on the phone to Waterloo. He may be here at any minute, now."

Bevan walked to the window and looked out at the busy street—one of the busiest thoroughfares in the West End of London. As he looked, a taxi drew up, opposite the door, and a man sprang out with all the agility of youth, though the iron-gray whiskers about his chin and the seamed red face placed him among the sixties.

Bevan dashed from the room to welcome the visitor, taking the portmanteau from his hand. "It is awfully good of you to come, professor," he said, shaking the traveler warmly by the hand.

"Nonsense," said the elder man sharply, "I was coming to Europe anyway, and I merely advanced my date of sailing."

Professor van der Bergh was one of those elderly men who never grow old. His blue eye was as clear as it had been on his twentieth birthday. A professor of pathology, a great anatomist, and one of the foremost bacteriologists in the United States, Bevan was relieved to discover that he had merely accelerated the great man's departure from New York, and was not wholly responsible for a trip which might end in disappointment.

"Now," said Van der Bergh, when they were in the study, spreading his coat tails and drawing his chair to the little fire, "just give me a second to light my pipe and tell me all your troubles." He puffed vigorously. Then: "I presume that the epidemic of January has scared you?"

Hereford Bevan nodded.

"Well," said the professor reflectively, "I don't wonder. The 1918 epidemic was bad enough. I am not calling it influenza, because I think very few of us are satisfied to affix that mild label to a devastating disease which appeared in the most mysterious fashion, took its toll, and disappeared as rapidly and mysteriously.

"I haven't heard any theory about that epidemic which has wholly satisfied me. People talk glibly of 'carriers' of 'infection,' but who infected the wild tribes in the center of Africa, on the very day that whole communities of Eskimos were laid low in parts of the arctic regions?"

"That is the mystery that I have never solved," said Bevan, "and never hope to."

"I wouldn't say that," said the professor, shaking his head. "I am always hoping to get on the track of first causes, however baffling they may be. But, now, let's get down to the epidemic of this year. I should like to compare notes with you. I suppose it has been suggested to you that the investigation of this particular disease is outside the province of Topical Medicines?"

Stuart Gold laughed.

"We are reminded of that every day," he said dryly.

"Now, just tell me what happened in January of this year," said the professor.

"I'll tell you briefly," said Bevan, "and without attempting to produce statistics. On the eighteenth of January, near three o'clock in the afternoon, the second manifestation of this disease attacked this country, and, so far as can be ascertained, the whole of the Continent."

"What were the symptoms?" asked the professor.

"People began to cry, that is to say, their eyes filled with water and they felt extremely uncomfortable for about a quarter of an hour."

The professor nodded.

"That is what happened in New York," he said, "and this symptom was followed, about six hours later, by a slight rise of temperature, shivering, and a desire for sleep."

"Just the same sort of thing happened here," said Bevan, "and in the morning everybody was as well as they had been the previous morning, and the fact that it had occurred might have been overlooked, but for the observation made in various hospitals. Gold and I were both stricken at the same time. We both took blood, and succeeded in isolating the germs."

The professor jumped up.

"Then you are the only people who have it," he said. "Nobody else in the world seems to have taken that precaution."

Stuart Gold lifted a big bell-shaped glass cover from a microscope, took from a locked case a thin microscopic slide and inserted it in the holder. He adjusted the lens, switched on a shaded light behind the instrument, and beckoned the professor forward. Professor van der Bergh glued his eye to the instrument, and looked for a long time.

"Perfect," he said, "I have never seen this fellow before. It looks rather like a Trypnasome. It is like and it is unlike. Of course, it is absurd to suggest that you've all had an attack of sleeping sickness, which you undoubtedly would have had, if this had been a Trypnasome. But this bug is a new one to me!"

He walked back to his chair, puffing thoughtfully at his pipe. "What did you do?"

"I made a culture," said Bevan, "and infected six South African rabbits. Their eyes watered for the prescribed time, their temperature rose six hours later, and in the morning they were all well. When I wired to you, though, I had no idea there was going to be any further developments. I merely wanted to make you acquainted with the bug."

The professor looked up sharply. "Have there been further developments?"

"Five days ago," said Bevan, speaking slowly, "the second symptoms appeared. These rabbits develop symptoms twice as fast as does the human being. I will show you."

He led the way back to the laboratory, went to the little hutch, and lifted the twisting, struggling rabbit to the bench under a blaze of electric light. The professor felt the animal gingerly.

"He has no temperature," he said, "and looks perfectly normal. What is the matter with him?"

Bevan lifted the little beast, and held his head toward the light. "Do you notice anything?" he asked.

"Good God!" said Van der Bergh, "he's blind!"

"He's been blind for five days."

"But——" Van der Bergh stared at him.

"It means," said Bevan, "that when the secondary symptom comes, and it should come in a fortnight from to-day——"

He stopped, and replaced the animal upon the bench. Then he put out his hand to stroke its ears, and suddenly the rabbit groped back from him. Again he reached out his hand, and again the animal made a frantic attempt to escape.

"He sees, now!" exclaimed the professor.

Bevan took down a board, to which a paper was pinned, looked at his watch, and jotted a note. "Thank God for that," he said. "The blindness lasts for exactly one hundred and twenty hours."

"But, do you mean," asked Van der

Bergh with an anxious little frown, "that the whole world is going blind, for five days?"

"That is my theory."

The professor mopped his face, with a large and gaudy handkerchief.

They went back, without another word, to the study, and Van der Bergh began his technical test. For his information, sheet after sheet of data were placed before him. Records of temperature, of diet and the like, were scanned and compared, while Bevan made his way to another laboratory, to examine the remaining rabbits. He returned as the professor finished.

"They can all see," he said. "I inspected them this morning, and they were as blind as bats."

Presently the professor finished.

"I am going down to our embassy," he said, "and the best thing you boys can do is to see some representative of your government. Let me see, Sir Douglas Sexton is your big man, isn't he?"

Bevan made a wry face. "He is the medical gentleman who has the ear of the government," he said. "But he is rather an impossible person. He's one of the old school of——"

"I know that school," said the professor grimly, "it's a school where you learn nothing, and forget nothing. Still, it's your duty to warn him."

Bevan nodded, and turned to Stuart Gold.

"Will you cancel my lecture, Gold?" he said. "I'll go down and see Sexton, though he wither me!"

Sir Douglas Sexton had a large house in a very large square. He was so well off that he could afford a shabby butler. That shrunken man shook his head, when Doctor Bevan made his inquiry.

"I don't think Sir Douglas will see you, sir," he said. "He has a consultation in half an hour's time."

"I simply must see Sir Douglas," said Bevan firmly. "Tell him."

The butler presently returned to usher the caller into a large and gloomy room, where Sir Douglas sat surrounded by open books.

"Really, it is most inconvenient, doctor, for you to see me at this moment," he complained. "I suppose you want to ask about the government grant to the Jackson Institute."

"I haven't come about the grant, Sir Douglas," replied Bevan, "but a matter of much greater importance."

In as few words as possible, he gave the result of his experiment, and on the face of Sir Douglas Sexton was undisguised incredulity.

"Come, come," he said, when Doctor Bevan had finished, and permitted his heavy features to relax into a smile. "That sort of stuff is all very well for the press, if you want to make a sensation and advertise your name, but surely you are not coming to me, a medical man, and a medical man, moreover, in the confidence of the government and the ministry of health, with a story of that kind!"

"Believe it or not," said Bevan patiently, "I am merely giving you, Sir Douglas, my own belief of what form the second epidemic will take."

"And do you expect me," smiled Sir Douglas, "to go to the prime minister of England and tell him that in fourteen days the whole of the world is going blind? My dear good man, if you published that sort of story, you would scare the people to death, and set back the practice of medicine a hundred years!"

"Do you think that, if I saw the prime minister——" began Bevan, and Sir Douglas stiffened.

"If you know the prime minister, or have any friends who could introduce you," he said shortly, "I have not the slightest objection to your seeing him. I can only warn you that the prime minister is certain to send for me and that I should give an opinion which would be contrary to yours."

"The opinion of Doctor van der Bergh ——" began Bevan, and Sir Douglas snorted.

"I really cannot allow Doctor van der Bergh to teach me my business," he said. "And now, doctor, if you will excuse——" He turned pointedly to his books, and Bevan went out.

For seven days, three men worked most earnestly to enlist the attention of the authorities. They might have given the story to the press, and created a sensation, but neither Bevan nor Van der Bergh favored this method. Eminent doctors, who were consulted, took views which were extraordinarily different. Some came to the laboratories to examine the records. Others "poohpoohed" the whole idea.

"Have you any doubt on the matter yourself?" asked the professor, and Bevan hesitated.

"The only doubt I have, sir," he said, "is whether my calculations as to the time are accurate. I have noticed in previous experiments with these rabbits, the disease develops about twice as fast as in the human body; but I am far from satisfied that this rule is invariable."

Van der Bergh nodded.

"My embassy has wired the particulars to Washington," he said, "and Washington takes a very serious view of your discovery. They are making whatever preparations they can."

He slept, that night, in his room at the institute. He awoke with the subconscious feeling that he had slept his usual allowance and was curiously alive and awake. The room was in pitch darkness, and he remembered with a frown that, because of his work, he had not gone to bed until four o'clock in the morning. He could not have slept two hours. He put out his hand and switched on the light, to discover the time. Apparently the light was not working.

On his bedside table was a box of matches, his cigarette holder and his cigarettes. He took the box, struck a light, but nothing happened. He threw away the match and struck another—still nothing happened. He held the faithless match in his hand, and suddenly felt a strange warmth at his finger tips. Then with a cry he dropped the match. It had burned his fingers.

Slowly, he put his legs over the edge of the bed, and stood up, groping his way to the window, and releasing the spring blind. The darkness was still complete. He strained his eyes but could not even see the silhouette of the window frame against the night. Then a church bell struck the hour. Nine, ten, eleven, twelve!

It was impossible that it could be twelve o'clock at night Twelve midday and dark!

He searched for his clothes, and began to dress. His window was open, yet, from outside, came no sound of traffic. London was silent—as silent as the grave. His window looked out upon the busy thoroughfare in which the Jackson Institute was situated, but there was not so much as the clink of a wheel or the sound of a pedestrian's footsteps.

He dressed awkwardly, slipping on his boots and lacing them quickly, then groped his way to the door, and opened it. A voice outside greeted him. It was the voice of Gold. "Is that you, Bevan?"

"Yes, it is I, what the dickens——" And then the realization of the catastrophe which had fallen upon the world came to him. "Blind!" he whispered. "We're all blind!"

Gold had been shell-shocked, in the war, and was subject to nerve storms. Presently, Bevan heard his voice whimpering hysterically.

"Blind!" he repeated. "God Almighty! What a horrible thing!"

"Steady yourself!" said Bevan sternly. "It has come! But it's only for five days, Gold. Come down to the study! There are twenty-four steps, Gold. Count 'em!"

He was halfway down the stairs, when he heard somebody sobbing at the foot, and recognized the voice of the old housekeeper who attended to the resident staff. She was whimpering and wailing.

"Oh, sir," she moaned. "I can't see! I can't see!"

"Nobody can see, or will see, for five days!" said Bevan. "Keep your nerve, Mrs. Moreland." He found his way to the study. He had scarcely reached the room before he heard a thumping on the door which led from the street to the staff quarters.

"Hello!" said a cheery voice, outside. "Is this the Jackson Institute?"

"Thank God, you're safe, professor," cried Bevan, having maneuvered around to let him in. "You took a risk in coming round."

The professor entered, with slow, halting footsteps, and Bevan shut the door behind him, and led the way to the study.

"I've been two hours getting here," said the professor. "Ouch!"

"Are you hurt?" asked Bevan.

"I ran against an infernal motor bus in the middle of the street. It had been left stranded," said the professor. "I think the blindness is general."

Stuart had stumbled into the room soon after them, had found a chair, and sat down upon it.

"Now," said Van der Bergh briskly, "you've got to find your way to your government offices and interview somebody in authority. There's going to be hell, in the world, for the next five days!"

"It is very awkward!" It was Gold's quivering voice that spoke. "But of course, it'll be all right, in a day or two."

"I hope so," said the professor's grim voice. "If it's for five days, little harm will be done, but—but if it's for ten days!"

"If it's for ten days?" Bevan repeated.

"The whole world will be dead," said the professor solemnly.

"Dead?" whispered Gold, and Van der Bergh swung round toward the voice. The old man's voice took on a softer note.

"Not all of us, perhaps," he said, "but the least intelligent. Don't you realize what has happened, and what will happen? We are a blind world and how shall we find food?"

A thrill of horror crept up Bevan's spine, as he realized, for the first time, just what world blindness meant.

"All the trains have stopped," the professor went on. "I've been figuring it out in my room, this morning, just what it means. There are blind men in the signal boxes and blind men on the engines. All transport has come to a standstill. How are you going to get the food to the people? In a day's time, the shops, if the people can reach them, will be sold out, and it will be impossible to replenish the local stores. You can neither milk nor reap. All the great power stations are at a standstill. There is no coal being got out of the mines. Wait, where is your telephone?"

Bevan fumbled for the instrument, and passed it in the direction of the professor's voice. A pause, then:

"Take it back," said the professor. "Of course, that will not be working. The exchange cannot see!"

Bevan rose unsteadily to his feet. "Put your hand on my shoulder, professor, and Gold, take hold of the professor's coat or something. We go to the kitchen, for food."

The meal consisted in the main of dry bread, biscuits, and cheese washed down by water. Then Hereford Bevan began his remarkable pilgrimage.

He left the house, and, keeping touch with the railings on his right, reached, first, Cockspur Street, and then, Whitehall. Halfway along the latter thoroughfare he thumped into a man, and putting out his hand felt embossed buttons.

"Hello," he said, "a policeman?"

"That's right, sir," said a voice, "I've been here since the morning. You're in Whitehall. What has happened, sir?"

"It is a temporary blindness which has come upon everybody," said Bevan, speaking quickly. "I am a doctor. Now, constable, you are to tell your friends if you meet them, and everybody you do meet, that it is only temporary. What time did it happen?"

"About ten o'clock, as near as I can remember," said the policeman.

Bevan continued his pilgrimage. Two hours' diligent search, two hours of groping and of stumbling, two hours of discussing with frantic men and women, whom he met on the way, brought him to Downing Street. That journey along Whitehall would remain in his mind a horrible memory for all his days. He heard oaths and sobbings. He heard the wild jabberings of somebody—whether it was man or woman he could not say—who had gone mad under the stress of the calamity, and he came to Downing Street as the clock struck three.

He might have passed the prime minister's house, but he heard voices, and recognized one as that of Sexton. The great man was moaning his trouble to somebody, who spoke in a quiet, unemotional voice. It proved to be the prime minister himself. Bevan stumbled toward and collided with the great physician.

"Who is it?" said Sexton.

"It is Hereford Bevan."

"This is the man, sir—the doctor I spoke to you about," explained Sexton.

A cool hand took Bevan's. "Come this way," said the voice. "You had better stay, Sexton. You'll never find your way back." Bevan found himself led through what he judged to be a large hall, and then suddenly his feet struck a heavy carpet.

"I think there's a chair behind you," said the new voice. "Sit down and tell me all about it."

Doctor Bevan spoke for ten minutes, his host merely interjecting a question here and there.

"It can last for only five days," said the voice with a quiver of emotion, "and we can last out only that five days. Can you make a suggestion?"

"Yes, sir," said Bevan. "There are a number of blind institutes throughout the country. Get in touch with them, and let their trained men organize the business of industry."

"It might be done," said the voice. "Happily the telegraphs are working satisfactorily as messages can be taken by sound."

The days that followed were days of night-mare, days when men groped and stumbled in an unknown world, shrieking for food. On the evening of the second day the water

failed. The pumping stations had ceased to work. Happily it rained, and people were able to collect water in their mackintosh coats.

Dr. Bevan made several excursions a day, and in one of these he met another bold adventurer, who told him that part of the Strand was on fire. Somebody had overset a lamp, without noticing the fact. The doctor made his way toward the Strand, but was forced to turn back by the clouds of pungent smoke which met him. He and his informant—he was a butcher from Smithfield —locked arms and made their way back to the institute. By some mischance they took a wrong turning, and might have been irretrievably lost, but they found a guardian angel, in the shape of a woman against whom they blundered.

"The Jackson Institue?" she said. "Oh, yes, I can lead you there."

She walked with unfaltering footsteps, and with such decision, that the doctor thought she had been spared the supreme affliction. He asked her this and she laughed.

"Oh, no," she said cheerfully. "You see, I've been blind all my life. The government has put us on point duty, at various places, to help people who have lost their way."

She told them that, according to her information, big fires were raging in half a dozen parts of London. She had heard of no railway collisions, and the prime minister told her——

"Told you?" said Bevan in surprise, and again she laughed.

"I've met him before, you see," she said. "I am Lord Selbury's daughter, Lillian Selbury."

Bevan remembered the name. It is curious that he had pictured her, for all the beauty of her voice, as a sad, middle-aged woman. She took his hand in hers, and they walked slowly toward his house.

"You'll think I'm horrid if I say I am enjoying this," she said, "and yet I am. It's so lovely to be able to pity others! Of course, it is very dreadful, and it is beginning to frighten me a little, and then there's nobody to tell me how pretty I am, because nobody can see. That is rather a drawback, isn't it?" and she laughed again.

"What does the government think about this?"

"They are terribly upset," she said in a graver tone. "You see, they cannot get at the people—they are so used to depending on the newspapers. We are crossing Whitehall Gardens, now. Government has wonderful faith in this doctor, Bevan, by the way."

"I hope their faith is justified," said Bevan grimly. "I happen to be the wonderful doctor."

"Are you really?" she said with a new note of interest. "Listen!" They stopped, and he heard the tinkle of a bell. "That is one of our people from St. Mildred's," she said. "The government is initiating a system of town criers. It is the only way we can get news to the people."

The girl led him to his house and there left him. Old Professor van der Bergh roared a greeting as he came into the room.

"Is that you, Bevan?" he asked. "I've got a knuckle of cold ham here, but be careful how you cut it, otherwise you're going to slice your fingers." He and Stuart Gold had spent the day feeding the various specimens in the laboratory. The fourth day dawned, and in the afternoon came a knock at the door. It was the girl.

"I've been ordered to place myself at your disposal, Doctor Bevan," she said. "The government may need you."

He spent that day wandering through the deserted streets, with the girl at his side, and as the hundred and twentieth hour approached he found himself looking forward not so much to the end of the tragic experience which he shared with the world, but to seeing, with his own eyes, the face of this guide of his. He had slept the clock round, and just before ten struck, he made his way to the street. He heard Big Ben boom the hour, and waited for light. But no light came. Another hour passed, and yet another, and his soul was seized with blind panic. Suppose sight never returned, suppose his experiments were altogether wrong, and that what happened in the case of the rabbits did not happen to man! Suppose the blindness was permanent! He groaned at the thought.

The girl was with him, her arm in his, throughout that day. His nerves were breaking, and somehow she sensed this fact, and comforted him as a mother might comfort a child. She led him into the park, with sure footsteps, and walked him up and down trying to distract his mind from the horror with which it was oppressed.

In the afternoon he was sent for, by the

cabinet council, and again told the story of his experiments.

"The hundred and twenty hours are passed, are they not, doctor?" said the premier's voice.

"Yes, sir," replied Bevan in a low voice. "But it is humanly impossible to be sure that that is the exact time."

No other question was asked him, but the terror of his audience came back to him, like an aura, and shriveled his very heart. He did not lie down, as was his wont, that night, but wandered out alone into the streets of London. It must have been two o'clock in the morning, when he came back to find the girl standing on the step, talking with Van der Bergh. She came toward him at the sound of his voice.

"There is another cabinet meeting, doctor," she said. "Will you come with me?"

"I hope I haven't kept you long," he said brokenly. His voice was husky and so unlike his own that she was startled.

"You're not to take this to heart, Doctor Bevan," she said severely, as they began their pilgrimage to Whitehall. "There's a terrible task waiting for the world, which has to be faced."

"Wait, wait!" he said hoarsely, and gripped the rail with one hand, and her arm with the other.

Was it imagination? It was still dark. A fine drizzle of rain was falling, but the blackness was dappled with tones of less blackness. There was a dark, straight thing before him; something that seemed to hang in the center of his eye; and a purple shape beyond; and he knew that he was looking at a London street, at a London lamp-post, with eyes that saw. Black London, London devoid of light, London whose streets were packed with motionless vehicles that stood just where they had stopped on the day the darkness fell, London with groping figures, half mad with joy, shrieking and sobbing their relief. He drew a long breath.

"What is it? What is it?" said the girl, in a frightened voice.

"I can see! I can see!" said Bevan in a whisper.

"Can you?" she said wistfully. "I—I am so glad. And now——"

He was near to tears, and his arms went about her. He fumbled in his pocket for a match, and struck a light. That blessed light he saw, and saw, too, the pale, spiritual face turned up to his.

"I can see you," he whispered again. "My God! You're the most beautiful thing I have ever seen—— My dear—guide me always!"

She drew closer to him.

"Always!" she whispered.

London slept, from sheer force of habit, and woke with the gray dawn to see—to look out upon a world that had been lost for five and a half days. But, in the night, all the forces of the law and the crown had been working at feverish pace; railways had dragged their drivers from their beds; carriers and stokers had been collected by the police, and slowly the wheels of life were turning again, and a humble world, grateful for the restoration of its greatest gift, hungered in patience and was happy.

Other stories by Mr. Wallace will follow soon.

A SOUND CONCLUSION

THE old lady, riding on a railroad train for the first time in her life, was on her way to Boston. Suddenly there came a rending of wood, a groaning of steel, and a shrieking of steam. With a sickening lurch, the car left the tracks and rolled down the embankment. The destruction was complete and terrific. People were killed, crushed, and tossed about. Crawling out of the splintered débris, the old lady, miraculously unhurt, addressed herself in a more or less querulous tone to the first man she saw. He happened to be a Bostonese, and he sat upright, the lower half of his body held fast by the weight of the wreck.

"Neighbor," said the old lady, "is this Boston?"

"No, madam," replied the imprisoned man, suffering cruelly but living up to the Boston legend of sparkling repartee; "this is not Boston. This is a catastrophe."

"Oh-h," retorted the old lady, evidently rebuking herself; "then I hadn't oughter got off here."

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A Chat With You

WHICH are the more interesting —things or people? People. Perhaps in this department we talk too much about things and not enough about people. Shall we reform? All right. Let's go.

For instance, there is William MacLeod Raine. If you go to the movies, you find his dramas among the best of the outdoor films. If you stray into a public library, you find his novels of the West among the greatest in demand. Although his blood is as Scottish as his name, practically all his life has been spent out beyond "where the West begins." A reporter for Seattle and Denver papers, an editorial writer for the famous old *Rocky Mountain News,* a traveler of plains and the rough-backed ranges, he wrote for us his first great novel of adventure, "Wyoming," a good many years ago. It is still selling in big editions. Even if you were not a reader of THE POPULAR at the time of its original appearance, you have probably read it since in book form. Since then, Raine has been getting the stuff to write about and writing it. "Mavericks," "Bucky O'Connor," "Ridgway of Montana," "A Texas Ranger," "The Vision Splendid," are a few of his books. One of the most interesting things about him is that his latest, and perhaps strongest, novel, "Tangled Trails," is going to appear complete in the next issue of this magazine. A little later you will be able to buy it for a dollar seventy-five, or two dollars, and it will be worth it, for Raine is one of the men who count. But you get it first in THE POPULAR. After you read it you will probably want to buy the book. It is worth a place in any library.

J. FRANK DAVIS, at present of San Antonio, Texas, is a man whose name is associated with good short stories of American life. His work has a certain bright realism, an optimistic sparkle that is part of the man's energy and temperament. He began life in New England as a newspaper man, and his name is known to-day wherever big newspapers are published. He knows the inside stories of things as only a big newspaper man can. He also knows the United States at firsthand, from Maine to California and back, by way of Texas and Montana. No one to-day unites in himself the knowledge and literary ability that he is able to put into his stories of political life. One of his stories of politics is in the present issue. There will be another in the next.

H. H. KNIBBS is a poet, a cowpuncher, a wanderer, and, last and best, a writer of great outdoor fiction. He began life as a telegraph operator, and, while the sound of the key was still in his ears, became a writer of the sort of verse that men read and remember. He felt the West rather than the East "a-callin'," and followed the setting sun to a gold mine of the greatest stuff for good fiction the world holds to-day. "Overland Red," "Sunny Mateel," "The Amazing Tenderfoot," and "The Ridin' Kid from Powder River" are a few titles that bring back stirring memories. His next novel will appear in THE POPULAR. His latest story, "Mountain Horse," comes out in the next issue.

DANE COOLIDGE is another outdoor man who is a great novelist as well. He knows more about the actual, rough, close-to-hardpan mining game than any one writing anywhere. When his books appear in cloth, people buy them, keep them, and reread them. His latest novel, "Lost Wagons," starts in the next issue. It is the best yet. There are all sorts of stories of the mining game, but the net inside stuff is in the Coolidge story. Hunting oil or gold may not be a safe, sane, and conservative business, but it is an interesting and exciting one.

EVER since he wrote his memorable stories of the "ex-tank club," ten or twelve years ago, Clarence Cullen has been famous as a humorist. The army and the navy helped to give Cullen his insight and experience. He served in both. He has been a newspaper man and a business agent. He knows people. His story, "An Alibi for Altogether Al," appears in the next issue.

LAWRENCE PERRY is the foremost writer on amateur sport in America. He has a football story, "The Coach at Old Magenta," in the next issue. Roy Norton, who made and lost two fortunes as a mining engineer, who knows the Klondike as well as he knows California, also has a story of the outdoors in the next issue. Norton's fame as a writer makes many words about him unnecessary.

ALL these, and a lot more, you will find in the next POPULAR. No other fiction magazine offers anything like the same value. There is only one POPULAR, and it is in a class by itself.

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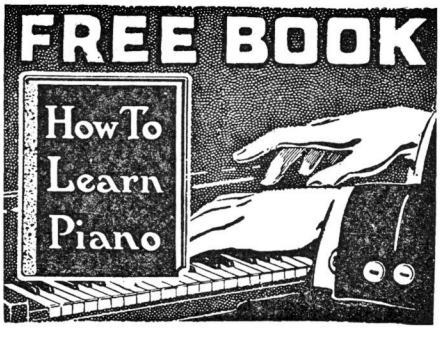

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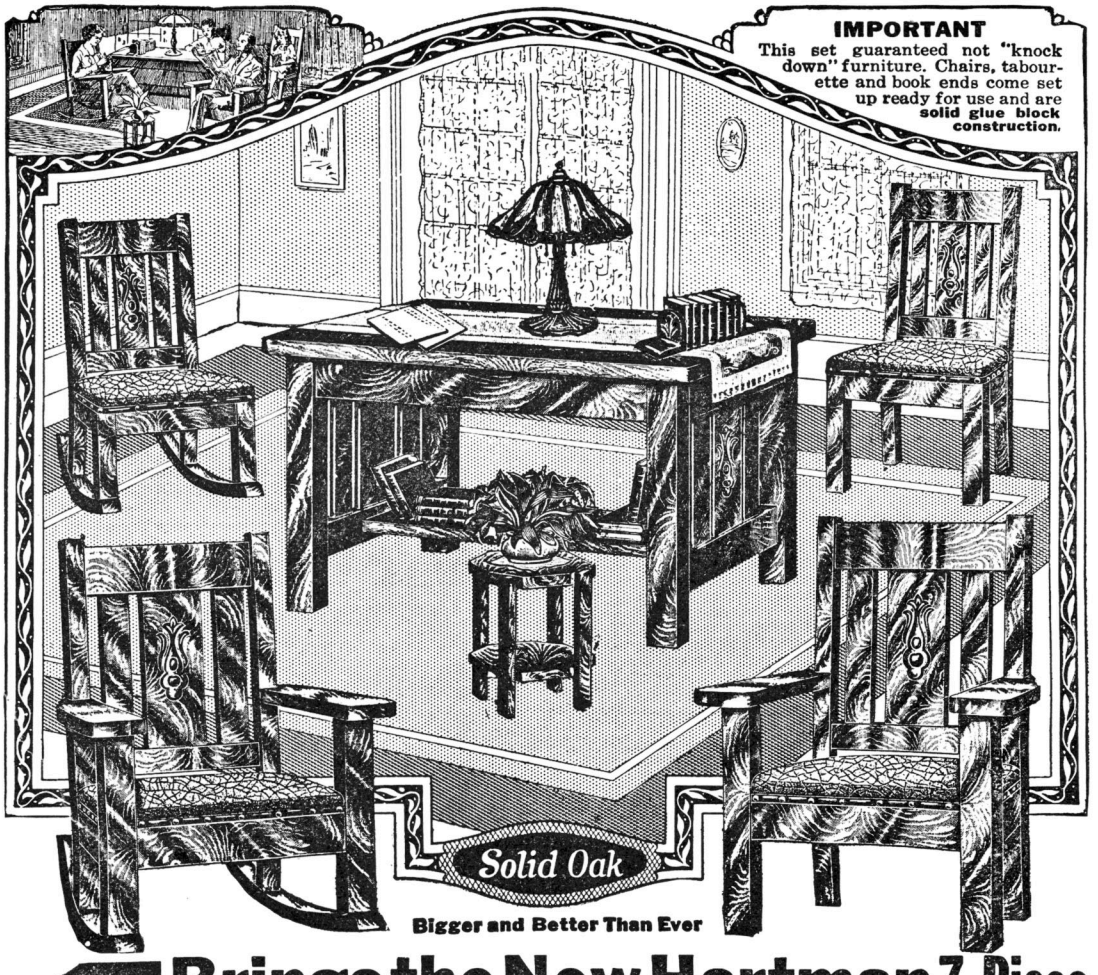

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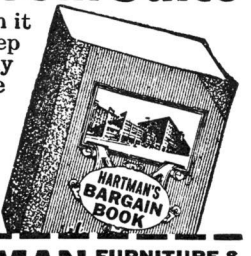

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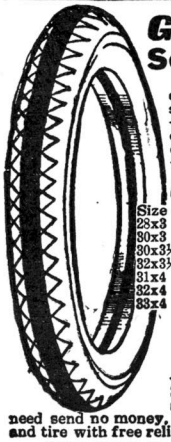

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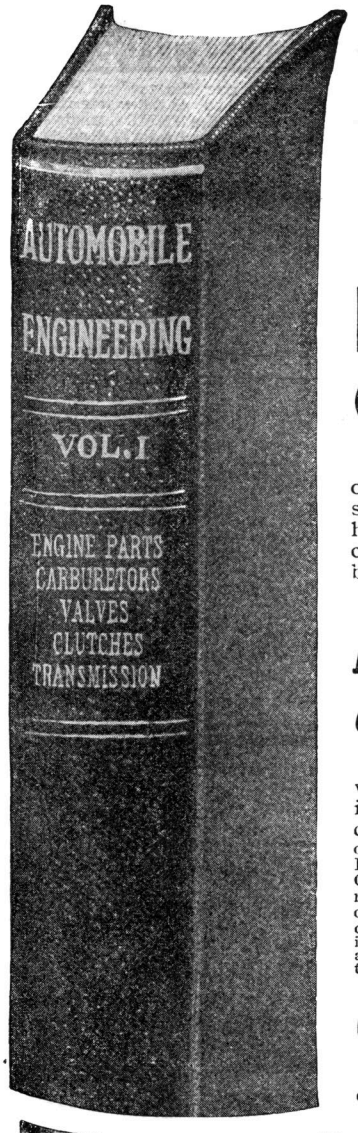

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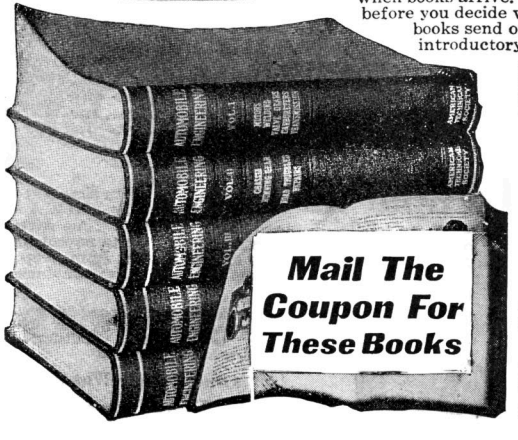

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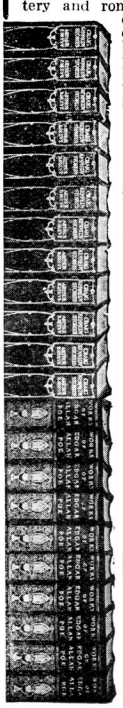

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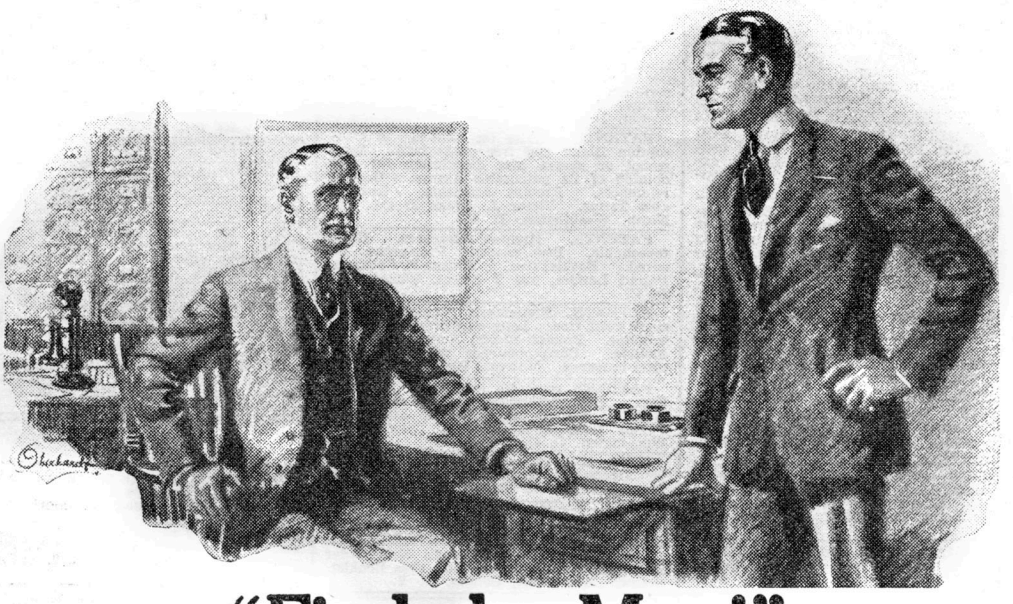

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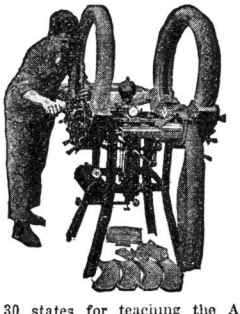

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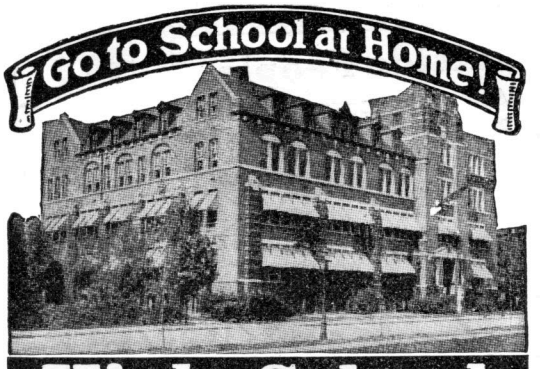

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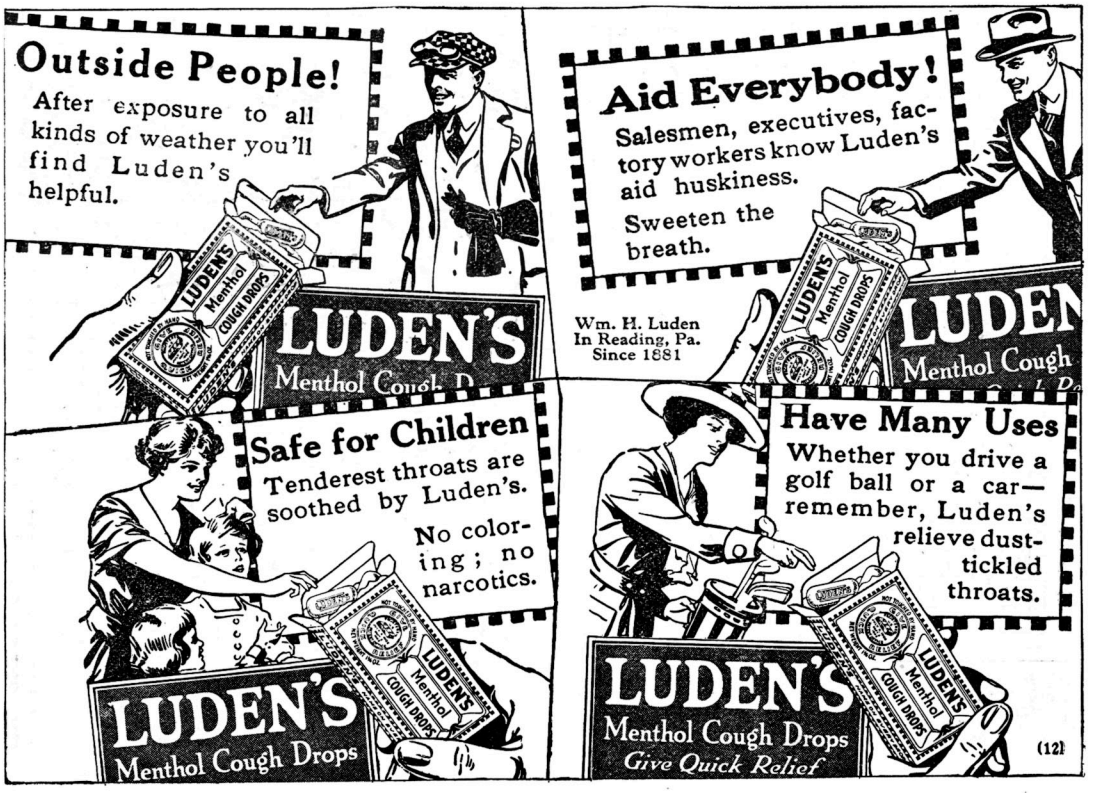

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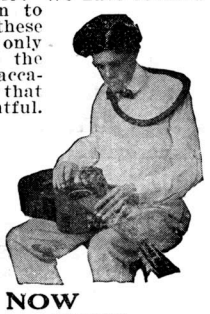

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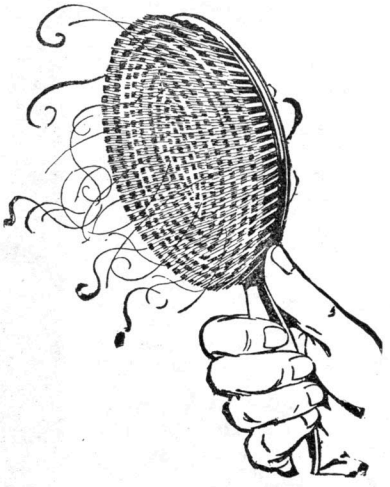

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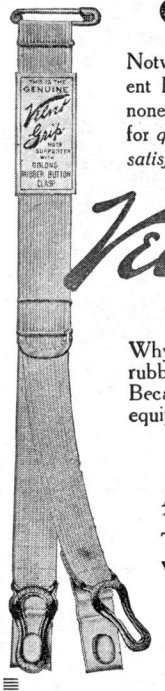

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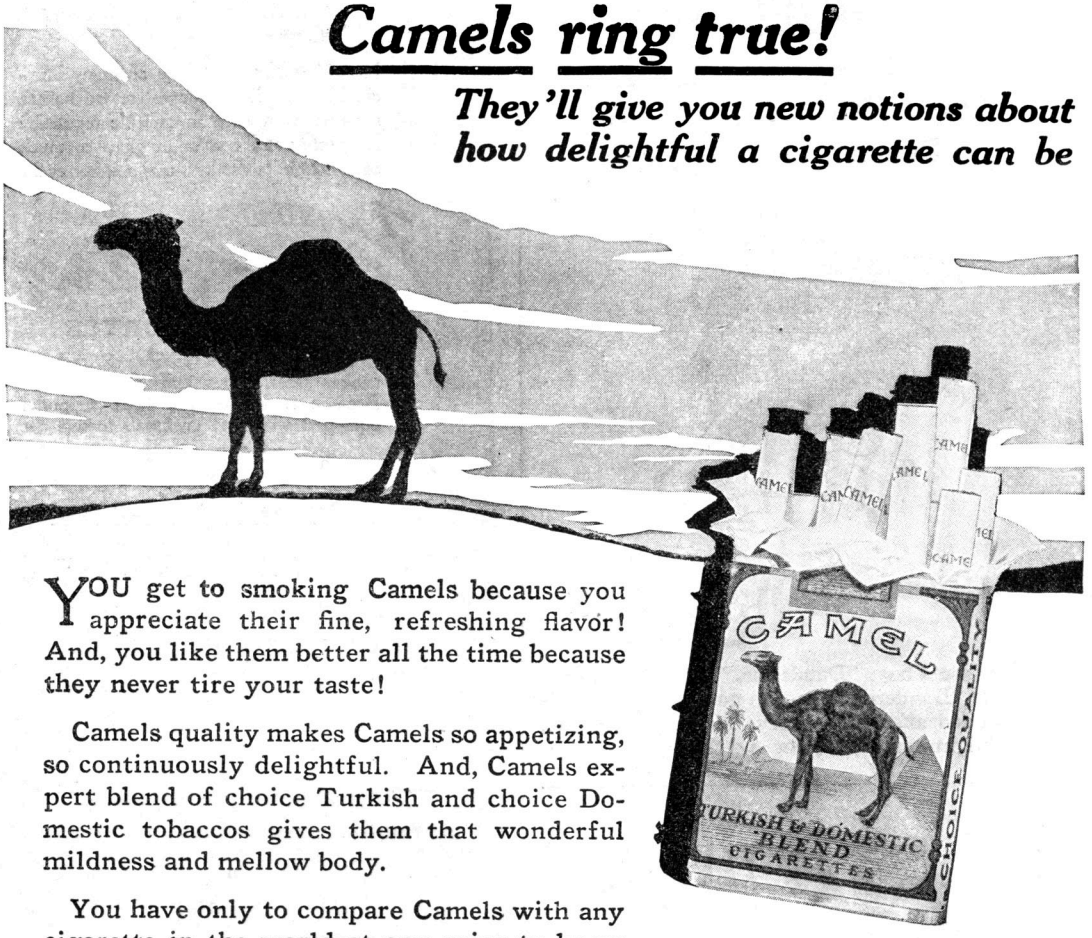

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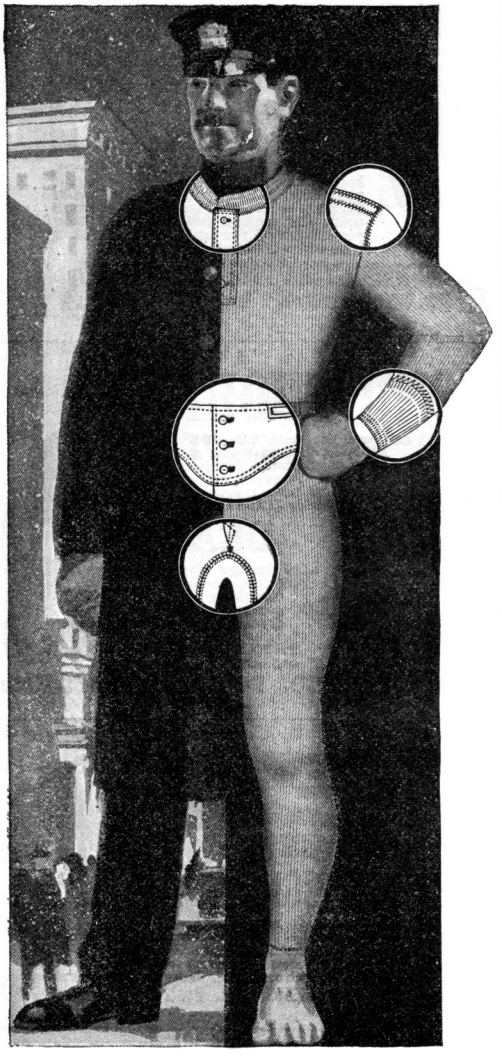
BUY "Hanes" winter underwear for men on the strict business basis of the most unusual quality, comfort and service ever sold at the price! Buy "Hanes" with your eyes shut, or over the phone—buy it without the slightest inspection, if need be, *because*

Every garment bearing the "Hanes" *national* nameplate returns in wear and in absolute satisfaction far more than you pay for it—more than you ever before got out of an undergarment! Our guarantee is your safeguard. *It proves our faith in "Hanes"!*



"HANES" underwear is made in heavy weight and medium weight Union Suits and heavy weight Shirts and Drawers. (Illustrated in this advertisement.) The new medium weight Union Suit, carrying the *yellow* label, has been added to meet the demand of indoor men. It is made of full combed yarn and silk trimmed.

"Hanes" for Boys

Buy "Hanes" Union Suits for boys if you seek more warmth and more wear than you ever bought before. This extra-value underwear duplicates the men's Union Suits in all important features with added fleeciness that appeals so much to the boys —*and to mothers!*

Made in sizes 20 to 34, covering ages 2 to 16 years. Two to four year old sizes have drop seat. Four desirable colors.

See "Hanes" underwear at your dealer's. If he cannot supply you, write us immediately.

P. H. HANES KNITTING CO.
Winston-Salem, N. C.
New York Office, 366 Broadway

Read Hanes Guarantee

"We guarantee Hanes Underwear absolutely —every thread, stitch and button. We guarantee to return your money or give you a new garment if any seam breaks."

Next Summer—You'll want to wear Hanes Nainsook Union Suits!

The Hands that do the Labor wear the Gloves-Boss Gloves

—wear them for protection from paint, dust, grease, dirt and minor injuries.

—wear them because they wear *well,* yet in spite of their tough texture allow a free *"feel"* of the work.

—wear them because they slip on and off *easily,* are comfortable—*and economical.*

—wear them because they are easy to get *anywhere* in any style or weight desired.

—wear them because they *always* have worn them —*and found them satisfactory.*

—wear them because millions of other hands are wearing them in hundreds of different lines of work.

Ask *your* dealer. He carries Boss Work Gloves. Three kinds of wrists, band, ribbed, and gauntlet. Sizes for men and women, boys and girls.

THE BOSS **MEEDY**—The world's favorite work glove for odd jobs around the house and garden, and all light handwork. Made of the best quality, medium weight canton flannel.

THE BOSS **HEVY**—The best bet for all work that requires a strong, wear-resisting glove. Made of the very best quality, heavy weight canton flannel.

THE BOSS **XTRA HEVY**—The world's champion heavy-weight hand-wear for rough work. Made of the finest grade of extra heavy canton flannel.

THE BOSS **WALLOPER**—This is the super work glove. Strong, flexible and built for rugged work. Made of the highest quality, heaviest weight canton flannel.

The Boss line includes highest quality leather-palm, jersey, ticking, and canton flannel gloves and mittens

THE BOSS MANUFACTURING CO., Kewanee, Ill.

Boss

Trade Mark

This Trade-mark identifies genuine Boss Work Gloves. Be sure it's on every pair you buy.

The Brunswick Method of Reproduction

No More Scratching Noises—

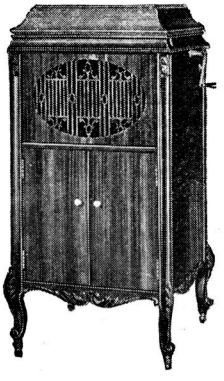
Instead, *Pure* reproduction

One of the foremost features of the Brunswick Method of Reproduction is the Ultona, as pictured above.

It plays all makes of records—at a turn of the hand it presents the correct needle and diaphragm. Each record is played at its best, without the bother of attachments.

But another great advantage of the Ultona is that it ends those "surface noises" or scratching sounds formerly associated with phonographic music. It is the *only counterbalanced* reproducer and tone arm—and this patent is the secret of purer reproduction.

Contact between needle and record is so perfectly balanced that all those old-time and disagreeable noises are banished.



To prove Brunswick Superiority, hear different records played on it. Note their greater clarity and charm. You've never heard any record at its best until you've heard it on The Brunswick.

A Brunswick dealer will be glad to explain the Ultona and other remarkable advancements made possible by the Brunswick Method of Reproduction.

Ask to Hear Brunswick Records

Played on any phonograph with steel or fibre needles. They, too, offer betterments.

THE BRUNSWICK-BALKE-COLLENDER COMPANY
General Offices: 623-633 S. Wabash Ave., Chicago

Branch Houses in Principal Cities of United States, Mexico and Canada

Canadian Distributors: **Musical Merchandise Sales** Co., 79 Wellington St., West, Toronto, Ont.

Brunswick
PHONOGRAPHS AND RECORDS

Money can not buy a finer Christmas gift

No matter how much you spend, you can't find a handsomer, more useful, more acceptable gift for "him" than a Durham-Duplex Razor at One Dollar. Packed in an attractive case of American ivory, with three double-edged, hollow-ground, oil-tempered Durham-Duplex blades, famous for their wonderful sharpness, this beautifully finished razor is sure to bring a smile of genuine appreciation on Christmas morning.

Standard Set, as described above, One Dollar. Special Christmas Model, with gold plated blade holder and safety guard, Two Dollars. Other Models up to $12.

Make your selection Today at your nearest Dealer's

DURHAM DUPLEX RAZOR CO.
Jersey City, New Jersey
FACTORIES
JERSEY CITY, U. S. A. — SHEFFIELD, ENG.
PARIS, FRANCE — TORONTO, CANADA
Sales Representatives in all Countries

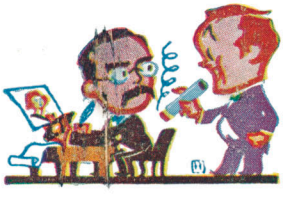
DURHAM-DUPLEX

A Real Razor-made Safe

With acknowledgments to K. C. B.

But a good wheeze— I'll leave it to you

I LOVE the ladies.
* * *
BUT LIKE most men.
* * *
I OFTEN guess wrong.
* * *
ON WHAT will win.
* * *
A SMILE from them.
* * *
I ALWAYS say.
* * *
IT'S BETTER to laugh.
* * *
THAN EVER to worry.
* * *
SO ONCE, when.
* * *
THE DAM broke, and.
* * *
A FLOOD hit town.
* * *
I THOUGHT I'd just.
* * *
CHEER UP my wife.
* * *
AND SO I said.
* * *
"IF THE worst comes.
* * *
YOU CAN float down.
* * *
THE RIVER on.
* * *
THE FAMILY music-box.
* * *
AND I'LL accompany you.
* * *
ON THE piano."
* * *
WHICH WAS all wrong.
* * *
POOR HUMOR, she said.
* * *
WAS OUT of place.
* * *
IN TIME of danger.
* * *
SO KIPLING was right.
* * *
"A WOMAN is only.
* * *
A WOMAN, but a good cigar.
* * *
IS A smoke;" only.
* * *
HE SHOULD have made it.
* * *
MY CIGARETTES because.
* * *
YOU'RE BOUND to get.
* * *
A SMILE from them.
* * *
THEY ALWAYS "satisfy."
* * *



TAKE the silky, tender leaves of choicest Turkish; blend them with the best Domestic tobacco that money can buy—*blend them* in the exclusive, can't-be-copied Chesterfield way—and you get a "smoke." Yes, and something more—you get a cigarette that honestly "satisfies."

They Satisfy **Chesterfield**

CIGARETTES

Liggett & Myers Tobacco Co.