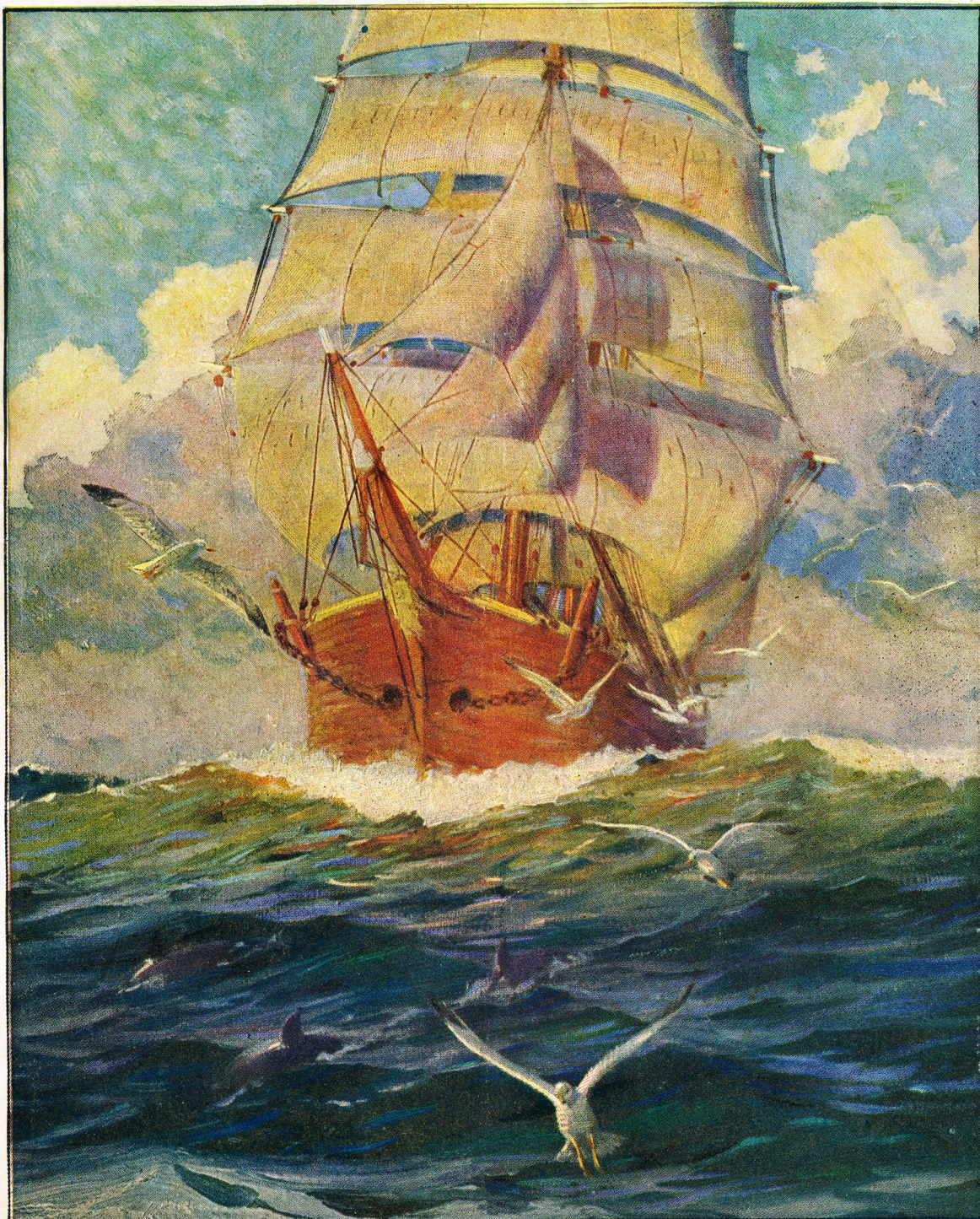


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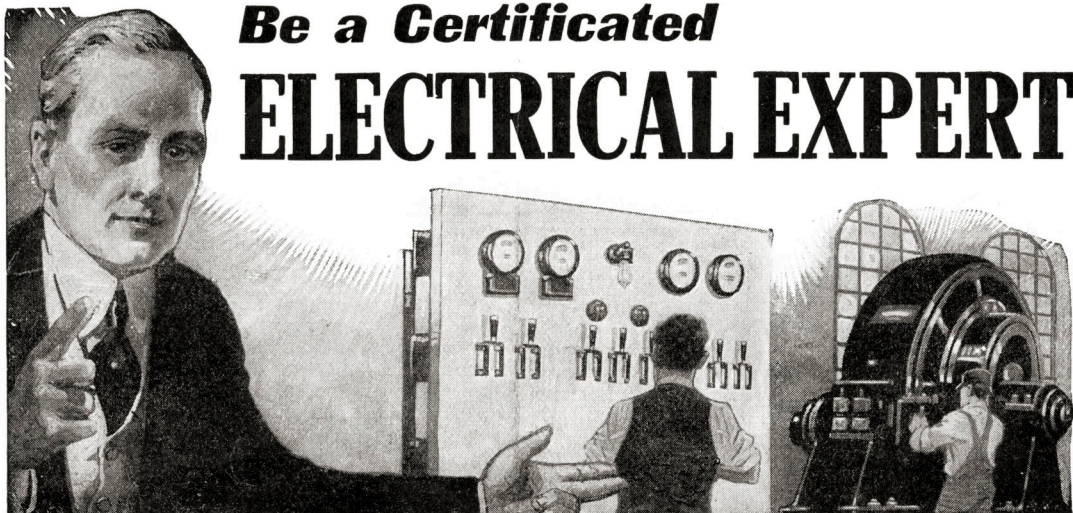
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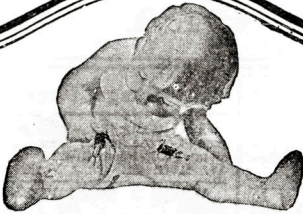
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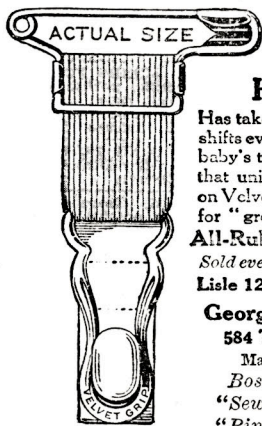


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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. LXI.

AUGUST 7, 1921.

No. 2

A Prima Donna Pitcher

By Hugh Kennedy

Author of "Number Fifteen and Jonah," "The Alcohalling Tragedy," Etc.

The trouble with young "Hap" Hylan of the Pacific Coast Boundary League was that he thought he was bigger than his job, so he suddenly found himself gracing a mountain sawmill instead of a pitcher's box. Lucky for him that the old ex-big-leaguer, Dom Perry, happened to be working in that mill! "Control?" said Dom. "That don't mean control of the leather only. The player that can't take his callings can't stick in any class of ball."

(A Complete Novel)

CHAPTER I.

THE ring-sleeved and stockinged Tigers had young "Hap" Hylan scratching his head in the fourth; but his luck held. With two men on and two down, Gomers, their third baseman, smashed a drive to left field that brought a groan from the stands.

"Three bags! Three, three, three!" exulted the first-base coach, dancing like a mad dervish.

"Or a miracle," breathed Hap, watching Mottram racing for the ball.

The miracle happened. Just as the ball reached the fence Mottram leaped, twisting his body in the air. The field held its breath. Came the smack of the ball against an ungloved hand, the crash of the fielder's body hurtling against the fence, then a many-lunged roar of joy as he gained his feet with the ball still gripped in his up-raised hand.

As Hap left the box he made a handkerchief of the loose sleeve of his tunic and wiped the perspiration from his brow.

"Horseshoes, kid, horseshoes!" jeered Gomers, crossing the diamond to pick up his glove.

"I'll say so," Hap came back at him, "when *you* come near getting a hit."

Bill Bard, who managed the team from the bench, had a word for him, too. "You wanna tighten up in there," Bill advised out of the tobacco-stained corner of his mouth, "or you'll be a squeezed lemon by the seventh. Git me?"

"Aw, have a heart, can't yuh?" whined the youngster. "Ain't any guy due for a bad innings once in a while?"

"He sure is, when him and trainin' rules is strangers." Beating about the bush was the worst thing Bill did. "This is your day for makin' good, kid. Alibis won't help you none."

Into the lull that had followed the triumphant outburst occasioned by Mottram's feat there pierced a single scream of encouragement for the young pitcher, a scream absurdly thin in contrast to that full-throated roar; for it was a woman's voice that called, a high-pitched, scratchy voice with the unpleasant forced quality that comes of trying to outdo the cries of others. "Good old kid, Happy," it shrilled.

The good old kid reddened under his tan. He picked up a couple of bats and began to swing them, for he was on deck.

He kept his back to the stand, waiting sheepishly for the voice to stab again through the hoarse rumble of male laughter and talk.

Bill Bard looked sharply from the brick-red face of his recruit to the woman, a woman with puttylike and bepowdered cheeks showing pallid beneath a hat black, wide-brimmed, beplumed. She was diligently chewing gum. "You're some candy kid, Happy," came her nasal shrill once more.

Bill spat in the sand. "Who's your friend?" he snarled, and strode to the coaching box off first base. "Git a hold of one, Pork," he began adjuring the big catcher digging his spikes in at the plate. "Let's make a start. Give it a ride—give it a ride!"

A hum of expectation began to run through the stands. Though slow on his feet "Pork" Barcom was a three-hundred hitter.

As Hap Hylan kept swinging his bats he glared sulkily at old Bill clapping his hands and mouthing his stock phrases of exhortation and command. He was sore, was young Hap. "Expects a guy to work, does he," he muttered, "and him jumping on his neck like that? Right in front of the stands, too, for the fans to hear."

All the breaks, he felt, were going against him. Somehow even the stands had not seemed so friendly to-day as usual. Like the gratitude of the mob that was, wasn't it? He had set a record that would stand for a while in this jay league. Sixteen strike-outs in one game! They had cheered themselves hoarse the day he had turned that trick. Did they expect him to repeat every time he went in there? Dad-burn the whole lot of them, anyway, from press box to bleachers.

Yet there was one spectator whom Hap left out of the sweep of his censure. Even now he could feel her presence behind him, second from the aisle there in the fifth row, not she of the black hat, but another. A sudden hunger for her sympathy moved him, yet he did not look toward her. He had had his smile from her during the work-out, and "Sprouts" Carlin, her twin brother, had had a franker hand wave of greeting; but beyond that gesture she was not one to go in public. Somehow he hadn't found the time to go to see her during this home

series, but, by crikey, he'd cut the gang to-night and amble out there to her place. A restful session on her dad's veranda would be better medicine than——

A tumult breaking out from the stands cut short his daydreaming. Pork was safe with a hot single past second.

Bat on shoulder, Hap set himself at the plate. Hoarse entreaties came to him from the coaching lines. "Git a hold of one in there now. Pick a good one. Push it outa the park." Then came Bill's signal and the foghorn exhortation: "You can do it, boy, you can do it." It was up to Hap to sacrifice.

"Red" Gates, the Tigers' pitcher, shot a murderous-looking ball at Hap's neck. Instinctively he stepped back.

"Stri-ike wan!" bawled the umpire.

"Stand up in there!" Bill charged him in a raucous growl. "Git some steel in your spine. Yuh can't meet it if you're in the next block when it comes over. Stand up to it!"

Hap had meant to stand up to it. He knew all about that curve ball of Gates', with its sharp break. He hadn't meant to step back, but his nerves were not good to-day. He had ducked in spite of himself. He dug his spikes in again while Gates read his catcher's signal. Again that murderous-looking ball. Again an involuntary shrinking from it.

"Stri-ike tuh!" And Pork, going down on the signal, was out by yards at second.

"Keep yer dogs outa that water bucket," barked old Bill. "Look 'em over, can't yuh? Spoil the good ones."

The next one looked good. Stung by Bill's too public roasting, Hap smashed at it with all the sullen rage that filled him.

"Batter out!"

A moan went up from the stands. Hap threw his bat peevishly at the fence. He was having a hard day.

Bill's comment, delivered as Hap slunk into the dugout, was salt in his wounds. "Better get some beauty sleep before you work next time," Bill advised; "it's good for the eye." There he was again, rubbing it in, as though any fellow wasn't due for an off day once in a while!

Next inning the Tigers scored the first run of the game. Mottram caught a high fly for the second out, but on a close decision the runner at third beat the throw

to the plate. Hap snatched peevishly at the ball when Pork returned it to him. A growling rumble ran the length of the stands, an agglomerate of many gloomy comments: "Here's where the kid blows." "The balloon's loose." "He's a bear when he's got a lead, but he's sure not there with the uphill pull." "Trouble with him, he wants all the garlands for himself—can't stand to see no brow decked but his own."

But the groans of the crape hangers proved untimely. The next batter fouled. The "Poets," as the reporters had dubbed Bill's team, made it one all in their half. The game looked even; but in the sixth the Tigers added another. Then in the seventh, to a chorus of entreaties from the bleachers to "take him out," they shoved across two more. There, at four to one, the score stood hopelessly until the last half of the ninth.

In that inning the first two of the Poets died at first. The game seemed over. The spectators began to crowd toward the exits. But you never can tell—not in baseball, be it big league or bush league. The third batter sent up a high fly to the infield. "All over!" sighed the fans, and to a man rose to leave. The Tigers' shortstop and third baseman both got under the ball. With arms held gracefully up they approached each other, each intent on making the last out of the game, each in his absorption deaf to the barked orders of his frantic captain. Four hands came together on the ball. It fell to the ground.

The outflowing currents of the crowd were suddenly dammed as though by a barrier. A roar of derisive laughter greeted the discomfiture of the two infielders. The next batter hit a stinging grounder straight at Red Gates, the pitcher. It bounced off his thigh, went high into the air, and did not come down till the runners were safe on first and second. The stands thundered with shouts, laughter, and the stamping of feet.

Pork Barcom came next to bat. A home run would tie the score, and right manfully the big catcher tried to lose the ball. Two mighty wallops went for nothing. The third resulted in the flukiest of scratch hits down the third-base line. Red Gates fielded it, but had no time to set himself for the throw, which went wide enough to pull the first baseman off the bag. A split-second

decision gave Pork his life. The bases were full.

The crowd went mad in a riot of cheering until Hap stepped to the plate. He had not so far got a hit that day. "Pinch hitter, pinch hitter," the cry went up. Hap looked toward Bill. He had had enough for one day. He was quite willing to quit.

Bill waved him on. "Gwan in there and show me," he ordered. "Win your own game. You either got the goods or you ain't."

The crowd moaned. Twice Red Gates scornfully shot over that deadly curve ball. Twice Hap in spite of himself stepped back, while old Bill raged at him: "Can that sandlot stuff. Let it bean yuh. What yuh tryin' to say? We got a bushel of spare balls!"

Sullenly the fans once more resigned themselves to a lost game. They couldn't see any sense in Bill's tactics, but Bill refused to be moved. "There's things of more account in the long run than a won game," he defended himself.

With the next ball came a moment of respite, for Hap luckily fouled it into the bleachers. The umpire threw out a new ball. Red turned his back on it and waited for the used one to come back to him from the crowd.

The umpire, a man of few words, grammatical or otherwise, was not to be bluffed. "Gimme it here," he ordered.

Red glared a moment, then gave it to him so fast that it hit his protector with a thud. A tricky temper had Red, and it had been tried to its limit. He stepped back into the box. Forgetting all about his curve that had been good enough for Hap all day he let go his fast one, putting all he had, including his rage, on it. It broke over the outside corner, knee high. Outside! That kind was meat to Hap, with his long reach. A wide one didn't bother his jumpy nerves. He swung savagely. With the crack, beloved of baseball fans, wood and leather met. Out and up sailed the ball till it cleared the wire netting above the center-field fence. Gates threw up his hands and started for the dugout. Hap had won his own game.

What the crowd did with itself, with its loose coins, with its hats, its cushions, with everything small enough to throw that was not nailed down, is a part of baseball

history, but not of this story. How it surged on the field and rode Hap, once more the hero, on its shoulders—even that, except as it served to restore the young pitcher to all his usual good opinion of himself is matter foreign to this tale's course.

CHAPTER II.

The ball grounds in Vancoria—a town that all but marks the northerly limits of league ball on the Pacific coast—have neither shower nor dressing room. Consequently, no sooner is the last man down in the ninth than each player "beats it on his own" for the hotel. Usually he hops into the most convenient of the purring autos parked about the gate and is driven by its flattered owner the few blocks to his destination.

Later, when Hap entered the elevator to descend to the hotel lobby he wore his nobbiest shoes, his nattiest tie, his happiest smile. All the earlier clouds of his day had vanished in the restored sun of popular favor. Jovially anticipating what old Bill would have to say to him now, he trimmed his nails in the utmost good humor. It would be as good as a show to see the old grouch crawfishing. Good medicine it would be for him, too, the old sorehead, never satisfied.

On stepping from the elevator old Bill was one of the first persons he saw. In his fawn suit and gray fedora hat Bill stood at the desk apparently receiving his mail from the clerk. Still wearing the white-toothed smile that had given him his nickname, and thrilling to every admiring glance cast in his direction, Hap sauntered up to him.

"Well, old scout," he greeted Bill, "did little Happy deliver the merchandise? Some bad old day he had, eh—not!"

Bill shoved a gnarled forefinger under the flap of an envelope and drew out the contained letter. Then he eyed his young pitcher over coldly. "Stuck on yer showing, are yuh?"

"Sure. I showed enough to win, didn't I?"

Dropping all his ball-field slang, Bill became suddenly the manager. "The treasurer's got something for you," he announced. "Better step right around and get it."

Hap's smile faded to a sickly grin. "Huh? How's that? Treasurer, you say?"

Bill had begun to read his letter. "You heard me. I said treasurer."

Hap continued to gape at him in slow comprehension. "Treasurer!" he repeated stupidly. Bill gave all his attention to his correspondence. Crestfallen, Hap moved toward the street. There the buoyancy of youth began to reassert itself. "Some old kiddie is Bill," he assured himself. "What surprise package is this he's handing me?"

He hailed Sprouts Carlin, the team's shortstop, who had preceded him to the curb. "Hey, Sprouts, come on round with me to the office. I got a guy wants to see me there."

Although a local boy Sprouts already, in early June, promised to be one of the finds of the season. Until quite recently he had been rather chummy with Hap. Now he colored in embarrassment. "I got to slip up home, Hap," he declined. "Sis, she'll be expecting me up for supper."

"Come on," urged Hap, ever slow to believe his company unwelcome, "it won't take more'n a minute."

"Another time," Sprouts rather uneasily excused himself and edged away.

"All right," said Hap in an injured tone. Then his earlier resolution, forgotten in his subsequent triumph, came back to him. "Tell Sis I'll be up some evening this week, sure."

"I'll tell her a-plenty," muttered Sprouts, his back turned.

"Whassay?" demanded Hap.

"Sure I'll tell her," amended Sprouts over his shoulder.

The treasurer of the Vancoria Baseball Club earned his living as a coal dealer. Hence summer was the logical season of his discontent; but with a fine understanding of the law of compensation he balanced the seasons by devoting his energies to business in winter and to sport in summer. To his office, a little uneasy as to the outcome, went Hap.

"Ah, and here he is," greeted the coal merchant, leaving a couple of cronies in his inner office as though breaking off a conversation of which Hap had been the subject. "Well, young man, that sure was some wallop you handed the old pill this afternoon."

Hap's smile blossomed readily to this flattery. "A hit in a pinch busts many a cinch," he quoted airily. "I sure come through with the goods to-day. Bill says,"

assuming an air of unconcern, "you got some little thing here for me."

"Ah-hum!" The treasurer had the air of one going through with an unpleasant duty. "He said that, did he? Well, I have. In fact it's been ready some days, but Bill wanted it held till he saw how certain matters shaped up to-day. He's the doctor in these things." He turned to select an envelope from a drawer of his desk. "That's the worst of professional sport; you can't keep it clear of—er—business."

"Well, what's the big idea? McGraw wiring for me, or what? Shoot."

The other offered the envelope. "You'll find that right, I think," he answered uncomfortably. "Salary in full to the end of the week and a week's bonus. I'm sorry, but—"

"Salary? Bonus?" gasped Hap. "Say, what you giving us? You guys ain't releasing me?"

"Unconditionally." There was no mistaking either the regret or the finality of the treasurer's tone.

Hap stared a long second. "Me?" he burst out. "Me with the league record for strike-outs! Me with a won game to my credit this very afternoon! Released? Who's doing this, anyway?"

"Not me." The treasurer edged away toward his office in the rear. "I'm on the financial end. Bill, he's the whole works in the field. What he says as to players goes." He withdrew a little farther from the counter.

"What he says!" sneered Hap bitterly. "Well, what does he say?"

"Better ask him direct," suggested the treasurer diplomatically; "although if I know Bill, I take it he's said a heap already."

Hap flushed a brick red. "Aw, who listens to him? He's always on the grouch. That's his job."

"The way to stick to a berth, kid, is to listen to the man that does the firing. In this case, that's Bill. The management backs him up. I'll say this for you, though." He came forward again, as though on a friendly impulse. "I'll say this for you: You looked good to me, even if you have been falling off lately. But we have to cut down by the fifteenth, and it was between you and 'Lefty' Carder. In Bill's judgment the man to keep is the steady man. It's condition and fighting spirit that

count with Bill. I don't want to lecture you, son. Good-by, and good luck." He held out his hand.

Too embittered to take the proffered hand Hap turned to the door. He was choking with a sense of monstrous injustice. Lefty Carder! Why, if that simp beaned you in the eye he couldn't hurt you. That's how much speed *he* had. And these guys with the say—what had they against him, the smoke-ball artist, the speed marvel? Nothing but a few nights out, such as any young fellow with the pep of life in him was entitled to. Against a trifle like that his record for strike-outs had counted for nothing. They'd had his number up for a week. Even that pippin of a home run with the sacks full had scored nothing in his favor.

He tramped unseeing through the streets, now crowded with people going home from offices and shops. He didn't give a hoot where he went, so long as it was not back to the hotel. Face his old teammates, keep smiling under their sympathy or pretend not to see their secret elation? Not for Hap. Not just yet. As for Bill, that backstabbing old grouch, one punch on the jaw would do for him. That's all he ever wanted with Bill. Some day he'd land it, too.

The bells and whistles at six o'clock found him still tramping blindly, still nursing his bruised self-love. They served to divert him to the extent at least of reminding him that it was time to eat. He had awakened late that morning, had had but one meal, a meal as hearty as the effects of a night out had permitted. Now the needs of his athletic young body became suddenly insistent.

While he ate at the first restaurant that offered, his thoughts milled on in their ceaseless round: his great deserts, his trifling shortcomings, his dirty treatment. Then suddenly out of his need for comfort a resolution came to him: he would go out to see Sis that very evening. That would keep him out of mischief—not that he cared much what happened. He needed a listener for his tale of wrongs suffered, of merits ignored. Sis would understand. He hadn't as yet got very far with her, but she would see his side of it, and sympathize. Sure, he would go straight out there as soon as she had had time to clear away the supper things and get round to her fancy-work, or whatever it was that she kept her fingers busy with.

He had been missing something, he'd admit, in not seeing more of that girl. He had gone out a few times to their place with Sprouts and just naturally got acquainted, the way kids might do. Once he had taken her to the movies and they had had chocolate sundaes afterward; a tame evening, but he had made his strike-out record next day. She had something, had Sis, that beauties didn't have, something you couldn't explain, but mighty comradely and comforting. She never tried to take you down a peg like some smarties. And as a listener, and understander—well, a fellow could talk to her in a way to simply surprise himself.

She liked him, too. He felt sure of that. Not that she showed it—not, at least, in any way that a fellow could exactly remember afterward. Still he had a hunch that she really cared—some. A fellow couldn't very well feel so homy with her if she didn't feel a bit that way, too. That stood to reason. Of course he had never had any notion of settling down; nothing like that—yet. Even keeping steady company was a thing he hadn't begun to bother his head about. Now, though, when things were in a mess, when he had been handed a raw deal, it was good to have a girl like Sis to go to for comfort.

He found old man Carlin, at the end of his hike, turning up the leaves of the rose-bushes that bordered his napkin of a garden, enjoying the while a pipe strong enough to destroy such bugs as he might find and even to endanger the roses themselves. A compact-bodied man, stocky-legged, like Sprouts, only thicker set; and unhurried. His strenuous hours he gave to the molder's trade; his evenings to the relaxation of his garden and pipe.

He looked up at the click of the gate. "Avening, Hap." He had a touch of the brogue. "It do beat all where these bugs come from. Pesky critters, there's more av them!" He applied a broad thumb to his enemies.

Hap failed to notice any lack of warmth in this welcome. He had never taken much notice of the elder Carlin, anyway, regarding him as a harmless old duffer. He made only a scant pretense of interest in either the roses or their parasites. "Sprouts around?" he presently asked.

"Sprouts? Seems to me Danny went out—to a show or something. Judging by the preening av him before the glass I'd say

more something than show." The old boy winked heavily.

"Get you," grinned Hap. "He's pretty sweet on Something, all right. How's Sis this evening?"

"Sis?" There was no trace of pleasantry in the tone. "Oh, Rosy, she's all right. That is—well, I mind her making some minton av a headache."

"Headache, has she? Girls are always having 'em. Hard luck. What say I just sashay in and find her? Maybe she ain't through her chores yet."

"Now I wouldn't be doing that same just yet, Hap." Carlin straightened and looked at his visitor firmly, if a little unhappily. "It's not like Rosy to be complaining. Do you be taking a chair now on the verandy while I be going in meself to see how she feels."

Having little choice in the matter Hap took the most comfortable chair available. A queer sort of welcome this for a guy! What had got into the old boy to be so stiff all of a sudden? Sprouts had had something of the same manner back at the hotel. Darn everybody! Just because he had had a raw deal from Bill, the rawest kind of deal, did every one else have to cold-shoulder him, too?

Sprouts must be at the bottom of this. That boy had been talking, had told them about Bill letting him out, giving them Bill's side of it, the mangy lickspittle. Trust Sprouts for that, the jealous way he'd been acting lately. With Sis, though, things would be different. She had been there to see him poke that homer over the fence this afternoon. She knew it wasn't coming to him, this deal they had handed him. Once let her get his side of it and—

A step in the doorway interrupted his reverie. "I'm sorry, Hap"—it was Carlin's voice again—"but Rosy she ain't feeling up to her usual this avening. She thinks she'll have to ask you to excuse her."

With fallen jaw Hap took in this information. "Aw, ain't that the limit? Here I come all the way out special to see her and she ain't feeling good. She looked fine this afternoon. Sure she ain't up to seeing a fellow a while, eh?"

The molder took a chair opposite Hap, "Not this avening, me boy." He laid a hand on the boy's knee. "It hurts me to be telling it ye, but she says not anny other avening, either."

"Whassay?" exploded Hap, and stared, speechless.

"Not anny other avening," repeated his host; "not, at anny rate, me boy, till—till things is different wid ye."

"Different, huh? What's wrong with me?"

"It's not for me to be lecturing av ye, boy; but as an older man to a young wan, they do say you've been—well, falling down lately."

"Haw, haw!" Hap sprang up rudely as he laughed his bitter laugh. "Falling down, eh? Where do all you crape hangers get that stuff? I make a strike-out record for this league. That's the falling down. I clout a homer out of the lot and win my own game. For that I'm canned. If that's falling down what would you call making good? Huh?"

The older man kept his patience. "Sit down, Hap. There's a lad. Maybe we can get this thing straight between us. What I know about ball would go on the back of a one-cent stamp, but I do know a bit about life. Seems to me they can't be so different, baseball and life. They're both games. The same never-say-die spirit's needed to win in one as in the other. It's all——"

"Win? Ain't I been winning? Didn't I hang up a strike-out record for this league? Didn't I——"

"Wait, son. We'll admit you did that. You hit a high spot there. A good and high spot it was, too. But how about the level? You been going good on the level?"

"Sure. Good enough for this company, anyhow."

"Well, this Bill Bard, it seems, is the judge of that. What he seems to expect is not what's good enough, but the best you've got. My boss down at the foundry, he's got the same bug. If you've been giving that, I've got no more to say, except that you've been done dirt."

"Sure; that's what I have. That's all that's wrong with me: the knockers are out with their hammers for me."

With an upward turn of his palm Carlin rose. "All right, me boy, maybe you know best. 'Tis no pleasure to me to be lecturing av ye. You'll be wanting to get back now, and I'll not be keeping ye."

Hap could take a hint as broad as this. His chin quivered as he rose to go. "It's a raw deal," he asserted sullenly, "a raw

deal all round." He turned back at the bottom of the steps. "I bet Sis would say so too, if she only had the story right."

"I'll not be denying that. She may have the story wrong; but whatever story she has, it's not what annybody's told her. I'm telling you, me boy, she's always stuck up for you till this day. If she's gone back on you it's her own eyes and ears have been the talebearers."

Hap had the grace to redden at this thrust. "Aw, hell!" he muttered savagely as he turned again toward the gate.

"Wan more word I'll be saying," his host sent after him: "Rosy's headache is a rare headache; which is more, I'm thinking, than anny young man alive deserves av her. Good avening, me boy, and luck go wid you."

"Luck!" Hap slammed the gate on that bitter word. "Ha, ha! Luck! Sure thing, I'm having luck—like a cat in a rain barrel."

CHAPTER III.

Two hours later the word went around among the ball players yawning over their magazines in the deep leather chairs of the hotel rotunda, or playing dollar-limit poker in Pork Barcom's room: "Hap Hylan's on the loose again." The rumor carried no details, but conveyed the general impression that with the start he already had the youngster was in a fair way to hang up another record—this time in the matter of hitting the high spots.

Bill Bard's only sign of interest had been a wordless grunt. Presently, however, he threw down his yellow-backed volume and sought out Mottram. "How be, Motty," he suggested, "you take a whirl among the near-beer joints? You pulled that fool kid out of one hole to-day, maybe you can pull him out of another. Go get him to bed, or something."

In an hour Mottram returned. He held himself very erect, his gaze apparently fixed on a point straight before him. His eye was bright, his cheek flushed.

"Nothing doing," he reported to Bill, "with that crazy kid. He's on top of the world, steppin' from one snow-capped mountain to the next. He's collected a gang of stiff round him that you can't tear him loose from with a block and tackle—not while his money lasts."

"And it'll last pretty quick," snapped

Bill. "Some of that gang'll pinch his roll, sure as sunup."

"He should worry! Just now he's got everything. He's the grandest box artist since old Cy Young. The only difference between him and 'Babe' Ruth is that Babe gets the coin and the write-ups. Him and the gang's all one mind about it. They was too unanimous for me. I beat it."

"Huh!" grunted Bill regretfully.

"This time—or I've got the dope all wrong—he'll do his tapering off in the cells."

"Huh!" grunted Bill again, half to himself. "He's taking it hard."

"You said it," agreed Motty solemnly, "the hardest he can buy."

Bill stared at his serious left fielder, then grinned. "The hay for yours, Motty. You been taking something not so soft yourself. Anyhow, it's rotten. That kid might 'a' made a pitcher, if—oh, damn it, what's the use?"

However reliable in general Mottram's account of Hap's conduct, it was inaccurate in one particular. Hap did not reach the cells that night, nor any other night.

How narrow was his escape, though, he will never more than dimly realize. The events of his carouse will always remain a blur in his memory, like a nightmare too vague to be described, but distinct enough to be shuddered at. Vancoria, like most other towns in North America, was a prohibition town; but there were places—well, let it go at that.

First, to Happy, had come, by unnoted degrees, a feeling of release from all his troubles. He had slipped out of them as out of chafing garments. His clearest recollection is of a blur of faces milling around him, now palely reflected in expansive mirrors or again losing themselves in shadowy backgrounds; admiring faces all, the faces of utter strangers, but the best fellows in the world. In this company he was a hero. His record of "'steen" strike-outs, his mighty wallop over the center-field fence, his peerless smoke ball, his control—these had been the theme of clamorous but pleasing discourse.

Near beer, at the command of an always hospitable Hap, but now both hospitable and wealthy, had flowed for all. In return some of the best fellows had insisted on bettering the quality of his own pale drink by a nip of something harder, something with a kick in it, produced, after glances of

precaution, from a hip pocket, or from other unnoted hiding places. A rare and glorious occasion.

"Let's circulate," he remembered, had become the slogan of the party. And the party had circulated. Other mirrored bars, other back rooms, had impressed themselves on his mind just enough to live in the haunting blur that was ever afterward to constitute his recollected vision of the rare and glorious occasion.

Fresh faces of utter strangers, but also the best fellows in the world, had joined them. Mottram, sober old Motty, coming out of nowhere, disappearing into nowhere, had been one of these. Other faces, too, had vanished. Time became as nothing. There was shouting and singing and storytelling and much loud laughter; and once a row of some kind among some of the best fellows about something. After that, their numbers lessened; they had circulated again.

On one of these excursions—was it the last?—they had encountered a policeman. Of course, being a policeman, he was a friend. All the cops on duty at the ball grounds had been friends. Reasonably, therefore, Hap had desired to embrace him. The big fellow looked forlorn, out there alone in the dark and unfriendly streets. He needed cheering up.

The embrace had not come off—not that Hap had been dissuaded from the attempt by the hissed but strenuous objections of some of the best fellows. A good sort, that flatfoot, a wise guy, fatherly, and with his heart in the right place. True, he had been harsh with the best fellows. "Beat it, you ginks," had been his politest word for them; and in spite of Hap's protestations that they were all "the bes' fel's in the worl', pers'n'l frien's," they had beaten it.

Had followed a walk with the policeman. Had he seen little Happy clout that old apple over the netting for the circuit with the sacks jammed? No; the bluecoat hadn't seen it, but had heard all about it. Some wallop, that. He was proud to know the walloper. A lad that could hit like that ought to be in the big leagues. Sure. And had he seen Hap work the day he had hung up that mark of 'shteen shstrike-outs? He hadn't, but had heard about it, and professed himself keen to hear more. Hap obliged him—several times.

The policeman had revealed himself a

man of rare understanding, the equal in sympathy of even the best of the departed good fellows. He wanted to hear still more. He knew a room where they could chin a while. Would Hap come? Sure; Hap would try anything once. He hadn't told him yet about knocking the pill out of the park this afternoon, had he? Had he seen that? No? Then he'd missed something out of his young life, take it from Hap.

The promised room had proved a blurry sort of place up some dark and billowy stairs. It had a bed in it, and on this Hap sat. Did his friend know what sort of reward a fellow got for work like Hap's? Good words? Salary boosted? Sold to higher company? Nothing like that. Release—that's what he got. Sure thing; let out, cold; canned for a pipestem-armed pitcher like Lefty Carder. Hap threw himself on the pillow and wept.

What other maunderings, what variations of his oft-told tale, Hap inflicted on his new friend, his memory does not retain. His next recollection is that of waking to stare in the dim light filtering through drawn blinds at the bare plaster of a clean but cheaply furnished room. He was partially undressed. His coat, shoes, collar, and necktie had been removed by some charitable hand.

He felt low in spirits. Why, he could not for a moment understand. Then with an overwhelming rush recollection came. Bill Bard had fired him—fired him for the weakest hurler on the string. Then his turndown at the Carlin place! Sis had refused to see him. Like hot metal old man Carlin's words seared into his very flesh: "She says not anny other avening, either."

He writhed in revolt against this heaping of injury on injury, but his first movement produced a physical discomfort so acute that it banished all other sensations. His head had become a solid thing shot through with stabs of pain. His swollen tongue filled his nauseous, flannel mouth. What a night he must have had! How many kinds of fighting poison must he have swallowed!

He lifted his head. Almost with a scream he fell back, intolerably stabbed with pain. This thing had gone too far. Morning-after heads he had had before, but never one like this. He could endure no more of it. Cautiously he turned over on his face and let his feet to the floor, infinitely careful to avoid a sudden motion, a jarring contact.

At length he stood up. The world swam blackly around him, so that he clutched at the bed for steadiness. Agonies pierced him with the motions of putting on his shoes. His head threatened to drop from his shoulders with the jerky efforts of getting into his coat. His collar and tie could wait. His first need was a bracer.

He staggered to the door, only to lean despairingly against the jamb. A panic of terror gripped him. What was this? Was he dying? His legs refused to support him. His brain reeled. His eyes saw nothing clearly. His heart fluttered like a spent balance wheel about to stop. Brief newspaper paragraphs flashed back into his memory, bald items telling of some roisterer found dead from the effects of moonshine whisky, of blind-pig poisons.

He searched the walls for a push button. He could not dare in his present state to trust himself to those billowy stairs of his last night's recollection. Yet he must order something. His scrutiny of the swaying walls revealed no bell. Then he must even venture the stairs. He could not die here like a trapped rabbit. He reached for the doorknob, caught it as it swayed past him, steadied himself by it. Then happily the bell button revealed itself. He had been leaning against it. With his free hand he caught and imprisoned the wildly careering thing and pressed its white plunger with the other.

Relieved, he lurched back to the bed. Some one would presently answer that bell. He felt in his change pocket for coin. Empty. He had blown all the loose stuff on the good fellows. Very well; he must dip down into the bill pocket. Nothing there. Whew! An expensive party, last night's. He had been free with the kale. All right; what was gone was gone. He still had his reserve, his little wad of four twenties, pinned safely in the lining of his waistcoat. He would break into that.

He fumbled at the buttons of his vest, felt in a sudden paralyzing suspicion at the region of the pocket over his left breast, tore open the garment. His wad also had gone.

A knock sounded on the door, jarring his shaken nerves like sudden thunder. At the husky groan which Hap had intended for "Come," a fat man entered, shirt-sleeved, white-aproned, rubicund, bulbous of nose, bearing a tray. On the tray stood a tall

glass of misty liquid, alive with a filmy wreath of bubbles surging upward to break in lightly beaded foam upon its surface; a liquid of alluring sheen, provocatively veiled within the exterior dew of its own ineffable coolness; a draft delectable; a benediction for parched membranes. Hap reached unsteady hands for it.

The rotund being who formed a background to this eye-compelling beverage smiled the lush smile of the good Samaritan. "Thought you'd be needin' of it, me lad," he panted. "Save meself a trip. Climbin' stairs ain't me long suit no more. Drink 'earty."

Hap's shaking hands fell to his sides. He recollected his plight. "I'm broke," he gasped. "Been rolled."

The good Samaritan smile vanished in sympathy, then swiftly beamed again. "Drink 'earty," repeated its wearer, as though explanations might wait, but not an effervescent drink of which time was the essence.

Hap waited for no third invitation. He clasped both hands about the glass. They trembled so violently that some of the precious fluid spilled over on the tray. The rim of the glass, when he bent his head to it, chattered alarmingly against his teeth. He had to call on the last shred of his will power to steady himself sufficiently to manage the draft.

At last he set down the emptied glass and sank back against the pillow. "Never again," he breathed, "never again!"

"Right-o," encouraged his benefactor. "All that glitters in glasses ain't good liquor—not these days. You been a-poisonin' of yourself, me lad."

Hap's shattered faculties still harped on the string of his obligations. "How much," he quavered, "is the damage?"

"Rest easy, me lad. A man wot sticks to this business these days does it mostly for 'is 'ealth. Me 'ealth's 'earty, thank you. You don't owe me nothink. Your peeler friend wot you come in with last night, 'e, squared everythink."

This did not seem at all clear to Hap, but he was in no state to question fortune or to look a gift horse in the mouth. Sighing his acquiescence in the arrangement he relaxed at full length on the bed.

"That's the proper caper," soothed his host. "Get a bit of the balmy, and you'll

be right as rain. 'Ow about a bite o' breakfast later?"

Hap jerked himself half erect. "No; no!" he almost screamed. "Food? Ugh!"

"Right-o," agreed the mind-reading publican. "Know 'ow it feels, meself. Rest easy, me lad. Another o' the same's wot you need. It's me own special, made up from a dook's private perscription. Been 'anded down in 'is family for generations, it 'ad. I 'ad it direct from 'is butler. Dates back, it does, to the day of 'Enery the Heighth. It'll do the trick. Never fails, young fellah, me lad, never fails."

Whether the "dook's" prescription or Hap's own youth and abounding vitality deserve the credit, he did eventually fulfill his host's prophecy and become again as right as rain; but for two days he kept his room, encouraged to "rest easy, me lad," by the fat victualer, who ministered to him with an un-failing tact born equally of good nature and experience.

In that time Hap did more original thinking than had ever ruffled his whole unheeding past. A change had begun in him: his callow youth had at last sprouted a feather or two. First and clearest of his new resolves was that about liquor. He was off the stuff. In this reaction there entered nothing of a moral nature; it was a purely physical revolt. Once as a boy on a holiday visit to an uncle's farm he had gorged himself on honey in the comb, neglecting the requisite proportion of bread and butter to accompany it. The consequences were never to be forgotten. Ever after he had hated even the hum of a bee.

Some primitive and mulish element in him balked at reopening a chapter of experience once so closed. Persuasion, argument, example had failed to move him after the pangs of his honey carouse. They would fail equally here. He vowed no vows, exacted no pledges of himself, made no moral issue of the matter. Reason and judgment had but slight part in his decision; nerves and bodily tissue were simply in a state of repulsion so violent as to be permanent. He was off the stuff. That said all there was to say.

But Hap's thinking took a wider range than his physical pangs and his narrow escape from serious poisoning. What dirty dip, for instance, had gone through his clothes? One of the good fellows? Likely enough. But in justice to them he recalled

that some of them had been with him when he first encountered the policeman. If they already had his wad, would they be sticking around? They'd have faded. Even so, while they might have gone through his outer pockets, they could not have unpinned the pocket in the lining of his waistcoat. That kind of touch could only be pulled off on a victim lying unconscious, one knocked out with the drops, or asleep.

That argument put it up to the policeman or the fat innkeeper—perhaps both. Did they stand in cahoots? More than likely. But, if so, why did they take care of him as they were doing? To rob a fellow of his coin and then pay it back to him in service was a rum layout. His throbbing head could arrive at no solution. He tackled his fat host the next time he panted up the stairs, the bearer of a glass of ginger ale and a wafer of ship's biscuit.

"What's the bright idea," he demanded, "of the flatty putting up for me this way?"

"'Flatty,' says you? Ow, I take yer meanin' now. It's the peeler you're alludin' to. Rum words they use over 'ere. But I wouldn't be goin' into that to-day, not if I was you, young laddie, me boy. Try the ginger hale. A bit of hall right, that hale is, eh?"

With hands that still trembled Hap lifted the glass. He drained it, but waved away the biscuit. "Let's get this straight," he persisted. "I meet up with this cop, a stranger. He shoos away the bunch I was trailing with and steers me up here. He puts me to bed, or gets some other guy to do it. I wake up with my roll pinched. He leaves money at the desk to pay my keep for a day or two. Why all the liberality?"

"You should worry, me lad, as the saying goes over 'ere. Had to take you along, 'e did. Couldn't 'ave you on the street no-how, the way you was—a bit screwed, you'll admit. Let on to the bunch, 'e did, that 'e was arrestin' of you. But all the time 'e knew you for one of the lads as play rounders at the park—baseball, they will miscall it over 'ere. Never do, says 'e, to 'ave one of them lads in the dock."

"White of him," murmured Hap.

"Besides and moreover, laddie, you were in for it. The poison you'd been lappin' up was bound to 'it you soon, and 'it you 'ard. 'E brings you up 'ere. 'E's a family man

hisself, 'as lads of 'is own. Said you'd been frisked, meanin', I judge, your wallet 'ad been prigged. Judgin' 'e was, you understand, by the gentry you'd been pallin' up with. Rum coves, 'e said they was. Said you'd be needin' a bit of puttin' on your feet; the bill for which, says 'e, was to be 'is affair. 'A clean chap, that,' says 'e; 'a likely lad. 'E'll pay it back once 'e gets on 'is feet.' A bit of hall right, eh, that ginger hale? 'Its the spot, it does. Eh, wot?"

With this glib explanation Hap had perforce to be content. It served only to convince him, however, that either the policeman or the saloon keeper himself had his money. It rather surprised him that he could not work up much indignation about it. They were treating him pretty decently, he had to admit. Between them they had kept him out of the cells, where he might have died. Instead of turning him adrift, penniless and sick, they were nursing him back to health—doing it at their own cost, too; for if they already had his money they had no need to return any part of it to him. He could think of nothing to do about it. That milk was spilt. No good crying about it.

Although his sense of obligation enabled Hap to forgive the attack on his purse it was otherwise with the blow to his professional pride. His hatred of Bill Bard, who had fired him, and of all the Poets, from whom he had been fired, settled to a bitter, unreasoning intensity. He had done something for that ball club. His reward had been dirt.

But, broke and out of a job, what was he going to do? The Seacoma Pirates, he knew, needed a pitcher. But they were tail-enders, distanced already in the pennant race. Their own home town would no longer turn out to support them. No berth with them for Hap! He did not propose to tie up to any bunch of cellar champs. The best for his—or nothing.

Nothing! In his present disgusted frame of mind the word appealed to Hap. To be nothing in organized ball—out of the game. That was the ticket. Out of its rottenness, its jealousies, its dirty deals. Sure; he'd chuck it all. In his weakened state he turned on his face and wept to think of all he would forgo—the thrills of the game, its chances, its tense struggles, its quick turns to victory or defeat, the adulation of

crowds. But he resolved that forgo it he would.

The truth is that Hap was bound to make a martyr of himself. He would have scouted that assertion as "piffle," had it been made in his hearing; nor would he have understood the reasons underlying its truth, had they been explained for his benefit. Nevertheless it was true. Twice had he been deeply wounded; and his wounds, to heal soundly, must suppurate. The vital tissue of his self-love was mortifying, turning to the gangrene of self-loathing—a morbid condition that must drain off in action. His meditations, as became a true penitent, ran on humiliation, on abnegation. In short, hating himself, he wanted to kick the object of his dislike.

The first of his wounds, that to his pride of prowess, had it come singly, would not have so affected him. His release had branded him publicly a failure, but that alone could never have broken down his abounding belief in himself. After the emotional blow-off of his carouse he would have settled down to a course of rehabilitation, of revenge. Eventually he would have joined the Pirates, have pitched them to a measure of success, have beaten the Poets, and made them look foolish, on every possible occasion.

But his second wound had gone deeper, piercing the inmost tissues of his spirit. The policeman had called him a clean lad; Rosy Carlin had refused to accept him at that valuation. Her acts, almost her very words, had classed him as a rotter.

He writhed in agony on the bed whenever that thought stabbed him, and it stabbed him with relentless frequency. He could not drive it away. Indeed he realized, just as one is inclined to finger an aching bruise, that he did not want to drive it away. He rather wanted to renew the sting of it. If Rosy had been soft with him, had listened to his woes, had consoled with him, he would in all probability soon have lightly forgotten her. He would have fed on her sympathy, restored himself in the comfort of her presence, then gone. That was the breed of hog he was. He liked the phrase so well that he repeated it. Now, although she had hurt him to the quick, although she had forbidden him "any other evening, either," she had got inside him. She was a presence to be carried about with him always.

He felt an immense commiseration for himself, but no relenting in the sternness of his sacrificial mood. He would cut out baseball, retire to some lonely spot where nobody would know him. The longer he dwelt on it the more that seemed the only thing to do. He indulged in moving pictures of himself—moving to the verge of tears; pictures of himself bucking logs in the woods, toiling with pick and shovel in some far construction camp, hiding his brilliant talents among unappreciative bohunks and blanket stiffs. Of course, in the end he would rise to be foreman, then subcontractor, then big boss. A strong, stern, commanding, but lonely figure, austere and loveless, treasuring always in his heart the image of a girl who once had refused to see him ever again, and he too proud in the days of his prosperity to ask her to take back that word.

On the morning of the third day of his retreat Hap rose and dressed. His nerves still unsettled, his knees disturbingly unworthy of full confidence, he descended the stairs. The place, as he had already decided by the view from his window, he found to be one of the quieter sort of old-time, side-street saloons. Once a bar with a neglected adjunct of such bedrooms as the law required, a still more drastic law had converted it into a lodging house with a languishing bar attached. The beery odors of former days still pervaded it, but power and prosperity had deserted it forever.

The fat proprietor Hap found behind his bar vigorously polishing a glass and in no wise cast down by the fact that he had no customer in sight to use it.

"'Ow now, young laddie, me boy, wot brings you down this hour o' day? Fed up halready with 'avin' of your breakfast in bed like a bloomin' lord? Speakin' of breakfast, 'ow would a bite o' grilled lamb chop an' kidney 'it the spot? That's wot's on for this mornin'. Devilish sustainin' fare, too. 'Ope you're feelin' a bit peckish, wot?"

"Sounds good," agreed Hap, without admitting that he had no notion of what peckish might mean. "I'll go you just this once. But look here, old-timer, I'm getting too deep into your books to suit me. What's the total damage by this time?"

"Now I wouldn't take on about that if I was you, me lad—not on a hempty

stomick. Treat yourself to another day to loaf about in. You're needin' of it after wot you been through. To-morrow, or day after, mebbe, I'll 'ave your little bill ready. Not that there's any 'urrying to settle. Hall in your own good time, me boy, hall in your own good time."

Hap looked his fat benefactor over. Dip or prince—which was he? Prince of rogues or prince of actors? Holding a fresh glass up to the light, the dip—or prince—fell to burnishing a detected flaw in its luster as though wholly unaware of his guest's scrutiny.

"Why do you do it?" Hap suddenly asked.

"Do it, me boy? A good 'ouse is known by the glasses it keeps. Shady 'ouses 'ave shady glasses. Besides, it's good for the 'ealth. Busy 'ands makes quiet minds."

Hap managed to catch his eye and held it. "Why do you do it?" he repeated.

"I get your meanin', me lad, and it does you credit, it does. Wot if we say I've been a bit screwed in me time meself, 'ad a 'eadache meself, didn't 'ave the price meself, an' didn't 'arf like it, young fellah, me lad? Hall true; but——"

"Fine," Hap sniffed; "but just where does the cop come in?"

"Eh, wot say? Cop? Who's 'e? Oh, I get your meanin' again, me lad. Wot was it you called 'im—Flatty? Rum word, that. Why, if you must know—er—me and 'im's partners in this. Wot 'e don't put up, I do. Some day you pays me back, and I pays 'im. Business, nothing but business. Simple as Hay, B. C."

Allowing Hap no chance for comment on this lucid explanation, he chattered on: "Wot say now to a bite o' breakfast? Right! This way, me bold bucko, and see that you eat 'earty. You got some meals to make hup—hevery one down in the bill, laddie, hevery last one down."

With short but active steps he waddled along the dark and barren hall toward the more cheerful, if equally empty, dining room. His busy hands fluttered over the table appointments after he had seated Hap. "Wot team are you plannin' to go with next, me lad?"

"Humph!" Hap threw all his bitterness into the grunt. "A mule team, I guess. That's the next team I join. Mule skinning ought to be good for what ails me."

"Ha, ha! Good, that is, very good. Two

days, young laddie, me boy, you take two days more. You can't skip without your bill. That's against the law, that is. An' your bill can't be got ready no'ow inside o' two days. 'Mule team!' That's a rare un, that is." Still chuckling, he left Hap to the ministrations of the slippered Chinese who suddenly materialized deferentially at his shoulder.

CHAPTER IV.

After a breakfast that would have come far from meeting his host's conception of "earty," Hap slipped out unnoticed to the street. Aware of a collar soiled, of clothing crumpled, of chin unshaven, he lacked all the moral support that comes from trig-ness of person. To his atrabilarious eye the outdoor world presented nothing to make a joyful noise about. His martyr mood had not yet lifted.

His course lay clear before him. He had dwelt on it in his recent solitary meditations until, in his enervated state, it possessed him. Still, it was almost with a lump in his throat that he inquired of a seedy person the way to the nearest employment office.

On the walk in front of the agency to which he was directed—it had evidently once been a warehouse of some sort—Hap found a garish display of billboards, scrawlingly lettered in variegated inks and sketchily spelled, offering apparently high wages to men of such diversified callings as buckers, fellers, hammermen, muckers, sawyers, tallymen, boom tenders, stationmen, setters.

In the ill-lighted interior men in every variety of working attire, and in numbers equal to filling all the jobs advertised, occupied the stiff chairs that lined the walls. A settled pessimism marked their demeanor. Either they gazed in stony disapproval at a workless world, or delivered virulent attacks on the foundations of society, solacing themselves meanwhile with sedulous target practice at the spaced cuspidors that paralleled the line of chairs.

Very low in mind Hap made his way to the counter. "Got any kind of a job for a guy like me?"

The man in charge finished the newspaper paragraph at the moment engaging his attention, made copious contribution to the cuspidor beside his chair, but found it unnecessary to disturb his feet, which were

performing the office of a paper weight on the top of his littered desk.

"What's yer line, bo?"

"Anything—don't care what."

The bored air gave way to a trace of animation. "Anything, huh? Skilled 'n any line?"

"Nope. Anything you got—lumber camp, construction camp. Don't give a hoot."

Again, cautiously, as though not to be deceived into yielding too readily to the testimony of his ears, the agent paid tribute to his familiar, the cuspidor. "Willin' to go anywhere? Far from town?"

"Farther the better."

Here, surprised out of his wonted calm, the agent permitted his feet to resume their normal function: he stood on them. "Yer in the right shop, kid. Got a dandy place in the mountains—just the place fer you. Sawmill. Easy graft. Great spot—fines' air an' scenery in the world, the kind of place where a bo can save his coin. The wages, now, ain't mebbe——"

"Me for there," said Hap. "How d'ye get to it?"

"Easy as walkin' round the corner. Fare an' fee, sixteen-fifty."

"Sixteen-fifty! Say, d'ye think if I had that much money I'd be sticking round this town? I'm stony."

Boredom, like a veil, once dimmed the light of the agent's eyes. He might have known there was a catch in it somewhere. "Fare an' fee, sixteen-fifty," he repeated in a tired voice and turned again to his newspaper. "Can't supply transportation to guys like you 'thout security. You'd duck on us."

Hap pondered a minute. "When's the next train?"

"Whaffor? Willin' to ride the blind? Fee 'thout the fare's two berries. Got it?"

"No. I said broke—not near broke. When's the next train?"

"One-thirty. Wha'dya wanta know fer?"

"Because I'm going out on it. This sawmill stunt looks good to me. See?"

The agent produced and critically examined the remains of a plug of "eatin'" tobacco. "The brake beams is free," he remarked dismissively.

"You said security," persisted Hap. "What would you call security?"

"Huh? Oh, a bunch of gov'ment bonds, 'r a block on Main Street. I ain't p'tic'lar."

"How about a suit case, a swell suit of togs, pair of kid shoes with cloth tops, and"—Hap gulped—"and a pair of baseball dogs?"

"Dandy. The hop's workin' fine this morning. I got a better yarn than that I wanna finish in this paper. Come round again when yuh wake up."

"Say, listen," pleaded Hap: "I ain't tryin' to string you. Have a heart and——"

He broke off, for the agent's feet were again functioning as a paper weight. The cuspidor once again had his long-delayed attention. He absordedly crinkled his newspaper. The interview had terminated.

"Dad-burn your unbelieving hide," burst out Hap, "I'll show you." He strode from the place, followed by the pitying glances of its frequenters. Their pity was not for the insolvency of his estate, but of his spirit. Willing to work in an up-country sawmill! The poor stiff, without spine enough to stand up on his hind legs like a man and demand his rights—it was him and the likes of him that kept the workers down!

The articles Hap had enumerated formed nearly the whole of the belongings he had left at the hotel where the Poets stayed when in town. They were now, he knew, on the road, but the club management had been responsible for his bill up to the time of his release, and there could lie no claim against his personal effects. He secured them without difficulty and presently displayed them for the amazed inspection of the employment agent, who obviously regarded them as questionably come by, but entertained no narrow prejudice against them on that account.

"Good enough?" inquired Hap, not without suppressed anxiety.

"Uh-huh. Not so tacky. Guess we c'n do biz. Lemme see—sixteen-fifty——"

"Nope. Eighteen. Dollar 'n' a half for eats."

"You got yer nerve, bo. All right, I'll see yer raise. 'S a deal at eighteen." He snapped the valise shut and hurled it behind his desk.

"How about a little receipt?" ventured Hap.

"Receipt me eye!" Had Hap actually asked for the organ mentioned he could not have occasioned a more intensely injured tone. "What's eatin' yuh? Ain't yuh gettin' the jack? Sure y'are; an' I'm gettin' the junk. Tha's the deal. I got no license

to run no hock shop. Me, I'm buyin' the stuff fer eighteen seeds. Come along yer first pay day with twenty-five an' I'll sell it yuh back. Thassa way I do biz. See?"

"Fair enough," agreed Hap, in no mood to balk at trifles.

Therefore at twenty-five minutes after one he occupied a seat in the day coach of the eastbound express, equipped with transportation to Nugget Falls, with the soiled card of the employment agent for presentation to the foreman of the sawmill there, with his shaving kit and some underclothing done up in a newspaper—and with nothing else.

He had found no time to return to the saloon of his fat friend, either to explain or to apologize for his hasty departure. His preparations had not only taken all his time, but had left him exhausted to a degree that surprised him no less than it depressed him. Anyway, he preferred to run away in this ungracious manner. He neither wanted to go any farther into the fat man's debt nor to argue with him about the wisdom of doing so. This was the better way out. As soon as he had saved up a few dollars he would send for his bill, and——

Not till then had it occurred to Hap that he knew neither the name of the place where he had recuperated nor that of its proprietor. He winced to think of the position in which that oversight apparently placed him, but soon dismissed the matter from his mind. It was too late to do anything about it now. The train was already in motion. Never mind. Some day he would square himself with that fat prince—or dip, whichever he was.

CHAPTER V.

Early next morning Hap awakened to the pressure of an ungentle hand on his shoulder.

"Next stop's yours," said a voice of authority.

Stiff, cramped, unrested, Hap roused himself with a start. He could not at once get his bearings. Then the cap of the brakeman bending over him, the stuffy air of the day coach, laden with contending odors of orange peel, of peanuts, of coal cinders, the wailing of a peevish infant, the yawn of a disturbed neighbor; the grind and clack of wheels beneath him, brought realization of his situation. He,

Hap Hylan, the sensational young pitcher, was on board a train, bound for some "jerk" called Nugget Falls, as a bundle stiff. His team had released him; a girl had turned him down. He was sure getting his bumps.

"All right, old man," he yawned.

The train must be far in the mountains by this time. He had dozed uneasily through the greater part of the journey, but his memory flashed back to reaches of tide flats with occasional pile-supported buildings on the outskirts of Vancoria, to vistas of level farming land, to a river at first broad and calm, but narrowing in the successive stages of his waking to turbulence and foam, to the memory of a heavily laboring engine, of slower progress, but steady ascent. The night had fitfully passed to a succession of unfamiliar sounds—of thunderings through tunnels and snowsheds, of the brief rush of waterfalls close to the car window, of the clanging of bells, of the roar and vibration of trains on an adjacent track. A tedious night of broken rest, of——

"Say, bo, wha'd I tell you? This is your stop. Bundle out. We're movin' in a minute."

A firm hand again pressed Hap's shoulder and indignant eyes glared at him beneath the visor of the brakeman's cap. The singsong of the wheels had ceased. The train had come to a standstill.

"Eh, what?" Hap sprang up guiltily. "Must 'a' dropped off again. This Nugget Falls?"

"Naw. Change here. Tha's your coach over on the siding. Nugget's forty-odd miles down the valley by rail and boat. Get a move on."

Hap sighed. Other days, other manners. No brakeman had ever addressed him thus when he had traveled with the team. Then he had been the chesty hero; now he was the chapfallen bo. Such truculence must be the portion of the working stiff. He rose submissively.

Noon came before he had covered the last of the "forty-odd" miles. If the divisional point at which he had changed for the south had depressed him with its tank-town dismalness, the ensuing train journey but made his heart sink deeper. A logged-off hill country, desolate with charred stumps and tangled second growths, is no prospect to cheer the spirit of a martyr proceeding to the scene of his torment.

The boat of the brakeman's tart direction

proved to be a tiny lake steamer hardly distinguishable from a tug. It had for mate and captain a rosy-skinned man of Sweden, for fireman-engineer a wire-haired Scot, for deck hand and purser a swarthy half-breed. Their communication was less even than the biblical yea, yea, and nay, nay; for the engine-room annunciator served all their conversational requirements. Hap was the boat's sole passenger. No tumbrel drawing near the guillotine ever bore a less debonair victim.

The progress of the vessel down the lake lay between beetling cliffs on the one hand and steep, but densely wooded, slopes on the other. No sign of a trail marked either shore. "Geel!" thought Hap, "three months on the rock pile would have this outjazzed a day's hike by aeroplane. Once in, nothing'll get you out but the price. I see where little Happy spends *this* summer."

A change of course around a jutting promontory at last revealed the end of the lake. Everywhere prevailed the same unbroken setting of forest, somber, primeval, except for a single splash of yellow, which was the town of Nugget Falls. A sawmill, its squatness unrelieved by either burner or smokestack, a lumber-laden pier built out on piles, a gaunt structure whose gable end, on closer approach, bore the name of Nugget Hotel, a store, three or four scattered, unpainted residences, the last of which had been forced high up the hill for lack of more level footing below—this was Nugget Falls.

Hap experienced no difficulty in finding the mill foreman, who had just issued from the hotel entrance and was on his way to the boat landing. "That's him," had grunted the deck hand, with indicative thumb, in reply to Hap's appeal for direction.

Plump, genial, mild-mannered, lavish with his chuckles, the foreman radiated such genuine good will that Hap, as soon as he was off the boat, felt lighter in mind at mere contact with him. He glanced briefly at the card which Hap offered him, then appraisingly at the boy himself. "Employment shark, huh? Never heard of that guy. They've got their nerve, those birds."

Then, with a reassuring chuckle: "But, between pals, what's a mere detail like that amount to? Work? Sure. Lemme see—twelve-thirty. Half an hour before the wheels turn. They'll fix you up for grub

at the boarding house along with the boat crew. Come on. You'll like our city."

He led the way back to the hotel. "That's all the old shack is, I don't mind telling you—the company boarding house. Used to call itself a hotel in the old days when it ran a bar. At that, there's worse chuck-and-flop joints than the old Nugget, take it from Jim Haney, that's been about a bit."

To the porch of the hotel were already issuing shirt-sleeved men busy with after-dinner implements of pipe, cigarette, or toothpick. The first of these, a large man of solid build, clean-shaven, lean-jawed, and deeply seamed of face, the foreman hailed:

"Hey, Dom, I got a partner for you."

Gravely occupied at the moment in thrusting, with knife-blade and thumb, a pruned segment of tobacco between his even teeth, the man called Dom preserved his perfect calm under the shock of this announcement.

"Report to Dom in the yard," the foreman instructed Hap, "after you've wrapped yourself round a square in the dining room."

One other preliminary remained for him to broach. "Prying into family secrets is the worst thing we do up here," he said, "but we find it handy to know what name a stranger chooses to go by while he sojourns with us."

"Hylan," said Hap, determined to sail under no false colors. "Hap Hylan."

"Hap? Short for what? Hapsburg? Habakkuk? Or"—with a chuckle—"just plain mishap?"

With a rush the whole contrast between past and present came over the youngster, making utterance difficult. "They used to know me," he confessed, subduing a threatened quaver, "as Happy."

Jim Haney read him with a keen glance of his twinkling eye. "Changed since your bereavement, haven't you?" he chuckled. "You look plain hungry to me. Go to it. Work and our mountain air'll soon fix you up."

The "yard" to which Hap repaired at one o'clock consisted of a strip of made ground, built up to the level of the mill floor with slabs and other mill waste, together with the single lumber-laden pier which ran at right angles to it. This was Dom's domain. Here, on either side of the tramway which ran its length, he assorted the output of the mill according to its dimensions and grade,

and tallied the whole with the solicitude of one born to far different fields of endeavor.

Hap was to have an early taste of the man's grim quality. Surprised to note that his hand, as it appeared against a piece of ship-lap, was abnormal, the fingers crooked, the joints enlarged, he impulsively asked: "Gosh, partner, where did you get a mitt like that?"

With a stern glance Dom challenged this familiarity. "I used to be a bank teller," he replied with careful emphasis. "Me fingers took cramps countin' the thousand-dollar bills."

"Sounds like a straight tip," admitted Hap, with his first grin for many days; "but—not wanting to get fresh, either—I had a hunch it was another kind of tip that manicured that fin the way it is."

Dom's mollified grunt accepted the explanation. "All right," he conceded, "if you've got to know, ask Jim Haney."

Asking Jim Haney proved an easy thing to do, for that evening the foreman of his own accord singled out his latest recruit for a heartening word. Affability, with that astute person, was truly innate; but it was more than that: it was a pose as well. To produce lumber was his problem; and to keep a sufficient number of men sufficiently contented to keep on producing lumber for him was the chief factor of that problem. His studied bonhomie was not altogether without an eye to results.

"Dom's mitt?" he laughed, in response to Hap's question. "It's one gnarly old specimen, ain't it? Sawmilling never gave him that bunch of fives, like it did mine." He held out a right hand from which two joints of the index finger were missing. "Baseball," he continued; "that's where Dom got his."

"So I guessed," said Hap. "How fast was he—bush league or big top?"

"Dominic Perry! Mean to say you never heard of Dom Perry?" The foreman's manner was that of a proud citizen showing off his town's most conspicuous feature. "No better backstop ever wore a mitt. Any time he was hitting under three hundred he was in a slump. And peg! They called him 'Old Gat' in his best days."

Dom Perry! Hap was no student of baseball history, but even he had heard of that famous catcher, the mainstay of the White Socks for one strenuous season. Bill Bard, who had once been his teammate, had a string of stories about him. "Dom

Perry!" the boy burst out. "What's he doing wallopin' lumber in a dump like this?"

Jim Haney looked pained. "Lookahere, young man," he reproved, "this here is my home town. I ain't standing for no slurs on it like 'dump.' Time you've lived in it a month you'll begin to see its potentialities, same's I do. It's got the water, the climate, the scenery. Minerals—the hills back of us is crawlin' with ores. As for industries—well, we've made a start, ain't we?" He waved his maimed hand affectionately at the mill. "What more had Frisco to start with?"

After this outburst he smiled again.

"But about friend Dom," he resumed, "Dom's weakness was the hard stuff. It drove him to the bushes, then to the bush. Me and him was school chums and townies back East. We've always kept in touch. Wherever I've got a gang, there's a job for old Dom. Up here, since prohibition, booze ain't so easy to get. This is a dry town. For Dom's sake it's going to stay dry. The man that totes a bottle round here'll find himself fired so quick he'll think he dreamed his job." The eye which he fixed on Hap with this pronouncement had lost all sign of its usual twinkle.

"Suits me," Hap assured him. "Me, I'm off the stuff. If that whole lake was hootch, I wouldn't even taste a fish that had swum in it."

"That's talkin' turkey." And Jim Haney chuckled again.

"Talking of ball," Hap modestly detained him, "I used to do a bit of 'pro' heaving myself. I've put it behind me, too, but me and Dom can do a bit of chinning about the game. It'll help pass the time."

"Sure, you can chin. Dom's one great little listener." On that, chuckling as though with especial relish, the foreman went.

Hap chose with judgment the moment to commence the "chinning" next day. He was laying sheathing on a half-built pile as Dom passed it up to him from the truck—doing it at last to Dom's satisfaction.

"Bill Bard's chances for copping the pennant in the Boundary League look jake this year," he casually remarked.

Dom transferred the prune-sized lump from his right cheek to his left and clamped his jaws tight. That was his sole gesture with his tobacco. He neither chewed on it nor spat—just kept it there tight and motionless in his cheek. A camp jape had

it that he even slept with it there. "Huh!" he replied, declining to commit himself.

"Got a pretty smooth bunch, Bill has. A trifle weak in the hurling department, but better than average, take 'em all round."

"So?" encouraged Dom.

"Crabbed old man-eater, Bill."

Dom looked up at him as at one who utters foolishness. "He's managin' a ball team, ain't he?" His air was that of one who has completely defended a maligned friend.

"Oh, I dunno about that. A man ought to run a ball team and still keep human, seems to me."

"Ever tried it?" asked Dom crushingly.

"Hardly, at my age," admitted Hap modestly. "Still, I ain't all green. I've done a bit of flinging myself."

"Have, eh?" Dom looked the piece in his hands over carefully for knots. "Sand-lot stuff?"

"Not me. No semipro standing for this bird, either. Straight professional."

"Think I've seen yer name," admitted Dom. "I look at the dope sometimes in the Coast papers. Worked for Bill, didn't you?"

"A while," confessed Hap. He had not expected to be identified so readily in this remote hamlet. "I've cut it all out, though."

"Have, eh?" Dom's scrutiny of another piece revealed a shake, and he rejected it for the cull pile. "How long since they released you?"

"Oh—er—ah—not long—couple o' weeks or so. I—ah—how'd you know?"

"'S a cinch a kid pitcher ain't droppin' ball till it drops him. Who cut you loose—Bill?"

"Yah, the old hamstringer. He sure played me low-down—me that had hung up a record for his old league, whiffing sixteen in one game. Last time I worked for him I won my own game—clutched out a homer in the ninth and chased in three ahead of me. Then he put the skids under me, dad gash his ugly heart!" Hap dropped a board into place with quite unnecessary violence. "If ever a ball player was done dirt, you're lookin' at him."

For this outburst Dom had no direct expression of either sympathy or dissent. "Why'n't you sign up somewhere else and show your goods?"

Hap threw up his hands and let them fall to his thighs. "I'm through. I took a few

days to think it over, and I made up my mind to—to chuck the whole works."

"Bad as that?" murmured Dom thoughtfully. Then, as though to himself, "'S a rotten game."

This was a throw that drew Hap off his base. "Aw, the old game's all right," he grandly assured the veteran. "I'm all for the game. It's the mugs it gets to run it that I'm sore on."

Dom spoke no word for a space of minutes, in the course of which they moved on to the V-joint pile. Then, when he had resumed the motions of passing up lumber to Hap, "What seemed to be the trouble between you and the girl?" he very casually inquired.

"Wha—what's that?" stammered Hap, amazed. "What in tunket do *you* know about the girl?"

"Not a thing," admitted Dom calmly.

"Well, then——" Hap tried to brazen it out.

"Kid ball players don't hit for the woods the first time they lose a berth. Wha'd she turn you down for?"

Hap reddened. "Well—oh—er—she didn't exactly say."

"All her fault, of course?" pursued Dom remorselessly.

"No-o. I—I guess I wouldn't say that." Hap's self-righteousness had survived in full force as between himself and Bill, but his days of brooding had broken down the last fragment of it as a defense against Rosy Carlin.

As a pastime the "chinning" he had looked forward to was making anything but smooth progress. He gave rein to thoughts at once melancholy and pleasurable; melancholy in that they concerned his present bereft condition, both melancholy and pleasurable in that they dwelt on Rosy. Her frank, boy-like laugh, her fresh, young cheeks whose color heightened so readily, the little wisp of unruly brown hair that curled in a provocative defiance all its own at her temple, her sure understanding of a fellow's point of view—all these had never been so utterly desirable as now when he had put a world between himself and them. One dandy little girl, he'd say!

Dom's hoarse voice disturbed his reverie: "This skirt of yours, what's she like? She the right sort?"

Hap's eyes blazed. "Wha'd'ye mean—right sort? Say, Rosy Carlin's the fin——"

He caught himself up in sudden realization that he had been trapped. In deep confusion he stooped to fit a board into its place with greater nicety. "Ferget it," he blurted out before he ventured to stand erect again.

Dom offered no comment. With deliberate routine movements he passed up the last of the half load of V-joint. "That's the lot," he remarked; but the lump in his cheek showed white, as though it required some muscular pressure to maintain his usual severity of countenance.

That evening he wrote a letter and asked Jim Haney, the keeper of his purse, for money to inclose in it. Being a proud man, unwilling to advertise his present whereabouts to the curious who might have known him by reputation in better days, he also induced his friend to sign it.

CHAPTER VI.

Jim Haney's prophecy had early and complete fulfilment; work and mountain air—to give no credit to youth and unimpaired vitality—did soon "fix up" Hap. In the intervals of his rather agreeable labor he began to do gratuitous shuffles and dance steps; he would exert his strength quite needlessly in lifting weights; and in his spare time he betook himself to the shore of the lake, where he zealously threw stones at any mark that offered, from a swimming mallard to the resinous knot in a fir tree.

The morning of his first Sunday he early inspected the mill's machinery and beguiled the ensuing hours by a walk to the site of the cascade from which the town took its name. On the hotel porch after dinner a happy thought cut short the second of his yawns.

"I know a stunt," he announced blithely: "I'll climb this old mountain. That'll help pass the time."

Incredulous glances made quick appraisal of his gravity. He was plainly in earnest. At once then his plan had hearty and unanimous approval. Jim Haney chuckled his intense delight.

"That's a thing," he encouraged, "I've many a time wanted to do myself, but never seemed to find time to get round to it."

"Then come along now," challenged Hap.

"I'd like nothing better; but—er—today's a busy day with me. I'm away behind with the stock records. Big Jess, though"—he indicated the lounging sawyer—"would

be better for stretching his long legs. What say, Jess?"

Jess professed keen pleasure in the prospect. If there was one thing he doted on more than another, that thing was mountain climbing. Lately, though, he had been suffering from corns, which absolutely demanded rest and quiet. Milt, now—so he passed the buck to the edger—would no doubt be glad to get some needed exercise.

Milt, thus cornered, crossed his huge feet on the porch rail and sought escape in a bolder flight of fancy. He'd been up that hill so often lately, he drawled, that the trip had lost all novelty for him. It was a dandy jaunt, and all that—just the thing for a Sunday stroll. Personally, however, he had got rather fed up with it. He rather opined he'd sit round to-day and get rested.

Others, recognizing their master in mendacity, took refuge in the same excuse. They very willingly, to Hap's question, "How's the going?" described the route. You followed the power pipeline to the dam up on the first level, circled round the pond till you came to the path, then went straight on. You couldn't miss it. But if you did, you had only to keep on going up. You'd be bound to come out right that way. It was very simple.

"Fine," Hap thanked them. "Nobody game to come along? Then here's where I start."

"Let me know what you think of the view from the top," begged Jim Haney, who had not yet betaken him to his stock records.

"I'll do that little thing," promised Hap cheerfully.

"What time d'ye figure on being back?"

"Oh, I ought to make it in time for supper, don't you think?"

"Easy; no trouble at all," a chorus assured the youngster. In which cheerful prospect he set cocksurely out.

Jim Haney watched him disappear, then settled back comfortably in his chair. "There's a kid," he said, "with ideas. If only he's got the staying power, he'll climb a ways."

"I been wondering," mused Dom. It was his only word throughout the incident.

As far as the dam, Hap found everything according to description. Beyond it, nothing came true to his preconceptions except that he kept on going up. The unrelieved

ascent through the pathless woods agreeably tested his wind, started the perspiration. The altitude—or something—gave him wings. He whistled, sang discordantly, shouted.

He noted presently that the trees grew more scattering and were stunted. Was he already approaching timber line? He began to encounter boulders and outcroppings of rock. Climbing steadily, he soon found himself scaling a rocky eminence whose top, as he glimpsed it through the diminishing foliage, stood bare and rugged.

At last he stood on its summit. A moment he stared at the prospect, then dropped to the rock and rolled about in a paroxysm of laughter. With no eye to observe him, no ear to hear his shouts, he vented his derisive merriment till his rib muscles ached. To the full he enjoyed his joke; and the joke was on himself.

Beneath him lay a valley, broad, densely wooded, hemmed on the farther side by a ridge even higher than that under his feet. Beyond rose another ridge, with, presumably, a second valley between. Far beyond that, the slopes of the mountain proper began to tower. Given a long summer day, a haversack of food—yes, and a guide—Hap estimated that he could hope to reach the real base of that uprearing mass by nightfall. So deceptive, as seen from below, had been the apparently continuous slope which he had thought to scale as a mere appetizer for supper.

Hap had his laugh out, then turned lazily on his arm. A while he lay in the warm June sunshine, tempered by the altitude, and mused. Here was he, Hap Hylan, once known as a smart guy among smart guys, now the butt and sport of rubes and hicks. The curious thing was that he rather liked them for their brand of humor. He gave them credit: they had something on the ball that sometimes had him guessing. In future he'd look their stuff over. He might even serve them up a few slants of his own.

Perhaps, after all, he was going to have a good time in this mill village. Anyway, he had to stick till September at the earliest. And when finally he got out—what then? Would he ever meet Rosy again? Whenever his thoughts got to rambling now, they fetched, up sooner or later with her. She had turned him down hard, the little spitfire. No, he mustn't think of her like that. It had cost her a headache to turn him down

He must never forget that. She was no flirt. If he should work and save, keep himself in good shape, and turn up some day a new man, steady as a rock, wonder would she give him another chance?

He could never remain still when his musings came to this stage. He simply had to be active with something, if only to go down to the lake and chuck stones about. Now he climbed down from his crag and struck off again through the woods. He had to put in the time until supper.

From time to time he had glimpses of the mountaintop. He did not know its name—doubted if it had one. Its mass stood off there cold, aloof, distant, not to be easily scaled. To conquer it would take preparation, planning endurance, purpose.

The same might be true of other ambitions. Perhaps he had quit too easily when he had cut and run, back there in Vancoria. You couldn't get far in anything if you didn't stick. Now if he were to make up his mind to a long, strong, uphill pull, to keep one ambition in front of him in spite of everything that might come between—like that mountaintop that was sometimes hidden but always there—if a fellow could get right down to some scheme like that, would he stand a chance to win back to where a girl like Rosy might consent to see him again some other evening? Anyway, it was something to think about. So strolling, so reflecting, he spent the hours till the shadows confirmed his appetite in regard to supper time's having arrived.

The men had taken their places at the long table before Hap joined them. He received a warm, almost a fond, welcome, as befits one who comes bearing promise of entertainment. Had he found the path all right? He certainly had, Hap assured them, pipe line, pond, path—everything just as they had said. Had the going been smooth? Sure; like hitting a pike. He could have tracked his way by Milt's footmarks, they covered so much ground; which eliminated Milt from the eager ranks of the questioners. And the view from the top? Perfectly grand. He had stood on the summit and counted no less than fifty-three separate peaks—all snow-capped, all far beneath him. He wouldn't have missed it, if it had been twice as far.

A thoughtful, even a respectful, silence fell on the table. Hap found himself the only speaker. He firmly announced his in-

tention to make the trip again the following Sunday. The only flaw in his enjoyment to-day had been the lack of good company. Nobody could possibly see a view like that too often. He knew he could point out to Milt a hundred beauties he had missed on his many previous visits. And as for the stock records, he himself would be glad to help out with them evenings, if necessary, to bring them up to the minute. How about it? Was it a date?

Every man except the two victims applauded loudly, would hear of no refusal. Hap had begun to find his batting eye.

CHAPTER VII.

But Hap was to have no further need to resort to mountain climbing as an outlet for his exuberant energy. A more welcome expedient was in preparation for him. The following Wednesday afternoon Dom commandeered his assistance in boarding up the shore end of the alley which ran between the piles of lumber on the pier.

"What's the bright idea," asked Hap in the course of the work, "of closing the old street to traffic?"

Dom straightened up from his labor. "I got a little scheme," he explained. "Whasay you an' me puts our heads together an' win this girl of yours?"

"Girl of mine! Wha'd ye mean—win her?"

"Might do it. Dan Cupid—that's my middle name. Never notice my wings?"

"Naw; but I've felt your arrows, you old mule skinner. But honest, Dom, wha'd ye mean—win her? You think I'd ever stand a chance with a girl like her?"

"G'wan, young feller. I'm a ball coach. The woman game's over my head. I'll say one thing, though: I never heard of a dame lookin' the other way just because the guy that had took a shine to her happened to be makin' good."

"Which sure ain't me," Hap bitterly laughed.

"Tha's where my scheme comes in. Notice that parcel came off the boat fer me at noon?"

"Uh-huh. Suit of clothes, I suppose, or something. Some party on somewheres? Going to doll up for it?"

"'Doll up' is right. That parcel was a big mitt and a couple of league balls I sent out for last week."

Hap studied this information a moment to find the catch in it—a habit he had formed since his experience of Sunday. Then he burst into a loud "Hoopla! Hooroo!" and executed a complicated series of steps. "Get you now," he chortled. "This blind alley is where we try them out. Bright idea; it's the only level spot in the town. Gimme your old foot rule and that chunk of blue pencil."

"What for?"

"To lay out a home plate on the planks here, exact size. Oh, my aunt! Won't there be doings at the crossroads this eve?"

"Maybe there will," agreed Dom grimly.

After supper, with the long June evening ahead of them, they got to work. Jim Haney, the only one yet in their confidence, soon joined them. Jim had been a fan in his day, and still fancied his own opinion on the merits of great players he had seen. Hap, with a ball once more in his hands, ran some risk of throwing his arm out for a beginning. He could hardly restrain himself long enough to warm up. Dom, a fresh lump settled tight in his cheek, looked almost grimmer than usual. With him this was no sport: it was business.

"Let's have a look at your fast one," he said, when Hap had sufficiently limbered his muscles.

Like a taut spring released, Hap uncoiled himself from his windup, his wrist pliant as the lash of a whip. The ball whizzed in its flight, broke with dazzling suddenness near the plate, met the waiting glove with the impact that only exceptional speed can impart.

"Gee whiz!" gasped Jim, open-mouthed.

"Some little old hop, eh?" the boy exulted, wild with the joy of again exerting his old power.

Dom's grunt was noncommittal. "You got something there, kid," he admitted, "when you get acquainted with it."

"Acquainted?" The word flicked Hap's pride. "Watch me. I'll buzz you six brothers to it in a row—all over." At the conclusion of this feat, "Wha'd I tell you?" he boasted.

"You said it," grunted Dom; "all over. I want 'em over one corner. Now your curve."

With slightly diminished speed came the next ball, but with a break, sharp, wide, late in starting. "Some mean little hook,

"I don't think," crowed Hap, showing his teeth in his winner's grin.

"Gee-ee whiz-z!" marveled Jim again.

Dom returned the ball with the air of one suspending judgment. "Now the rest of your bag of tricks," he ordered. "Anything you like."

"Huh? Rest of 'em?" Hap's grin vanished. "Ain't that enough—a hop, a hook, a straight one to mix in, and all with smoke to beat a prairie fire?"

"No slow ball?" questioned Dom hopefully.

"Slow ball!" Hap scoffed. "I leave that to the old has-beens that've got nothing else—Lefty Carder, and his sort."

Dom drew off his glove and went to sit beside Jim.

"Whassa matter?" complained Hap. "You ain't had enough, surely? Me, I'm hardly warm yet."

"I most gen'rally aim to sit down when I'm tired," Dom informed him. "This hop, hook, and smoke—satisfied with that, are yuh?"

"That's the stuff I hung up a league record with. Sixteen——"

Dom silenced him with upraised palm and averted ear. "Ferget it! Big Six himself couldn't get by with no more'n that. No slow ball, no cross fire, no spitter, not even a floater!"

"How about Grover Cleveland Alexander?" argued the stubborn youngster. "They say he only uses——"

"Can it. Can that 'they say' stuff. Let's switch to something we can savvy." Dom transferred his lump from cheek to cheek, while Hap fumed. "One day last month I was buyin' a plug from Harry in the store up here while one of these traveler guys was in there tryin' to sell him a bill of goods. Harry had just gone up in the air over the new price of something he was out of—crocks, or something. 'Now, looka here,' argued the drummer; 'you ain't fixin' to go outa business, are you?' 'Not on your life,' says Harry. 'Then listen here,' says he; 'the price I'm quotin' you's the goin' price to-day. You an' me, we don't fix prices to suit ourselves, nor nothing else much. We ain't on that end of the game. Others lead, we follow. We got to do business the way business is done, or stop doin' business.' Wasn't he right?" Dom aimed the question direct at Hap.

"Sure," Hap impatiently agreed. "Anybody could see that."

Dom lifted an eyebrow. "Could, eh?"

"Sure. But what's the matter with another little go at the old pill? Feel rested?"

"Naw," drawled Dom. "Tireder'n ever."

"Funny thing. Me, I'm good for a straight hour of it."

"Then why not take it, me boy?"

"What doing? If you ain't going to work, what can I do?"

"Think. Pitchin' that gets by is mostly thinkin'. Seems like you've had pointers enough already for an hour's bean work."

"Oh, all right," snapped Hap. He was deeply disappointed and offended. He turned a very huffy shoulder indeed and strode away.

"How's he shape up?" inquired the good-natured Haney, smoothing matters. "Think you can do something with him, Dom?"

"I'd durn well like to." There was a glint in Dom's eye. "I'd durn well like to, but there's a law in this country against maimin' an' bruisin'."

"Ain't you just a little stiff with him? I thought he was a wonder. He sure looks like Walter*Johnson to me."

"Yeh," admitted Dom, though grudgingly; "there's some resemblance; they're both human beings."

Jim chuckled his appreciation of this cynicism, but stuck to his protest. "He's only a kid, you know. What's the use breakin' his heart right at the send-off?"

The big catcher laid his gnarled hand on his friend's shoulder. "Jimmy," said he, "your game's sawmillin'—that, an' bein' a prince. Now dry up, darn you, and listen. Pitchin' that gets by these days is nine-tenths head and the rest arm. That kid's got the wrong mixture. At nineteen or so, he's got nine parts arm and the rest head. He may be all head at forty, but then he'll have no arm. What we got to do is put the years into him without him livin' them. That's no picnic, take it from me that's broke in more pitchers than you've seen band saws. Packin' twenty years into two months—that's the most we'll be able to hold him here—takes a heavy hand. Treat 'em rough's my motto."

"You're the doctor, Dom," Jim Haney conceded. "Every good man gets his own results in his own way. You know my motto, though: 'All vinegar an' no oil scraps the salad.'"

True to his motto, the foreman seized a moment next morning when Dom was frowning over his tally board in the yard and Hap had rolled the emptied truck back to the mill. "How's the arm to-day?" he genially inquired.

"Limber as a cat's tail," bragged Hap, with demonstrations.

"I've seen some classy pitching in my day, boy, but I'll say I never saw smoke to beat yours."

Hap's grin blossomed readily to this flattery. "'S what they all say."

"Dom, he took a shine to it, too."

"Then why'n't he say so, the old bear cat?"

"Well now, son, I'd allow for Dom, if I was you. Baseball, with Dom, ain't no game—it's his religion. He knows what the best is, and he just can't stand for nothing short of that. He's easy humored, though. A young man of parts like you that did that and learned to listen might pick up a thing or two, I'd say."

"Yeh; might, if he'd talk ball and forget the price of crocks."

Jim had a subdued chuckle for this. "I'd say you hadn't put in your whole hour thinkin', as he recommended."

"I did, too—thinkin' what a sorehead he is."

"I'd give him another trial if I was you. Maybe he's got something on the ball that you ain't quite figured out yet."

"You won't need to coax me. Any guy that's got a ball and a glove'll need a gun to keep little Happy away."

CHAPTER VIII.

Another trial was held that evening, but Dom's perversity nearly wrecked its success at the start. After the boy had lobbed him a few balls he sharply asked:

"What you figger you're doin'?"

"Why, warming up, of course."

"Yeh; but warmin' up what?"

Hap swung his arm impatiently. "The old soup bone, I guess."

"Well, what for?"

They had spectators this evening, and Hap's vanity rebelled at this public catechizing. A wink from Jim Haney saved him. This was a place to make allowance for Dom. "Oh, so a guy can work, I suppose," he answered wearily.

"You said it—so's his bean can work.

The arm's only gettin' ready to take orders. It's a cinch no arm, warm or cold, won't ever deliver more'n what's in the bean. My song is we wanna warm the old bean up. Le's go."

The work-out proceeded. For a time Hap had no chance to dazzle the onlookers. Dom called repeatedly for a slow ball. His conditions were hard. He wanted it over the corner; wanted it knee-high, shoulder-high; wanted it slower—so slow that he could read the trade-mark on the ball; wanted it—impossible exaction—with the same delivery as the fast one.

"How's a guy ever going to do a stunt like that?" complained Hap.

"Wrist. Handle your wrist. Don't whip it. Bluff—and watch yer wrist. Le's go."

Hap tried again. "Gee!" he objected, "he'd murder that one."

"Not when he's set for your fast one. You got to outguess him. Watch yer wrist. Le's go."

After several earnest, but still awkward efforts Hap had his opportunity.

"Now," Dom relieved him, "show yer own goods."

"Fast one?"

"Anything. Le's go."

Hap shot one over and thrilled to the gasp of admiration its flashing speed produced. Then, "Curve," he warned.

"Anything. Le's go."

"Don't you want to know what's comin'?"

"Do know. I get yer wireless. No good batter would have to outguess you. He'd just read you—like print."

"How d'ye mean—read?"

"Son, you got just two different slants—good ones, too, when you an' them gits acquainted. An' you got two different deliveries—one fer each. Readin'? It's only spellin'—like A, B—without the C."

"'Tis, eh? Then the Boundary League batters must be bum spellers. They sometimes was lucky, but I never caught any of them reading me."

"That's why they're in the Boundary League."

"Maybe. But I don't get you. Show me."

Taking the ball Dom illustrated the little unconscious mannerisms—the grip of the ball, the angle of the wrist—which betrayed to his practiced eye the pitcher's intentions.

Hap watched him, incredulous. "Do I do that? Try me again."

They continued to practice. At last Dom, with his first indication of uncertainty, merely blocked a ball and failed to hold it. "Guessed you wrong that time," he admitted. "You're gettin' the idea."

Fired with enthusiasm, Hap wanted to keep on. "Bet I outguess you two out of five," he challenged.

"Nope. You got the idea. 'S enough. Practice thinkin' about it. Now le's mix them. Try a floater."

The floater, as the stock resource of slow or failing pitchers, Hap had always scorned. "Nothing more'n an old-fashioned round-house out," he used to sneer. Now, reminded by Jim Haney's wink that this was another place to make allowance, he set himself to meet Dom's exacting demands. He must get some rise on the ball, get it close to the batter's wrist, get it to curve across the line of his swing.

"If you're lookin' fer tips, kid, here's one. It's the biggest thing you'll ever get from me. It's this: A baseball bat ain't so thick as it is long. That goes for every slant, fast or slow."

"Burn 'em up. That's my motto," said the impatient Hap.

"Hot stuff while it lasts, kid; only it's like tobogganin'—it don't last. Didn't Bill Bard ever call for a slow one?"

At the mention of his enemy Hap bristled. "That old grouch? Sure. 'Let 'em hit. Save your arm. Keep your speed for the pinchers. Let George, the fielder, do it.' He was always gassing. Who listens to him?"

Dom drew off his glove.

"Whassa matter?" protested Hap. "Not tired?"

"Dead tired. I feel like if I had a platform, I could make a speech." With his glove under his elbow Dom moved over to the lumber pile on which Jim Haney sat. "This Bill Bard's a man I first met in fast company. He was no world-beater, but a second sacker in that class had to have something. Bill had his in his bean. That's why he's still managin' a ball team. What he wants is to pull the coin; an' to do that he needs a winnin' team. His job is to pick an' hold the men that can deliver most goods the most days. He can't afford to carry no grouch, nor no groucher. In organized ball a grouch gets you nowhere except outside.

"Get that right; a sore player's a losin'

player, just as a hot pug is due fer a cold knock-out. Control? Bah! That don't mean control of the leather only. It means tongue, temper, swelled head. It means keepin' the old bean workin'; gettin' your mind right. The player that can't take his callings can't stick in any class of ball; for, deserve 'em or not, he's bound to get 'em. That's 'pro' ball. Move over, Jim," and Dom seated himself beside his friend.

"Well, for a man without a platform," chuckled the admiring foreman, "that's what I call some speech. The main idea"—he looked knowingly at Hap—"seems to be that you either do business the way business is done, or stop doing business."

It was still over Hap's head. "'S all right," he defended himself, "but you don't know Bill Bard. Wait till you've been let out, like me. Then you'll see red."

"Kid," said Dom, pointing a crooked forefinger, "the last man to let me out of a ball club—no Boundary League club it was, either—was Bill Bard. D'ye hear me squealin'? Me seein' my finish, you gettin' yer start, if we'd had the old control, if we'd had enough of the right goods to sell, Bill would be payin' us the price to-day. Now if you want to get anywhere in this man's game, you drop the grouch. Whasay? Is it a deal?"

"That's askin' something," Hap demurred. "I'm no last-ditch hater; but Bill? Eat out of his hand? Darn him, that'll take some doing."

"'S your cake; eat it or leave it," Dom dismissed the subject. "All depends on yer notion of control."

Jim added a helping touch. "Seems to be something in that thing of gettin' your mind right. It works out well in the mill business."

"Every time," agreed Dom. "'S no such thing as control without it."

As Hap began to improve in steadiness and to show some mastery of his new effects, the slow ball and the floater, Dom gradually opened up new volumes of pitching lore to him. He would coach him in mixing them, in changing pace, in putting them, as he said, "where they hate 'em." He initiated him into all the tricky arts of deceiving and outguessing the batter. He insisted on a mastery of the spitter, not as a stand-by, but for occasional use; and especially to bluff with.

Sometimes Jim Haney, not very sure of

his life, but game, would stand at the plate to be pitched to. How to work the various types of batter, what to serve to the over-eager one, what to the slow thinker, what to the fool one with the quick eye and iron nerve—all with the aim of playing to their weakness, of making them pop up or hit to the fielders—these formed the basis of work-outs endlessly repeated.

In his hours of labor in the lumber yard Hap was always eager to talk ball. So long as his side of the conversation continued to run to assertions of opinion, to recitals of his triumphs, to crass boastings, Dom confined his replies, except for an occasional thrust at the boy's colossal self-sufficiency, to grunts or monosyllables.

Under all this grueling a change began to work in the youngster. He grew less assertive. He began to make allowance for Dom, not at the prompting of Jim Haney's wink, but from a new conception of his own shortcomings and from a desire to learn. Frequently, glimpsing the possibilities of some fresh hint, he would ask for further help.

"S enough. You got the idea," Dom would break off. "Work it out fer yerself. Score with it off yer own bat." No cod-dler was Dom.

One morning, standing under the shed where moldings and the finer products of the mill were racked, the two waited for a sudden July downpour to spend its force. Hap gazed out thoughtfully and watched the spattering drops collecting into rills.

"I been wondering," he mused, "how long it took Harry, the storekeeper, to fall into line and do business the way business is done."

Dom gave him a keen glance and controlled a grin. "Oh, not long, I guess. He's a smart guy."

"Some folks is naturally quicker'n others."

"S a fact; but them that learns slow often learns sure."

"There's that comfort. Here's one guy ought to be mighty sure some day, then."

In silence they waited for the abating storm to pass. As the sun broke through and lighted up a hilltop in the rear of the retreating cloud, they stepped forth to resume their tasks. "Dunno," offered Dom thoughtfully, "but it begins to look like we'd cop off the girl yet, me an' you."

"You and me is right," Hap told him feelingly, "if we do it."

That evening the big catcher again employed his stiff fingers in the labor of composition—no very difficult task for him who was too direct to write otherwise than as he talked. His letter ran:

DEAR BILL: In case you don't recognize my fist this is Dom Perry talking. I'm running true to form, signed up fer me natural in the last bush a has-been can hit. I'm sawmilling right where they cut the tall stuff. Anyhow I'm playing them safe. What I want to say is I got a kid pitcher here says he worked fer you last spring. Name is Hylan. Now this bird he is broke and too stuck on himself to write to his friends, so I got him where he can't jump to no outlaw league. He can't break away before August nohow. You know the kid. He's got an arm in a millyun and a head like every other one. But I only had "Blat" Hornsby a month and it's ball history what I done with him. Well, in two months I can mebbe do even better with this one. Anyhow, I'm working on him and I'll say he's learning to stand the gaff even if he ain't no second Three-fingered Brown. If you find yourself in a hole for a pitcher next month I want you should keep this boy in mind. He might be pretty good by that time. You don't need to put it in the papers that you heard from me.

Bill must have been on the road with the Poets, for nearly two weeks passed before his reply was in Dom's hands. It wasted no ink, and ran:

DEAR DOM: Glad to hear from you. I often wondered where that fool kid went. Last I heard of him he was on a rip-roaring jag. He won his last game with me on the biggest fluke I ever saw in baseball, and then wanted to grab all the credit himself. That, and a few other things, let him out with me. Maybe you can tame him. I couldn't—not working against the bright lights. I'm fixed for pitchers just now, but let me know how he shapes. We are out in front a few games and look like copping in September. If I need help I'll holler.

CHAPTER IX.

The last day of July arrived without a definite "holler" from Bill. He did, though, send one brief inquiry. It asked:

How's that kid shaping up now? My short-stop has just broke his ankle and my first-string pitcher is showing signs of cracking. If I can't manage to give him a rest I may be in a hole any day. How do I get a wire to you in that neck of the woods?

Dom and Jim put their heads together over this, but still allowed Hap to have no inkling of their conspiracy. Even when the boy sent to the employment agent for his

suit case they did not deter him with any hint that he himself might be called back any day. They did not wish to upset his training nor to excite him with any prospect that might not come true.

Jim was all for sending to Bill Bard a warm account of Hap's later progress, especially in headwork, but Dom overruled him. He wrote to Bill Bard:

The kid's arm ain't gone back none and he begins to learn to save it. He's liable any time now to use his head fer more than braggin' with. You mite probably find him useful. Wire me here, in care of the mill. The captain of the boat will bring it in.

He would go no further than this in praise of his pupil.

In the days that ensued Dom grew more and more restive. Regularly after the boat's arrival he put himself in the way of the captain in the hope of receiving a message. With each disappointment his temper became more sullen, his manner of speech more abrupt. The lump in his cheek stood out a constant white these days, as though his jaws were pressed tight in the tension of some fierce battle with himself.

During the daily work-outs with Hap he carried to extremes his policy of treating 'em rough. In a hundred ways as unexpected as they were exasperating, he flayed the boy's pride, jarred his self-control. He might almost have been suspected of trying to pick a quarrel with his pupil, to break with him; but his coaching never slackened from its high standards, nor omitted any means to fit the young pitcher for the fastest company. Yet at times so caustic was his criticism, so intolerable were his sneers, that it took all Jim Haney's arts of conciliation to keep the youth in hand.

"Ain't you on to his little game?" he would ask, cornering Hap after a specially trying practice. "Remember how he was always talking control—gettin' the mind right?"

"He don't give me much chance to forget it."

"Well, now he's tryin' you out, seein' how much your control's good for. He's stackin' you up against all the hard knocks and mortifications of the game, tryin' to get you sore. His play is to put you up in the air, like a bunch of hostile rooters, or a naggin' captain, or an infield that boots every second chance. It's a great system, lookin' at it from that angle."

"It's pure hell," groaned the boy. "Bill Bard at his worst wasn't a marker to him. If it wasn't for looking like a cheap sport, I'd—I'd——"

He cast a longing glance across the lake, like a prisoner eying his one avenue of escape.

"No you wouldn't, son; not yet," soothed the foreman. "Cut and run? Not you. You got too much at stake. Dom's the opportunity of a lifetime for you. A youngster like you, with fifteen years ahead of him in high-class ball—that's what I call some prospect. It's a business career—big business, if you get to the top."

Hap kept silent, although no longer with any trace of rebellion.

"Why," pursued Jim Haney, "with what you can save you'll be a made man at thirty-five, the age when most men is no more'n fairly started. And it ain't only baseball with you, if I dope it out right. You got to win once before you stand to win twice. Ain't that right?" He broke into his happy chuckle. Jim Haney couldn't keep serious for long. "It's like mountain climbing—more to it than meets the eye. Eh, bud?" and he dug Hap not ungently in the ribs.

But for all his loyalty to Dom, the foreman in his shrewdness knew better the true cause of the big fellow's peevishness. He said no direct word to Dom, but himself exercised toward him all the forbearance and tact for which he pleaded in Hap, leaving to time the outcome. He knew he would not have long to wait for the crisis.

The days of early August descended in heat and stillness on the valley. From a burnished concavity of sky the sun aimed down its rays as into a bowl from whose sides they glanced to meet in augmentation at the bottom. The lake, a polished mirror, reflected heat and gave off a smother of humidity as well. In knot and shake of the sawn lumber the pitch ran fluid like sap in a live tree, surcharging the air with pungent smells. Heat waves shimmered over every sun-baked surface. A planned board repelled the unwary hand that touched it, like hot iron.

On such an afternoon Dom's temper snapped. Handling some pieces of two-by-four with less than his usual care, he let one fall on his toe. A month before, the blow would have drawn from him a grunt, or at most a fervent damn. Now its effect was that of a spark to tinder. He seized

the offending piece and hurled it high over the piled lumber to fall with a vengeful splash into the lake. After it he sent an avalanche of invective that should have shriveled the sap in its minutest cell. Then taking in turn the mill, the town, the valley, the mountains, he bestowed on them his compliments in language of blistering intensity.

The substance of his remarks was that for climate, for society, for drinking facilities, for ease of escape, for general desirability as a place of residence, Hades had this "jerk" looking like the black deuce in a red bobtail.

Hap listened to this outburst in that titillating state of mixed feelings with which the young are apt to regard the physical mishaps of others. He nearly strangled in his desire to appear sympathetic; but Dom's fervent climax, directed at the impervious hills, was too much for him. He burst into a guffaw. Then he howled. He shrieked. He threw himself to the hot surface of the pile he had been building and rolled in ecstasy. In one packed minute he made up for all his hours of iron restraint, of hard-won control. He let himself go.

As soon as he was able, he drew himself to the edge of the pile and looked down. Below, Dom stood rigid in a portentous silence. The lump, more egglike than ever in whiteness and contour, stood out on his tense cheek. In his eye glared a baleful light that silenced the boy into stuttering gurgles, like the spent mutterings of a storm that has passed.

"Kid," he hoarsely pleaded, "mother's yellow-haired pet, do me one last favor: stay right where y'are. Don't budge off that pile till I'm safe away from here. The lumber round here's mostly A1 clear, an' I'd hate to see it all splattered up with yer gore!" With the air of one putting himself under a godlike restraint he turned on his heel and made off with haughty strides.

"Aw, hold on, Dom," stuttered Hap, sobering with remorse, "I didn't mean—"

Dom cut him short with one relentless valediction: "You kin go to blazes and beyond!"

For a time Hap obeyed instructions—he remained on the pile. At intervals the head saw boomed, the band saw whined on a pitch more acute, the trimmers twanged their brief waspish note, while for ground bass the planer blatted its harsh monotone. The

dust of their operation dimmed the interior of the mill, hung in a faint haze about it. In lulls of the machinery the purling of the tail race blended drowsily with the more distant murmur of the falls.

Hap had things to think about. What did Dom's outburst mean? Was the old bear cat going out, chucking the job? That *would* queer the combination. He would miss old Dom, miss his grouch, miss his deep, if surly, wisdom, miss his expert training and advice. Why did the old boy do it, giving his time and passing on his experience to a raw greeny? What was there in it for him? Not a thing. With nothing to gain, he gave the best he had, like a king turning over his realm to a pauper.

Jim Haney, too—what a good scout he had been! Why did he do it? Self-interest did not explain it, for it was to his advantage to keep Hap as long as possible a day laborer. Yet he had been as keen to fit him for success in the outside world as Dom himself. Come to know them, these old heads had more in them than he used to give them credit for. A fellow could learn from them. Turning down their advice the way he had turned down old man Carlin's—bull-headed stuff like that got a guy nowhere. That old boy had had something on the ball, too; yes, and so had Bill Bard.

Well, what had become of Dom? Apparently he did not intend to come back. Hap climbed down from the pile and went on with the work as well as he could alone. He heaved a number of the pieces onto the pile, then scrambled up again and straightened them out.

He was thus employed when from the mill Jim Haney's eye noted his unusual procedure. The foreman strolled out to inquire, with feigned indifference, "Dom not about?"

"Not just lately. He went off a spell ago."

"H'm. Not peeved, was he—not above his usual?"

At the recollection Hap burst again into a spasm of laughter. "You might say he was—above his limit, if you get what I mean."

"Bad," grieved Jim, "bad. Did he—er—say things? Express himself?"

"He opened up. I'd rather not repeat any of it. His opinion of this place might jar your feelings—a loyal citizen like you."

"Bad," repeated Jim. "Beat it then, did he?"

"Like a guy showing his heels to the devil. Begged me to stay up here till he got safe away. He had a hunch to murder me."

"Uh-huh. That's his way when the fit's on him—talks violent; but he'd hardly swat a fly. Offended him, did you?"

"Didn't mean to, but couldn't help it. A scantling fell on his toe and started him. Then I hurt him worse—I laughed. That finished him."

"He'd be sore at that. Fluent, was he?"

"He hosed down the whole landscape with language."

"Bad, too bad. He's due for a blow-out any day."

"Not another? I'd say he blew enough off his chest this afternoon to get some relief."

"Temporary—only temporary. I know Dom. The fit's on him. He's due for it soon."

"You mean he'll drink?"

"Like a whale chasing minnows. Tell me"—the question came anxiously—"did he still have that old billiard ball in his cheek? He hadn't got rid of it?"

"His quid? Sure, he had it. The madder he gets the more it stands out, like a wen on a bald head."

The foreman breathed in relief. "There's that comfort. Once he swallows that, it's all off."

"Swallows it! Swallows a cheekful of raw tobacco!"

"That's what he's liable to do, once he gets worked up to it. That's generally the end of his dry spell. After that he won't chew any more, but he'll drink a hole in the sea."

"Poor old Dom! Talk about control! He's a lesson to a guy, ain't he?"

"He needs friends when he's that way. We'll do what we can for him. Let's keep out of his way a while, so he can cool off. To-morrow I'll set him to sorting out a shipment. I've got an order for four car-load lots to go out any day we can get the cars. Dom won't desert me till he sees that off. That'll hold him a few days longer."

Next day but one the empty cars came in, towed down the lake on a ferry barge by the little steamer. But the scow was not the whole of the captain's extra charge that day. He brought also a yellow en-

velope addressed in pencil to Dom. Bill Bard had "hollered."

"What you going to do?" asked the foreman anxiously, watching Dom devour his message with gleaming eyes.

"Do?" Dom's gloom had lifted. He was in a fever of energy. "Do? Fill them cars of yours if it takes all night. Then—first boat—blooey!" He kissed his crooked finger tips to the hills.

"Couldn't we," Jim hinted, well knowing that he wasted breath, "couldn't we let the boy go out alone?"

"Could," agreed Dom; "but we wouldn't. I'm owin' meself a treat. I'm gonna watch him mow down them bush-league batters an' pile 'em in win'rows, if I have to swim out."

Hap received the news of his recall with joy that was yet tempered with regret. He would miss this life, miss its quiet, its good-fellowship, the comfortable sense it gave him of doing something useful, if not strenuous.

From the little landing next morning Jim Haney, chuckling stoutly to the last, waved the two adventurers farewell. "Come back," he called across a widening gap to Dom, "when you get—tired."

"Ain't gettin' tired this time, old scout. Take care of yerself."

Jim Haney had heard that boast before. "Write," he shouted, "if you should want—work." What he meant was, "your return fare." His last audible word, "Good luck!" came with a wave of the hand that included the thrilled, but quiet, Hap as well.

"Prince!" breathed the boy. Then, when the boat was set on its course to round the bend, and the yellow splash in the forest which was Nugget Falls began to fade, "One swell little burg!" he sighed.

CHAPTER X.

On the day of his arrival in Vancoria, when the resurrected Hap Hylan again faced the Tigers, the ball stands held a big, if not a very hopeful, crowd. The Poets had had a lead of six games, but a run of hard luck had tugged them back until the Tigers were treading vaingloriously on their heels. Sprouts Carlin had snapped his ankle sliding to second. Lefty Carder had put his pitching finger out handling a hard peg while substituting for Sprouts at short. The first-string pitcher, overworked, had cracked. "Dud" Wilks, the new shortstop, was given

to booting an occasional easy one; after which he would sulk. With their rivals crowding them and the end of the season only two weeks away, the team's nerve had weakened. Twice lately they had utterly blown in the seventh. They were jinxed.

In Hap Hylan rested the Poets' one chance of winning the pennant. At that late day in the season no dependable pitchers could be had—no pitchers at all except the crocks and chronic sore arms turned out to pasture by other clubs. If Hap could stand the gaff, break the jinx, hold the Tigers even for the rest of the series, and give the overworked pitching staff time to get back to form, the trick could be done. The coveted pennant, if only by the margin of half a game, would fly from the Vancoria flagstaff.

Bill Bard, at their first meeting in the hotel lobby, had looked his recruit keenly over. "Fit?" he barked, with no reference then or later to their former difference.

"Pretty good, Bill." Hap meant to make no boast that he could not live up to—meant also to start on a good footing with his old adversary to "get his mind right."

"You'll need to be better than pretty good," snapped Bill, harassed by his succession of mishaps. "It ain't only the Tigers you've got to beat. You got a bunch of crocks and crape hangers behind you. They think they're hoodooed—nervous as a cat in a carpetbag. You'll have to jazz 'em up or do it all yourself."

"Fair enough," beamed Hap. "How's Pork?"

"Hog-fat and healthy as a pup," growled Bill. "Only the big stiff thinks he's going into a decline or some ladylike disease like that. He's had a run of tough luck at poker, and the bottom's dropped out of his world. He expects to lose every time he puts a pad on. The jinx is ridin' on his neck as plain as a boil. Don't let him get your goat."

"Glad you warned me. It's like Dom says: A ball team in a slump is a parcel of overstrung babies. You got to nurse 'em."

"Huh?" Bill stared as at wisdom from the mouth of babes. "That's hot stuff. Picked up anything else from Dom?"

"Tried to, Bill. He was over my head at first; but I got hold of one thing. It's this: It pays to give the other guy's idea the once-over."

"And that's some earful," Bill told him; and their peace was made.

"Looks like I'll need all Dom taught me this afternoon."

"You will that. And I might as well tell you now, case some one else beats me to it, that a scout'll be up there in the visitor's box lookin' Red Gates over. Red's been comin' up all summer. He stands second in games won to-day."

"Let him look," laughed Hap. "Why can't we make him take a squint at little Happy, too?"

"Huh?" Bill stared. "I'll say you didn't leave your nerve up there in the sawdust. 'S up to you."

The practice that preceded the game was wine in Hap's pulsing veins. The stir, the life, the color, of the instreaming crowds, dividing, jostling, eddying into place; the cries of the soft-drink venders; the rough pleasantries from the bleachers for any home player, or the barbed witticisms for any Tiger, who happened within earshot; the swift movements of the players, coördinating perfectly; the cries of encouragement from infielder to infielder; the crack of bat on ball, of ball on glove; the sheer exultation of being at play, yet the sense of value as a recognized entertainer; the zest of perfect physical condition; the thought that he, Henry Hylan, nineteen, equipped for conquest, was having his chance—Hap thrilled to it all.

"This is the life," he breathed, "this is the life!"

In the batting practice he took his turn—and as many more as he could manage—at the plate. Never since that day—ages ago—when he had cracked out that fluke homer had he held a bat in his hand. The willow burned to the fierce joy of his grip. His batting eye would be out, but he wouldn't go after any extra-base bingles to-day. A single, if he could get it, would suit his book. And stand up to it? You bet he would! He had his nerve along to-day, never to be lost again. Let Red Gates try to drive him back from the plate this time. He'd take a cracked rib before he would weaken.

The Tigers were watching him, sizing him up. They were a cocky lot, Hap thought, braced by their string of victories; and they meant to win again to-day. Very soon they showed their hand—they meant to guy Hap,

to talk him out of the game. They had picked up some inkling of the manner in which he had spent his summer and they were out to make the most of it. Most ball players are inveterate town dwellers. The country is anathema to them. But the bush—and a sawmill! Symbols of the down and out.

Third baseman Gomers led off with the first gun of the attack. "Lookin' fine, kid," he greeted; "sawdust must agree with you."

"Ain't it the truth?" flashed Hap. "I'll see that you eat some later on."

Ball players are not often actively hostile toward a rival; but the pressure of the game is merciless. To win is everything. If banter will help, good; if bitter words, even veiled abuse, will win, good, also. Let the other fellow learn to tether his own goat, to take what's coming.

Hap would willingly have kept the secret of his summer's sojourn; but, now that it was out, he scorned to let it weaken him. Young as he was, instinct and experience alike told him that in baseball you give as good as you get—or go under.

Red Gates, tall, bronzed, as lithe, as loose-shouldered, as physically perfect as Hap himself, and with all the assurance of the steady winner in his bearing, had his fling also: "Goin' to show us some big-league stuff to-day, huh?"

"Won't waste any on you, Red. What I had before was enough for you."

Gates, turned back in his first sally, had another and more subtle line of attack. "Hear you've been havin' a private coach," he jeered. "Whyn't you bring him along to see you take yer bumps?"

"Who d'ye mean—Dom?"

"You know it. That bird's been dead from the neck down these ten years."

"We'll leave Dom out of it, Red, if it's all the same to you." There was no anger in Hap's tone—only a quiet reserve. Dom's failings were no subject for public jest.

Red Gates obtusely pursued his advantage. "'Out of it' is right. Can't even stick it to watch a game any more. Think he's comin', do you?"

"Expect so."

"Expect again. He ain't. Hadn't the heart, I guess, to see you trimmed."

Bill Bard had sidled up within hearing. He did not propose to have his pitcher talked out of the game before it had started.

"Shoot yer news," defied Bill. "What d'ye know?" Neither he nor Hap had seen the big fellow since noon. He had then been unable to touch food, but was still clinging desperately to his quid, as to a last moral support. His firm intention had then been to see the game.

"Last I heard of him," jeered Gates, "he'd made the raffle. He'll be off in a room by himself by now, pickling himself in hootch."

"Yah!" Bill sneered in deep disgust; "and I guess some of you guys was good enough sports to put him next."

Red leered his poor triumph. "You're some swell guesser," he admitted.

"We should worry," Bill brushed it away. "Dom ain't our mascot."

Hap unwrapped a fresh wafer of gum and added it to that already in his cheek. "I'll eat them alive for this, Bill," was his low-toned vow.

The ten-minute bell sounded.

"Come on, youngster," beckoned Bill, with sure instinct seeking relief in action, "time to warm up."

They withdrew to the foot-scuffed strip in front of the main stand set apart for the home battery, Bill taking the glove for a time while Pork continued to work at the plate as a cog in the infield machinery.

As Hap lobbed the ball his eye roamed the tiers of seats, now all but filled. Especially he sought the place which had been the focus of his thoughts on the day of his last appearance on these grounds—the second from the aisle, up there in the fifth row. Almost he hoped—and feared—to see Rosy there again. No such luck. A gross man in striped shirt sleeves and a Panama hat, wielding a palm-leaf fan, looked down from her place with the set and unfriendly scowl of those overburdened with flesh.

Yet Hap refused to see either the fat man or his scowl. A comelier vision held him, preempting from grosser occupancy that precious seat. He had not much of an eye for girls' clothes, but he vividly recalled the green sweater which Rosy had worn that day in June, with the glimpse of white blouse at the parted bosom of it; yes, and the hat, a soft sports hat with a hint of green ribbon, and a wisp of unruly brown hair peeping distractingly from under the brim.

In ten minutes he was going into the game of his life, the game that for him marked the real beginning of things. On his per-

formance to-day his whole future hung. And the reward? Money, fame, life in big cities—success? Side issues, these. The big thing was the memory of a trim figure of a girl up there in the fifth row, second from the aisle, a modest figure in a green sweater and a white sports hat. He had to win back her smile. That was his real goal.

Lightly he had continued to lob the ball. Gee! What would these tough sports of ball hounds say if they could read his thoughts? They would have it on him then for fair. They'd hang a josh on him that he never could shake. "Skirt-struck!" they'd jeer at him. He did them wrong; for every swaggerer of them all, had he been free to confess, was a lover in his heart, or could envy the man who was.

Hap pulled himself up, began to put something on the ball. Only his foxy stuff he used at first, a slow, tantalizing drop, just getting under a tall man's shoulder; then a floater, cutting this corner, then that. He did not yet call on his speed. He wanted to show his control, his new and hard-won mastery of those very effects which Bill had once in vain implored him to use. He meant it at once as a tribute and an apology to the older man.

"That's what old Dom would want me to do," he thought to himself—"to start by getting my mind right. Poor old bird, wise for everybody but himself!"

His place was near the visitors' box, in which club officials and their guests, or more rarely a player off duty, were privileged to view the games. Two men now occupied it. In one of them Hap recognized the genial treasurer whose hand at their last parting he had pettishly refused. Beside him sat a stranger, a spare, hard-boiled citizen with the unmistakable air of the *passé* athlete, with unblinking steel-gray eyes under the rim of his drab fedora, and the trap-lipped mouth that scorns to open except in weighty judgments. That, Hap surmised, would be the scout.

Down the aisle toward this box a young man on crutches now made his way, one bandaged foot held carefully up from contact with the floor. At sight of his face Hap sent up a wild one; for the cripple was Sprouts Carlin. Hap's thrill had not been all for the injured youth himself. Rather it was for the frank smile with which he had acknowledged the greeting of a friend—the very twin of Rosy's smile.

Seated at last in the box, his crutches propped in a near corner, his injured limb disposed in comfort, Sprouts, was free to observe the field.

"H'lo, Sprouts," Hap sang up to him cheerfully.

"H'lo, Happy. How's the boy?" All the old-time friendliness warmed the tone.

Hap thrilled with elation at that. "Fine as silk. How's the ankle, Sprouts?"

"Coming on. This my first time downtown. Howdy, Bill!" He flirted a hand to the manager.

There was no time for parley. The umpire, his breast pad in place, his mask dangling from his hand, came on the field. In five minutes he would call the game.

Hap began to put speed on the ball. "See you after the game," said Sprouts. "Don't forget, now—sure."

"No fear. Stick right where you are," said Hap, "and I'll come round there."

Pork Barcom changed places with Bill. He conferred briefly with Hap as to signals. "What about all this new stuff I hear you got, kid?" he asked, as one of little faith.

"I'll show you, Pork," laughed Hap; "and I bet you're going to hold four tens to-night against a queen full." Then, as Pork spread his feet in catching position, "Here's a fast one."

"Bam! I'll say it is," yelled a delighted fan as ball smacked against glove.

Hap tried out his "stuff" for Pork—his slow ball, his floater, his high drop, his swift cross fire; but not the spitter. "I got a moist one, too," he said before they separated to their places. "Breaks like chain lightning. Only, don't signal for him till I tell you. Foxy stuff first—that's the dope. Speed for the pinches, and the spitter up our sleeve."

CHAPTER XI.

"Fer the home team, Hylan 'n' Barcom!"

Thus, with all his accustomed gusto, the umpire finished his announcement of the "battrees fer tuh-day."

Hap walked to the mound. The final electric thrill pulsed through the packed stands. "Atta boy," came the heartening cries: "Let's have this one." "Here's where we even up." "Some of the old pep out there to-day."

The game was on.

The Tigers soon indicated what their bat-

ting policy would be. Confident that a pitcher who had not faced a batter since June would be wild, they went in to wait him out. The lead-off man, notorious for his skill in working a pass, fell a quick victim to this belief; for Hap got him in a hole at once with two slow ones—a floater that pinched the inside corner and a teasing high drop that got under his shoulder only as it crossed the plate.

With two on the batter, Pork called for a wasted one; but Hap had another design. Pretending to wet the ball for a spitter, he sent up instead a fast hop in the groove. Uncertain what to expect, fooled too by the change of pace, the batter missed it.

"Atta way ta pitch!" "That's mowin' 'em down!" "Make 'em be good!" roared the bleachers. This began to look like a ball game already.

The next two batters fell quick victims to Hap's unlooked-for slow delivery. One fouled out to Pork and the other died on an easy roller to second. In the whole inning not one ball had been called. Control such as that put an end to any policy of waiting.

"That's pitchin'," praised Bill out of the corner of his mouth. "Save yourself. Let the boys behind you earn their dough."

In their half the Poets fared little better. They showed no sign of breaking through their batting slump. Red Gates had his big curve working perfectly. He was at the top of his season's form.

The second saw the Tigers trying a new line of attack. Convinced now of Hap's control, they yet assumed that a pitcher out of the game all summer would be weak in fielding his position. Therefore they tried to bunt, feeling out this new quality of pitching which they had been quick to recognize.

The bunting line of attack, against a slow-footed, big-girthed pitcher whose day is waning, has often proved effective. It has driven more than one old-timer, whose hand still held its cunning, from the box. But Hap had youth, speed, and a slim-waisted liteness. He easily fielded two bunted balls and laughed as he took his time to throw to first.

The third man, fouling two, had to hit. He managed to send an easy roller to Dud at short. In handling a ball in the air Dud had all the precision of clockwork; but his weakness was a ground ball between his feet,

a weakness that had long before let him out of faster company. He fumbled. The runner was safe.

A groan rose from the rooters. Here it came again—the same old booting that had lost game after game. Now, with a temperamental pitcher in the box, there was double reason to fear the effect of such an error. Dud swore savagely under his breath. That was his second weakness—a surly temper.

A flash of his own old anger Hap had felt, too. But timely to his rescue had come Dom's maxim: "Nurse 'em, nurse 'em; they're overstrung babies."

"It took an ugly hop, old man," he grinned. "'Twon't matter. Two down."

The shortstop, when peeved, was a man to be left alone. "Gwan," he snarled, "don't try to pap-feed me." He had been playing ball when Hap had been absorbing most of his nourishment from a bottle and he took occasion to say so.

"And we'll both be going strong a dog's age yet," Hap lightly laughed it off, and left the surly one to his sulks. Nevertheless he took a little longer than necessary to read Pork's signals for the next batter, making sure that he had himself in hand, that his mind was right. He struck out his man, and the rooters howled their delight. There was to be no blowing up in this game.

The second three of the Poets, the cream of their batting order, fell victims to Red Gates' speed and cunning. They went out in succession. The batting slump gave no sign of lifting.

In the third, Red himself came to bat. "Here's a mark," yelled a derisive rooter. "Breeze him."

But Hap meant to do more than "breeze" him. He had a score to settle with Red. He tried a circus stunt. Grinning at Pork, but treating Red as something the umpire had neglected to brush off the plate, he said: "Three pitched balls for this gink, Pork!"

Red had nothing to say to this, but his jaw muscles worked angrily. He was one of those eager batters who stoop over and crowd the plate, chopping the air with quick, short motions of the bat. A floater that fanned the hair on his chest got him for the first one. He whipped at it savagely.

Hap grinned. "Same one again," he called to Pork, as though scorning to use signals against so feeble a batter.

The bronze of Red's cheek deepened. He

dug in his cleats and set his teeth, determined to wipe out the insult with a three-bagger. He just managed to foul the ball.

"That's two," said Hap conversationally. "Now the moist one, Pork, to finish him."

"Yah!" scoffed Red, goaded to speech. "Yuh ain't got one. Put it across here, and I'll park it in Pasadena."

Again, behind his glove, Hap made the motions of wetting the ball. This time he did not bluff. As the ball left his hand he laughed exultantly. Waist high, straight over, Red swung at it to catch the expected hop, missing the sharp downshoot of the spitter a foot.

He saw how he had been fooled. "Huh!" he jeered his chagrin. "Tha's somethin' yuh musta picked up in the woods."

"You bet!" grinned Hap, springing the retort he had been saving. "Any old tree up there's got more pitch in it than you."

Crude it was, but effective. At bat or in verbal encounter Red had come off a bad second. Hap had heard the last of the jeers about either sawmill or bush.

It had its effect, too, on the Poets behind Hap. For all their professional pumped-up bluff they had been a beaten team at the start. So far they had batted like tail-enders, and the shortstop had already blown up and still sulked.

Now, at Hap's repartee, Dud had a fierce guffaw of joy. He banged a fist into his glove. "Get that?" he snorted to the third base. "'Any old tree!' Har, har! Tha's a hot one. 'More pitch in it 'n you.' Gor!" he chuckled, and continued to chuckle till the next man, the lead-off again, went out on a foul pop to first.

He ran up to put a hand on Hap's shoulder as they came in toward the dugout. "Kid," he declared, "I'm *for* yuh. You sure can shoot 'em over. 'Any old tree!' Har, har!" His was one of those blessed natures with whom one joke bears many repetitions. "Next one I boot out there," he made his amends, "I'm gonna swallow it if it chokes me to death. You watch me."

"You're all right, Dud," laughed Hap, more delighted than he cared to show.

So nursed, the rest of the Poets, behind Hap's steady pitching, began also to respond to his indomitable spirit. Their accustomed snap and sureness returned. They started to fight every inch of the way.

"Atta way!" howled the delighted rooters. "Now you're showin' us a ball game."

Yet the fourth proved unlucky for Hap. Against the first man up he pitched himself into a hole. Full of confidence, he sent up for the third strike a hook with all his speed. It broke with a snakelike dart.

"Take yer base," commanded the umpire, for the first and only time in the game.

"No, no, *no!*" crescendoed Pork. "It was over. You know it was over. It had the corner. Call 'em right, can't yuh?" Pork had got back his fighting spirit, too.

"Robber! Blind man! Wipe yer eye! Whadda they pay yuh fer it?" came in a mingled roar from the bleachers, no less confident that the ball had been good than if they had been in a position to see it. They jeered, rasped, howled their displeasure.

Pork, in spite of the umpire's averted ear and upraised palm, kept up his fierce protest. Once started, he was hard to stop.

"How about it, Happy?" asked Bill quickly, springing up from the bench.

"I thought I ought to've had it," Hap answered truthfully. But an aphorism of old Dom's came back to hold him in check: "There's two guys yuh can't change—an editor an' an umpire; they both got the last say." He shook his head for Bill to interfere. To let Pork kick himself out of the game now would cripple the team. On that Bill silenced the big catcher, but not before he had drawn a five-dollar fine.

"Ne' mind, Pork," Hap consoled him; "you'll win it back to-night."

"He'll never score," prophesied a rooter. "Yuh can't get away with that kinda work."

But misfortune again dogged the Poets; for the runner promptly stole second, beating Pork's perfect peg. Too intent on his pitching, handicapped by his lack of recent playing experience, Hap had allowed his man too long a lead off first.

"What t'ell's the matter with yuh? Can't-cha keep an eye over here?" The first baseman was justly wrath.

Hap flushed under the rebuke. An angry retort rose to his tongue. But what was it Dom had said about taking your callings? "Deserve 'em or not," he remembered, "you're bound to get 'em." He had certainly deserved this one. He decided to keep silent.

"He'll die where he is," Hap promised himself hopefully, trying to hold his man tight to second. But luck was against him.

A Texas leaguer, such as every slow-ball pitcher may sometimes run into, put the batter on first and the runner—held by sharp fielding—on third.

Here had developed the first pinch of the game. Hap fell back on his speed. But as Dom had once said, there is no ball one man can pitch so good that another can't hit it; and when a fast ball is met fairly it travels far. Mottram made the out easily enough in left field, but the runner on third raced home with the throw. In the dusty cloud of the slide to the plate, his body inclined over the tangled forms of Pork and the runner, the umpire stood with downfaced palm. The run scored.

Then tumult. Bill Bard, his arm outstretched toward third, his jaws working in violent speech, had catapulted to the plate. Almost to a man the team converged from the field around that common center of protest and reprehension. The Tigers knotted into groups, loud with counter clamor. The stands seethed with indignation.

From that general turmoil no words could audibly emerge; but all gestures indicated third base as the point of dispute. The runner had left the bag before the ball had touched Mottram's glove. The yard he had so stolen was the whole margin by which he had beaten the ball at the plate.

In vain the storm of protest and oburgation dashed against the rock of the umpire's determination. He would not change. He had not seen the thing complained of—was watching the ball. The decision stood. The run scored.

The score stood unchanged when in the sixth Hap took his second turn at bat. Pork, ahead of him, had just doubled cleanly to right—the Poets' first hit. To his very toes the boy tingled to continue the attack. Behind him a rising tumult urged him on.

"Over the netting!" a rooter implored. "You done it before." And the reminder of his timely home run in June keyed the crowd to a pitch of expectancy.

But Hap had his orders—to work the pitcher if he could; but in the end to strike out. Bill was taking his prospects on the boy's pitching. He did not want him tiring himself on the paths.

His first time up, Hap had failed to hit, but had at least found the ball for a grounder to short. And he had kept his vow: he had stood up to it. Red had tried

hard to drive him back, first with the old trick of his curve breaking over, then with a nasty straight chin ball; but Hap had stood his ground.

Now, a vengeful gleam in his eye, Red was at his tricks again. He started his curve at Hap's head. It broke over, and the boy struck at it. Then came a fast one, inside, chin high. Its unexpected in-break caught Hap full behind the ear. He dropped like a felled ox.

It looked like an act of deliberate beaming on Red's part. A rumble of ominous import, pierced by the horrified gasps or smothered screams of women, arose behind the wire netting that fenced the spectators from the field. Shocked, secretly enraged, yet all but the fiery Dud Wilks withholding censure, the Poets tumbled from their dugout. The water boy ran up. The catcher began to lift the unconscious youth.

"Leave him be," admonished the wiser umpire. "Let him lie."

Dud, hot to his very shoe pegs, had rushed straight out to the mound. "Yuh dirty beaner, yuh did it a-purpose. Yuh been tryin' to get him. Darn yer ugly red head! I'll bean it fer *you*." And he swiped valiantly at the jaw of the lank pitcher overtopping him by a head.

Red quailed; but the blow glanced off his instinctively raised guard arm. He made no move to retaliate. Strong arms quickly pinned Dud's hands to his sides, dragged him away; but no hand interfered to bridle his lusty tongue. He continued to flay his antagonist with edged and injurious words.

Hap revived. The air cleared. A cheer went up as supporting hands led the boy shakily to the bench. By consent of the Tigers' captain Lefty Carder took his place on the paths, keeping him still in the game. With first and second filled and none down, the crowd was wild for a score. But the Poets' lead-off man, after killing as much time as he could, hit hard into a brilliant double. The next batter, after a further exhibition of expert stalling, went out on a line drive to deep center.

Bill already had a relief pitcher warming up. Now, "How about it, youngster?" he asked, with a keen eye on Hap.

"Fine. Bill—fine as silk. Don't yank me. Lemme go in there again." Forestalling refusal, Hap trotted toward the mound.

Reluctantly, as though appeasing his own

conscience, Bill signaled the relief pitcher to keep ready.

Renewed cheering, with a flutter of fans and waving of parasols, greeted Hap's return to the box. The human crowd loves pluck, and the injured player who comes back is sure of its favor. Yet the boy was still dazed, though trying gamely to hide it. The blow had really sapped his strength. His grin blossomed less readily. He realized in all soberness now the wisdom of Dom's repeated counsel to husband his energy. The time had come to call on all his reserve.

He began again with his foxy stuff. But the flower of his cunning had wilted; the perfection of his control had deserted him. The batter doubled cleanly to right.

To look toward Bill meant the bench, and Hap's one resolve was to stick. He faced the next man at the plate. Stubbornly he took his time. If only this blur that dulled his faculties would lift!

The batter rapped a hard grounder between short and third. With the crack of the bat the runner on second started for home. The game seemed lost. But Dud by a miracle of fielding made a two-fingered spear of the ball. His quick throw to third caught the runner still far from the bag. He turned back. He was trapped between bases.

The infield crowded to the line. Hap went to third, backing up the baseman. A hush fell, broken only by the scuffling feet of the dodging runner, of the alternating players in pursuit. His fate was certain.

Suddenly into the lull pierced the agonized tenor of an overwrought fan: "Hit 'im with the ball, me lad, hit 'im with the ball!"

The cheers dammed back to greet the expected out, burst into cascades of laughter that ran like a flood through the stands. The delicious innocence of the phrase, recalling to every mind some thrilling climax of the games of childhood, caught the fancy of both crowd and players. They rocked to it. Hap laughed till the tears came.

That laugh was his salvation. Suddenly his brain cleared. He felt himself again in full possession of his powers. The pain in the back of his head became nothing but a matter of bruised flesh. He could ignore that. His mind was again his own. The grin with which he faced the next man up bloomed as firm-lipped, as free as of old.

He settled down. A feeling of deep con-

tent, of being taken care of—far different from the vainglory of his former triumphs—gave steadiness to mind and arm. He couldn't lose. He had a fighting team behind him, every man on his toes, working, boosting for him personally. The crowd was a fused unit, tense in its one desire for him to win. Like the deep throb of a single-plucked bass string its straining partisanship vibrated through him.

Hap settled down, began again to know the joy of the master. Whatever he had it in him to do, he could do now. To the end of the game he pitched air-tight ball, retiring the Tigers in order. Not another man of them reached first.

But a run was needed to tie, two to win. With all the ardor of a righteous crusade the spectators had fixed on that one desire. "Tie it up," they had implored, in every variety of accent and every style of rhetoric. "Stake us to one." "We can't drop this game now." "The jinx is busted; let's get ours."

When the first Poet had stepped to the plate in the seventh the crowd as by one impulse had come to its feet. "The lucky seventh!" the word went up. Then every man had settled back in his seat, sure that a zeal so burning, so unified, must have its way.

The hour's play had reversed the attitudes of the teams. The Tigers, though in the lead, had been put on the defensive. The Poets, from Bill Bard, raucously coaching, to the agile bat boy, tingled with aggressive fire. The struggle had settled to one of spirit, of team endurance against team endurance. The test was of stamina—not physical, but of the soul. It could not last; the strain was too intense. Somewhere a weak link must break.

But where that weak link lay did not appear until the last half of the ninth. Till then neither side had added to the score—the Tigers through failure to hit safely, the Poets falling short of bunching their hits.

In the ninth Dud Wilks came first to bat. His fighting rage still gripped him. He banged the plate with his bat and from a corner of his mouth snarled at Red his muttered defiance: "Come on, yuh dirty beaner. Tried to kill him, did yuh? There's murder in the ugly heart of yuh. Yer goin'! Come on with what yuh got left."

Red came on. Victory hung just within his grasp. Three more outs, then the

shower. Experience had steeled him against hostile rooting; but this crowd to-day had been different. He was in bad with them, not as a player, but as a man. Guilty or not, they had condemned him on the evidence. They believed him guilty of a treacherous assault. Insensibly the dejection of the pariah had begun to affect him.

And this Dud, this stocky fighting demon—Red had quailed before him once. Now—invisibly—he quailed again. In faster company than the Boundary League Dud had been a hitter; and he still was good. Secretly Red feared him; and fear is not good for a pitcher.

He dared not pass him—the first man up. He pitched himself, in his overcautiousness, into a hole. Then he fell back on his fast one breaking in over the corner. On that Dud took his revenge. He lined it straight for the left-field fence, over it—the longest hit of the season; and while he trotted the circuit he grunted injurious epithets from the left corner of his mouth for “the dirty beaner” to hear.

With the score tied, the game went to extra innings; but the issue never once hung in doubt. Hap continued invincible; Red was going. He held on gamely, but cracked in the eleventh. A double and a single put across the winning run.

The crowd cheered, but decorously, without abandon. Too many climaxes had already blown its enthusiasm down. It began to melt away, as an audience, at the curtain of a last act, surfeited with emotion, will sometimes leave the theater, seeking the street in a numbed rapture, half wonder, half laughter, while it adjusts itself once more to the workaday world.

CHAPTER XII.

Bill Bard's first concern was for Hap.

“Now you beat it, youngster, to a doc's office and have him look at that nut of yours. I don't want you takin' no chances with a beaner like that. Scoot!”

“Whatever you say, Bill. I've begun to feel it again the last while. I'll beat it; only I got to see Sprouts first.”

“Sprouts?” echoed Bill, as though suddenly remembering a neglected duty. “Glad you reminded me. I want to see that cripple myself. And who's this comin' on like a young hook-and-ladder company? Looks like some one else for you to see.”

Through the sweated and hurriedly departing players a fat man, rotund of figure, perspiring freely, smiling happily, his hand extended, advanced with short, but active, steps. In his street clothes, his “bowler” jauntily a-tilt, Hap at first failed to recognize the rubicund face of his saloon-keeper friend.

“Glad to see you again, me lad,” was the hearty greeting. “I couldn't stay 'ome no'ow—not when I 'eard you was back. ‘Mule team,’ says you—I'll join a mule team.’ Remember? Glad you didn't, me lad. A lively game it is, wotever name it goes by—though it 'as its faults, it 'as. Tell me now, me lad, why wouldn't you hit 'im with the ball? That's the way to get a runner hout—hit 'im with the ball. Eh, what?”

Beaming with pleasure as he had been to recognize his benefactor—or robber—Hap now burst into a laugh. “That was you, was it, made that crack? I'll say you're some rooter. I want to tell you right here you helped win this game.”

“That's gratifyin' me, lad, 'ighly gratifyin'.”

“That what they do in rounders—hit 'em with the ball?”

“And why not, me lad?” The fat man bridled like a good patriot defending a national institution. “Why not, I say?”

“Sure. Why not?” acquiesced Hap with a grin. Then he sobered. “But look here, old man, you must have thought me a bum sport to clear out the way I did. I'll come round to see you and explain. I've a friend waiting now. You'll have my little bill ready, won't you?”

“I 'ave it 'ere, me lad—brought it along.” He held out a fat envelope. “All there—eighty-one dollars and thirty cents, bed, meals, *and* refreshments deducted. It was the peeler's idear. Thought you was better off, he did, with all that blunt out of your clothes and in the safe till your 'ead-ache was gone. If you 'adn't hup and 'opped it——”

“Prince!” shouted Hap, and clapped a round shoulder. “I knew all along it was prince.”

“Prince?” echoed the fat man, bewildered. “Prince? I wasn't aware that any son of the royal fam'ly——”

“Sure,” laughed Hap. “One of 'em's in town. You're gonna meet him.”

“That's 'ighly gratifyin', me lad, 'ighly

gratifyin'. But I 'ope, if I may say so, you wouldn't spoof an old friend?"

"Spoof nothing. You look in the glass. You'll see him there."

The fat man studied this. "Now that's 'ighly gratifyin', too, me lad," he said.

Hap signaled to Sprouts, now propped on his crutches, and almost the only remaining occupant of the stand. "Be with you in a jiff, Sproutsy." But he had yet another query. "How's the dook's prescription working these days?" he smiled.

"Never fails, me lad, never fails; though I do 'ope you'll never be needin' of it again."

"Not me," Hap assured him. "I've a good friend, though, who will, I'm afraid. I'll bring him around. See you later." And he excused himself.

He did see him later—on behalf of that "good friend" who he had only too correctly feared would be a fitting candidate for "the dook's prescription." Dom had swallowed his wad of chewing tobacco with a vengeance! But the end of it all was his boarding a train for Nugget Falls again, content to know that, with all his faults, a brave and goodly piece of work had been entered to his credit in the great Judgment Book. Nor was the day of his departure the last he saw of Hap Hylan by a long shot. The love that Hap bore to him was no such weakly growth as that. After all, by their works ye shall know them.

With Sprouts, when the two were at last together after Hap's "gratifyin'" interlude with his rotund friend of the saloon, Hap had an onset of constraint. Rosy and this boy were twins, bound by the closest of family ties. As Sprouts felt, might not Rosy also feel? He fell awkwardly silent.

"Some game!" offered Sprouts heartily, between thuds of his crutches on the steps of the aisle.

"Yeh." Hap had begun to suffer a reaction from the high tide of his excitement; also his head ached dully. "I made a

bloomer, letting that guy down to second. It was a shut-out, only for that."

"'S nothing," panted Sprouts, at the top of his climb. With the disinclination of professionals—even very young professionals—to hold post mortems on played games, they left the subject.

Sprouts took another tack. "That scout," he said, "wasn't missing much."

"Oh, him!" Hap pricked up his ears. "I forgot all about him. What did he think—of Red?"

"Didn't say. He chewed gum. His was a heavy thinking part. Once, though, he opened up. 'That kid,' says he, meaning you, 'is the whole works.'"

"Now that's 'ighly gratifyin', too, as my fat friend would say."

"Sure is. You're going up next season as far as the Coast League at least. That's settled beyond a doubt."

"Dandy, dandy! Only, I'll hate to cut loose from this old town."

"Different here. Me, I'd call it great luck. In your case it's well earned. Fact is, Hap"—Sprouts had to pause for words—"I'm down here to-day on a bit of scout duty myself. The old man, he's been kinda worried about you all summer—not hearing, and all. We wanted to know how you came through—how you shaped up."

"Uh-huh." In dumb hunger Hap waited.

Sprouts colored. "What I wanted to say, Hap, the old man—all of us—would be mighty glad, supposing your head ain't bothering you too much, to have you come up this evening—or any evening—and—and visit with us."

Hap gazed out, misty-eyed, over the dusty and now deserted diamond, the scene of the tensest struggle of his young life. Had he really won? Looked like it. He had gained at least the chance to win.

"Sprouts," he said, a hand on his friend's shoulder, "I'd come if—if my head was that bad I'd have to tote it along in sections."



THE CRIME WAVE IN CENTRAL AMERICA

NATIVES of Central America who aren't too particular about "thine and mine" have evolved an original plan for getting ahead of the owners of coconut plantations. They teach monkeys to pick the nuts and bring them to a safe place. To add to the growers' troubles, the monkeys have developed remarkable accuracy in throwing the nuts at their pursuers.

Watchful Wasting

By Albert Payson Terhune

Author of "Sheer Weight," "Najib's 'Yowltide,'" Etc.

Hilary B. Banks, efficiency expert, was fine at cutting out. But in the "movie" game he succeeded in cutting out more than he intended

THIS story begins in two places at once. On the "lot" of the Preëminent Film Corporation—just off Hollywood Boulevard, in Los Angeles; and in the New York offices of the same corporation, at No. 999 West Forty-second Street. After which, the yarn follows the course of empire—and takes its way westward.

At Hollywood, the Preëminent people were clearing decks for the second of their Roy McNair features; a picture which, like its highly successful predecessor, was to star the modest young middleweight champion of the world, in what was described as "A Fistic Comedy."

Malachi Ruhl, chief director of the Preëminent, was in artistic throes over the new production. Indeed every one in that section of the lot was infected by Ruhl's thrill. Except perhaps Roy McNair himself. After fighting battle after battle in the campaign toward the middleweight championship the emotions do not respond deeply to the prospect of posturing and grimacing and hippodroming in front of a platoon of punchless cameras. Wherefore McNair went about his all-important task calmly, even amusedly. And he had a queer tendency to grin rather than to cower at Ruhl's bursts of divine rage.

At the New York offices of the Preëminent two bulbous-girthed men sat in grim conclave over a set of newly and expensively audited ledgers. The ledgers had not a tithe of Malachi Ruhl's artistic fire. They were bare of fire and of art. In dull figures they told the sordid truth about the cost of each production. While Malachi Ruhl was glowing to the knowledge that such-and-such a picture had been a triumph and had advanced the progress of movie possibilities, these drab ledgers pointed out that the cash receipts for many of the inspired pictures did

not come within fifty thousand dollars of justifying the lavish outlay.

Wherefore the sad conference of the Preëminent's president and treasurer in the corporation's supercostly New York offices. Wherefore too, the summoning of a genie to the conference—a genie whose mission in life was the reconciling of Ledgers to Golden Visions. To end at once the cruel suspense, this genie—and genius—was Hilary B. Banks, the famed efficiency expert, the all-potent, consulting specialist for diseased or anæmic businesses.

The president and the treasurer looked up from their sorrowful ledger-burrowing with something of scared hopefulness as the mighty Hilary B. Banks was announced. And the great man's aspect was enough, by itself, to justify almost any hope. If mortal could save a situation—any situation at all, from fire at sea to an office leak—it was Banks. The first glance at him was enough to convince the world of that.

He was tall. He was about one Jim Jeffries in height and three Jim Jeffrieses in girth. He had the figure of a gladiator whose ancestors included *Falstaff*. He was perhaps the one man in the business world who still wore a senatorial frock coat and a white-corded vest in such a way as to make him look not only tremendously imposing but equally up-to-date. His curling hair was Jovelike. So was his relentlessly piercing, dark eye. His mouth might well have been chipped from a statue of Napoleon. So might his manner. For the rest, he exuded power. Hilary B. Banks could have led armies or sold patent soap from a cart tail; and he could have made a mammoth hit at either vocation.

"Good morning!" gushed the president, with an air so humbly effusive that he himself rebelled at it and added more briskly: "You have been over the books, I hope?"

"That is why I am here," returned Banks, in a tone which carried both authority and reproof.

The president and the treasurer looked meekly at each other, and then at the efficiency expert. Banks was seating himself in the biggest of the room's dozen big chairs and was exhuming from his vest a pale little cigar. The president felt the pettiness of his own query about the books; and he was about to rectify it by some sage remark, as soon as he could think of one. But Banks saved him the trouble. Taking in the wide room with an eagle gaze, the expert said:

"In a minor way, waste stoppage could well begin right here. I note there are no less than twelve of these handsomely upholstered chairs in this room. They cost, probably, on an average, one hundred and twenty-five dollars each. Three chairs of this sort would be ample. Then, if necessary, a half dozen five-dollar cane-seat chairs scattered here and there.

"That couch, too! It must have cost fully two hundred dollars. It has no place in a business office. If you are obliged to work late and need to rest for an hour or so, an army cot in an anteroom, would serve the same purpose. Such can be picked up, now, at any of the various army-stores sales for not more than——"

"But——" blithered the president guiltily, "I—we thought——"

"I notice three highly expensive desks, too," went on the relentless Banks. "I gather that one of them is for each of you gentlemen; and the third—judging from the pads and pencils—for a secretary or a stenographer. A nineteen-dollar combination desk-and-typewriter stand would suffice for your stenographer. The same principle applies to many of these hangings and all but one or two of the paintings. I believe in tasteful decorations, as a legitimate aid to enterprise. But not in costly overfurnishing. Not less than four thousand dollars—perhaps as much as four thousand five hundred dollars—could have been saved in the furnishing of this one room. To say nothing of the rest of the suite.

"Also, in the outer office, I counted eleven employees. Two of them were reading newspapers. Two more were talking. About half your force, out there, seems superfluous. An office boy was scrawling pictures of women's heads on a sheet of embossed letter-head paper. High-priced paper, at that

Five electric lights were burning in an unused dark corner. All this, my one cursory glance told me. A more careful look would, of course, have revealed much more. And if I——"

"It—it never occurred to—to——" began the treasurer, wiggling deeper in his chair.

"If your Los Angeles plant is run on similar principles of utter wastage," continued the remorseless Banks, "I can well understand why you have found it necessary to send for me. This apart from any needless expense in the mere taking of the pictures themselves."

He paused and favored his hearers, in turn, with an eagle glare. He was facing two awed and crushed culprits. His experienced eye told him this. And he resumed magisterially:

"I have jotted down a number of notes in connection with what a study of your books told me. For the moment, I shall not refer to them. It is enough to mention one or two lesser items which seem to me to epitomize the rest. In all the course of a somewhat broad business experience, I have never before come upon such a glaring series of futile expenditures. For example: Under the caption of 'Footage,' I find that it is the custom to take no less than four simultaneous views, sometimes more, of certain scenes. And to 'retake' as often as three times, in some instances. That means the needless hire of several very high-priced photographers——"

"Camera men," murmured the president, loath to interrupt so great a personage, but unable to let pass the crude phrasing.

"And the total and unnecessary waste of thousands of feet of costly film. Moreover the——"

The treasurer plucked up heart to stammer an explanation of the necessity of having one set of films intact in case of mishap to another. He even tried to explain the needful "shooting" of the same scene from different angles and distances. But Hilary B. Banks waved aside his paltry objection, with a curt:

"If four, why not forty? Two cameras would suffice; to obviate the chance of one missing. As for the photographing at different angles, I can better decide on the need of that when I go out there to study the situation at firsthand. In the meantime, here is another item, culled from hundreds: one of your stars, Barry Clive, receives

three thousand five hundred dollars a week, it seems, while he is 'working.' And, presumably, he is 'working,' as long as the picture is being made. I find a record of his sitting idle in his dressing room for three entire days, during the filming of a recent picture, because his director was busy trying to film another scene that would not be——"

"But we have to pay him, when he's called to the lot," expostulated the president. "He is likely to be needed at any——"

"Then, again," pursued Banks, "I note that an ex-prize fighter, a Roy McNair, is on your pay roll, out there, at two thousand seven hundred dollars a week. Surely, if it is necessary to introduce pugilism in a picture, there are many impecunious prize fighters who would be glad of so easy a job at seventy-five dollars a week, or even less. And——"

"Hold on!" interposed the treasurer, feeling his cold feet were at last on surer ground. "Roy McNair is a money-maker. He's only been in two features, so far. And each of them has cleaned up big. The fans——"

"Even so. He could be engaged for a mere tithe of that salary. Why, it is more, by the year, than any professional fighter ever made in the ring. And——"

"And we are getting bigger returns from him than any fight promoter ever hauled down from a champion," retorted the treasurer, his back to the wall. "Why, just the story of how he happened to get into the game, out there, has brought a million folks to see his pictures. You've most likely read about it. He——"

"I am not interested in press-agent yarns," reproved Banks. "Which reminds me: the salaries paid to the Preëminent's press staff are——"

"You see," said the treasurer, keen to pass along his favorite story, "it was like this. Barry Clive was our biggest money-maker. Mostly on account of his looks. McNair goes out to the Coast to patch up a bum set of lungs. His cousin, a little cuss named 'Cleppy' Worden, gets McNair a job on the lot, under a fake name. Clive gets fond of Worden's sweetheart, and beats Worden up, to make a hit with her. Then McNair sails into Clive, and puts Barry's good looks into the slag heap; and Ruhl is just going to have McNair pinched, when he finds out who he is and signs him up, instead. And ever since then——"

"Yes," yawned Banks, "very likely. But it's beside the point. Here is my conclusion, gentlemen; I believe, in fact, I know, I can put your wasteful organization on a much better paying basis. I can guarantee to cut the overhead and the host of needless expenditures, to the bone. But I must have a free hand. That must be assured to me. And I must go out there, to make at least a three-month study of conditions.

"If the idea appeals to you, I am ready to state my terms. If not—well, my time is limited. Take three minutes, if you choose, to decide on my proposition. Here is a rough draft of my plan and the fee I shall require. I'll step into the outer office, while you talk it over."

"But—but only three minutes——" quavered the president. "If you could wait until we——"

"The Magna Charta was signed in just three seconds," said Banks sternly. "And the battle of Austerlitz was won through a fifteen-second decision of Bonaparte's. Three minutes, please. Thank you."

Thus it chanced that Efficiency came to the Preëminent lot, at Hollywood. The first reaction to it was not unlike that caused by tossing a ravenous three-pound pickerel into a pool of busily merry goldfish.

The Preëminent had gone along, like most of the large picture concerns, following the line of least resistance when questions of price arose; and doing its humble share to hasten the hour of drastic readjustment which was to burst upon the movie world a few years later.

In this placidly spendthrift organization appeared a huge personage, in senatorial raiment and armed with almost boundless authority from the home office. To a genius for economical efficiency, he added a cloudless ignorance of the motion-picture industry. And, at once, he acquired all the local popularity hitherto divided between the typhoid germ and the man who devised the income tax.

To the Preëminent's Los Angeles officials, Hilary B. Banks resolved himself into a thing of horror. Beginning with the office force, he swung the sickle among happy heads which had grown large under the authority and sinecure of departmental jobs. The force, in one department after another, was cut down with relentless hand.

The surviving chiefs and subchiefs and

workers found themselves buried under the victims' duties, in addition to their own. Gone were the pleasantly dreamy times when five hours of moderately steady labor represented a self-respecting day's toil. Gone were afternoons of golf and of motoring and of sea bathing. Gone were the loafingly luxurious daylight sessions in the lobby or grill of the Alexandria. Gone was everything; except grinding labor. And the laments of the fired were mingled with the despairing anathemas of the nonfired.

Through this scene of wholesale carnage Hilary B. Banks strode in majestic unconcern.

When the average small employer discharges an incompetent or unneeded clerk, he must needs fight against a gloomy wonder as to what is to become of the unfortunate's wife and hypothetical twelve children. No such inefficiently useless thoughts ruffled the gigantic serenity of Hilary B. Banks. He was miles above maudlin sentiment. As justly expect the reaper to shed tears over the bearded grain or the poulterer to sigh above the decapitated forms of his market broilers, as to look for silly compunction in Banks.

True, he sought always to retain the men who had wives and many children; and to discharge the unattached. But that was because the much-married employee can be lashed into prodigies of work at which the independent bachelor would balk or kick, a hungry family being a mighty deterrent to false notions of independence. But sentiment, as such, had no place in Banks' demi-god cosmos—as hundreds of luckless Pre-eminent employees learned with absolutely no loss of time.

Having arranged office matters more to his liking, or less to his disliking, the expert turned his attention to deleting the ghastly overhead and leakage in the artistic departments of the business. Here, he felt, lay the true feast. All the rest had been a mere appetizer.

Roy McNair had been away, for two weeks, "on location." Late one night he returned to Los Angeles and tiptoed to his sleeping porch in the little Figueroa Street home of his cousin, Grover Cleveland—otherwise Cleppy—Worden, with whom he lived.

Roy moved with all the catlike silence of the trained athlete, as he groped his way into the bungalow. He did not at all mind

waking fat, little Cleppy Worden. Indeed, if Cleppy alone were to be considered, Roy would have entered the bungalow with a whoop and would have haled his cousin from bed and made him share a midnight lunch and listen to an account of everything that happened during the ten-day location job out in their old stamping ground in the Imperial Valley.

But, six months earlier, Cleppy had been married. He had married Jean Potter, a lovable wisp of a girl, who also worked for the Pre-eminent. The two had pooled their incomes and had gone to housekeeping in the Figueroa Street bungalow; taking Cleppy's adored cousin, Roy, to board with them.

Jean had kept on with her work at the lot. But, in a month or so, now, she was going to take a half-year vacation. And it was because of all which this coming vacation implied that Roy now came into the house on tiptoe, lest he disturb the sleep of one to whom full nights' rest were a necessity.

It was not until he and Jean and Cleppy were at breakfast next morning that Roy heard of the advent of Hilary B. Banks. When his host and hostess found that he was ignorant of the great news, both of them began to tell him about it at once.

Roy missed the sense of much of this staccato marital duet. But he gathered from it enough to learn that an elephantine efficiency guy had been sent out from New York and that he had made toad pie of the office force and that now he was starting to raise Cain, out on the lot. And wasn't it the horriddest thing Roy ever heard of? And just listen to what he did to poor "Hick" Fallon!

Roy listened eagerly and with what intelligence he could muster. This was something new, in McNair's life—this efficiency business. In his fighting days, his manager had handled all financial details. Since then, Roy had done his easy work for the Pre-eminent and had drawn and banked his weekly salary—a salary whose magnitude even now dumfounded him. Beyond that, he knew nothing of finance—and cared less. Still, he could see the matter was bothering Jean. And, awkwardly, he strove to turn the talk to some less worrisome channel.

"You two are both working, to-day, aren't you?" he asked, after clucking sympathetically with his tongue against the roof of his mouth as the dual complaint reached a mo-

mentary halt. "Because, even if you aren't, you both of you ought to come out there. I want you to see *me*. What do you think I'm going to be? I kicked like a steer when Ruhl told me about it, last week; but he's promised the get-up won't make me sissyish.

"He says the audiences will see it's just a joke, the minute they set eyes on me. Come out and see me be *it*. They're going to have my costume ready by ten o'clock. Ruhl's going to shoot the scene, some time before noon. He doesn't want to give me time to get used to wearing the things. Says the awkwarder I am in 'em, the funnier it'll be. But I kind of hate to do it, at that!"

"Do *what*?" demanded the mystified Jean. "Roy McNair, honestly, I think you can say more and tell less, when you want to, than any three men on the lot. What's it all about?"

Pleased that he had roused her interest and that he had switched the theme from something which made her unhappy, Roy deigned to translate.

"Ruhl's worked a new stunt into that 'With Fist and Brain' picture I'm doing. He thinks a lot of the idea. It doesn't make any kind of a hit with me. The s'ciety chap who proves to his girl that he can handle himself in a scrap as well as the rough-necks, and gets into a cham'nship fight—Lord, but the p'fessional bunch will laugh their fool heads off at that pipe dream!—this chap takes a whirl at being a kind of knight errant—whatever that is.

"That's Ruhl's new scheme. The hero's girl gets insultedlike by a tough, on the street, one evening. So, next night, he dresses up like a girl and sa'nters down that street. The tough sees him and thinks it's a girl. Dim light, you know. And the tough sasays up to him, and the hero pretty near rips him into nine pieces. The tough's all stooped to find the classy-looking girl punching him on the jaw. And he——"

"Huh!" grunted Cleppy Worden, in 'no-wise impressed. "Female impers'nation stuff, hey? Rotten! All right for a Sadie-chap. But punk, for a two-handed he-guy like you! You're on the screen to make folks set up. Not to make 'em give you the merry ho-ho. If I was you, I'd——"

"That's what I said to Ruhl," McNair defended himself. "But he tells me I'm dead wrong. This won't be a reg'lar female impers'nation. Just a kind of broolesque. There's to be about fifty feet of me climb-

ing into the she-duds, wrong way; and fifty more of me trying to walk natural in 'em, and breathe without smashing the loose cor-set. And——"

"Corset!" groaned Cleppy, while Jean squealed joyously. "*Corset! Geel!*"

"And," Roy continued, trying not to listen, "then there's just a flash of me, close up, as I start out of the taxi toward the dark corner where the tough is standing. Then a flash of him, getting a glimpse of me in the dark and starting toward me. The rest is to be filmed fifty feet away—where he comes alongside and all—up to the place in the fight where my she-clothes have all slipped their moorings and busted out at the seams, in the whaling I give him.

"I'm not saying I like the notion, even yet. But you know how Ruhl is. Once he gets one of his pet plans, a feller feels like a child beater for refusing to do what he wants. Ruhl takes it like it was the roon of all his life. So I ended up by saying I'd stand for it. And, anyhow," he added defiantly, "it's a heap better than to have to make love down some girl's neck, while the camera close-ups the two of us. That's the part of this game I sure hate."

"That's because you've never been in love," Jean assured him. "And, honestly, you make screen love awfully well, Roy—for a middleweight champion. Reine Houston told me you——"

"Rub it in!" grumbled McNair. "Next you'll be saying——"

"No, I won't, either. And I think it's a fine idea—the dressing you up in girl's clothes. I wouldn't miss seeing it filmed, to-day, if I had to walk out to the lot, bare-foot. I'm going to get within six inches of the camera line and——"

"And guy me for weeks afterward," complained Roy. "I was a happy man, till you started in guying me. You don't seem to have any respect at all for a real live star. Never mind, kid!" he broke off, lest she take his plaint seriously. "I'd rather be guyed by you than flattered by most girls. You're all right. Say, by the way, I spoke to Ruhl about your jumping off the ledge in that 'Golden Hearts' picture you folks are working in. And he says it'll be all right about having a 'double' do the jump. He sent a memo to Bemis about it. He said the scene wasn't to be rehearsed till some time to-day. He wanted Bemis to wait till we came back; because Ruhl wants to

go over it with him first. So don't bother your head, any more, about having to do the jump."

He spoke fast, avoiding her eye. But the look of grateful relief in Cleppy's face told him that both husband and wife had been worried over the possible need for this mild feat of acrobatics.

"Thank you, ever so much," said Jean simply, and with no embarrassment at all. "I was sure Mr. Ruhl would make it all right, if you spoke to him about it. And—oh, I do hope we won't be working, at the time of your wonderful scene!"

But, a few hours later, Jean and Cleppy had quite forgotten their amused interest in McNair's female impersonation. They had troubles of their own.

Roy, with the help of his dresser and a snickering wardrobe man, got into his feminine togs. Then, blasphemously, he got out of them; and went to Section 7 of the studio; there to make a conscientiously bungling effort to don them under the battery of two cameras. After which, for the further benefit of the camera, and coached by the delighted Malachi Ruhl, he did a succession of shamblingly ill-balanced steps, which were supposed to depict the pseudo girl's efforts to walk in high heels.

Then Ruhl directed him to the outdoor section where the scene was already set and the characters waiting for the street encounter between the distinguished pugilist and the tough.

Spurred on by the precepts and presence of Hilary B. Banks, Ruhl was trying to obviate some of the usual long pauses between bits of camera action. And he was doing it, with monstrous ill will. Banks was a festering sore in Ruhl's soul. As the chief director himself expressed it: "I'm getting to hate relations of his that I never heard of."

Followed by Ruhl and the two camera men, Roy McNair set off across the lot toward the section assigned for his scene. He was beginning to take a morbid amusement in this weird rôle of his. And the torment of the more or less mercifully adjusted corsets and high-heeled shoes made him doubly grateful that he was a man. He did not realize how plausible was his disguise—thanks to brilliantly artistic draping and make-up and to the slender grace of his athletic body. At a careless glance, under the mask of cream-colored paint he gave the impression of being a strikingly handsome

and somewhat Amazonian woman in her late twenties.

A little to the left of his route to the appointed section, a group of men and women were gathered, in evident keen interest, about some pivotal point. And in the group's center a man was talking, loudly. As Roy paused, idly, he heard a woman's voice make reply to the man's oration. And the tone of the voice was one of frightened unhappiness. Moreover, the voice was Jean's. Hoisting his skirts out of the way of his stride, Roy broke into a run.

It had been a field day for Hilary B. Banks. He had been on the lot since eight o'clock. Apart from the joy of catching a number of employees coming to work disgracefully late, he had found no less than seven major items of extravagance to jot down for future reference. And now, as he was about to depart for lunch, he happened upon a set scene, with several people in make-up loitering around it. Pausing in front of Bemis, who was inspecting an artificial five-foot ledge with a painted ridge of rock behind it, Banks inquired sharply:

"What's the meaning of all this delay? Why don't you get these people to work? The light is good."

"We're waiting for Mr. Ruhl, sir," answered the assistant director, as civilly as might be. "He wants to handle this himself. And just now he's in No. 7, working on a scene in the McNair feature. He'll be here, presently."

"And in the meantime, I suppose——"

Banks stopped midway in a sarcastic retort, to stare at two women. One of them was standing beside a fat little man. The other was sitting on a soft mattress at the foot of the ledge. Both wore decidedly bizarre clothes. And both were dressed precisely alike.

"What's the idea?" queried Banks. "Twins?"

"No, sir," replied Bemis, nodding toward the woman who sat on the mattress. "That is a 'double.' She is doubling for Mrs. Worden, yonder—in the jump from that ledge. The action calls for Mrs. Worden to be escaping from bandits. We took that part, last week, out on location. She comes to a ledge and hesitates; then jumps down. Mrs. Worden is to appear at the top of the ledge and crouch for the jump. Then the double is to do the jump itself. And we're to get a close-up of Mrs. Worden lying senseless

at the foot of the ledge, afterward—and of the cowboys finding her there. She——”

“What’s the use of the double, then?” rasped Banks. “That drop is a good deal less than six feet. And there’s a big mattress at the bottom. Why can’t she do the whole thing; and save all the expense of hiring another woman and providing a dress for that woman and all? Why not, eh? It’s one of the most asinine pieces of expenditure, in a small way, that I’ve seen since I’ve been in this spendthrift hole. She looks strong and healthy. Why can’t she do her own jumping, instead of——”

Cleppy had left his troubled wife, and came edging timorously up to the great man. Ranging alongside, he lifted his plump little bulk on tiptoe and whispered mumblingly in the unwilling ear of Hilary B. Banks. Bemis swore, venomously, under his breath. And the “double” cast a reassuringly pitying glance at poor Jean.

“Rot!” stormed Banks, scarce waiting to hear the end of Cleppy’s faltering confidence. “Utter rot! If she’s well enough to be chased by bandits and to lie unconscious at the foot of the cliff, she’s well enough to jump off it. And that’s what she’ll do. Here, you!” to Bemis. “Send that double about her business. And, after this, see that I’m consulted, before you hire a double, for any part at all.”

“But you don’t understand, sir!” shrilled Cleppy. “I just told you, my wife——”

“I understand!” snapped Banks. “I understand, all right. And there’s something I want you and that woman to understand, too. I want you to understand that I’m not interested in your domestic affairs. You people are here to do your work. If any of you aren’t able to do that work, you can stop drawing your exorbitant pay. You’re not going to put the Preëminent to the needless expense of hiring a high-priced understudy—I mean, double. Get that, all of you. And you, especially!” wheeling on Jean. “You’ll make that jump, when the time comes, or you’ll turn over your whole job here to some one who can——”

“I’m sorry, sir,” said Jean, trembling. “But Mr. Ruhl was kind enough to——”

“I’m running this place,” thundered Banks, furious at the wordless murmur of sympathy and indignation from the fast-increasing group. “I’m running it. Not Mr. Ruhl or any one else. Get that through your head, once and for all.”

“Looka here!” flashed Cleppy. “I don’t aim to let any man speak that way to my wife. Cut it out, before I——”

“You’re fired,” ordained Banks, in his best voice. “Go to the cashier and get your time. I’ll not stand for any back talk or bluster here. Not from anybody. Get out!”

“If—if my husband is discharged for defending me,” spoke up Jean, very gallantly indeed, “then I——”

“Then you’ll get out, too?” flared Banks. “You can bet you will. I’ll have no malingerers on this lot, or any one talking back to me. Get that, too. All of you. I am in charge here; and I——”

Between him and his scowling audience stepped a strikingly handsome woman. Tall she was and broad of shoulder and deep of chest; and of wondrous athletic carriage. In her make-up and picture hat and exquisitely modeled dress she was a sight to make any one pause.

Hilary B. Banks, like George Washington, “ever had an eye for a fine woman.” But his eye was nearsighted, in spite of its Napoleonic gleam. And he would not mar the classic strength of his features by wearing glasses. Moreover this woman had come to a halt with her back to the sun. To Banks, she gave the impression of gloriously vital femininity. And there was a light in her made-up eyes which might well have been taken for a glare.

“Stunning!” said Banks, aloud, in patronizing approval. But his kindly praise went unheard.

“You’re firing the Wordens?” she demanded. “I warn you, if they go, I go. Contract or no contract. What’s the trouble, anyway?”

“He—he ordered Jean to jump down off that ledge,” whimpered Cleppy. “After I’d told him——”

“You swine!” blazed the woman, advancing furiously upon Banks.

Her voice, he noted, was mighty deep for a woman’s. It might even have been called a baritone. And her insult had been all but spat in his face. He peered intently at the flashy creature who had dared affront him, and whose voice was so ill a match for the dainty costume. And, as his eyes focused on the insulter, he saw that this was no woman, but a man in woman’s apparel. There could be no possible doubt. The square jaw, the sinewy throat, the big and rough hands, the

whole insistent aura of masculinity—all proved that this person belonged to the type of so-called artist, known as a "female impersonator."

By repute and by anecdote, Banks knew of such actors. He had read that they are recruited from among the smallest and most fragile men in the profession. His first twinge of amaze merged into righteous indignation. This whippersnapper had insulted him, here in public; in his own monarchy where he held power of financial life and death. In a second, the indignation had turned to boiling rage.

It was not enough to rap out a dictum of discharge and then to turn haughtily away. He had been spoken to as never before in his triumphant life. The stripling had called him a swine. This demanded something more drastic than a mere discharge—if Hilary B. Banks wanted to keep the reverence and fear of the Preëminent throng. In a trice, the Napoleonic, if flaming mind of Hilary B. Banks was made up. Even while Roy McNair stood blocking his way and with lips parted as if to spit some fresh affront at him, Banks attacked.

Shooting forth a mighty right arm, he gripped the unprepared McNair by the neck, yanked him forward and prepared to throw the mincing female impersonator across his knee for a humiliating spank. Such a public degradation would sting the youth far more keenly than would a fist blow.

But, oddly enough, McNair did not reach his punisher's knee. Somewhere during that brief yanking passage through the air, he melted from Banks' Herculean grasp. Scarce had the efficiency expert's fingers closed on his neckband, than Roy had wriggled free, leaving a handful of valuable dress goods in Banks' fist. And, in practically the same motion, he let drive his left for his assailant's jaw.

Had that punch gone home, the efficiency man would have been totally inefficient for some seconds. But a pugilist's blow is not struck by the arm and fist alone. It is delivered by aid of the entire body, from neck to toe. And in this case, the feet played McNair false. Under the wrench of his effort, both high French heels, already overstrained by clumsy walking, turned under. The right slipper twisted completely to one side, all but throwing McNair off his balance. As a result, his left-hander fell short. Instead of connecting hard with the point

of Banks' jaw, it plowed grazingly along the side of his throat, bruising the flesh as it passed.

The blow had a dual effect on Banks. It showed him to his own satisfaction that his opponent had not the strength or skill to hit a damaging wallop. And the quick hurt of it snapped his frayed temper. Into the fight he charged, like a mad bull. And, McNair gave ground at his rush.

Hilary B. Banks was built on lines of great strength. And, in younger days, he had prided himself not a little on his boxing prowess. He still took a moderate amount of athletic exercise; and his two hundred and fifty pounds and six feet two inches of husky physique were far less flabby than the normal business man's. He welcomed this chance to prove, with his fists, what already he had proved with his brain—that he was a master of men. That his present antagonist was six inches shorter and ninety pounds lighter than himself, did not detract at all from his own fierce joy in the battle.

As Banks rushed, McNair not only gave ground, but actually turned and fled. To one side he sprang, barely in time to avoid the other's bull rush. Then he took three floundering steps, and came to a standstill. During the fraction of a second, before his bulkier foe could change direction and charge again, Roy utilized the breathing space to kick his tortured feet free of the encumbering shoes that had made him as slow and as awkward as a novice.

The shoes were off, as Banks bore down upon him. There was no space to side-step or even to get set for punch or parry. Instinctively, McNair ducked and wriggled into a clinch. His lovely picture hat was scraped free of his head—and the fluffy wig along with it—as the top of his skull brushed beneath Banks' deadly swing.

Banks sought to hold on with one arm and to punch Roy's upturned face with the other. He might as readily have held a buzzing, black hornet. McNair was free, and dancing out of reach before the constrictor arm could tighten.

His feet untrammelled, the obstructing picture hat gone from in front of his bothered eyes, Roy at last was ready. Banks came for him anew. This time, McNair did not retreat. His teeth were bared, his eyes were a pair of burning pin points under his thatch of brow. His jaw was tucked into

his muscular neck. An impatient tug of one hand had ripped the ruffy skirt from hem to belt. His legs, like his liberated feet, had plenty of sea room. Once more, he was a grimly joyous fighting machine—a figure as menacing as it was ludicrous. Torn finery flapping wide, he met his enemy's onset.

The men came together with a clash. Once more McNair ducked the flailing right-hander, but this time he did not seek a clinch. Instead, his left found its way, with a thud, to Banks' ample meridian. And his right banged jarringly over the big man's heart.

Banks clawed futilely at his elusive foe. Roy was in no hurry to leave the close-quarters range into which he had darted. Before clinching, he landed two more short-arm lefts to the wind and another right to the heart. A woeful grunt of pain and amazement from his opponent gave homage to the battering-ram force of Roy's infighting.

As McNair danced away, now, Banks did not rush him. The efficiency expert was a good judge of efficiency in other matters besides business. And he had discovered that this female impersonator knew how to box. Moreover, that he could hit an unbelievably hard blow for a man of his slight build. Apparently, the fight was not to be won in a single devastating punch, and in the soul of Hilary B. Banks anxiety was born.

He knew, of course, that his enemy was no match for him. But the fellow's skill might prolong the bout to an annoying length. And the rapturous and noninterfering crowd might be treated merely to the unpleasant spectacle of a big and powerful man outfighting a small and weakly youngster and not to the lightning-swift, condign punishment Banks had planned. Instead of striking the assembly with awe, he might well arouse in it the contempt that is the meed of the giant who conquers a game pygmy. Wherefore, Banks awaited Roy's next move, relying on the chance advantage of the boxer who lets his adversary take the aggressive.

McNair did not keep him waiting. Like a whirlwind, he returned. He dashed at his gigantic foe, head lowered. Banks planted himself firmly and struck with his left. A charging fighter is often an easy mark for the cool antagonist who stands and watches. But, somehow, this case seemed an exception.

Banks' well-planned blow whizzed mur-

derously past the ear of the man who scarce moved his head to avoid it and who slackened his pace not at all. And Banks' alert right guard was penetrated with equal ease. Then, before he could clinch or so much as push Roy away, McNair was at his wind and heart with a shower of skilled punches that turned Banks deadly ill.

This was not the first nor the tenth time Roy McNair had fought men much taller than himself. And, instinctively, he was following the accepted tactics for a short man against a tall. Namely, to play for the body until the tortured heart and stomach forced the larger fighter to bend over, from sheer pain, and to leave his jaw exposed and within easy reach.

Sick and dizzy as he was, Banks at last managed to stagger away. McNair was after him like a crazy wild cat. Banks smote with all his remaining strength. McNair had grown careless of the other's awkward leads, and now he paid the bill for overconfidence. He shifted his head, to let the big fist go past him. But, carelessness made him move it too short a distance. Banks' hard-driven left fist caught him full on the cheek bone. Under the tremendous impact, Roy's rush was halted with dismaying suddenness. Roy's head snapped back; and his body followed it. His shoulders struck ground, ahead of any of the rest of him.

This sudden victory went to Banks' head. Craving to avenge his parlor hurts and the spectacle he had presented in being battered helplessly about by his smaller foe, he leaped forward, foaming at the mouth. Back went one of his well-shod feet, for a punitive kick in the ribs of his prone adversary.

McNair might well have passed quietly into dreamland, under the force of the blow that had floored him, if that blow had chanced to land three inches lower. But the cheek bone is not a vital spot. The impact had knocked him down, thanks as much to his own charging momentum as to anything else, and his head sang from the clout he had received.

But such details are as nothing to a well-trained professional. By the time his body hit ground, McNair was gathering his legs under him and bracing himself to spring up. He had half arisen, therefore, by the time Banks' vicious kick reached him. Thus the swinging boot missed his ribs and caught him alongside the one knee which still remained on the ground.

A howl of wrath from the crowd, at sight of the kick, was echoed by a wild Irish yell from Roy himself. His body left ground and went through the air with the speed of a catapult, straight for the man who had kicked him. The filthy, unsportsmanly cowardice of Banks had succeeded in doing what no professional pugilist had ever been able to do. It robbed McNair of all temper control and turned him into a screaming madman. Yet, subconsciously, his fighting faculties remained cool and as scientifically deadly as ever.

Flying at Banks and brushing aside a ponderous lunge, he hurled himself on the big man. His left and his right in lightning succession sank themselves deep into Banks' stomach. Under that frightful concussion, Banks doubled forward, purple, breathless, agape, his eyes bulging. Before he could right himself or lift his futile guard, Roy McNair had "got set," and had launched the blow for which he had been preparing throughout the fight. Driven with all his science and with all his rage—augmented scientific force, Roy's left fist found its mark. A bare inch to the right of the jaw point it landed. His right fist followed it, coming to anchor higher up on the victim's countenance.

Hilary B. Banks shuddered convulsively, from head to heel. His knee joints turned to hot tallow. With a little gurgling sob, he collapsed in a heap and lay there, still shuddering, his eyes opening and shutting with an unseeing regularity.

Roy McNair nodded, good-naturedly, in response to the shrieked plaudits of the crowd. His fury had departed with Banks' consciousness. He turned away, a bit ashamed of himself. And his glance fell on Jean Worden, standing on a chair at the edge of the exultantly clamorous circle. Frowning, he hurried over to her.

"I'm so sorry!" he blurted. "I—I didn't think of you being here. I didn't think of anything except—except what the cur tried to do. I—oh, Lord, but I hope it didn't shock you or hurt you or—"

"I think," said Jean gratefully, as she laid one little hand on his arm, "I think it did me more good than all the doctors on earth. It was—it was *glorious*, Roy!"

"Good!" exclaimed McNair, grinning as expansively as a mischievous collie. "That was all I cared about. The rest of it was a

picnic. Or it will be, when I can get rid of these flappy clothes."

He went over to where Malachi Ruhl and a score of others were striving to restore consciousness to the stricken Banks. Tugging at Ruhl's coat, McNair pulled him to one side.

"That female impersonation stuff is off," proclaimed Roy. "I'm going back to shed this trousseau and get into a pair of honest-to-heaven pants. Sorry to dis'point you but—"

"Disappoint me, huh?" snarled the anguished Ruhl. "Look a' what you done! You've likely killed the poor slob. That'll mean—"

"No, it won't, either," McNair reassured him. "I—— Hold on, a second. I'll fix it."

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Hilary B. Banks shiver all over and struggle to a slumped, sitting posture. Beckoning a camera man to follow, Roy went to the disheveled and bleeding efficiency expert, and stood looking quietly down at him. Banks was blinking dazedly about. At sight of Roy, he straightened. Through a hedge of broken teeth he blubbered, pointing a shaky forefinger at McNair:

"I want that man fired! Instantly! And I want——"

"What you want and what you get, in this good old world," philosophized McNair, "are plenty different. You wanted a cinch victory, just now. And what you got—well, you got it, good and plenty and then a few!"

"Who—what—are you?" blithered the efficiency expert, his hazy vision taking in a glimpse of tiger muscle revealed by the burst dress sleeve. "Who—what——"

"I'm Roy McNair," said the pugilist, choosing his words and speaking with impressive slowness. "And I've given you the licking you've been needing ever since you came out here."

"You're discharged!" bellowed the sick Banks. "And I shall sue——"

"No, I'm not. And no you won't," cheerily answered Roy. "Too many things would get into print. And maybe on the screen, too. This camera man, here, looked out for that part of it. He kept grinding, from the time I spoke to you. The pictures will show the Preëminent's efficiency expert trying to pick on a smaller chap who knocks him out. And don't forget you kicked me, while I was on the ground."

"I——"

"That's what the pictures will show, in court or anywhere else. And the papers will tell a pretty yarn, too, about why you tried to fire poor little Jean Worden; and how you fired her husband for trying to take her part. All that yarn will sound grand in New York, won't it? The pictures will go big, there, too. How about it? Am I fired?"

Hilary B. Banks gurgled, made as though to speak, and fell to nursing his damaged face.

"Am I fired?" repeated McNair.

Slowly, gloweringly, Banks shook his head. Dizzy as he was, he could visualize the screened evidence of what had just happened; and he could hear the Homeric laughter of the world—*his* world.

"Is Jean Worden fired?" pursued McNair. "Is her husband fired? Does she have to make that jump?"

Again the impotently wrathful gurgle, followed by the headshake.

"Good!" applauded Roy. "I've got your word. And I've got the pictures. Better go wash up. That left eye of yours is due to look like it was a thunderstorm, in another hour or two."

He moved away. The camera man pattered after him.

"Say, Mr. McNair," babbled the man. "I didn't like to give you away, back there. But I didn't take any of that scrap betwixt you and Banks. I didn't even have the machine pointed at either of you."

"You know that, do you?" asked Roy.

"Sure, I do. I never——"

"And I know it, too," went on McNair gravely. "And that makes two of us that know it. And here's a nice greasy ten-spot for you, to keep anybody else from knowing it. Least of all, that nice, good Mr. Banks. Something tells me he's due to start East to-night. I'd sure hate to have him postpone his trip, just because you forgot to grind your measly picture box."



GOOD PAY FOR BRAINS

PESSIMISTIC young men who prize their own cleverness highly are in the habit of saying that this is an age in which brains are not well paid. It is a false cry. Emerson, for instance, thought nothing of traveling in mid-winter from Boston to Iowa to deliver a lecture for a fifty-dollar fee. Compare that with what Gilbert K. Chesterton, or any other well-known man, receives now for an evening's talk. The contrast is convincing. Brains were never so well rewarded financially as they are to-day in America.



ONE LUXURY AT A TIME

WHEN Graham B. Nichol, now chief of the division of information in the revenue department in Washington, first set about the business of making his own way, unaided, untrammelled, and alone, in the world, there were frequent periods when his finances ran below the zero mark. But he made shift always to seem prosperous and to dress the part.

One evening, however, in a moment of absent-mindedness, he let slip a hint of how he solved his financial problems. He had shown up at an elaborate social affair resplendent as the pearly dawn in a full-dress suit that set off admirably his athletic and graceful form.

One of his friends commented on his splendid and rich appearance, following it up with this:

"But you seem to be starting a new fashion. I notice that you never wear a watch with your evening clothes."

"No," assented Nichol; "I never have both of them out at the same time."

K a d j a m a n

By H. de Vere Stacpoole

Author of "Glued," "It Is Paris!" Etc.

Tuan Marop, down there in Borneo, was capable of cutting out more than his right eye if it offended him. Perhaps Kray was right in guessing that Tuan was akin to those who have saved us in the past from backsliding into beasts

KRAY'S little son was playing with the big Siberian pup in the doorway. From where I sat I could see the child and the dog, and beyond them and framed by the door opening the pine-clad mountains cutting the blue sky of summer, and beyond these Omstjall, the snow peak and grandfather of the glacier that takes its name.

Kray has given up hunting these five years and is now manager of the Sellagman Salmon Canning Company, at least he looks after the fishing and the canning and gets two thousand dollars a year for the job, while I expect the real manager, the man who looks after the New York office and the prospectuses and so forth, gets ten—maybe more. I don't know, neither does Kray, neither does he care. He says he has hunted everything in his time but the dollar, and that a free life in the open air is all he wants now that he has done with hunting and got married. He was sixty-seven years old when he married and didn't look more than fifty, so he says; he doesn't look more than fifty to-day, at a little distance.

He has hunted everywhere and shot everything and he started his business at twenty so that when he married he had been at the job nearly fifty years. That is a long time, for a year in the wilds is longer than a year in a city and the risks are greater.

Said Kray, looking at the child and the pup: "Olaff takes after his mother, don't he? Same flax-colored hair coming. First I thought he was going to be darker, but it's coming true enough. Scandinavian flax, there's no other color like it. Gets on with the pup, don't he? I saw the old dog lickin' them both yesterday same as if Olaff was hers, too. I've sent her off to the Skagga fjord till the autumn."

"The big Siberian dog I saw here last?"

"Yes, the mother of that pup. I've sent her off till the autumn. Olaff will be bigger then."

"But why did you send her off—because she was treating Olaff as if he were her pup?"

"Well, not exactly," said Kray, "and yet maybe that was a bit of the reason. But mainly I expect it was something that happened years ago that rattled me; thirty years ago it was when I was with Beconi in Borneo on the exploring job. He was after minerals and if he'd stuck to them in his drinks as well as his prospectin' he'd have pulled through; but the whisky did him. I'd been out East with a chap called Milner hunting, and we struck Sarawak coast. Milner was going home from there, and I was paid off with a bonus. I could have gone back with him to England, and maybe would only for this chap Beconi who happened along while we were waiting at Bintulu for a boat.

"Boats in those days weren't plentiful along the coast, and you didn't often know where they were going when they came, but as long as they took you somewhere else it didn't much matter. That's how we were placed at Bintulu when out of the sea haze one day a little paddle-wheel boat came snortin' and tied up to the rotten old wharf where the Sea Dyak children used to sit fishing when they weren't playing head-hunting with wooden *parangs*.

"The *Tanjong Data* was the name of the boat, and she was bound for Rejang and Kuching and ports beyond with a mixed cargo and a big monkey for the Dutch government that had been caught somewhere to the north of the Tubao River. The *Tanjong* had blown a cylinder cover off or something, and she lay at Bintulu a week

for repairs and while she was repairing and taking more cargo I was often on board talking to the captain and Beconi, who had come by her and was sticking on board till the last minute, seeing that his cabin was a sight more comfortable than shore quarters. The monkey interested me a lot, for in all my shooting I'd never come across the big monkeys much, and this chap was big. He must have weighed all of two hundred pounds, and he was turning gray with age. He was what the Dyaks call a Mayas Kassa, which means an orang-utan, with a face like a full moon. I'm not joking. There are three kinds of orang-utans; the Mayas Kassa, the Mayas Rabei, and the Mayas Tjaping, but the Kassa takes the bun for beauty. I never did see such a face. It was like nothing so much as a full moon broadened out, same as you see it when the moon's rising through a bank of mist and in the middle of it two eyes and a nose, to say nothing of the mouth. That was what the monkey was like, and they had him in a cage close to the engine-room hatch, and he'd sit there the day long, scratching himself and talking to himself, his eyes traveling about round the decks as if he was watching something passing, and sometimes he'd look up at you, but he'd never meet your eye square, at least not for longer than the flick of a snapshot shutter.

"Taking him altogether he was near five feet in height and his chest looked as thick as a tree as he sat there scratching the fur on it, his hands were as big as hams; and I reckon he could have taken two ordinary men and knocked their heads together same as if they'd been two rag dolls.

"Beconi took a lot of interest in the chap, too, and we'd sit under the double awning they'd rigged aft of the funnel and have our drinks and watch Kadjaman, for that was his name, given him because he was caught at Kadjaman, which is north of Fort Bellaja near the Tubao River. Beconi, when he had the whisky in him, would stand up for Kadjaman having a soul of his own, same as a man; but if the whisky was out, and maybe a touch of liver on him, he'd be the other way about. I used to use the monkey on him for fun, or to see the state of his health, and then Kadjaman would sit watching us and pretending not to.

"We didn't know that he'd been at work of nights, when the whole of Bintulu and the chaps on board were snoring. He'd

worked on the cage bars, loosening them by degrees and little by little, so that the time might come when one big pluck could rip them out.

"No, sir, we didn't know that or we couldn't have sat there sucking our cheroots and bug juice and talking about monkeys having souls.

II.

"Now I must tell you that Milner had a servant, Tuan Marop by name, and Tuan had his child with him, a little chap of six or so, named Ting. Mrs. Tuan had been dead over a year, and he'd brought Ting down to Bintulu to leave him there while he accompanied Milner on his expedition. Ting and Kadjaman had struck up a friendship of sorts. The child would talk to the brute in the Dyak lingo and Kadjaman would scratch himself and talk back in orang-utan. I tell you it was talking.

"You've seen a child talking to a dog—you've heard Olaff talking to that pup; well that was the sort of thing, only Ting wasn't a soft little chap like Olaff. Ting was a Dyak, Sarabas Dyak, with a hundred generations of head hunters behind him, and what he was saying to Kadjaman didn't seem popsy-wopsy talk from what I could gather, though I didn't know a word of his lingo.

"I asked Beconi to ask Tuan to listen and report, and Tuan said Ting wasn't talking Dyak, but the monkey language. Seemed to think it a joke, but he was in dead earnest all the same. There is a monkey language as sure as there's anything else in this world, and what they say to each other, Lord only knows, but they say a lot, and Ting seemed to have picked it up same as children do with foreign languages. Tuan said that the Dyak children, now and again and once in a hundred years, so to speak, could pick out what the monkeys were saying when they held their jamborees in the forest, but he'd never seen or heard of a child talking to a monkey before like Ting did, for the reason that the Dyaks didn't keep monkeys in cages and so the children hadn't a chance. He seemed proud of the fact, same as if Ting had taken a prize at college.

"So things went on like that till the *Tanjong Data* had done tinkering at her cylinder covers, and the day before leaving came, with the docks all of a clatter with

fruit cases for down coast and rolls of matting and boxes of tobacco and Lord knows what else and the niggers all bug house with being driven and getting in each other's way.

"Then, coming along four o'clock in the evening, when things had settled down and the breeze was rising, Beconi and I were sitting in deck chairs talking and saying good-by to Milner and the captain. Tuan had brought us up some tea which the steward had made for us, and Ting was playing near the gangway by himself. All of a sudden, swish! the bars of the cage went, and Kadjaman was out.

"I was sitting with my back to the cage, and when I turned I saw Kadjaman on the deck, a cage bar in his fist, and the bar was in the act of dashing a nigger's brains out. It was all as sudden as that. I didn't wait to see more. It was every man for himself, and I had no charter to clear the decks of the *Tanjong Data* of orang-utans armed with five-foot iron bars; besides I hadn't my gun with me. I guess if I'd had a popgun even, I wouldn't have taken a nose dive into the Bintulu River like I did. A man's courage lies in his gun often enough—unless he's fronting a moral duty, which I wasn't. I just dived and got to the other bank and watched.

"Every one had skipped from that deck either overboard or through the saloon hatch and there was Kadjaman with his bar in his fist, a free man, so to say, soul or no soul. He was pretty busy, too. He wanted more blood, it seemed, but he was afraid of going below for it, afraid of traps, so he smashed away at the saloon skylight cover, beating the brass rods of it to knots. Then he beat the starboard rail; in fact, he gave that steamer the biggest thrashing of her life. Maybe it was his having been kept in a cage six months that was coming out, or maybe it was just his own nature; but he did take it out of that old hooker. He near beat the cockroaches out of her, and you can fancy that the chaps hidden in the cabin had a lively time expecting him down the saloon companionway.

"However, all of a sudden, he let up. I could see him standing sniffing the air as if he smelt danger. He stood like that for half a tick and then he stooped down and picked up something from the deck and threw it over his arm like a sack. Same moment he made a jump for the gangway and next he was on the bank.

"I saw now what he was carrying—and heard it, too—it was Ting. The child had been playing on the deck as I told you and hadn't got below with the others. Maybe he'd sat admiring the ways of his friend, but that's as may be; the fact was he was now shouting murder or what sounded like it in Dyak and Tuan was responding.

"Tuan had found a creese down below, and, before the monkey had made twenty yards, he was on deck and after him to recover his property. Beconi and Milner, who'd armed themselves, were after Tuan to lend a hand, and there was I stuck on the opposite bank only able to look on.

"On the flat Kadjaman was nowhere, but once he'd got among the trees he was the whole of the circus and the elephant.

"Just by the river there, the undergrowth's so thick you can't go more than a yard in a precious long minute. You should see it; wait-a-bit thorns three inches long, python *lianas* that twine about and knot themselves just like snakes, ground tangle that gets you just by the ankle. That's what the goin's like, and Kadjaman was up in the branches. I don't know how he got along with Ting, swinging himself from branch to branch. I expect Ting clung to him for safety and so saved trouble and gave him the free use of both arms.

"Anyhow he got away—got clear away, leaving Tuan lamenting and the rest of them pretty well spent. Then they came back, and I met them, having swum the river, and we went back on board, and you should have seen that deck—the rail bent and skylight hashed and lashed so's to look like nothing, and a dead nigger on the planks with a hundred thousand flies on his head like a buzzing turban.

"Tuan had come back with us. He'd altered in color a bit, but otherwise he seemed same as ordinary. He knew quite well there was no use chasing any more after Kadjaman, yet all the same he got his discharge from Milner that night, and he went off with a blowgun. That was all the weapons he wanted, so he said, but he didn't catch Kadjaman.

III

"Next morning the *Tanjong Data* started with Milner on board, leaving us in that God-forsaken place face to face with the mosquitoes. Havana mosquitoes are bad, but these chaps laid over them, striped

brutes like tigers. Then there were the Sanut *tingal pala* ants; these chaps bite you and hang on with their teeth like bulldogs; if you pull them off they leave their heads behind. A cheerful place, with nothing to listen to but the rainy noise of the palm leaves, shaken by the wind and the howling of Dyak songs from the village, and nothing to see but the Bintulu coming down to the sea between banks of trees that seemed crowding one another into the river.

"There are parts of the Bintulu where no man could make a landing on the banks, by reason of the tangle of growth, vines and whatnots; but at Bintulu it's been cleared, though in those days it was had enough within half a mile of the town.

"Beconci wasn't going to start for three days, so I had my work cut out killing time and mosquitoes. I'd sit sometimes by the river watching the gunfish by the hour. You'd see them prospecting along the bank, and then when they'd marked down an insect sitting on a leaf, they'd take aim and spit, letting fly a jet of water aimed sure as a rifle bullet. Then I'd sometimes watch the Dyak girls going about, the rummiest sight, in their brass arm rings and leg wear, and sometimes I'd sit and talk to Tuan, for Beconci had taken him on as a servant.

"He didn't talk English bad, and at first I tried to comfort him about Ting, till I found out he wasn't needing any. It wasn't that he hadn't been fond of the child, but it was just that he seemed to reckon Ting dead. Not corpsed, but dead to him and his tribe. I had some talks with Tuan on the business then and afterward, and he told me that the big monkeys took off Dyak children now and then and sometimes the children were got back after they'd been living a year or two with the monks, and that they weren't any use; they weren't humans any more. Tuan, though he didn't know anything much more than the difference between the two ends of a blowgun, said all men had been monkeys once, but so long ago that man had forgotten, and if a child was to go and live in the trees with the monkeys he'd revert to the old times in a year or two, and not twenty or fifty years would fetch him back.

"I thought he was talking through his hat, but out in India, since then, I've seen the fruth of what he said. You've heard of wolf children? Wolves are always carrying off children; some they eat and some they

don't, and the ones they don't they bring up as wolves, and the children take to it and go on all fours and, after a year or less they're fixed, can't ever get back to be men. Why, they had a wolf child in the Secundra Missionary Asylum and kept it there till it grew up to a man over thirty. It died somewhere about '95, and it never learned to speak, couldn't do more than run about on all fours and snarl. Rum, isn't it?

"Meanwhile Beconci was getting the lads together for his expedition, and he wasn't finding it an easy matter, for in those days Sea Dyaks weren't anxious for payment much except in human heads, and even heads were sometimes pretty much at a discount. The head-hunting chaps have got a bad name, but they weren't so black as they were painted. They weren't always rushing about, either, hunting for heads. It was mostly when they were in love and wanted to give a girl a present that they went hunting, or when they had a down on a chap and wanted to do him in. Beconci's crowd that he managed to collect at last were head hunters to a man, but I'd sooner trust myself alone with any one of them than with a New York tough—a long sight.

"We started on a Saturday at dawn, crossing the Bintulu and striking toward the Tatan River. I've said Beconci was after minerals and so he was, but his main proposition was gold. Down along south of the eastern ports he'd heard stories of a gold river somewhere in Sarawak north of the Rejang, and he carried the idea in his head, and I suppose that was what made him strike south from the Bintulu.

"We had with us Tuan and half a dozen of the Sea Dyaks and provisions for a month, and we hadn't more than crossed the river and gone a few yards when the trees closed behind us, shutting out the sound of the village and cutting us off from the morning sun as a closed door might. I've never got used to the jungle, that's to say the real thing, and it's my opinion it is not the place for a man. It's a kind of old glass house where the beginnings of life come from, and it's my opinion it has outlived its uses and would be as well done away with. Maybe I'm prejudiced, having done near all my hunting in the open. Anyhow, that Saturday morning I wasn't in any too high spirits. If I could have broke my contract and turned back I wouldn't, though, bad as I wanted to, because-I'd taken a liking to

Beconi, and I had my misgivings as to his pulling through without a white man's help.

"I've hinted he drank. We took a good stock of liquor with us, but it went under my eye. That was one of my conditions, and I knew if he was left alone with it the jungle would soon have done with him.

"We struck a big stretch of soggy ground where Nipah palms grew and nothing else. I'm just going to give you a sniff of that hell place they call the jungle in Borneo, and I can't begin it better than by saying we hadn't gone more than five hundred yards from the river when we struck this swamp. It wasn't a true swamp, either. It was solid enough in bits, and you'd be going along saying, 'It's all right now,' when your foot would go, sucked down, and you'd pull it out with a pound of black mud like treacle sticking to your boot. We went along mostly clinging to the palms that grew along the solid tracts and gave us a lead. Then, when we'd passed the swamp we found ourselves before the Big Thorn. That's what the Dyaks called it, a big patch of wait-a-bit thorn we had to cut our way through, and it took us the whole day to do that.

"Then when we camped on a bit of high ground the black ants raised objections, and the black ants of Borneo sting like wasps.

"I give you that as a sample of twenty-four hours in the jungle. You didn't get swamp all the time nor wait-a-bit thorn all the time, but you got lots of other things not much better, and it was always that infernal glass-house damp heat and smell. It's the smell that gets you, not a bad smell, mind you, but just the smell of a glass house—only more so.

"Then at the end of a week we struck a rival prospector. It was the rummiest meeting. He was a chap by name of Havenmouth. He'd shoved east with an expedition from Maka, crossing the Balinean River, and he'd found the gold. But he was dying. I never did see such a skeleton. The jungle fever or something like that had done for him, and he said he'd been living on quinine and whisky, but that he didn't care as he'd found the gold. It was in a little stream to the nor'east. He said there was dead loads of it, even though the stream was so small.

"He said that little stream must have been washing its gold for ages to make us rich. There he lay with his hands like a skele-

ton's and his face like a skull painted with fever, handing us out all that talk; and then he showed us a sample of gold grains he'd taken from the stream.

"Sure enough some of them were as big as split bullets. Then he died with a whoop, and we buried him. But the bother was, he died before he could give us the exact location by compass. He hadn't got it written down, for we searched him and his effects; he'd been carrying it in his head. He'd given us the gold grains, though.

"Well, that was the worst present a man ever got. Havenmouth had said: 'It isn't more than twenty miles way back there,' and that was the string that tied us to the circle, for we went wandering round like the Egyptians in the wilderness, round and round, hunting for that darned stream for months and months. You wouldn't believe it, unless you'd been there, how that thing held us. I'm not overset on money, but it held me, same as when you draw a chalk line round a hen and put her nose to it, she's held.

"We struck streams, all sorts of little tributaries of the Rejang and the Tatan, and we struck mud turtles and spitting fish and water lizards and snakes, but we struck no gold. Beconi was so full of the business that he forgot his wanting to drink. And so it went on for more than three months, till one day the madness lifted from us, and we saw that we were done. We'd got to get back to Bintulu and get back prompt, for we were near done for grub.

"I'd managed to shoot a good deal, and we had the remains of Havenmouth's store. Still, all the same, we'd got to get back; and over the fire that night, when we'd come to the decision to clear out, Beconi had his first drink for a long time. We were sitting there smoking and talking when all of a sudden from the dark outside the firelight comes a whistle and Tuan gives a jump where he sat. Then he whistles between his fingers as if in answer and out of the dark comes a chap crawling along with his hair over his eyes. He creeps up to Tuan, and they begin to talk. Then Tuan comes to us and tells us the news. One of the Dyaks, a fish trapper that had done a journey up the Tatan on some business of his own had come on Kadjaman's house.

"That's what Tuan told us with a straight face, but we didn't laugh, for we knew what he meant. The oranges build houses of sorts

away up in the trees. They haven't walls or roofs or lavatory accommodation; they're just platforms built between two branches and furnished with bundles of brushwood and leaves. This fishing Dyak was a blood relation of Tuan's. He knew Ting, and he knew of the carrying off, and a month before, going along through the forest by the river and chancing to look up he saw Kadjaman's platform away up in a tree.

"He wouldn't have took any more notice, monkey houses being common, only for a face looking down at him out of the leaves. He saw at once it was Ting's face, and he called out, thinking the child might come down. Instead of that Ting went up the remainder of the tree like a flash and hid on the platform.

"He marked the place and then he'd set out to hunt for Tuan and us. He'd seen us start from Bintulu and he knew the direction we'd gone; but how he found us after a month's hunt—well, search me! But find us he did.

"Tuan having got the yarn, said it was necessary for him, now that he had the indication, to drop everything else and get his child back. He said he couldn't lead us any longer till he had that matter settled, and Beconi agreed that it was only right and proper to get the child back and said he'd wait there with the whisky while Tuan and myself made the journey and fetched the goods. The place was only a day's journey from where we were. I agreed. I judged he couldn't kill himself with the whisky in two days and that if he did it'd maybe be a mercy for him, and taking my gun I followed Tuan and the fisher Dyak, striking in the direction of the Tatan.

"It was less than a day's journey, and when we got there it wasn't above ten o'clock in the morning, and there, like as if a chap had hoisted a mattress and stuck it between two of the branches, away up in a big tree, we saw Kadjaman's house; but there wasn't a sign of the owner nor of Ting. We didn't go to knock at the door. We all sat down in the undergrowth which hid us while giving us a view of the premises above, and there we waited. I didn't know what Tuan proposed to do to get the child back, but I did know one thing, he was going to get

it back now he'd found the address. I reckoned he'd kill Kadjaman and then climb for the child; but I was wrong as it turned out.

"I nodded off to sleep, for I was bone tired with the journey, and I'd been dozing maybe an hour when Tuan joggled me awake. I looked up and there was Ting crawling along a branch twenty foot up, following in the track of a big monk that was Kadjaman's twin brother if it wasn't himself. You could see at a glance that the child had joined up with the monkey folk in the three months he'd been with them.

"But I wasn't bothering about that, I was watching Tuan. Tuan had his blowgun with him. It was a better weapon and twice as deadly as a Colt's automatic. It was death itself, for the dart was poisoned. Tuan was standing up and leaning back with the gun to his lips. Up above, against the sprinkling light through the leaves, Kadjaman made a target as big as a barn door and not more than twenty-five feet off and Tuan with that infernal gun could hit the middle of a sixpence somewhere about the same distance. So there didn't seem much chance for the monkey, did there?

"Well, all of a sudden I heard the 'phut' of the blowgun, and right on it Ting, up in the branches, let a squeal out of him and I saw he'd been hit, hit right in the neck where the big vein is and where the poison of the dart would act quickest.

"Then he came tumbling, kicking, and catching at twigs, bang into the bushes, dead as Pharaoh's aunt. Tuan gave the body a stir with his foot to see if it was dead all right, and finding it so was satisfied. He didn't bother about Kadjaman, though he could have killed him easy enough. He'd got his son back, anyhow, and stopped him from going lower than he'd gone. You see he wasn't a chap to believe in *Tarzan of the Apes* or *Mowgli*, seeing that he knew what the jungle is and what monkeys are, and what men can become.

"Tuan wasn't a popsy-wopsy father by no means, but I've often thought it's chaps like Tuan, stuck by nature in the door in old days, that's stopped humans from backsliding into beasts—but maybe I'm wrong."



The next issue will have "The End of the Road," by Mr. Stacpoole.

With the Aid of Edgar Allan Poe

By Raymond J. Brown

Author of "Adonis: A Beautiful Youth," "A Nice, Clean Job," Etc.

If, Billy Hale had been a little better at deciphering codes, it would have been so much the worse for him that day at the Bowie track

SPRAWLED out on his bed in the Hotel Moffatt, lank legs spread wide apart, hands clasped under head, eyes closed, and the smoke rising lazily from the curved-stem pipe which hung from his mouth, Billy Hale suggested in no particular the best-known product of the hammer and chisel of M. Rodin. Nevertheless, he was thinking—thinking so aggressively and so intently that it is remarkable that the throbbing of his brain was not audible in the little room.

And he had cause to think. He was, as he had phrased it to Charley Todd not ten minutes before, "in hell's own hole." True, he had company in said hole—to wit, Charley, a short, plump, yellow-thatched young man with the face of a seraph, who sat in an easy-chair beside the bed. But the presence of a fellow sufferer in nowise relieved the poignancy of Billy's misery.

About four hours earlier, in the sixth race at Bowie, a horse named Silver King, carrying five hundred dollars, the joint property of Billy and Charley, had faltered in his last strides after leading a field of twelve all the way from the barrier and had been nosed out by another horse, the name of which does not matter. Now, since the only visible means of support of which Billy and Charley could boast was the profits they gained by playing the races, since the loss of five hundred dollars left in their treasury a slim balance of approximately two hundred dollars, since the next afternoon marked the closing of the fall racing season in the East, since they owed at the Hotel Moffatt a matter of one hundred and twenty dollars for room and meals, since starting for New Orleans immediately in order to be on hand for the opening of the next race meeting was a matter of grim necessity if their career on the turf were to be continued, and since train fares be-

tween Baltimore and the Crescent City ran into real money, the taking of thought by Billy and Charley on the matter of ways and means certainly was in order.

Be it said to the credit of both young men that they blamed neither luck nor the weakening legs of Silver King nor the jockey who rode the horse nor anything else but their own cupidity for their desperate situation. They were system players, albeit of only six months' standing. The system upon which they conducted their turf speculations called for a wager of only fifty dollars on Silver King. But they had received such glowing information about Silver King's chances of winning, and the odds against the horse, as reflected by the play in the pari-mutuel machines, had appeared so attractive that neither of them could resist the temptation to make a plunge on the chance of bolstering up a waning bank roll.

Billy Hale was the first to break the silence. He lurched about in the bed and turned on Charley a pair of keen dark eyes that flashed appropriately in a long, lean-jawed, intelligent face.

"Thought of anything?" he asked.

"We *might* rob a bank," suggested Charley with a grim smile.

"This is no time for funny cracks," growled Billy impatiently.

"Could we make a touch?" asked Charley.

"You're about as helpful as a crutch to a blind man!"

"Well, let's go out and grab off a couple of jobs."

"Where?" demanded Billy. "Who'd hire—"

"I'm a good penman, and quick at figures," replied Charley with a grin. "I—"

"That would get you about twenty a week," interrupted Billy. "At that rate you'd get to New Orleans next March—"

about the time they were getting ready to open at Bowie again."

"Well, that's all I can think of," muttered Charley. "I don't know anybody who'd give us any money."

"You've certainly helped us a lot," observed Billy sarcastically.

"How about yourself?" demanded Charley, nettled. "I haven't heard you offering any brilliant suggestions for getting us out of our mess."

Billy lapsed into a gloomy silence.

"That job thing's worth looking into," ventured Charley after a moment. "I wonder," he murmured as if to himself, "I wonder if old Finkelstein would read a letter if I wrote him one?"

"Finkelstein!" barked Billy, sitting upright in the bed. "Do you mean to tell me you'd ask Finkelstein to give you your job back? After walking out of his place with me the way you did last spring? Why, you told him you'd be back to buy him out! Where's your pride?"

"Haven't any," grinned Charley. "It began disappearing when the bank roll started to shrink. And the way the cold winds whistle through this city of Baltimore—wow! How can a guy be proud when he's next door to stranded and has only one overcoat—light weight? I tell you, Billy, the more I see of this sporting life the sweeter the little old forty per I used to get for pounding the pavements with a sample case for Finkelstein looks to me! You handle more dough in this game, but there's less of it stays with you. I'll tell the world that right about now a nice warm subway train, with an evening paper in my lap and a suit case full of Finkelstein's velvets between my knees would look like home, sweet home!"

"You wouldn't say that if Silver King won to-day," guessed Billy shrewdly.

"Maybe not," admitted Charley, "but I've been thinking things over since the system started to go blooie. When we were working for Finkelstein, we had to stand a lot of lip from him; but we were right there with our little bank books, and we had car fare when we needed it. We thought we were a pair of wise birds, giving all that up to follow the ponies, but I guess Finkelstein and the rest of them had the right dope at that."

Billy grunted sourly.

"Oh, you can't deny it," insisted Charley.

"We've landed right where they told us we would."

"We're not licked yet," maintained Billy stoutly.

"I am!" declared Charley. "And, if you think *you're* not, all I can say about you is you're a pig for punishment!"

"What a croaker!" groaned Billy. "Have I any right to expect luck—trailing along with a quitting, squealing mutt like you?"

"Oh, can it!" laughed Charley. "You're not talking to a stranger! You know as well as I do that the only thing that keeps you from hopping the first rattler to New York is that you're afraid to hear the gang say, 'I told you so!'"

"Is that so?" growled Billy hotly, but unconvincingly. "Why, I——"

A sudden lusty rapping at the door of the room cut him short. Charley jumped to his feet and started for the door, but Billy reached over and restrained him by seizing his coat tails.

"Who is it?" called Billy from the bed.

"Telegram, Mr. Hale," answered a bell boy.

Charley made another attempt to get to the door, but the strong hand of his partner in misery held him fast.

"Sit down!" whispered Billy. "If you open the door for him, you'll have to tip him—and we can't afford it!" Then to the boy: "Slide it under the door, will you, son?"

Released at last, Charley leaped across the room and picked up the yellow envelope the boy had thrust through the crack.

"I wonder——" he began, studying the address with a peculiar gleam in his eye, "I wonder if——"

"Here! Quit wondering and let's have it!" ordered Billy, jumping from the bed and seizing the envelope.

He ripped it open and drew out the inclosed message. An instant later an expression of utter puzzlement overspread his face.

"What in the name of Heaven would you call this?" he yelped, shoving the telegram over to Charley. Charley took the sheet and read:

H A L WILLIAMS HOTEL MOFFATT
BALTO FAZ SAAP YAAZ PAGST PAIZ
YUWMPA JW FRANK

"Is it a joke?" demanded Billy, peering over Charley's shoulder as the latter perused the message. "And who in hob is

'Frank?' I don't know anybody of that name, and——"

Charley interrupted with a chuckle.

"Why, look here," he bade, holding up the telegram so that Billy could see. "It isn't for *you*. Somebody's made a mistake. It's addressed to H. A. L. Williams. Here," he said, picking up the envelope which had contained the message, "here is where the mistake was made. See—the clerk in the telegraph office was wool gathering and addressed this envelope to 'Williams Hal.' That's how you got it. The message itself, though, is addressed in typewriting to H. A. L. Wil——"

"Let me see that again!" commanded Billy, his eyes alight. He grabbed the yellow sheet from Charley's hand and studied it closely. Then he dropped it with an exclamation of disgust. "For cripes sake—what language would you call this?" he demanded, reading. "Faz saap yaaz——" Why, you can't even pronounce it!"

"Must be Russian," guessed Charley, grinning.

"No, I'm darned if it is," murmured Billy after another look at the message. "It's a code; that's what! It can't be anything else! Look—it's sent to H. A. L. Williams—that's *Herb* Williams, the big plunger! He's stopping at this hotel. One of his scouts has run across a sure thing for get-away day to-morrow, and he's sent Williams the info. Holy smoke, Charley, do you see what this means?"

"Anybody who could see what *that* means," laughed Charley, "would be——"

"Oh, cut out that end-man stuff!" cried Billy in disgust. "Don't you see that——"

"I can see that it would be pretty soft for us to have one of *Herb* Williams' tips handed to us like this," interrupted Charley, holding up the telegram. "The only catch is that the darned thing doesn't make sense."

"It does to Williams!" snapped Billy. "It does to 'Frank'—whoever he is!"

"But not to us," murmured Charley, "who need it worst!"

Billy glared at the message again. He studied each letter. He got an inspiration and tried to read the telegram backward. It was even more puzzling in the reverse than it was when viewed from left to right. He turned the paper upside down; then he turned it over, held it up to the electric light and attempted to extract some meaning

from the blurred typing which showed from the rear.

"I can't make anything out of it," he declared at last.

"I knew that before you began," Charley informed him comfortingly.

"Well, I tried, anyhow—and that's more than you did!"

"We both got the same results, though," retorted Charley. "Maybe the Chinese who does my laundry could make something out of it. It looks more like one of his checks than——"

"Oh, shut up!" bellowed Billy. "This thing's valuable."

"I wouldn't give a nickel for eight of them!" announced Charley.

"You *couldn't* give a nickel for a bushel of them—the way you're fixed now," returned Billy. "But this is certainly valuable to Williams."

"See if you can make a dicker with him," suggested Charley. "Gosh knows we need the money!"

"No, that isn't the idea," said Billy seriously, "but I'll find Williams and deliver it to him. I'll explain how it was given to me by mistake. Maybe he'll be so glad to get it that he'll translate it—slip us the tip that——"

"And maybe he won't," said Charley. "Million-dollar betters like *Herb* Williams aren't strong for handing out information to busted pikers."

"It's worth trying, anyhow," decided Billy. He folded the telegram and placed it carefully in its envelope. Then he took it out again. There was a thoughtful look on his face as he drew a pencil from his pocket, walked over to the bureau, and picked up a sheet of Hotel Moffatt stationery. "Just on a chance," he murmured as he proceeded to copy the telegram letter by letter.

Charley thought this operation intensely funny.

"You're figuring," he guessed, "that an angel will appear to you in your sleep and decode it for you!"

Billy finished copying the message, replaced it neatly in its envelope, and walked out of the room. He had no trouble in finding *Herb* Williams, a slim, dapper, shrewd-faced, hard-eyed man of fifty, with a cruel, sneering mouth and a studiously genteel manner—a typical high-class professional gambler. Williams and three other

well-dressed, slick-looking gentlemen occupied a square table in the Hotel Moffatt grill. They were puffing at long, black cigars, drinking mineral water, and talking earnestly.

"Here's a telegram for you, Mr. Williams," said Billy, halting beside Williams' chair and holding out the message.

"Thanks," grunted Williams shortly, taking the envelope without looking up and thrusting it into an outside pocket of his coat. Then his other hand, a long-fingered, well-manicured, deft-looking, and sinewy hand, fished into a waistcoat pocket and withdrew a twenty-five-cent piece. "Here," murmured Williams absently, extending the quarter in Billy's direction.

The latter laughed.

"I'm not a messenger boy, Mr. Williams," he said. Then, as Williams looked up: "Hale is my name—William Hale. I'm stopping at the hotel here. The telegram was delivered to me by mistake. My name was on the envelope. I——"

"Eh?" inquired Williams, suddenly interested. He took out the telegram and glanced at the envelope. "You opened it, didn't you?" he asked Billy, glancing at him suspiciously.

"Why, my name was——"

"A lot of good it did you!" laughed Williams, noting in a hasty glance within the envelope that the contents were in code. "A code is certainly a wonderful protection against snoops," he murmured, winking at the man who sat opposite.

Billy straightened.

"Snoops!" he exclaimed. "Do you mean that I——"

"You opened it, didn't you?" inquired Williams, who had an unpleasant nasal whine in his voice.

"Yes, but my name——"

"All right; all right," murmured Williams in an irritating singsong. A moment later he turned and seemed astonished that Billy had not departed. "What are you waiting for?" he demanded. "I offered you a quarter for your trouble; you didn't take it. What do you expect me to do now—kiss you?"

Billy felt his cheeks burn. He longed to reach over and tweak Williams' hawk nose.

"I expect you to speak civilly to me," he snapped.

"Sure!" grinned Williams, who obviously was performing for the benefit of his friends.

"Sure thing! And the next telegram of yours that comes to me—I'll be sure you get it! Good night!"

Billy turned on his heel and made his way back to his room in a seething temper.

"Well, did he come through?" inquired Charley, as he came in.

"The whelp!" roared Billy. "The pup! The——"

"He didn't!" decided Charley with a grin. "Thought he wouldn't."

"Why, blast him!" shouted Billy. "He—he insulted me! He tried to make a fool out of me in front of his cronies! He wanted to hand me a quarter!"

"Why didn't you take it?" inquired Charley. "Every little bit helps, you know."

"Oh, you're as bad as he is!" snapped Billy, taking his copy of the telegram from his pocket. "You funny men give me a pain in the neck! I was a little worried," he said, as he sat down to study the cryptic groups of letters, "I was a little worried about whether I was doing right in trying to decipher another man's code, but after the way that crook-backed son of a pirate treated me just now—by George, *anything* I do to him is right!"

"On the level," gasped Charley, "on the level—you don't mean to say you're going to try to make sense out of that mess of *x's* and *z's*!"

"I'm *going* to make sense out of it," declared Billy.

"You're crazier than I suspected," Charley told him. "For Christmas sake, how——"

"You're such an ignorant little shrimp," said Billy nastily, "that I don't believe you have—but did you ever hear of a man named Edgar Allan Poe?"

"One of my bosom friends," declared Charley. "We have a lot of things in common. For instance, he used to live in this town; but he got out; which is what I'm going to do. And he had a saying which expresses my idea of this horse-racing game—'never more!'"

"He wrote a story," said Billy, "that I read years ago. It was called 'The Gold Bug.' In it a man deciphers a code—yes, and he explains how he does it."

"Shucks!" laughed Charley. "I read that, too. But it's only a story. Poe had an advantage you haven't got—he made up his own code, and then wrote a message to fit it."

"Codes are deciphered every day," declared Billy. "The police, the secret service, the department of justice, the post-office department——"

"Because a circus acrobat can walk a tight rope is no reason for believing that *you* can do it," interrupted Charley.

"Calamity Jane, shut up!" bellowed Billy, clapping on his hat and dashing for the door.

Procuring a copy of "Poe's Tales" at ten o'clock at night in the city of Baltimore proved to be a much more simple task than Billy expected. The libraries and the good book stores were closed, but a small news dealer on a side street near the hotel, who ran a modest secondhand book exchange as an adjunct to his other business, found a paper-backed copy of the work Billy desired, sandwiched in among many other old books.

Back in his room again, Billy spread out the copy he had made of Williams' telegram and turned the pages of the book with eager fingers. Charley watched him with an amused, satirical smile.

"*Monseer Dupin*," he observed, giving the name of Poe's detective hero the true A. E. F. pronunciation, "with the accent on the 'dupel'!"

Billy found the place he had been searching for. He read for a few moments. Then he glanced fixedly at the paper containing the code message.

"Charley! Look here!" he exclaimed at last.

Charley, grinning and skeptical, obeyed.

"Look!" commanded Billy, pointing to a place in the book. "Poe says here: 'Now, in English the letter which most frequently occurs is *e*. *E* predominates so remarkably that an individual sentence of any length is rarely seen, in which it is not the prevailing character.'"

"It sounds all right," grinned Charley, "but——"

"Sh-h! Now take a look at the message."

He spread it out:

FAZ SAAP YAAZ PAGST PAIZ YUWMPA JW

"Now," he said, "look at those *a*'s. A regular mob of them, isn't there? Only one word without an *a* in it—somewhere—and some of them have more than one. Now, look here." He pointed to the next paragraph in the book. "Poe says: '*E* is doubled with great frequency in English—in

such words, for example, as "meet," "fleet," "speed," "seen," "been," "agree," et cetera.' I think we can almost take a chance on assuming that *a* in the message is *e* in the alphabet.

"Go ahead," agreed Charley, interested despite himself, "and see what it gets you."

In a minute or so Billy held up the following for inspection:

—E— —EE— —EE— —E——
—E— ————— E ———

"Well, that's a swell-looking layout!" scoffed Charley. "I think the original message makes a bigger hit with me; it looks more—er—substantial somehow."

Billy appeared to be disappointed also.

"Gee," he murmured, "it doesn't look very promising, does it? I thought when we had the *e*'s lined up that we'd see a little light ahead. I thought maybe we'd find a word that might be 'the.' That's what Poe's man in 'The Gold Bug' did." He studied the paper critically. "There's only one word here that might be 'the,'" he decided at last; "the first word. It's the only one that has three letters. That would make *z* in the message *e* in the alphabet. Let's try it."

He got no farther than the third word on this basis, stopping with an expression of disgust when he found himself up against two consecutive four-letter words each with a double *h* in the center, an impossible combination in English.

"I must have been right the first time," he decided, scowling at his row of *e*'s and dashes. "But—what—what——"

His voice faded into silence, and he sat, frowning and squinting at the paper, his lips moving slowly, his right hand caressing his brow as he endeavored to concentrate on the problem before him.

Suddenly he leaped to his feet.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed. "Jackass! Dumb-bell! Idiot! Fat head!"

"Who—me?" inquired Charley placidly.

"Both of us!" yelled Billy wildly. "We've overlooked the one important thing in this whole rig-up! This telegram *must* have something to do with the track. Somewhere in it *must* be the name of a horse. Otherwise Williams wouldn't be getting it *in code*. If it was just a personal message of some kind, one that everybody could read and welcome, the good old American, United States language would be plenty good

enough for it. Also, to-morrow being get-away day here, it's pretty certain the message has to do with a horse that goes to-morrow." He leaped across the room and picked up an evening newspaper which lay on a table. "Where's to-morrow's entries?" he muttered, spreading the paper out on the bed.

With the paper upon which he had begun his decoding process beside him, he began slowly reading through the list of horses entered at the Bowie track for the races of the following afternoon. His search was unproductive of results until he reached the entries for the third race. From among the list of sixteen horses the name Deerfeet rose up and hit him in the eye.

"Got it!" he cried. "Deerfeet! It can't be anything else! Look!" he directed Charley. "We've got those two sets of double e's right at the beginning of the message. And that gives us four new letters—*d*, *r*, *f*, and *t*, corresponding to S, P, Y, and Z in the message. Let's try them."

Speedily as his pencil would travel he made the substitutions on his paper. Then he disclosed to Charley the result of his work as follows:

—ET DEER FEET RE—D—
RE—T F——RE ——

Charley, his scoffing, skeptical manner entirely gone, gazed at Billy in wide-eyed amazement.

"By cricky!" he breathed. "You——"

"Laugh at me, would you?" exulted Billy. "Guess I showed you something, didn't I? If old E. A. Poe isn't turning over in his grave now, he will be before I'm through! Give me that paper!" he ordered, grabbing the sheet out of Charley's hands. "There are a few blanks I've got to fill in."

He studied the paper closely for a moment. Then:

"This being a racing telegram," he decided, "this missing letter in that first word can't be anything else but *b*."

"'Bet,'" murmured Charley, glancing at the paper and supplying the letter in his mind.

"Positively!" glowed Billy. "'Bet Deerfeet——' that's the way the message starts. The next word——"

"'Ready!'" broke in Charley, who had been studying the characters "RE—D—" as Billy talked.

"By gum, I think you're right," admitted

Billy. "'Bet Deerfeet—ready'—meaning the horse is ready—ready for a race. And now we come to R-E-blank-T." He gave it a moment's thought. "Can't possibly be anything but 'rent' or 'rest,'" he decided.

"Make it 'rest,'" suggested Charley.

"'Rest' it is," agreed Billy. "Now, the next word——"

"That looks like a tough one," frowned Charley as his eyes fell on the symbols "F——RE."

"Maybe," said Billy. "I'm thinking, though, that there aren't so many words beginning with *f* that have that *re* finish. Get out that pocket dictionary of yours, and let's look 'em over."

They found "fare" and "fibre," which had too few letters and "fanfare" and "feature," which had too many, before their eyes, almost synchronously, fell on the word they were seeking—"figure."

With a whoop of joy Billy printed it in, noting with glee at the same time that the symbol W in the cryptogram, corresponding in the decoded message with the *g* in "figure," also was the second of the two letters which made up the short last word of the message. The translated message, punctuated as common sense directed, now read:

BET DEERFEET; READY; REST
FIGURE —G FRANK.

The missing letter in the last word was puzzling for a time, inasmuch as neither one of them could recall a two-letter English word ending in *g*, until Billy, by the simple expedient of substituting for the blank each letter of the alphabet in order, arrived at the solution; which was "N. G.," accepted abbreviation on the race track as elsewhere for "no good."

The message, now clear as crystal to any horse player, conveyed the information that a bet on Deerfeet was in order, because the horse was ready for a winning effort and out-classed the opposition he was called upon to face on the morrow.

Billy Hale filled in the last letter. Then he threw his long, wiry arms around the diminutive Charley and lifted the latter from his feet.

"Sonny," he laughed, "you and Edgar Allan Poe and I make up *some* band of code artists! As for you, Mr. Herbert A. L. Williams," he growled, dropping Charley and shaking his fist in the general direction of the door, "I'm going to tell you about

this after Deerfeet wins to-morrow, and, if you pull any of your upstage stuff, I'm going to drive that parrot beak of yours right through the back of your head!"

Billy and Charley discharged all indebtedness at the Hotel Moffatt before leaving the hostelry at noon the next day. Their bill was exactly \$118.60. They left their baggage in their room, for the bill they paid included lodging for that night. After paying their fares on the special electric cars which ran from Baltimore to the Bowie track and purchasing the badges which admitted them to the race course, their combined capital, held by Billy, consisted of seventy-four dollars.

Billy extracted a two-dollar bill from the roll and handed it to Charley. Then he stripped off two single bills and stuffed them into the fob pocket of his trousers.

"Get-away dough," he explained. "Enough to see us back to town and buy us a bite to eat."

"Hey!" cried Charley, amazed. "You're not figuring on betting all the rest on Deerfeet!"

"I'll say I am!" replied Billy grimly. "Every last jitney of it!"

"But, if we lose——"

"My, you're a cheerful cuss!" grinned Billy. "Always talking about losing, or going back to work for Finkelstein, or——"

"There's a possibility——" insisted Charley.

"There's a possibility that the grand stand will cave in and kill us before we get a chance to bet," growled Billy. "There's all kinds of possibilities. But you'll only catch me looking for the cheerful ones."

"Cheerful!" shivered Charley. "Could anything be cheerful on a day like this?"

It was not a day to inspire one with pleasant thoughts. The date was November twenty-eighth. The sky was gray and gloomy. A twenty-knot gale, straight from the east, swept across the track, a melancholy harbinger of the coming winter, saddest season of the year for the busted turfite. The Bowie track, set in a remote, uninhabited part of Prince George's County, Maryland, surrounded by bare, stark trees, its infield filled with dead, unkempt grass, is a dismal place at best, for it is there that the opening and closing race meetings of the Eastern season are held, in April and November, at both of which times the high

winds, penetrating, chill, and generally unsettled meteorological conditions, which are seasonable, fill even the hardiest racegoer with sullen thoughts of influenza and pneumonia.

So Charley shivered and shook his head in doubt. There were several things he did not like about this Deerfeet bet, over and above the fact that, if the horse lost, he and Billy would in all likelihood be reduced to the extremity of hypothecating their slim store of clothing and jewelry to obtain food. Deerfeet's record, as disclosed by the form chart, was bad. The horse was a five-year-old maiden, and a steed which has been unable to earn brackets in three years of racing could not be of much account. Virtually every one of the cheap lot of platers entered in the third race had beaten Deerfeet disgracefully time and time again.

The recent public appearances of the horse had indicated in no way that Deerfeet's racing form had improved to an extent which would entitle the animal to serious consideration in any kind of company. In Deerfeet's last race, at Laurel three weeks before, the horse had finished a lone-some last to a field of fourteen in a race of a mile and a sixteenth that had been run in absurdly slow time.

Charley had offered all these objections to Billy, counseling, first, that they stay off the race entirely, and, second, that they limit their speculation on Deerfeet to a modest wager.

Billy, though, had ridden roughshod over these appeals.

"You've got cold feet," he charged. "That's all that's the matter with you. And you're stupid. Can't you see—they're slipping this Deerfeet plug over to-day; the stage is all set. Maybe they're giving him a shot of the needle. I don't know, and it's none of my business. What I do know, though, is that Herb Williams isn't getting telegrams from New York about any dead ones. The fact that this skate's record makes him look like a dodo is all the better for us—the price will be e-normous! So shut up, play dead and let somebody that knows something run things!"

The two of them watched the first two races without interest. When the bell clanged beneath the grand stand, signifying that the booths were open for the sale of pari-mutuel tickets for the third race, Billy jumped from his seat and started down the

stairs. The crowd at the track was huge, the horse players from near by being out in droves to seize their last chance to bet at a track until the coming spring. It took Billy upward of five minutes to fight his way down the grand-stand steps and through the crowd which jammed the betting ring.

His first glimpse of the big dial upon which the sale of pari-mutuel tickets was recorded gave him a distinct thrill. Scratches had reduced the field in the third race to ten, and every one of the other nine contestants had thus far received a larger play than Deerfeet. Indeed, only two two-dollar bets were marked up for the five-year-old maiden.

"He'll be five million to one!" reflected Billy gleefully. "Williams probably won't put his dough down till the last minute. He knows the pikers watch him and that they'll follow his play and he's afraid of spoiling the price."

As he squirmed through the crowd toward the ticket booths he caught sight of the plunger, standing with a group of friends on the fringe of the mob, making hasty mental computations as the money played on the race was rung up on the dial.

Billy elbowed and shouldered a path for himself to a window where five-dollar tickets were sold. He bought four. He placed the tickets in his vest pocket, found his way to another five-dollar window and purchased two more tickets. This was strategy. He had no intention of calling undue attention to the horse Deerfeet even by his modest play, so he distributed it. Then he cleaved a way for himself to the twenty-dollar window at the extreme left of the row and bought a single ticket. He loitered in the vicinity for a minute or two, returned to the window and bought another ticket, thus bringing the total of his purchases up to seventy dollars. He complimented himself upon accomplishing his object with much adroitness as he plunged into the crowd again to find his way out of the betting ring.

On his way out he paused long enough to survey the dial again. It registered a total of only eighty-six dollars bet on Deerfeet, his seventy dollars and a scattering of two-dollar bets from lucky pikers who were shooting at the moon.

"Got it all down?" asked Charley when Billy rejoined him in the grand stand.

"All of it," acknowledged the treasurer of the firm.

"Well," grinned Charley, "when we're starving to death this winter, remember that——"

"Quit croaking!" snapped Billy, whose heart was thumping queerly.

They sat in silence, shivering from the biting wind—possibly also from the consciousness that what might well be regarded as their last dollar had been wagered on Deerfeet—until the notes of a bugle from the judges' stand announced that the horses were parading from the paddock.

Deerfeet was anything but a pretty animal; a huge, gangling, bony beast with a large head, a rough coat of brown and a flat-footed, awkward stride. The number on the saddle cloth was an ominous thirteen, and the jockey's colors were a somber black with soiled slashes of white on the sleeves of the jacket.

"If that isn't a grand-looking outfit!" murmured Charley as Deerfeet shambled along at the tail of the procession of ten horses. "Deerfeet! Where do they get that stuff? Why, that animal's got feet like a camel!"

"Ha, ha, young feller! You're right!" laughed the man who stood next to him. "I wouldn't bet on that pig with Mexican money."

"Pretty wise, aren't you?" Billy snapped at the stranger.

"I'm wise enough to know who's going to win this heat," returned the other. "The old 'fave'—Circus Boy; there's nothing to it!"

"Bet you——" began Billy hotly. Then he recalled how poorly fixed he was to wager money on any sort of a proposition. "Oh, all right," he grunted, "have it your own way."

It was a race of a mile and seventy yards, the start being approximately at the center of the grand stand. Deerfeet was some place in the middle of the field when it was lined up behind the barrier. There was the usual amount of jostling and backing and filling before the racers were brought into alignment. Then of a sudden the webbing flew upward, there was the pound of hoofs and the swish of whips.

"They're off!" thundered the crowd, and the ten horses leaped from the starting line.

To most of the people who that year attended the close of the autumn meeting of the Southern Maryland Agricultural Association, which is the name of the organiza-

tion which operates the Bowie track, the third race on the day's card was an event of no particularly startling features. Those, though, who occupied seats in the extreme right-hand end of the grand stand are talking to this day of the two wild men who were in the fourth row of that section. This pair—one a tall, slim, dark-haired, grave-faced young man, the other a plump little blond with cherubic countenance—behaved with an abandon and a lack of decorum that would have resulted in immediate arrest and incarceration if displayed at any other place than a race track.

They screeched, they yelled, they leaped in the air, they threw their hats away, they hugged each other, they aimed apparently murderous blows at each other's chests and shoulders—and all, apparently, because a horse named Deerfeet, an ugly, unlikely looking animal, for which not a dozen others in that vast crowd were cheering, proceeded to come to life after a five-year sleep and tow-rope about as cheap a bevy of bone bags as ever disgraced the name of thoroughbred. And, as if their previous actions had not stamped them as hopelessly insane, when the announcement was posted that for each two-dollar ticket sold on Deerfeet \$202.30 might be collected, the taller man of the two, rising to his full height and extending both arms above him, threw back his head and proclaimed in sepulchral tones:

"Green be the memory of Edgar Allan Poe!"

To which the smaller man replied with entire seriousness:

"Amen, you long-legged old son of a horse thief! A-a-a-men!"

A man with \$7,080.50 in the pockets where but a few minutes before nestled two miserable one-dollar bills probably has a right to feel and act in a cocky, self-confident and independent manner. Certainly the William Hale who buttonholed Mr. Herbert A. L. Williams in the Bowie betting ring, just after cashing his seventy dollars' worth of Deerfeet tickets, was a very different person from the Billy who had been so polite and diffident when presenting the telegram in the Hotel Moffatt grill the night before.

Billy backed Williams up against a wall, appropriately the wall of the track telegraph office.

"Got something to tell you, old-timer,"

he said, grinning. "Thought you were pretty smart last night, didn't you, trying to make a bum out of me before your friends?"

Williams gazed at him in puzzlement.

"I'm the fellow who got your telegram," Billy informed him; "the telegram in code."

"Yes; yes. How do you do?" murmured Williams, wondering whether to call for help, to run, or to take a chance on swinging one for this patently crazy man's jaw.

"A code's a great protection against snoops, isn't it?" laughed Billy. "You thought that was an awfully funny line, didn't you? Well, if you want to know who got the biggest laugh out of it—I did! I deciphered your code. Now, laugh, you poor——"

"You—what?" gasped Williams, alarm in his eyes.

"I deciphered your code," repeated Billy. "Here, if you don't believe it—take a slant at this!"

And he shoved over to Williams the paper containing the original message and his translation:

FAZ SAAP YAAZ PAGST PAIZ
YUWMPA JW
BET DEERFEET; READY; REST
FIGURE N. G.

Williams looked at the paper. Then he looked at Billy. Then he looked at the paper again.

"You bet Deerfeet?" he asked when he looked up again.

"I'll say I did!" proclaimed Billy. "Just win seven thou; that's all."

"Well, I'm—damned!" murmured Williams, studying the paper again.

"Picked me up for a boob, didn't you?" gloated Billy. "Thought you——"

But a roar of laughter from Williams cut him short.

"By the great horn spoon!" vowed the gambler. "If this isn't the funniest thing I ever *did* hear of!"

"It's funny all right," admitted Billy, "only, the laugh is——"

"Look here!" snapped Williams suddenly. He thrust his hand into an inside pocket and drew out a small book with a red, leather cover. He turned the pages; then he thrust the open book over to Billy. "Right there," he directed, pointing to the open page. "That's the code there. Translate that message again."

"I did translate it once——" began Billy. "Do it again," snapped Williams.

Wondering, Billy obeyed. He spread out his paper and the code book, took a pencil from his pocket and started to work.

In a few minutes he turned to Williams, absolute consternation written on his face.

"What do you call—this?" he asked weakly, holding up the paper.

"Let's see what you've got," commanded Williams, reaching for the sheet.

He took it. On it was, of course, the original message and Billy's translation:

FAZ SAAP YAAZ PAGST PAID
YUWMPA JW

BET DEERFEET; READY; REST
FIGURE N. G.

But beneath this was another line:

TON GOOD MOON DOUGH DOWN
MIKADO YK

"That's it," grinned Williams. "That's the way the message should read."

"But—but——" stammered Billy.

"You don't understand it?" laughed Williams. "It's easy—if you're on to things. That YK at the end means 'York'—*New York*. Frank Miller, who keeps an eye on things up there for me, wanted to tell me that the owners of the Good Moon Stable—you know, the McMahon crowd—were betting a lot of money in the pool rooms and handbooks around New York on their horse Mikado, which you'll find goes in the sixth race here to-day. The Good Moon people never bet unless they're pretty sure of copping, so you can see that following their money——"

"But this message!" stammered Billy. "It hasn't any *e's*! It——"

"Any *e's*!" repeated Williams. "For all I know it hasn't got any *x's*, either—or any *p's* and *q's*! What I do know, though, is that it's one of the straightest tips——"

Billy never told Charley where it was he received the wonderful tip on Mikado which induced him to wager two thousand dollars of their winnings on that horse in the sixth race. He was quite indefinite, too, when replying to Charley's inquiries regarding whether he had laid the law down to H. A. L. Williams after the victory of Deerfeet. Nor did Charley press him. Mikado paid approximately two to one, and there was, in consequence, something more than eleven thousand dollars to be divided by the pair as a result of their day's work.

Only, they didn't divide it. Neither did they, as they once had promised to do, buy out their former employer, Mr. Finkelstein. But on Waverly Place, only a door or two from Mr. Finkelstein's establishment, three large windows on the third floor of a loft building bear in great gold letters the legend:

HALE & TODD
VELVETS

And customers of Messrs. Hale & Todd, who are many, frequently are prone to wonder why it is that the proprietors of a textile establishment display so prominently in their office such an inappropriate decoration as a life-size portrait of Edgar Allan Poe.

Another story by Mr. Brown, "Orion—A Sleeper," soon.



UNCLE JOE'S PERSISTENCE

IT takes a smart man to put the laugh on your "Uncle Joe" Cannon, who now wears the distinction of the longest service in Congress in this country's history, but it was done recently. According to the graybeards, the last time the trick was turned was about twenty years ago.

It was proposed to bring back the dead who had perished in the blowing-up of the battleship *Maine* and to give them a public funeral. Charles S. Boutelle, of Maine, as chairman of the naval affairs committee, claimed that he should write the bill appropriating money for the memorial, while Uncle Joe, as chairman of the appropriations committee, argued that it was his privilege. The dispute on the floor of the House ended with Boutelle's thundering out:

"Mr. Speaker! There are men in this world who would turn a funeral procession into a riot if they were not appointed to drive the hearse!"

A Dangerous Dame

By W. R. Hoefler

Author of "Barnum Was Wrong," "According to Emerson," Etc.

When "Take-a-chance" MacCreery set out to invest baseball with a little more of the element of chance, he picked a game that did not need that sort of investing

THERE had been a flurry of excitement in the closing innings of the game; excitement that was not born of any deeds of the contesting ball players, but was, on the contrary, furnished by a number of the spectators. For, in that section of the grand stand between the home plate and third base which is known to Polo Grounds denizens as Pikers' Pavilion because of the prevalent tendency of the gambling gentry to gather there and attempt to place wagers on the game, a number of these chance-taking individuals had been detected and forcibly ejected from the grounds.

After the game, a party of spectators, who had been pleased witnesses of these gambling put-outs and were now clustered about a table in Markey's upper Eighth Avenue restaurant, made comment about the incident.

"Served 'em right," said one. "Those pikers ought to be exterminated. Gambling's a bad influence if allowed in the game."

"Sure it is," agreed another. "The tin-horns ought to be barred from every ball park in the country."

Other and more lurid comments were made, all in the same tenor.

The old Ivory Hunter, just back from an extended scouting trip through a part of the country known in baseball parlance as the Tall Timbers, set his glass of not very near beer down with a grimace and sighed.

"It's the truth," said he solemnly, filling a blackened pipe. "Gambling's a powerful bad thing to have horn into the old game. Bad any way you take it. It's mighty pestiferous to have a lotta short-sport layers roostin' up in the stands waiting to cash the coin in when some baby crashes the pill out. But it's even worse when you got a baseball-club owner that so far forgets the high proclivities of his position that he's gotta flirt with the Goddess of Chance ev'ry time the dame winks at him.

"There was 'Take-a-chance' MacCreery now," continued the Ivory Hunter, lighting his pipe. "Take-a-chance was the gamblingest man ever I did see. He'd take a chance on any kind of gamble you could name, from faro to 'Button, Button, Who's Got the Button?' He'd bet you on the sun comin' up or ladies' skirt styles comin' down. He'd lay you odds on havin' a hard comin' winter and take odds on gettin' a soft hotel bed. He'd bet on stocks rising or snow falling; he'd gamble on a crooked race or a straight flush; he'd gamble on the length of a minister's sermon or a billiard player's run and a chance on a presidential or three-legged race was custard pie to him.

"It was down in Oklahoma that I first run across Take-a-chance. I was managing a ball club away out in the weeds then—in the Oil League. It was early May; it'd been rainin' hard since morning, and they wasn't no game at the local park that day. I'd been sitting on the porch of Shaner's Hotel inspecting the raindrops, 'cause they wasn't a thing else to do, and waitin' for supper, when a bird about forty-five years young rambles out on the veranda and squats down in the chair next to me.

"He's a sunburned, keen-lookin' gent, about middle size, but strong built and active lookin'. He tilts his soft hat back, sticks his new, shiny brown low-cut shoes on the porch railing, tilts a powerful long stogy up at the rain clouds from the east corner of his mouth, and tosses out a long sigh. Time must be hanging some heavy on his hands, too, I thought.

"'Friend,' says he, fooling with a hunk of gold as big as a walnut he's toting round for a watch charm, as he eyes me over kind of reflective, 'It's considerable of a inactive sort of day, ain't it?'

"'And then some,' I says, kind of sour. "Well,' says he, 'I don't like pool, and

there ain't enough element of pure luck in billiards to suit me. We couldn't scare up sufficient gents round here for a live card game. We can't shoot craps without you got some bones, 'cause I won the cigar clerk's dice off him last night and very thoughtless left 'em in my pants pocket when the tailor come round and got 'em this morning.'

"What about it all?" I asked him, pretty short.

"I was thinkin' about the flock of cellar hounds I hadda call a ball club and swearin' to myself in seven languages and shorthand at old 'Sandy' Robertson, the owner, who was so tight he wouldn't pay for the paper the players' contracts was signed on.

"Why, brother," says he, 'they's just this about it: We had oughta do something to pass the little minutes along till supper, and just examining the little drops of water as they splash on the little grains of sand ain't any too exhilaratin' a indoor sport. They don't seem nothin' else to do, so I'll just bet you the purchasing power of a five-case note on Colored Man Up Or Colored Man Down.'

"This was a common game in the town. You just looked out on Main Street and laid a little bet that the first person of tint which come along the thoroughfare would be headin' either up the street or down.

"Up or down?" I ask him.

"Up," says he.

"It looked like a good bet to me. Most of the colored folks lived downtown way, near the creek. And it being nearly time to quit work they'd be rambling home soon. It looked like a cinch on Colored Man Down.

"You're on," I says, and we watched.

"For five minutes there ain't much of anything comin' either up or down Main Street. Then, fin'ly, along comes a tremendous big, busted umbrella and underneath it is old Mose Taylor shufflin' *up* the street. Mose was the oldest colored man in the county. He even claimed he could remember when G. Washington crossed this here Rubicon. He only got outside about twice in a year and here it was just my luck to have him pick out this minute for his semiyearly walk, in a steady rain, and go up the street just a few minutes before all them other brethern of his would be comin' down from work.

"I handed this stogy gent a five-dollar bill.

"Try it again—either way?" he says, real allurin'.

"No, thanks," I says, disgusted.

"Well, I'll gamble five more the potatoes'll be cold at supper to-night," says he.

"That ain't no gamble," I says. 'That's a cinch.'

"We sit there again, just watchin' the rain and not saying a thing and then he turns to me again.

"Brother," says he, 'I never aim to get nosey about how a gent gets by in this sad vale of tears and rain, but would you mind tellin' me your business?'

"I manage this here local ball club—in the Oil League here," I says. 'Why?'

"Then I just lost a mind bet to myself," he says. 'I bet me you was a butcher. Well, I'll bet you a couple o' hundred you don't shove your team up in the first division. It's a long-distance bet, but you'll get the lucre if I lose it. Folks hereabouts in the oil country all know me.'

"Us—first division? That ain't a bet," I says. 'It's a fact.'

"Then I'll bet you they do," he says.

"I just shook my head no.

"Well," says he, kinda pleading, 'I'll lay five dollars to one your team loses to-morrow.'

"It might keep rainin'," I says, 'and maybe we couldn't play.'

"Bet you ten dollars it ain't," says he.

"That gets me a little peeved. 'Say,' I ask him, 'ain't they anything on this earth beneath or the waters below that you don't wanna bet something on?'

"They is," says he. 'Just one thing. I wouldn't never bet, at any odds, that a lady in a crowded elevator won't powder her nose if she sees a lookin'-glass. I might be a piker, but I just couldn't buck such big odds.'

"And what might your business be—outside of flirtin' with old lady luck so continuous," I ask him.

"It might be anything—if I could only get somebody to bet me their business on something," he says; 'but just now it's oil. I own the Mamie Sue oil property. My name's MacCreery.'

"Why, you ain't Take-a-chance MacCreery, that I've heard so much of?" I ask.

"None other whatever," says he. And that sets me a-thinkin'. Here's a bird which is so laden with wealth, on account of his oil property, he can't even bet his money all away.

"Mr. MacCreery," I says, 'the first words

I ever heard you utter was uttered to bet me something.'

"Ain't it the truth?" he says.

"And in the short time we been occupying each other's presence you been tryin' to gamble on everything in sight here, from rain to cold potatoes.'

"Uh-huh," says he.

"And you seem like a gent which would be glad to grapple with old kid Luck at any weight, on anything, at any time, in any amount and pretty nigh at any odds.'

"To say the least of it," he answers, swinging his stogy to the other corner of his mouth.

"Then," I says, expecting to kid him, 'I got a proposition in mind which ought to be peaches and cream to say nothing of heavenly nectar on the side to one of your gambling idiosyncrasies. If you ackshully do adore flirting with Luck when they's some real, regular flirting in sight; if you aim to acquire the heavenly thrill which comes to regular he-gamboliers only when they cop off a miraclelike long, long shot, then I got a beautiful, eighteen carat, swell gamble for you.'

"Name this gamble," he says. 'But before you do, I just wanta warn you not to raise any false expectations on me. I'll bet mostly anything you're a mind to suggest—but I don't bet against a sure thing. They's gotta be some little element of chance in it—however infinitesimal. I might be a mite of a gambler but, friend, I ain't no sucker. Now shoot.'

"And so I shoot—hardly really expectin' to get a raise out of him. 'My proposition's this,' I says; 'for you to take a gamble and buy this tail-end prairie-dog-league ball club I'm bossing. I'd sure admire to manage a club for once in my life for a bird like you who'll take a chance and maybe buy me a player once and a while. Old Man Robertson's so tight he squeaks when he walks.'

"He don't give you no help a-tall in collecting a winning team?" says Take-a-chance, real surprised.

"None whatever," I tell him real mournful. 'Old Sandy won't leave me even trade for a player for fear I'll get stung. We got the same cripples now that we ended in the basement with three seasons ago. Why, that tight old rooster even makes the boys pay for the arnica they use when they get hurt playin' for him.'

"My! my!" says he, real sympathetic. 'What could I buy this outfit for?'

"For a few thousand Sandy'd chuck in a piano with the grounds, franchise, players, and everything," I tell him.

"MacCreery squints up the end of his stogy. 'Maybe I could win the ball club from this Robertson at red dog or pinochle or Michigan or something,' he says.

"Maybe you could," I says, 'if you got divine power. Otherwise you couldn't get Sandy to risk a phony dime against your oil stock that next month'll be June. Sandy's so near he wouldn't pry himself loose from a jitney to see David battle Goliath again.'

"Well, a few thousand ain't much collateral," says he at last. 'And I get a whole daw-gone baseball club with uniforms 'n' grounds 'n' everything,' he says. 'Where's the gamble in all this?'

"Why, the gamble's everywhere," I hafta tell him. 'Any club, stuck in a league away out in the weeds, like this Oil League is, is always a gamble to get your money back. They's a lot more acres than they's fans in this country. On top of all that you'd have the rottenest bunch of basement bums that ever pulled a bone, bar none—anywhere. This outfit has landed in the cellar five straight seasons. When we play to home the only birds we have to see the games're the ones that have to, like Sadie Mallory who sells the tickets, and the deadheads who ain't got no other place to go, and the few fans which're so sore at us they'll pay good money to call us bad names. You'd have a gamble either to win games or money.'

"Mac lights another stogy and thinks about it for a while.

"Well, brother," he says at last, 'I'll take a chance.'

"And he does. He buys the club from Sandy Robertson and on Monday I got a new boss who'll gamble.

"That day he comes out to the park to see his ball team perform, and he leaves the game later lookin' awful grieved. We only lost to the Hoot Owls of Tincumbville by fourteen to one at that, but Mac thought it was a disgrace to own them boys.

"Sam," says he, real sad, 'if them boys're ball players then I'm the King of Ireland.'

"They ain't no King of Ireland unless it's George," I says.

"True," he says, 'and they ain't no ball

players on the club unless it's Sadie Mal-lory. I ain't seen her try yet. That third baseman we got is so slow he keeps getting hurt all the time from bunts down the third-base line he can't get out the way of. And two of our outfielders was beaned to-day by fly balls they wasn't fast enough to duck. Sandy ought to of tossed in a hospital or a old men's asylum with the outfit. You ain't said a word too much about Sandy, Sam,' he says. 'I see where we got to prospect around real pronto and drill for some baseball prop-erty. You don't know some likely lookin' boys which know enough what a base hit is like to maybe get one some time, do you? If they ain't tied down with a ninety-nine-year ground lease I'll take the rubber offen my roll and we could maybe find a gusher in the way of a nice pitcher or a batter.'

"Well, that kind of chatter sounded like jazz music to me.

"Sure I do,' I says. 'I know some elegant ball players. They's a swell, high-powered battery, f'r example, that's workin' for the Lizzards. They're the best-lookin' battery in Oklahoma. This young Brancum, the catcher, is a bear. He can catch, hit, run bases, think, and do pretty nigh anything you could think of except maybe make a submarine. And the pitcher, Jakey McGuire, is a regular throwin' hound. He's a big, six-foot left hander with more smoke then there is in all Pittsburgh, besides which he's got a curve that can almost talk in French.'

"If he's all that how come he ain't up North with them Giants or them Boston Bean Pot players and all?' says Mac, a little suspicious.

"Control,' I says. 'He ain't got it. Jakey finds bother always keepin' the ball inside the park. He wounded a storekeeper in Main Street once. And he uses up our umpires pretty bad, too. If they wasn't behind the plate he'd drill holes in the grand stand with his fast one. But, believe me, Mac,' I says, 'if you buy him, I'll get him control. I'll get him so's he can hit a sand flea's left eye at a hundred feet. You'd hafta buy both together, though, 'cause they ain't nobody but 'Cully' Brancum can catch McGuire. And they'd cost you something. The Lizzards are in the lead for the flag right now. And the winner down here gets a real silk pennant and their picture in the baseball guide.

"Then they's this Potter boy with the

Goats. He's a terrible good third baseman. If we could grab him off the Nannies we could release old Ben Healey to private life, and Ben'd have more time to spend with his grandchildren. Also, they's Casey Crabb, a outfielder with the Ground Hogs. He'd help us. But we might have a lotta expense gettin' these babies.'

"Leave that part to me,' Mac says. 'If them owners got any sportin' blood poured inside their hides a-tall, you'll find I'm a awful good shopper sometimes.'

"And so he left to see the other owners while I brang the club over to Dunberg to start a series with the Dunberg Muskrats.

"It's a week later before I see Take-a-chance again. Then he comes into the hotel at Rawton where we was losing a series to the Hookworms that week. It's just about the time I'm finishing up with supper in the dining room.

"He's got seven guys with him. Four of these I know. They're Cully Brancum and Jakey McGuire and Potter, the Goats' third sacker, and a outfielder with the Pink Wal-ruses. The other three I never saw before, but they eat like they might be ball players. After Take-a-chance sits the boys at a table he drags me out to the lobby.

"I gotta d'sappoint you some, Sam,' he says.

"What's wrong?' I says. 'I see you got some ball players with you. Did they just come over to bring back the oil stock you lost trading for 'em?'

"Oh, no,' says Mac. 'They belong to us. But I fell down on this Casey Crabb boy you wanted. I owned him, too, up to yesterday noon. I gave Denny Sullivan eighty-three dollars and a shotgun for Casey in a straight buy. But I lost him again this morning when I got outa luck. I played Denny Buzz Fly for Crabb, best two outa three flies against some other player.'

"Buzz Fly?' I says.

"Sure; Buzz Fly,' says Mac. 'The first fly which comes buzzin' around and lights on a gent's nose, why that gent wins. I found out later that Denny had put molasses on his nose, but at that I don't hold it against the old sport. You can't blame a gent for forgettin' himself once in a while and usin' his brains.'

"And you bought them others outright,' I says.

"I bought Brancum and this Jakey Mc-

Guire outright,' he says. 'Asa Shaw wouldn't take a gamble on 'em. I hadda give two hundred and thirteen dollars for the pair, but Asa thrun in their uniforms and a bat with 'em. He's sure a tight, unaccommodatin', un-sportin' old cuss, ain't he?'

"Then this Potter lad I hadda pay double for. I bet Tom Petri double or nothing for him and lost, but I felt sorry for Tom and give him big odds.'

"What did you bet on there?' I says.

"Dark or Light,' he says. 'We was having breakfast at the Elm House and we bet on the waitress before we seen her. I give Tom the edge by betting she'd be a blonde against a brunette. And Tom went and stuck one over on me—they got nothin' but colored help there. But I kinda made it up on this Timmey boy, the outfielder from the Pink Walruses. I won him from Otto Shanley, puttin' up seventy-one dollars and a safety razor—this Timmey ain't a bad hitter, you know—against the player, at Walk Around. You know Walk Around?' he says.

"None a-tall,' I tell him.

"Why,' says Mac, surprised at my ignorance. 'You just tie a short rope on a dog's tail and guess the number of times he's gonna walk around himself before either he sits down to chew the rope off or beats it away. The gent which guesses the nearest to the right number of revolutions wins the stake. And then,' Take-a-chance goes on, 'them three other boys I brung, they're a swell pitcher and a first baseman and a outfielder, all of 'em elegant, which I got from the owners in the Texas-Oklahoma League.'

"Then they must be so rotten they was waived right out the league,' I says.

"Waived out nothing,' he says. 'They was gambled out. And I'll bet you twenty-nine dollars they're three of the stylistest boys in that league for ball playin'.'

"You won't bet me a thing on nothin',' I tell him. 'Not even that the sun won't ever come up again. But if them lads wasn't waived out the league, how come you was able to buy 'em? The Texas-Oklahoma League is in organized baseball. And in organized ball you can't let loose a player to a lower league without every other owner in that league waives on him. The Texas-Oklahoma is a low enough class league, goodness knows,' I says, 'it's about class X Y Z in organized ball; but this here Oil League

we're cavortin' in is even lower'n that. It ain't in any class a-tall.

"It's independent only because they ain't enough money in the outfit for them big-league moguls to waste their time figurin' baseball laws to take it away from us. So if them boys're good and you got 'em away from the Texas-Oklahoma League you must of worked a miracle that's got the Jonah-and-the-whale performance looking like a small-time kerosene-circuit mystery act.'

"No miracle,' says he. 'Just a kind smile from the Goddess of Chance. Up near Dennison I heard quite some favorable conversation about how good these three boys are. They even tell me two of 'em's wanted in the Cotton States League to play the bench. So I thought if I could buy 'em, we'd have our club cranked up so good we oughta shoot to the top of the Oil League here like a ten-thousand gusher scrambling out the ground. So I went and tried to pry them boys loose from their owners by offering 'em good money, not knowing the legal aspects of baseball law which you just mentioned about waiving players.

"I named them owners such a nice price for their players—even chucked in two beagle hounds I won from a conductor on the Katy Road against my fare, and a gold pencil I took from my daughter Mabel against a new party dress at Spin the Platter—that they wanted to sell awful bad. But no, they says, they dassent sell. The other owners wouldn't ever waive on these boys.

"So I says: 'Where could I see them other owners?' And they says I can see 'em right over in Dennison. They all happen to be there for a league meeting.

"Well, one of them two owners brung me to their hotel that evening and then I horned into a stud game with the other six. It was fifty dollars, table stakes freeze-out. By ten o'clock I had 'em all froze out, and they kept howling if I wouldn't melt a little and leave 'em in again. So I says sure I'd leave 'em in again if they'd play me fifty dollars each against their waivers on these players in their league I was after. They didn't like to do it, but neither did they enjoy watchin' me line my vest pockets with their bills; so they said yes.

"Then one gent says: 'Let's change the game and maybe we'll change our luck with this lucky rummy.' So I says: 'Sure; ar v-

thing; what'll it be?" And another gent says: "We'll shoot craps. Twenty-five dollars against half a waiver each throw." I have to roll against each gent either until he gets his fifty back or until I get his whole waiver. And if I win three out the six waivers from them boys they all agree to waive and leave me buy the players.

"Well, I tossed an ace and got the dice to start off, and then I went out and made the six straight passes I had to, for the three waivers, and kept right on going and made twelve straight passes before letting loose of them bones. And that's how I got them Texas-Oklahoma players out of their league.

"So now," says Take-a-chance, "we got a pretty nice outfit to start off with. Of course we're twenty games behind the leaders and we won only two out of twenty-eight games with the old team, but with this lot of boys we got now and what I might be able to pick up occasionally, we can go right after them other clubs."

"Sure," I says. "It's only the middle of May now, and they's lotsa time for us to ramble up on the field."

"And now," says Mac, "I'm gonna gamble a mite with you."

"No, you ain't," I says. "You don't mean me."

"Yes, I am," grins Mac. "I sure do mean you. But I wouldn't ask you to gamble none with me—you bein' a trusted employee of mine now. I'm gonna gamble that you're a real, live baseball manager; one which knows the head of a baseball league from the tail and has got enough sense of direction to move toward the head once and a while—always providin', of course, you got a boss which is willing and able, like I am, to provide the requisite motion on the team in the shape of ball players which got something besides a appetite."

"I don't blame you none whatever for having your team down in the ground floor after I saw 'em try to play that one game. I realize now you ain't had nothin' but a franchise and a tight owner to try and derick the team upward with, heretofore. But you got some regular players now. And I'm gonna gamble five hundred dollars that when the season closes in they won't be more'n the third part of a turtle's whiskers between our club and the pennant."

"Meaning what?" I says.

"Meanin' that if you cop off that there old flag I slip you a bonus of five hundred

dollars, free and clear of your regular salary, and all other encumbrances," he says.

"Well, with that kind of encouragement and team I step on the gas and we just let her go. First I get this big McGuire so's he can keep the ball in the confines of the ball yard. Then I get them other boys working together as nice as ham and eggs. Inside of a week they're all slapping the onion on the nose and they're in there scrapping with their heads up instead of tryin' to curl up and die the minute the game starts like my other team was. They start right out to singe the grass all over this Oil League."

"We cop off twelve straight games and inside of a week the crowds 're tearing down the fences to pay us their money to see us. Inside of two weeks we got all the populace thereabouts squattin' up in the bleachers instead of roosting alongside oil leases waiting for oil to spout. It gets so a twenty-thousand-barrel-a-day gusher don't even make the natives yawn no more, while every time I take the wraps off this big Jakey McGuire and let him loose in the league, folks try to tear the roofs off the grand stands, they get so excited."

"We drop the thirteenth game to the Lizards and our town goes into mourning and they keep the kids home from school, wearing black. Old Take-a-chance himself gets all worked up over the loss and comes up to me and says he's gonna buy me some more players. I tell him I don't need 'em. With this outfit we got we can ramble in easy. But he keeps insisting."

"I'll buy this fellow Cy Cobb they talk about for you," he says. "And I'll get this 'Baby' Ruth and 'Hiram' Johnson, the speed pitcher, to kinda help out. Jakey McGuire could maybe give him a few pointers, too. And Freddie Collins and some more of 'em."

"You couldn't get them boys down here for anything," I tell Take-a-chance. "Their clubs wouldn't let loose of 'em, anyway."

"I'll gamble with 'em," he says, "if they won't leave me buy 'em. I'll play their owners stuss or Canfield or even squat tag. I'll even get this here player Ban Johnson they talk about. You got me quite excited now on this baseball gamble you got me to indulge myself in. We just gotta cop this flag."

"But after we cop off fourteen more straight Take-a-chance is satisfied that maybe we won't have to call in the American

and National Leagues to help us grab the flag.

"In July we're up in first division and busting along so speedy the scorers can't hardly see to write down our wins for the dust we're raisin'. In August we're out in front and our whole town closes business up and all and has a parade and reception for us. You never saw anything half so excited as our town is now that our Angleworms 're headin' the league, after the teams which Sandy Robertson used to get for 'em.

"The first of September we're leading the league by twelve full games, and they all admit the tussle is over. They start in building the silk pennant for us because with the season over on the fifth of September and only four more games to play, how we're gonna lose twelve out of four games is more than even the baseball experts could figure out."

The old Ivory Hunter paused, refilled his pipe, leaned back in his chair, and sighed.

"But," said he mournfully, "I didn't yet know how real scandalous Take-a-chance MacCreery could flirt with the Goddess of Chance, once she began makin' eyes at him. That man sure was some gamblin' hound. And this Goddess of Chance is a wicked skirt to fool with.

"It's the night before the season is gonna close. We're now fourteen games in the lead and we got only one more game to play, and it's with the poor old Hookworms, at that, the team which is last by twenty-one games, almost as bad a basement club as we used to be.

"Just to kind of celebrate the event of our winning, Take-a-chance gives a banquet to both our clubs at Shaner's Hotel and afterward him and 'Polkey' O'Neal, the owner of the Hookworms and four other birds start a little game up in Polkey's hotel room.

"For about three hours the game's pretty slow and irksome. Every good fist that's out they ain't a thing against it, and it's almost disgusting how Take-a-chance keeps sittin' there with his stogy pointed toward the chandelier and gradually attractin' the chips. He's corralled nearly all the chips in the game, and they're about aiming to close up shop when 'Til' Whitcomb, a bird which manufactures baby carriages, deals out a hand that sets off the dynamite.

"Old Man Herman, the sheriff, opens for the limit, five bucks. The next lad, a hymn-

book drummer, remains. The next guy curls up and quits. Then Polkey O'Neal takes a second look at his fin, appears kinda scared, like he can't quite believe it and jolts the pot another five. Take-a-chance swings his stogy to the other side of his face and studies his cards a second. 'I'll take a chance,' he says finely, and lingers. Til Whitcomb pulls a fade-out; and the sheriff at last decides to pay the fine and costs and stays, but the hymn-book drummer says, 'amen,' and drops.

"And then they draw. The sheriff accepts two—I figure him for threes; Polkey O'Neal plays with his original cast—I dope him for a straight or a flush or maybe even standing room only and Take-a-chance collects one card. He's got a brace of twins maybe or a delayed flush or a bashful straight.

"Then it starts. The sheriff tosses in the limit. Just once, though. It don't even make O'Neal hesitate. Polkey jolts that to the roof. And Take-a-chance pays the ten and costs and cracks it to the chandeliers again. The second time around the sheriff yells, 'Kamerad,' and quits. I see his fist when he tosses 'em in. He was running on three cylinders—all aces.

"And then, for about ten minutes Polkey O'Neal and Take-a-chance MacCreery go to the mat for fair. They bust the pot for the limit each time.

"Fin'ly Mac yawns and says he ain't gonna sit up all night straining himself holding what he's got in his hand for just chicken feed, and says to lift the limit up a few flights. Polkey grins.

"'If I was only lucky enough to be buckin' a real sport,' he says, 'one which wouldn't cry "mamma", if I named too big a figure, why,' he says, 'I'd play this out for something worth while.'

"'Say,' says Mac, covering up a yawn 'where did you buy that kind of a record? I'll bet the British navy right now on what I'm fondling here. Mention anything you want and I'll give it a jolt.'

"'Well,' says Polkey, 'if you really mean them scornful words, I got you. I'd admire to own this Jakey McGuire you got on your team. He'll prob'ly be up in the Big Tent in a year or two and there'll be money in selling him. Also, I could almost cop off the pennant next year with him alone. I'll toss in a couple of my players and show-down for the pot and Jakey!'

"'Show-down my uncle!' says Mac. 'Put in your two best players for Jake. Then I'll raise you 'Tod' Halloran my first sacker.'

"'I'm game,' says Polkey. 'I'll go all the way with you. But let's decide that the loser in the end don't lose all the players. He just changes players when the pot is took in, so's he'll still have a team. I'm saying this just to protect you, Mac. I admire you for a sport. So when we finely show-down and I take in the whole daw-gone pot I get the swell players you put in and you take my tail-enders.'

"'Anyways you want,' says Mac.

"'Then all right,' says Polkey. 'I'll see Tod Halloran and raise you "Tickle" Tully, my shortstop.'

"'See Tickle with a catcher and I raise you Cully Brancum,' says Mac.

"'I'll see Cully with Eddie Yardley and raise you Pete Kelley,' says Polkey.

"'Let's quit piking,' says Mac, kinda boredlike. 'I'll see Pete with a new wind pad we bought, and I just raise you my whole dog-gone outfield.'

"'All right, Mac,' says Polkey, 'I'll go the limit. I'll see your outfield with mine and raise you what infielders I got left.'

"'I see your infielders and I raise you ——' Mac begins when I horn in.

"'Hey, Mac,' I says, 'don't go plumb offa your nut with this gambling stuff. If you lose, then we gotta take these bums that Polkey owns. We'd have to start in all over next year building up. Use some discretion, Mac!'

"'Discretion wasn't invented for a hand like I got, Sam,' says Mac. 'I'd gamble a ringside seat in heaven on what I'm a-holding here. Let's go. I'll see all your infielders with what catchers I got left, and I raise you what loose regulars ain't already in the pot and my utility players.'

"'I'll see all that with my utility players,' says Polkey, 'and jolt it up again with all the baseball paraphernalia we got, includin' uniforms, bats, balls, gloves, three good wind pads, and our home plate.'

"'See that mess of stuff,' chirps Mac, 'with what we got like it and I just raise you real big with Sam here.'

"'Say,' I yelled at Take-a-chance, 'you ain't bettin' me in that pot, are you? You ain't got crust enough for that?'

"'Sure I have,' says Mac. 'Everything goes. With what I see in my palm here, I'd bet my grandmother's false teeth.'

"'Well,' pipes Polkey, real determined, 'I'll see Sam with Verne Dixon, my manager and a baboon we got for a mascot, and I raise you my grand stand.'

"'See your grand stand with ourn and bust it up again with my right and left and center-field bleachers,' says Mac.

"'I'll see them bleachers and I raise you our ball park,' chirps Polkey, and then Take-a-chance sees that bet with his ball park and says, 'Now, I'll just jolt it again with our franchise.'

"'And I'll call it with ourn,' says Polkey. 'We better show-down now. If I kept on, you'd begin to toss your whole family in this here pot, and then I couldn't call you, 'cause you got more relations 'n what I got. What you got?'

"Old Take-a-chance shifts his stogy and lays down his cards.

"'We all get round close to rubber; and then a kind of gasp goes through the crowd.

"'The lucky son of a gambler,' says the hymn-book peddler. 'If he ain't been blessed with a straight flush.'

"'And it was so. Mac has got a straight flush, five to nine in diamonds. And then Polkey O'Neal grins and lays his fist down. And then we all take another look and we nearly drop dead. The lucky stiff lays down another straight flush, all pink, too, in hearts. But Polkey begins next to where Mac's leaves off and it ends up as high as they're ever made. No wonder the lucky stiff was willin' to buck Take-a-chance.

"'A royal flush,' says the sheriff, kinda hoarse. 'I only held one of them things once in all my life. And I had to travel all the way to Puerto Descado, in Argentina, before I could get that one.'

"'Well,' I says to Take-a-chance, 'you did go and take a chance, didn't you, huh?'

"Mac chews on his stogy a while and yawns. 'Uh-huh,' he says, careless. 'I was just a little outa luck. But I'm apt to win their whole darn league away from 'em by next spring.'

"'Well,' says the hymn-book peddler, 'they can't take the flag away from you, Mac, anyway. Of course, you'll be winning it to-morrow by owning a team which has won only thirty-two games against a hundred and twelve for Polkey's new outfit which he wins from you. It seems kinda funny, don't it, that the team which up to now won the fewest games in the league is gonna be the pennant holders, and the club

which won the most is gonna be in the cellar. I can't hardly figure it out.'"

The old Ivory Hunter paused and looked round at his audience in Markey's restaurant sadly.

"But believe me, gents," he said to them, "believe me, them club owners in that Oil League of ourn could figure it out, and they did—the next day.

"When it come time for us to play the final game the two teams with their new owners had swapped uniforms, and there was I in the coacher's box sportin' the spangles of the Hookworms instead of the outfit I'd bust through to the head of the league with. And all account of too much take-a-chance.

"The ump come out before game time and announced the batteries. 'McGuire and Brancum for the Hookworms!' he yells, 'and Pond and Burns for the locals.'

"Hey, Joe,' some fan yells from the third-base bleachers, 'you got that balled up. It's McGuire and Brancum for us and them other boys for the Hooks.'

"I got it right,' says the ump with lotsa dignity. 'I don't make mistakes announcing any more than I do in decisions.'

"You got it all wrong, Joe,' the fans start in yelling. 'You announced our battery for theirs. And you got the home team going to bat first.'

"It's all correct and proper,' the ump yells back. 'And I hafta take great pleasure in announcing furthermore that from to-day on the Hookworms ain't the Hookworms no more and the Angleworms ain't themselves neither. Take-a-chance MacCreery has got our league all balled up and confused. He lost his whole dog-gone ball outfit to Polkey O'Neal last evening in a game of draw poker. I thank you. Play ball.'

"Well, if that ain't the gosh-darned limit,' the fans start to howl. 'Gambling away our swell players. That Take-a-chance guy would gamble his blessed eyeballs away. Ain't that a crime?' they keep yelling.

"Well, anyway,' says one fan, after the game, 'they can't take the pennant away from this town, even if we have got them old bums of Polkey's in place of our regular team now. This town won a hundred and twelve games.'"

"So he did win the pennant, anyway," said the sport writer to the old Ivory Hunter. "They couldn't take MacCreery's games away from him."

The scout glanced at his refilled glass of not very near beer, and sighed. "That's just what I thought," said he sadly. "Until I see Mac the next day. He comes up and hands me five hundred dollars."

"The bonus, huh?' I says. 'For coping you the pennant?'

"Nope,' says Mac. 'For copping Polkey O'Neal the pennant. I lost that flag, but I done it by circumstances over which you had no control.'

"You lost it?' I says. 'You still got all them games I won for you and you lead the league, don't you, regardless of what players you own now.'

"Sure you won me enough games,' says Take-a-chance, 'but I dassent keep 'em. I just got through gassing with the national commission of the Oil League about it. And they decided that according to the rules and by-laws and regulations of the league that when I gambled away my franchise and took over Polkey's I just naturally took over his club standing in the cellar as well as his players.'

"Why, then, seeing I'm Polkey's manager, why, then,' I says, 'I must be boss of the pennant winner after all.'

"Mac looks terrible sorry.

"Nope,' he says. 'Cause the commission also decided that, being you wasn't no player and not confined to a player's contract, I couldn't legally toss you in the pot with the players. So you're still my manager and the Hookworms are our ball club and the Hookworm name and standing are ourn, too. Sam,' he says, real sympathetic, 'it's awful sad to say, but *you finished in the basement* again.'

"And all on account of you flirting with the Goddess of Chance,' I says.

"All on account of her,' he says, as he lights up another stogy. 'That lady, Sam, is a daw-gone dangerous dame. I got to admit it.'"

The Ivory Hunter knocked the ashes from his pipe and rose to leave.

"And maybe I don't know it," he concluded. "She's a wicked woman to make eyes at, gents. Awful wicked. Good day."

Pride

By Chester L. Saxby

The captain of the *Samson* got pride into his crew, but it cost him dear

ARNIE" SONDEHEIM sat in this landsman's office with no great feeling of comfort. The deeply upholstered chair with its wide arms did not appeal to him—could not make him at home. Nor could the men opposite relieve this sensation of artificiality, no matter how much they tried; they might be at ease themselves, but they were impotent to make a seaman so. The walls were too wide and high; the sunlight swam in too unobstructed; the foundations of the building were too stationary, had no roll, no lift such as the 'tow produces. The rich furnishings overawed one who had become accustomed to narrow compartments cheaply bulkheaded.

But Arnie was not to be denied the satisfaction that came of his being recently accepted as a full-fledged sailing master. He felt wondrously proud of that. And he had merely to raise his eyes and fasten them upon the fine, big reproduction of the *Samson* in full sail, hanging upon the farther wall, and instantly pride fortified him. By right of conquest she was his to command; he ruled her.

Neither Merl nor Tibbert, who owned her in partnership, could feel this glory that descended upon him and would never leave him. They might own her in every plank and stick, but her soul—that they did not own. He himself held the *Samson's* soul in his keeping. He had risen from the ranks to this; just for this, he thought. He had come from before the mast to guide her destiny, to cater to her whims, to joy in her supremacy over the winds.

Tibbert looked at him with eyes steel-edged to mark every slightest chance of fortune. Arnie recognized that Tibbert had missed the one thing that counted.

Tibbert said: "You will proceed with the kerosene to Shanghai and get our agent's orders there. Your stores are on Broadway wharf now; provisions likewise."

"I'd like to run over the provisions,"

Arnie told him. "It's a long cruise; I want to be sure what I'm getting. We had scurvy aboard before." He stated this last in an even tone, but it brought again the old hurt, the vision of his best friend, the little Yankee cook, Japes, dead of the dread disease.

Merl, heavy-jowled and bulbous-eyed, snorted at this.

"We 'tend to the buying, Sondheim. No faultfinding, if you please!"

Arnie turned quiet blue eyes upon him. Merl, he knew, had been a tug captain for a dozen years and did not comprehend what *months* of bad food meant. He observed sailing from a landward slant and, like Tibbert, drove a close bargain.

"I'll pay out of my own pocket before I'll take cheap stuff," Arnie said.

"Oh, the cabin food has been specially looked after," Tibbert hastened to reassure him, growing somewhat stern at the presumption of Arnie's words.

But this novel sea master was to astonish him even more.

"We won't need any special cabin food. The same treatment for every man gets the best results. Plenty of potatoes, dried meat, inspected tinned stuff——"

Merl whistled. "What kind of a captain are you, anyway?"

"I leave that to you. But the crew trusts me, and I trust them. Good food and kindly treatment means willing workers and good time made in passage."

"H'm!" Merl studied him narrowly. "I thought the captain saw to that."

But the blue eyes did not waver. "I'm not a driver expecting more than is reasonable. And they'll work—aye, hands and hearts—when they're treated right." It had taken Arnie seven voyages to reach this conclusion, and he would hold it now against all argument. Crews were what they were made: that was his gospel.

"I wonder now," Merl muttered, "how far you'd carry that."

Arnie grinned. "Across the Pacific and back. I've tried it farther."

"With certain crews, maybe," was the musing reply. "It sounds too much like democracy. Remember, Sondheim; we're trusting you." A heavy fist thudded upon the desk top. "Notions cost money. Laying down the rules is a captain's position." "I thought it was getting a vessel into port," Arnie mildly suggested. And because they continued to gaze strangely at him he went on, "I'm staking my job on this. If you'd seen 'em slave at the ropes in a storm and take a line in the boats trying to beat a calm just on account of a decent word, you'd feel different."

Tibbert tapped with a pencil. "Deliver the cargo, and no questions asked. As you say, you're staking your job." His mouth took that singular twist. "It's up to us to decide on a skipper's merits. You won't object to our doing so."

"Not if I get the right food," Arnie agreed. "We'll make a record run."

"Very well, then. It's a trial on both parts. We wish you success."

Arnie laughed at that. His life had been nothing else than experiments. And somehow they had gained him what he now possessed. This one pleased him best, for the good opinion of the men he worked with had come to represent the one standard of achievement. The joy in a superlative ship, and the honest respect of her crew! He was tempted to bet on what that combination would always bring. He remembered the money the insurance people had paid him for the loss of the *Jessica* which had escheated to him. Gladly would he have wagered it all.

And then he looked up once more, and there was the ship of ships, his beloved *Samson*. At once the thought of the money left his mind. What was money to having her! Aye, he was wagering the very life of him as it was. If he lost, the *Samson* would be taken from him, and that summed up everything.

He thought, when he got outside, of the crew he would like to sign—men who had sailed with him on two different occasions. There was the *Samson's* old crew, and there were the patient, willing hands that had manned the *Jessica*. He spent the rest of the day searching the boarding houses, the saloons, the crimping headquarters. And only five of the former lot could he discover.

They came gladly. The rest, the big majority, he took as he could find them. If he could not have old friends, he would make new ones. It all rested with him. Human nature did not vary.

They took a light breeze that was hauling to the south and, ending a month of bothersome idleness, said farewell to the land and stood out past the Heads. The stays began to tune up; the top-hammer fifted st. illy. With a bone in her teeth the ship whisked away for the Farallones.

Arnie remarked to the mate—a heavy-bodied fellow, thick in the jaw and with the slumbering eyes of an ox—that the sea made a man out of one.

"I dunno," he was answered. "See it work both ways. Look at that now!"

He had reference to a seaman rather past the middle of life and plainly a dismal specimen, who sat on the step of the foredeck and nursed his head.

Tuller, the mate, was indignant. "I'll just put 'im a mind of what's to be done," he remarked significantly. His hands doubled. He started forward.

But Arnie stopped him. "I'll see what's the matter," he said.

He strolled to the foredeck and stood eyeing the fellow—while from various points of vantage the members of the mate's watch peered expectantly.

"Sick, Moren?" he asked. He never had to inquire a man's name: if he had heard it once, it remained with him always. And he had done his own hiring.

A shiver took Moren. He lifted his face to show vague eyes.

"It's a-comin' on, I guess, sir. Can't—help it, sir. No use—fightin'." Dark fear surged up, making the face ashen by contrast. A gyrating of the eyes; a huddling down—and with a harsh gasp Moren tumbled over, knotting himself into a ball that writhed and produced repulsive sounds. Froth bubbled from his lips.

Arnie dropped beside him and fell to work straightening him out. He gripped the clawing hands and held them harmless; then he called for water. It was a difficult job to wrestle with the taut nerves, and two buckets of cold sea water were required to force relaxation. A limp and sodden unfortunate Arnie carried in his arms down the fo'c's'le ladder. He came up in frowning thought.

"Epileptic fit," he said. "Bad. Poor devil! Medicine's no good."

"One kind is," Tuller argued. "You can rough it out of 'em."

"He'd be glad if you could," Arnie was unconscious of the curious eyes measuring him from aloft and alow. "But you'd make it worse. He's got no business going to sea; it might catch him in the rigging, and then where would he be?"

"Jus' so," Tuller bristled. "Givin' us trouble; puttin' us short-handed! I'd settle with 'im first off. That's the dirtiest trick I ever hear about."

Arnie said simply: "We can't mend that now," and went to reckon the course. He was distressed. Well he knew what scant sympathy this or any ship's company would have. Sailing men partake of the sea's cruelty, without realizing it. He could not get past this thought. Moren was forty years old; possibly forty-five; and all he had to look forward to was a series of seizures and a life of loneliness before the mast. Arnie looked back two years and saw himself in Moren's place. His luck had plucked him away: Moren's held him.

What a gamble! Life threw the dice, and luck turned them.

He gave up this reflection after a little, what with the need aboard. The *Samson* chattered to him in every timber, laughed as she spat the water away, and demanded: *More sail! . . . More sail!* He grinned as he humored her—this sound child of the builder's craft. He bawled for royals and felt his heart flutter in their fluttering. A grand sight! The noblest thing in creation! How she must look to passing vessels! A skimming bird of multiplex wings! The luck of the weather had taken them out of the belt of variable winds and into the steady trades on the first day.

He did not forget to order the cook to take Moren some warm broth.

And the following night a man in the second mate's watch was reported unfit for duty. Spangler, the second mate, brought the word and muttered a nasty epithet. But Arnie investigated, gave the sick one some quinine, and cheerily greeted Moren, who had returned shakily to his deck watch. The trades were increasing and driving the ship along at a piping gait. No fear in this! A single pair of hands at the wheel; a lookout in the foretop—that sufficed. Let them all turn sick!

He paused to view the men at their meal, his mild eyes alight.

"What's the word, boys? Any complaint of the mess?" He knew there was not; that there could not be. They returned his joviality in kind. In the first night watch he heard them singing; and he heard the *Samson* outsourcing them all.

When the mate the next noon issued out of the fo'c's'le dragging one Hart by the collar and very nearly strangling the man, the complacency was, to be sure, somewhat ruffled. Tuller announced that Hart was "sojering" and grew blasphemous. Arnie heard Hart out. The fellow protested that slack times had kept him ashore until his liver was out of condition. At that the watch began to laugh; whereupon Tuller, without looking, painfully silenced the nearest one with his boot.

Arnie gauged his man. "I'm for making a record cruise," he said, "and I'll hold every man responsible for time lost. Drink a little sea water; that's my word. And remember the ship, the finest vessel you ever sailed in. Give 'er the best you've got; she's deserving it. What do you say?"

"She's a han'some un," Hart replied. "W'en my liver's fit—"

"There it's comin' ag'in! Ain't no use —" a voice trembled. Near by a body pitched into the rail and scuffled on the deck. It was Moren.

Tuller produced a string of oaths. A man in the lee of the galley howled that his stomach "hurt him awful." Another got in Arnie's way as he bore Moren off.

"It's the water's tuh blame; ain't yuh noticed, sir?" he whined.

Before nightfall the wind was a roar, and foretopgallant sails were double-reefed. In the process two of the crew were escorted below complaining of injuries. The dusk screened the activity aloft, so that one was forced to conjecture what had happened. Arnie, roused in the night, discovered Tuller down in the fo'c's'le suspiciously examining the naked bodies of the two by the light of the dim lamp and calling the lie in a mad-dened voice.

He cried to Arnie above the thunder of the rising seas: "Not a mark on either of 'em! That's evidence! It's a job, sir! There ain't no pride in 'em!"

Men were leaning out of bunks, their faces weird in half shadow.

"Tumble up!" Arnie shouted. "All hands

to furl sail! No time now, Mr. Tuller! We've got to ease 'er! Look alive, men! We're in for a blow!"

He swung about, and ran into Moren weakly groping for the ladder. The two looked into each other's eyes. Arnie was stirred.

"Here! Get back with you! You're not fit for this . . . only the strong ones——" And he dashed by to take command of the deck. The *Samson* labored, running her head deep, fighting against the weight of her canvas. He was right; it had come on to blow. The northeast trades in all their fury! Work in the rigging for every man that was able! And the truth dawned upon him that here was grudging service.

It was a hard dose for him to swallow. He watched with the keenness of a hawk not one man alone, but several. Admission was wrung from him then, and realization struck him like a thing of ice. It brought out all the old bitterness that he had believed dead. Merl had been right—and Tibbert. He had allowed himself to believe that kindness worked miracles. It was not so. In the screaming darkness he could hear voices grumbling, footsteps lagging—the intonations of tired indifference.

Had the *Samson's* need not been so great, the bitterness of the discovery might have drawn a punishing response. But the thing now was to lighten the vessel's head. He flung himself dominantly into this struggle with the wind and exacted of these half-hearted hands only what would accomplish the immediate purpose. With them would be a separate accounting that he dreaded to forecast.

And then, when the upper masts rose bare and the agony of the vessel's voice subsided to a gentle sighing, a figure confronted him in the waist and touched its cap in the homely salute of sailing men the world over. He recognized this one as being of that tried and true company that had been willing to give their all for him and for the ship before.

"She do seem human," the man bawled, showing his teeth in his delight. "Hark to 'er, sir! These 'ere ain't knowin' 'er proper is all. But they'll l'arn."

Then and there the bitterness sank away. Calmer second judgment saw the value of this advice. Men *were* what they were made, and these, gathered from a variety of com-

mands, had missed the chance thus far of reveling in the glory of a superlative ship. His was a responsibility of teaching them the *Samson's* majestic pride.

He was very thankful of the explanation and full of eagerness to awaken the blind. His faith returned like the easy running of spring sap. Arnie was still a child in his exuberance. He turned his face upward to the glistening trucks and laughed at the simplicity of it. They should romp into Shanghai a baptized company.

The way of this education was ingenious. The trades continued strong and assisted the undertaking. Arnie singled out Hart first and sent him out upon the martingale to the tip of the flying jib boom and bade him face about. Hart was frightened, but did as he was ordered. Clutching the fore-royal stay, he stared back over the length of the vessel and up at the towering masts. A certain awe came into his stolid face. In this position one might well feel himself apart from this rushing monster and standing directly in the track of it. Like a creation unearthly it thundered down upon him, imperious, sublime, alive, a thing of delicate curves appareled in power and plumed with a towering headdress that imprisoned the song of the universe. Viewed from the deck she was a ship; viewed from the flying jib boom she was the very spirit of the deep made manifest, the untamed, sentient joy that sailing men are lured by. She lived and spoke in the language of the viking.

Arnie watched Hart for the effect of this, and when he saw the first fear turn to wonder, he called him inboard and sent out another—a third—a fourth—a fifth. One by one they clambered and wriggled along the perilous journey. And Arnie marked those who scowled down at the water and would not raise their faces to the spectacle he meant them to see. He marked them for another lesson, marked them in disgust. When the entire crew had been over the rope, he had so marked seven.

And something of the *Samson's* glory had entered into the others.

Thereafter he proceeded singly to teach them all the difference in the songs of vessels: of the irritable grumbling of low-masted brigs, of the drudging voices of heavy-bodied freighters, of the fussy shrillness of "the little old women" of the trade, of the brute cursing peculiar to broad-yarded barks. He appeared to happen upon

these ideas casually, and he awakened a remembrance in most of the crew.

"Tiresome sailing—aye, haven't I known the kind?" He faced the blinking pupil. "Thought it was the captain—or the mate, maybe. Hard going and poor sleep—aye! That was the vessel and the way the masts were stepped in her, and the cut of her bows. But Clyde built—that's another thing, eh? You're lucky, Bruff! We're all lucky! Listen now! She knows what's what. Take 'er in the night when you can't see a hundred yards for the mist, and she'll tell you what's to be done. If she's got too much clothes on, she says so. If she wants more, she hollers for it. If she wants 'er head, she shouts for it. We were in a race once——"

He said this to Moren, and marveled at the light that grew in the man's haunted eyes, at the way he moistened his lips and threw back his shoulders.

"They'd never beat this 'ere!" the wan fellow asserted. "It ain't right she's gotta put up with me. I ain't 'er kind." Arnie saw him knot his fists.

But also there were six or seven who laughed and turned away from him.

Arnie, however, was not through: he had only begun. He pitted the mate's watch against the second mate's in furling sail and laid wagers loudly, until the *Samson* echoed with the hoarse sounds of competition. Watch against watch—they rejoiced in that and learned to fight like devils in the slings, and afterward on the deck as well when one slid down a mainstay and flung a gibe at those tumbling down from the foremast. Strangely, there was no more sickness in the fo'c's'le—except Moren's.

Tuller argued with Arnie: "Would yuh keep a straight course to Shanghai, sir? We're three points off this minute." He could never understand Arnie's methods.

"We'll make it up, man," Arnie grinned. He was busy figuring out the next day's lesson. "What's three points to a ship like this? Get the men to sailing 'er, and watch 'em bring 'er in! A spanking ship and a roaring crew, Tuller! Who says we're losing time? Maybe the steering's bad. That'll be next, then."

And so it was. Arnie, who could steer a vessel with his eyes shut—by the feel of the wind on his cheek and that uncanny sixth sense of direction which neither he nor any other had ever been able to fathom—gave

up sleep to show the mettle of the *Samson*, her coördination, her delicate adjustment, the keenness of her response to the helm. In the night, in a whipping sea, before a bellowing wind, he hove her to, simply for these men to see and to feel her pride. They knew the significance of this thing; that if she missed stays no power existed to save her and them from a terrible disaster—a hopeless splintering and wreckage aloft. A few of them had witnessed vessels made derelict in this way, and all could envision it. But Arnie, living these days and nights on a high scale of emotion, shouted, as he whirled the spokes, that she was laughing. In another moment there she lay tossing in the teeth of the trades as gently as a cradle rocks. A cheer went up from those simple hearts.

Arnie noted three, nevertheless, who drew down their mouths and seemed to sneer; and one who sauntered to the rail and spat. It was the same when he showed the port watch. Always the seven! He wished to be sure of this.

He was less and less in doubt what he must do. Nor did any bitterness enter into the contemplation. He saw a crew fighting off indifference, an indifference in some cases of long standing, and gaining day by day a spirit of satisfaction in their calling. It was not their fault that they had been indifferent before: it was not the fault of these seven that they were indifferent still. Men were what they were made, and some had not yet been hewed out of the rough block. The milder lessons of pride did not touch them. One must knock *literally* at the doors of their consciousness. A baptized crew!—that was what he meant to have. Not a part of them, but *all* of them breathing a perfect pride that was the pride of being of the glorious *Samson*. He would have that, or he would have nothing.

At table Tuller listened without enthusiasm to this odd gospel. What did it matter how the men felt? Officers were signed to get the work out of them whether they liked it or not. There were proper ways.

But Arnie would not argue. He averred: "They're no better than animals, if you've got to order 'em. Make 'em happy, Tuller, so they know why they're here." The hurt of those years in which he had asked that question and found no answer, sobered him. "Getting to Shanghai might not be hard, but living with discontented men—men that

haven't got any pride, for cruise after cruise—by God, Tuller, that's wrong! And the ship, Tuller!"

"There won't be any ship if we don't get to Shanghai."

Arnie clapped him on the back. "They're learning to steer. A baptized crew! Only seven that don't care. That's for to-day, Tuller. I'm sorry for 'em!"

It was a day of brilliant sunshine, with a mad, high wind chorusing aloft, with a faint springtime in the air that told of the tropics near at hand. Coatless, his shirt open, his happiness abated not a whit, Arnie took the deck and called seven names—three from the deck watch and four from the watch below. They came aft slowly, so slowly that two he went into the fo'c's'le for and drove out before him. He faced a little line of silent men.

"I guess you know what's got to be done," he addressed them. "If you've got any pride you'll fight, and if you haven't got the pride for that you can find a boat in Shanghai—if the *Samson* don't 'tend to you herself."

One of them essayed to speak, but Arnie cut him off.

"Explaining's what a fool does. A man with any pride don't ever explain."

They just looked at him then, several growing red-faced and all very set of feature. One attempted to slink out of the group. Quickly Arnie leaped forward and knocked him down. He lay cursing until Arnie kicked him onto his feet.

"Wouldn't help 'im, would you?" he taunted the rest. "Save your own hides, and that's all that matters. Cowards, are you?" He slapped one across the face with his open hand. The answer was a weak lunge, with head covered.

"Pride, my hearties! That's what counts." Arnie stepped into the midst of them, elbowing, stepping on their feet, laughing at them. And suddenly he began in earnest, working his arms like pistons, driving them back against the rail, darting after those who tried to crawl away. It was a shameful sight.

"Explaining, eh?" he barked at a villainously blasphemous face. "Let's hear you! Well, I don't agree with that," and he struck him, not once ceasing to smile. Immediately he whirled about to another. "You're bigger'n I am. Maybe you can explain better. They want to hear." He waved to the crew, gathered mutely.

His words were an invitation. A murmur arose—grew into coherent speech. Arnie, the least bit uncertain how they would take this, felt a glad thrill as he heard them, for he knew the days of his laboring with them had not been wasted.

How a crew of sea fellows can talk! They speak a crude language, a language that cuts to the marrow. The wind could not drown the smart they carried.

"Seven of 'em! beauties, ain't they? My, ain't thet sluggin' jes' grand? I see hens fight onct—look ut thet face, would ye? Take 'is picter! Come a sackful o' wind it'd knock the hull of 'em down. Gaw-wd! Proud huskies!"

The effect showed. The captain might vilify them in vain; their bunkmates jeered them, and their gorge rose to frenzy. One was sobbing aloud as he made his first drive. One put his hand to his face, looked at the blood on his fingers and flung himself straight at Arnie. In two minutes the fight was raging. Arnie husbanded his strength when he saw that they were aroused. He fought craftily, stepping back to lead on one at a time. And, seeing this, one worked his way behind and, thrusting forth a foot, tripped him.

Instantly a roar went up, and a dozen men charged hotly down from around the foremast. Arnie was not to be seen, for all the seven had leaped upon him in a trice. But as the indignant rescuers reached the place, Arnie squirmed out, writhing free, kicking shins, stomachs, and heads. He got upon his knees; then—

"Stand away!" he commanded. His breath was labored. "This—is my—my fight! Get—back!" With a violent effort he regained his feet.

"Now—dirty dogs! You'll pay—for that! Tripping—fouling!" He lost all sense of discretion, of defensiveness. He left his head unguarded and rained blows with both fists. He appeared to have gone mad. "*Pride! Pride!*" he spat through ugly, bruised lips. His face was streaming and grimy. "Not—damn bit—in any—you! Can—'xplain that—maybe—get off—ship! Ov'board!—all you!"

And truly it looked for a time as if he *would* drive them overboard, for he went at them with a fury they could not withstand. All seven, battling terrifically, were forced back. One and then another went down—and rose again. Not one thought

of quitting. Against the bulwark they planted themselves and did terrible damage.

The result came suddenly. Arnie, knowing himself conquered, gasped for each breath, and one of the seven wilted in a heap. Those on the edge of the circle heard the mate cry out: "Steady the helm! What are yuh——" And the ship lurched as she yawed. Came the thunder of top-hammer cracking and bursting. Over rolled the vessel, and a big sea swept the deck.

Sailors' instinct warned the crew in time. There was a scurrying and a wild clutching. The scrambling was worst by the inundated bulwark. A dark figure that looked lifeless was lifted up and swirled out. Floundering, weak, grinning foolishly, Arnie flung himself overboard after it. Both bleeding hands he laid upon it; then he disappeared under the boiling crest——

A gaunt inaction followed. Out of this the voice of the mate, bellowing like a bull. Men tumbled over one another trying to reach and loose the ropes. At the starboard davits blind fingers fumbled to drop the boat. A weary lot, they fell into it and cast off. Somebody found oars in the bottom.

They were all but run under by the savage seas before they caught sight of what they were after. Then they had to pull in the two together, being unable to loosen Arnie's grasp of the other. They managed it, shipping more water. The vessel showed for a moment, already two miles distant. After her they rowed, not knowing whether she could heave to, too spent for anxiety—for this boat's crew had been mustered of the prideless, embattled seven. This last fact Arnie could not know; he lay propped in the stern sheets. But had he known, possibly he would not have cared, inasmuch as the effort to bring him in reflected no pride in the ship; whereas this was what he wanted and had fought them to obtain.

They reached her somehow, when a drag was rigged to retard her gait. This was toward evening, and their strength had become virtually exhausted. Arnie was bunched below, while the work of cutting away wrecked top-hammer went forward, and re-rigging and splicing occupied the rest of the night.

Up the next day, Arnie lent weak guidance to the last tedious labors and without a word of comment for the unhappy helmsman who had brought about the accident, searched out the seven and shook hands with

each. He thanked them severally for proving him wrong, saying nothing of the rescue; whereby they were hugely flattered with themselves. They and the others of the crew tried in vain to comprehend why summary punishment did not descend where it belonged; but Arnie was vividly recalling a similar laxity on his own part that had cost him his proud second mateship on the *Snowbird*, and sympathy withheld him. The seven found something to admire in this restraint.

Indeed, quite a deal of admiration appeared to be in them. One might not perceive that they took greater satisfaction in the *Samson*, although the hurt in the captain's face for the cruel wounding of his beloved charge quickly sent them aloft to do yeoman service. It seemed that they would never really come to appreciate the ship: it was not in them. And yet for Arnie there certainly grew in them a weedy loyalty born of the struggle and their recognition of his bravery; born of the service they had rendered him in an open boat, too. They had suffered together.

Three days the *Samson* was buffeted hither and thither before the carpenter could send up new yards and present repaired royals. Three days she groped about in patient blindness to find herself and be off upon her errand to the China coast. It was a quick job at that; a fine source of inspiration to Arnie, who counted all his company baptized by misfortune to a noble pride.

It was later, when they had squared away upon the new course, that the last uncertainty left him. Freshly accoutered, the *Samson* tried her strength and fairly flung the waters from her bows. And the lookout bawled of smoke on the port quarter. Before four hours they were within signaling distance.

She turned out to be a steamship of the lean, tapered build that mail ships show. The crew greeted her joyously as a friend from home and set up a cry: "A race! A race!" Arnie lowered the glass and grinned at Tuller.

"The *John McCall*, Humber Line. She'll do eighteen knots—but we can beat 'er. I'm a mind to try. Same course as ours; she's on the Java run."

"Don't pay tuh give in to 'em too much," muttered the mate.

"It's reward for all of us. They deserve

it. Fetch the flags out of the locker, and we'll see if she's willing. Steam makes 'em stuck up."

So they signaled across a reach of water, flaunting the challenge, while the crew swarmed onto the shrouds and pantomimed hilarious encouragement. To their joy the challenge was accepted, and the race was on.

Here began no child's play, but a wearing struggle between the old and the new, between the winds of Heaven and the engines of man's invention. Never had the proud *Samson* been so called upon to defend her kind. Black smoke poured more and more thickly from the funnels of the greyhound, *John McCall*. In answer Arnie bawled for skysails to be set—a tricky undertaking in such a blow.

Half a dozen toiled over the log-line, letting it run out with a whoop and burning their hands in the eagerness to read what it told. Fifteen and a half—sixteen—and a quarter—and three-quarters—*seventeen!*

She held the steamer's pace like a steel-nerved thing for hours; then very slowly fell behind. The men jabbered and pleaded and fell silent.

Arnie gauged the wind. His features hardened. He listened for strain.

Then—"Topm'st st'uns'ls!" he roared. Leaping, the crew ran to hoist the booms. Sweating, slaving, fighting the wind, they bent on canvas. And the *Samson*, thundering her battle song, forged foot by foot abreast. In the forepeak Moren babbled some demoniac foolishness. From the taffrail sounded: "*—and a quarter!*"

Nightfall found them still on even terms. The glow of happiness lighted all the dark for Arnie. He spoke low-voiced to the courageous masts. They answered him in the deep tones of a harp. The sea was white in their wake.

With the morning the belching funnels yonder had marked a slight gain, and men groaned. Dumb faces they turned upon Arnie, who paced the deck with the mate. Tuller was arguing with him, but he did not hear Tuller. The *Samson* alone would warn him. A tumultuous earnestness possessed him. He reached a decision.

"Crack on!" he commanded. "Who'll lay aloft and rig to gallant st'uns'ls?"

They did not see Tuller shake his head. But they heard Arnie laugh, and it was wine to their blood. Up went the booms.

6A P

Forms wriggled out on them. A vast cloud of canvas rushed heedlessly above the ship. What a roar! What a glory! And men slid downward, limp, wet through and through with their toiling.

And they were fairly flying through the sea. By noon the *Samson* had closed the distance; by the first dog watch she had pushed her nose ahead. Into the setting sun she careered, all afire with the flame of the sky, gorgeous, awesome, conceived of a power immortal. She rent the air with her clamor of defiance.

Next day Tuller's warning was realized, and from end to end of the vessel echoed the twang of a parting clew line. Open water behind her, and victory in sight! Tragically the eyes of men went aloft to the main topsail thrashing furiously.

Arnie stared at it and at the crew. He would not ask that. Too dangerous! But who should gainsay him—the captain—if he cared to risk it? Off came his cap, his shirt. He sprang for the main shrouds.

Their shouts stopped him. They pointed. And there was one just rounding the futtock shrouds directly overhead. He could not believe. It was Moren. Moren! Moren whom he did not dare to trust aloft! Moren with a marlinspike at his belt! Pride did he want? Well, he had it.

Arnie watched in amazement. The man was on the yard now and making out as if he meant to test what trade winds could do. He had nearly reached the tack. Out went his arm—and all at once the jealousy of the gods of health swooped down upon him. He was seen to clutch at the sail, at the yard. He found neither, and his brave spirit crumpled. Over the yardarm his body doubled. A sound went up from the deck. The race was forgotten.

There is no harder undertaking than Arnie faced. To bring a man in off a yardarm when dead weight alone is contended against, requires strength of several kinds—strength to fight a snoring blast and a whipping sail into the bargain. One must somehow repudiate his imagination and rise superior to the nerves that sustain action!

Twice Arnie thought his burden was lost, with the yardarm shaking him. Once it seemed to those watchers the struggle was in vain and two men offered for the sake of one. The wind knew no mercy; the flying seas struck in villainy. But a seaman's heart grows calloused with looking on death:

his hands grip life by the throat. Arnie slid down a stay, surrendered his burden, and turned to see what headway they had lost. In that moment two others had sprung onto the shrouds with marlinspikes, and the crew were cheering them on—that is, all but six or seven. These latter gazed upon Arnie dumbly. They found him quite all their interest could ask.

And to Arnie's surprise the *John McCall's* funnels breathed less and less black breath. While he looked the ensign sank from her masthead, to travel skyward again immediately—the salute of respect known to those of the seven oceans. Flags showed; and he read them by the code book. They said: "Fine work. Your race. Compliments."

A hand tapped his shoulder. Tuller remonstrated: "It ain't Java. Look!"

And the legend had broken out: "Bound for Hakodate. Wire news of you."

Hakodate! Hakodate, Japan! Six hundred miles off his course! Ah, then he understood the wind. Tuller scowled in reproach, but Arnie laughed.

"Well, it can't be helped. I *thought* something was wrong, Tuller; but how could we know, eh? They've got pride, and we'll make it up."

"We'd 'a' been in port by now if we'd left their damn pride alone."

"Aye," said Arnie, "we might be at that." He was counting the days from Frisco. The sum of them staggered him. No record run now! But he shook off the reflection to remark: "A crew like this one can do big things. Watch 'em!"

"They can't haul the monsoons around," Tuller reminded him. "And there's the Japan current to face. The Kuro-siwo—nothing like it anywhere."

"Aye, the Kuro-siwo! But the monsoons may have shifted. Late fall, Tuller!"

But the monsoons still blew strongly from the south, aiding and abetting the Kuro-siwo. And avoid this marine current they could not wholly. Arnie had time in which to fall prey to his thoughts. They were bothersome thoughts. He was staking all on a toss of the dice. Should anything happen now—

But nothing happened. The *Samson* stormed into the eye of the powerful monsoons. All the crew battled with her. Tacking that brought men from their sleep to take in sail many times a day, and just as often in the dead of night; to this they ral-

lied without stint of energy, with a fine pride, and all singing out on the ropes like brave whalers that little Japes used to prattle about!

In the solitude of his cabin Arnie fretted at the delay. Head winds when the gamble of gambles had found him forgetting time and teaching a mongrel crew what pride is! Surely, surely, Merl and Tibbert would not hold him to the matter of a few days! He had forged a crew for them, a crew that would gain tenfold for any little loss this might mean. No, no; the *Samson* was still his; would continue to be his.

When he reported again he would tell them about the seven whose sea souls had been awakened; how they toiled and surrendered their rest and solemnly—aye, what queer, solemn folk they were, those seven!—risked their crazy necks every hour. He would tell of Moren who called himself unfitted to man such a ship—and who dared the fury of the wrathful trade wind and the madness of a loose sail, while the terror of a fit was stealing over him. He would tell them of all this and more, too. For he was right, and they were wrong. He had won—he and the *Samson*!

In these moments of looking back, a supreme peace enwrapped him, lulled him wondrously. He laughed to himself, and heard the *Samson* answer in her big, booming voice. But there were moments when he looked ahead, and fear still brooded. He almost dreaded to look upon Shanghai, seeing only an agent who held out to him a slip of paper on which was printed the end of all things. He realized now what he had done; he had for a space forgotten the owners; and *that* no man could do with impunity. He had placed the ship first in his thoughts, whereas she was simply the instrument of men's accomplishments. Merl would not be able to forgive that.

Life threw the dice, and luck turned them. He was afraid.

And yet, he had but to take the deck, the crew alert to the mate's bawling—and fear was instantly dead. They romped at their work, these men. They were fighting his battle and joying in it. The spirit of both watches was monumental. He heard them wagering on the run, and laughing at the ease of it. While he wondered, they worked to the roar of chanteys. The seven, reborn, led the singing.

And on a day they stood into Shanghai.

Arnie trembled a little as he entered the agent's office. He had left the mate aboard to superintend the discharging, and the streets rose narrow and evil-smelling and oppressive with their ferment of overpopulation.

The agent was holding out a paper. He put out his hand and accepted it. He hesitated to read, but the man settled back to watch. He unfolded it. The orders were brief:

Overdue. Explain or turn over command to Captain Wagner, ship *Weatherall*.

That was every word. He nodded and went out.

It made him grin all to himself that Tibbert should put it that way. He might have known they were not ready to give him up. "Explain," they said. That was their loophole. Well, how much should go into the explanation? Cables cost money.

Musing, he sauntered down street after street and at length came to the outskirts where was more freedom for the lungs. He found a spot less thronged and composed, one after another, half a dozen reports, wondering why none of them satisfied him. Irritated, he cast paper and pencil aside. He needed thought.

Yet it was thought that betrayed him. Something knocked at the back of his head. When he listened to its hammering, it told him: "Explaining's what a fool does." Simply that. Starkly he coned this over. Therein lay the trouble then.

Well, as to that one might call it explaining or not. If there was reason enough in what he had done and had not done, there were other and better terms. One might say——

He scowled. He could not go on. And he knew why.

Pride! This was a question of pride and nothing more. Out yonder the *Samson* pulled at her anchor chains and beckoned him back. And here he was sitting on a stone and unable to move. Pride! It startled him. He began to tremble again.

He knew very quickly that the dice had indeed turned against him. He was looking back along the road he had traveled, res-

urrecting the times when explanation would have blotted out so much hurt. He recalled that never once had he descended to explanation. He had withheld himself each time without knowing why he did. But he knew now. There was no pride in excuses. Explaining was a fool's part.

He found it very hard to return to the water front.

The sight of the *Samson* lording it over the shipping gave him a curious, stabbing thrill. It was like a wound of honor. Her pride and his!

On board, as he looked about at the men, the thrill deepened. They had had their lesson and were bigger for it. He had not considered that he, too, must have his lesson. As he was in a sense bigger than they, his lesson had to be bigger.

The men saw him emerge, tugging at his trunk. Their stupefaction had a note in it of blank dismay. He told them that another master would take the ship out, and then he stood beside the mainmast and tried to make it all perfectly clear to the *Samson*. She was silent, but, of course, she must understand. Pride was the wine of life to her. She did her duty and never explained.

The crew had drawn off to discuss this thing. He waved his hand as he started for the rail. For the ship he had no farewell, for the better part of them both could not ever be separated. Others might own her in every plank and stick; but her soul—that had come to abide with him and rested in his keeping.

The baptized crew, overflowing with a new knowledge of the dignity of their calling, took the ratlines and cheered him. That was their tribute to him who had taught them. And their pride was in the ship first and last. But on his heels seven men thrust forward to the rail and carelessly tossed their duffel into the gig. In response to the yells and queries sent in their wake, these seven shrugged their shoulders. They were off with their captain, wherever he might be steering—and not without some pride, too.

Every man to his taste!



Chanting Wheels

By Hubbard Hutchinson

Holding down a job in a steel mill seems a curious occupation for a budding musical genius, even when he needs the money. But Raleigh was too much of a regular fellow to find himself out of the picture anywhere. You are going to like this story, just as you are going to like Raleigh—and not only because both are unusual. This tale in which we see music proving itself strangely valuable to a steel mill after all, plunges too deep beneath the surface of life amid the grim “chanting wheels” to fail to appeal to any one—whether captain of industry, musician or man in the street. In short, it is just plain “big.”

(A Four-Part Story—Part I.)

CHAPTER I.

RALEIGH swung up the narrow road from the trolley, and sniffed the smoky air with a zest of anticipation tempered by the cinders of reality. Then he laughed gayly. After all, it would be a lark. He passed some workmen, with a flash of white teeth and a flare of color so out of keeping with the soot-stained sky and the drab tones of road and factory that two of them turned and stared after him.

He wondered what his uncle would say, the uncle whom he had not seen for three years, and whom he had only seen five times in all. The last was just before he had gone to France. Smiling to himself, he remembered the first time this uncle had come to the house—a tall, finely built man, with black hair even then frosty and a square face with the angular jaws and mouth of a conqueror. To Raleigh's twelve-year-old curiosity, he was all that was beautiful in strength, and he had loved him on sight. As was natural to him, he had gone straight to the piano and begun to play, confident that this new god would lean over him in amazed approbation as did his teachers. At that epoch in the road of music he had reached the place where “I Dreamt That I Dwelt In Marble Halls” held for him the passion of “Tristan” and the exaltation of “Parsifal.” He had just reached the place in the playing where the music soared to full-mouthed chords very hard to play but beautiful beyond dreams, when his uncle

had spoken almost as though he were not present at all, and quite as if no playing were going on.

“Sis, you ought to get that boy out of doors; he shouldn't be moping at the piano like a girl.”

The rainbow-hued crystals rising round him through his music had crashed suddenly to earth, and he had hated his uncle. For years the hatred endured; he hated him all the more, of course, because he had so much wanted to love him.

He remembered it now, as he swung along—remembered the puzzled look growing in his mother's gentle, practical face as she had replied:

“But David, he doesn't want to go out and play. He just lives at the piano. He's perfectly well, though, and strong as a little horse.”

Her face, so like his uncle's, had clouded with the strange look Raleigh was to know well as he grew older; the look of a mother who finds she has brought some one into the world that she cannot possibly understand.

Raleigh's eyes filled suddenly, and he reached rather hastily for his handkerchief. His dear, puzzled mother—perhaps—

Then all thoughts were knocked from him.

He rounded the corner, his handkerchief for the instant in his eyes, and a warm, compact figure struck him violently in the chest. Raleigh gasped, cleared his vision, and looked down into the flushed face of a girl. For an instant both gazed. Though he

subconsciously registered the brilliance of her cheeks and the blown curves of her hair, he actually saw only the trouble in the blue eyes, and the dilation of the pupils. His mood of reminiscence had, perhaps, sensitized him.

"You're in trouble," he said, catching two small, bare hands red with the cold. "What is it—what can I do?"

For an instant the blue eyes looked at him, and something of the trouble left them. She caught a quick breath, and smiled a little, with an unexpected wreath of laughter lines traced for a moment round her mouth.

"My!" she gasped. "You surprised me so." At the voice Raleigh's interest doubled; it was the rare, low-pitched velvet of the true contralto. "I was hurrying so," the voice rushed on. "I didn't see you at all. Perhaps you can help him—or her," with a quick scrutiny of the tall figure. "Do you work here?"

"Not yet. What is it?"

"Come on." She turned, and hurried with long, swift strides along the frozen walk toward the shop entrance, Raleigh at her side. He tried to catch the fragmentary story.

"He was workin' on the night shift, and he worked overtime or something. He must have got kind of sleepy, I guess, 'cause they say he just crawled into the press hole to fix a plate, an' the thing came down on him. Oh"—she shuddered, her lips going white—"he's awful!"

Raleigh gripped her elbow, and they hurried along the icy pavement. The girl turned past the shop entrance down a street flanked by a bare wall of the factory.

"It's his sister," she said. "They sent word home what happened—they live just about a block away. He's outside on a stretcher. Poor little thing—she's about crazy. I was goin' for a doctor."

Raleigh's heart tightened as he heard. They approached an opening in the wall—double doors like those into a carriage house. From this came the screams of a woman. Even above the softened roar of the shops beyond Raleigh heard them, unvarying as a whistle blast, inhumanly regular. Under them he caught the groaning of a man. He seized the girl and sped and they flashed through the open gates.

A small group stood irregularly round a man laid on a stretcher. He was young, but his face was so gnarled with agony that it

had lost almost the semblance of humanity. Over him had been hastily thrown a coat. Beneath it crept out a steady stream of dark blood. The coat was short; it did not hide the dreadful feet, crushed out of their shoes like an orange out of its skin. One arm was bent under the man's head, the clenched fist blue and white under the grime. The other—

Raleigh turned quickly away from him to his companion, who had dropped beside a crouching figure at the man's head, a girl whose dead-black eyes spotted her parchment face, and who screamed. Raleigh's companion had thrown an arm about her and was trying to soothe her.

He looked back at the man, and his head swirled for a moment. Then he experienced the cold impersonality that the war, after a month, had given him. Several workmen stood about, horror on their stolid faces. A youth knelt beside a medicine case, and gazed into it helplessly. Raleigh touched him.

"What's been done?"

The youth—there was sweat on his forehead—licked his lips.

"We've just sent for the ambulance. I—I don't know much about it. Doctor Ledlie's not here to-day— My God!"—as the crushed man's groans rose higher.

Raleigh's voice flicked like a whip. "What—you've done nothing to ease him?"

The other shook his head. In an instant Raleigh's white, muscular hands were running through the medicine case. He found the hypodermic, selected a tiny vial from the row under their steel guards, and carefully broke the top and filled the needle. Then he turned to the writhing man.

"This will help, old fellow," came in the quiet, steadying voice. He slit the sleeve of the unhurt arm, fumbled for a moment for the vein, then slowly pressed the piston home. Loss of blood hastened the reaction; the straining eyes relaxed, and turned gratefully to Raleigh for an uncertain moment. The groans sank to a whistling breath. Raleigh laid a hand for a moment on the man's wet forehead. The eyes closed.

The watching crowd had grown; men hastened to and fro on the back fringe of it; low whispers ran about. A man whose white collar pointed to office rather than factory had appeared, and looked down at the man and then at the workmen with an anxious, slanted face. The shrieks of the sister came

still, and the workmen shifted uneasily and looked at each other in dismay. The shrieks had all the monotony of madness in them. Raleigh seized the girl's wrists in a firm grip, and looked into the vacant eyes.

"Stop it," he said gently, but with authority. He repeated it, shaking her a little. Presently he saw the staring eyes focus slowly to his. The screams suddenly stopped, and the girl toppled over against her companion with a little gurgle.

"Fainted," said Raleigh. "Get some water—lay her down." This to the boy of the medicine chest, who leaped away and vanished through the gloom of the disused shop into a door leading to the offices.

Raleigh smiled into the white face of the other girl. "She's all right," he told her. "Best thing she could have done, probably."

The boy returned almost at once, bearing a cup of water. Raleigh's companion took it, and began bathing the unconscious girl's forehead and wrists. Through the tingling of his nerves Raleigh watched her, conscious of pleasure in the sure movements of her well-shaped hands, the instinctive movements that a young animal might make. He watched the curves of her neck, under a curl of blue-burnished black hair, and the line of her forehead white against the girl's black dress as she bent soothingly above her. She reminded him insistently of something closer to nature than most civilized humanity. She was very real.

He glanced at the office man. "How long ago did this happen?" he asked, his voice lowered.

"About ten minutes. The ambulance ought to be here now." The office man's worried face turned toward the workmen, who talked in low tones. As if to cap his words, the clang of a bell sounded above the whir of a motor outside, and the red-crossed car turned into the building. Out leaped two blue-clad men, professionally stolid. Behind them a slender, alert man with a black case. He bent over the hurt man, laid back the coat, and lifted fingers wet with blood. He looked up quickly.

"No need of the hosp——"

Raleigh violently shook his head, and motioned to the sister, whose eyes had just opened again. The doctor nodded. Raleigh came close and the workmen crowded around.

"Fifteen minutes—possibly an hour—not more," with terseness. "Ribs crushed—

lungs punctured all over—bladder broken, I should say." He grimaced. "How did such a thing happen?" His eyes were on Raleigh. He passed the glance to the office man, who turned to one of the workmen. The latter shook his head.

"Don't know," he said, with a furtive eye on the office man. "I seen him throw out the press, an' crawl into the pressin' surface to fix suthin'. Next I knowed, I hear him hollerin'. Seems like the throw must not 'a' been clean off, an' jarred back, or else it was wore. I grabbed's quick's I could. But it had got him."

"Where's his cousin? He works here, too. They's buddies," spoke up another.

"Dunno. Maybe on another shift."

As the two attendants lifted the stretcher, the sister raised her head, and sprang up dizzily, with a choked torrent of foreign words. Quickly the other girl slipped an arm round her; the sister clutched her hand convulsively. They followed the stretcher into the ambulance, and Raleigh, as a matter of course, stepped in with them. As he took his seat, he heard the office man speak to the men of the shop.

"There's no need to spread this around, you know," he said meaningly, looking at them through narrowed lids. The men looked down, nodded, and went away.

In the semidarkness of the ambulance Raleigh heard the sister's sobs. He turned to the doctor beside him.

"Is there nothing that can be done for him? If it is a question of money——"

The little doctor sighed. To him death had become so casual an acquaintance, that he always wondered at the importunity of people, their rebellion to the last ditch.

"It's not a question of anything but minutes," he answered gently. "The boy would be a helpless burden if he lived. This is better. He may die on the way home."

But he did not. The ambulance stopped before a row of brown frame houses, as dingy as old shoes. The man was carried into the house. Raleigh, following, glanced round at the drab floor and walls, decked here and there with flamboyant grocery calendars and prints from Sunday supplements.

They carried the man into a small room, close and heavy-smelling, and laid him on the bed. The doctor drew up a chair and waited. The men went out. The sister, her breath coming in gasps, flung onto her knees beside him. Raleigh and his compan-

ion drew together. Somehow she found his hand.

For a moment there was no sound save the whistling breath of the unconscious man and the sobs of his sister. Suddenly she raised her head, looked at them imploringly, and spoke in the same strange tongue. They eyed each other helplessly. Then Raleigh addressed her in bad French and flowing Italian, to be met with a shake of the head. He dug into the back of his mind for his scant German. This brought a rush of color to her face. In a broken dialect she spoke.

"Does he—does he die?"

Raleigh's head bent. "He does, *fräulein*," he said gently. She seemed to know, for she nodded dully. Then—

"Soon?"

"Soon, *fräulein*."

As if in answer the man on the bed stirred and opened his eyes. With a strange light in them he looked at Raleigh. Then his glance sought his sister's, and he spoke in gasps. His undamaged hand trembled to her bent head, with an effort that sent the sweat pouring from his forehead. As Raleigh turned away, his eyes filled, the man smiled, a tortured smile with somehow a glory of youth round it. As with passing sunshine the little room gleamed a moment. Then his hand clenched on the girl's head, grew heavy, dropped.

Raleigh drew his companion gently to the door, then turned back. The man's sister was looking with dry, hard eyes at the face on the bed, suddenly relaxed into peace.

"*Fräulein*—is there anything—can I—"

The girl rose with the dignity of tragedy.

"No, *mein herr*, you—I cannot thank you—"

She trembled. Raleigh pressed her hand and hurried out.

His companion was leaning against the door, crying gently. As a child might, she turned at his touch and buried her face against his coat as he put his arms round her. Presently she lifted a flushed face, wet with tears.

"Why—why do such awful things happen?" she whispered. "It almost makes me believe there isn't any God."

Raleigh walked slowly down the road to the trolley. He could not face his uncle now—to-morrow would be time enough. He had no appointment. His mind swirled with raw sensation; pictures raced across his vi-

sion. They mixed; yet curiously remained separate, like threads of dark oil in a goblet of champagne. The pulp-crushed feet of the man—the mechanical, regular shrieks of the sister—the twisted agony of the deathbed—these traced dark coils through the glow of the girl's presence.

He remembered the strange drops and pauses of her rich voice, the instinctively sure movements of her hands and body, her mouth, with its wreathing laughter lines. These pictures sank before the feeling of the hurt man's corded, limply muscled arm, warm and nerveless as he shot the hypodermic—the office man's narrowed lids as he addressed the workmen—the horror in the stolid faces of them—

He stared back at the Hydraulic before he boarded the car to his hotel. Its squat immensity, the strange shapes of its gigantic towers, huge iron funnels, smoke escapes like crooked metallic coxcombs, globular iron monsters vomiting smoke—all took on, as he looked, another significance, and coalesced, as the separate voices of an orchestra, into one tremendous impression. The many-throated roar of its voices blurred into one menacing tone, in which lurked words barely escaping coherent and awful utterance.

The strangely shaped furnaces and nameless machines assumed a violent livingness, as if some monstrous passion, born out of machinery itself, had distorted them into malevolent attitudes and tortured shapes. They seemed crouched for strife. Raleigh could hear their speech; like a sound arising out of another consciousness, he *heard* their malignant, threatening shapes cutting the sky. They seemed intent on watching with suspended anger the tiny figures toiling among their feet. They seemed waiting to be freed—perhaps one of them, for a moment, had been. He thought of the crushed body—

The girl's cool, deep voice drifted over his heated mind, and the illusion vanished. He thought of her eyes, black-fringed and deep, and of the warmth of her in his arms as she had cried into his coat. He shook himself, and rubbed his hands across his face.

"Fool," he muttered to himself as he boarded the trolley, "I don't even know her name."

The trolley bore him away.

Eleanor Grayson walked hastily toward the dead man's house, her face deep with

sympathy. It was the noon period, and with her came kind, hush-voiced men, who creaked awkwardly into the silent little room. Beside her was the girl of the morning. Eleanor was speaking.

"It was so kind of you—you must have made it much easier for her," she had been saying. Her voice had the light ease of her manner, of the way she wore her very tailored clothes and her small veiled hat. It was the ease of generations behind her.

"Oh, I didn't do anything much. It was this man I ran into. My, he's a peach," came the rich contralto. They reached the house, behind the men, and the girl of the morning stopped.

"I guess you won't need me any more," she said. "I'll be getting back to my brother. I was coming over to meet him when I ran into all this." She looked at Eleanor with frank curiosity and admiration in her vivid, rather boyish face. They made a quaint contrast for any painter—the one polished and finished like a miniature, gleaming without hardness, the other untaught as an apple blossom on a branch—and as lovely. "You're Miss Grayson, aren't you?" she asked a little shyly, the smile breaking out. "I've heard of you lots. Everybody in the shop likes you." She became suddenly self-conscious, nodded, and went away quickly.

In the house sat the victim's sister, her arms flung across her face, bowed on the bed. At the window stood a pale, slender youth, his narrow face consumed with the fire of a pair of great eyes. He was the cousin, the "buddy." To him the dead man had been brother, protector, hero—friend in this strange land of hurry and noise, of toil and great weariness.

As the men tiptoed into the front room, he turned to them, and they shrank before the fury in the white face. There was no grief. It was burned away. He spoke to them gently, listened silently, when they told him the company was paying all funeral expenses, and when they went out, turned to the window again. His eyes were fixed on the smoke that hung in the sky in the direction of the shops, but what he saw was another picture.

He had been summoned from work as soon as he could be found. He had run out of the shop entrance, knowing the worst. As he had started to cross the street, a big motor had blocked his way. It slowed, pulled to the curb, and a man got out of

it, a tall, well-built man, with prematurely white hair and a young, spare face. The man was laughing to some one inside the car, and flung a sentence over his shoulder.

"Just be a minute, Jim. I've got to sign some checks and dictate one letter." He strode away with power visible in every line of him, from columnar neck to long legs.

The boy had watched him. He had dimly realized that this was one of the gods who controlled his world—perhaps the chief of the gods. He was smiling. He was rich—happy—and he was alive. The choking grief in his heart over his cousin, horribly killed, turned suddenly to rage, and far back in his brain, the sensitive, imagination-laden brain of a dreamer, something clicked, and began to whirl with a softness almost unheard.

The man's smiling, assured face had swung before him as he had bent above the still body of his cousin and kissed the white forehead, drying his tears, turning him white and still. The soft whirring in his brain never stopped again.

CHAPTER II.

Next day David Harde leaned forward in his desk chair, and grasped the letter more firmly in his well-kept hands. His brows, lifting as they did under concentration, arched his square, brown face into a belying expression of vacancy. Once he chuckled. Now and then he frowned, and once smiled with a certain grimness. The letter was written on fawn-colored paper, and the writing, big and black, looked as if Chinese ideographs had been set in horizontal lines across the page. Its postmark was a week old, and there were telltale pencil streaks on the envelope, that betrayed to David that it had been carried about unposted.

The letter, in, part, ran thus:

—so don't think that I am for a moment giving up my plan of being a composer, for I am not. I mean to succeed in it, for I care for it better than anything in the world. But just at present, I am having difficulty in making publishers see the merit of my part of the field. The development of the ancient modes in music and their harmonic adaptation to the purposes of modern orchestral handling is quite new.

David frowned and scratched his head indignantly:

Then, too there is the question of money. As such it means nothing to me. No artist can put gain before achievement and still follow with clear eyes the white flame of the hilltops.

"Talks like he was in the City Gas," muttered David, taking a new grip on the letter, and ruffling up the white hair, according ill with his tanned skin and clear, brown eyes. The letter ran on:

Still, it is a humiliating fact that we cling to this plane, and the body must be fed. So, unless you tell me outright that it is impossible, I am coming out to work for you. I went once to a foundry with an artist pal of mine to get the light effects. It was magnificent—the great dipper of molten metal at the end of the swaying arm gleamed like rubies in a sable hand.

Here David snatched a cigarette, and began to puff furiously.

I should like that sort of thing, you know. I should like to be part of such flaming strength, to hear the sounding symphonies of the great chanting wheels. Of course, my main purpose will continue to be my songs; but I hope to profit by the exercise of the work. I shall arrive next week—you being willing. Your affectionate nephew,

DANTE ROSSETTI RALEIGH.

David laid down the letter, and sank back in his chair, thumb and finger caressing a chin like a small box. He reflected on the possible repetition of history. Bob Raleigh—a faint smile lifted his thin, well-cut lips as the image of the boy's father swung before him—Bob with his handsome, big frame and dark eyes with their inward dreams. What a mating of wings to feet, of a will-o'-the-wisp to a hearth fire, when he had married Alicia, sweet and practical, with all David's own efficiency and also his limitations, who had worshiped her husband and mended him, with blind awe and maternal pity, through all the failures.

David remembered how he had nearly disrupted the little office in the old days, before the Hydraulic had spread roaring across adjacent blocks—remembered, with a deepening of the reminiscent smile—how he had once sent Bob forth for contracts to another town, and after three days' silence, had confronted him, the world well lost, writing a sonata with a French violinist, whom chance had shoved across his path at the hotel.

Poor Bob! Pneumonia's swift annihilation had brought David genuine relief with its real sorrow. But Alicia, as her boy, always puzzling, grew more and more the counterpart of his father, finally had given up the prospective struggle with another temperament, and quietly died, leaving the boy just enough to make four years in a Berkshire college possible to him.

Reports of those four years had come

to David, some from the boy himself, more from rumor, because he had speedily developed into the kind of person round whom college weaves a legend, embroidered by succeeding undergraduate generations. Freshmen were told, how, when the team lacked four yards for a decisive touchdown against Amherst, he had been caught by the quarter back, gazing into the western sunset, and quoting Shelley dreamily to a shocked opponent at right end, which had not, however, prevented his being speedily brought sufficiently back to earth to help put the touchdown over. After three years of playing a cool, appallingly unexpected game in football, he had renounced the gridiron because he wanted to write cantatas for the choir and comedies for the Glee Club. To this, despite anathemas from his fraternity, and malediction from his coach, he had stuck. He had received the only A ever granted by "Baldy" Dutton in Literature 8, and had failed to graduate because he refused to take a semester of compulsory mathematics.

He had been ridiculed, fervently admired, and not a little feared by his classmates, and had had, in fine, quite the time that any undergraduate has who dares to be an individual in an undergraduate community.

All this flitted through David's mind, and later things, tales from his regiment, of a French general who had sat beside Raleigh in a tumble-down chateau near Baccarat, while the American sergeant played queer things on a scorched grand piano, and his colonel, unfortunately entering and incautiously speaking, had been furiously *shushed* to abashed silence by his French superior.

Well——

He pressed his button and said to the smoothly efficient woman who had glided from an inner office, "Call Culhane in from the hot-press shop, will you, Miss Thompson?"

Presently there came an increase in the subdued roar seeping through many walls to David's office, as the shop door beyond his own opened with a huge puff of sound. David never heard it, this shuttle slash of shouting machinery, without a corresponding enlargement of force within himself. These were the voices of his own particular children. Less successful men said that David was hard as his steel, and relentless as his hydraulic presses. Those who knew him better realized in him the driving force of the creator, be he poet or manufacturer.

David's own ground-glass door swung to admit Culhane, bare of throat, head, and arm, who sauntered to the desk, wiping his hands on his trousers. It was David's policy to ignore formalism as much as possible, and his men loved him for it. Hence Culhane's ease.

"Morning, Pat," nodded David. "Got No. 2 blower going yet?"

The foreman grinned, and thrust back a lock of dangling black hair. "Going fine now," he replied. "It's them foreigners, Mr. Harde. Conling told me he thought one or two of them was monkeying around it and pulled the pins, and that dropped it. We fired Molowski. He was the worst—always shootin' off his mouth."

The problem in the shops had grown with the post-bellum growth of everything but efficiency and common sense, into a threatening cloud, whose dark storm center was the foreign element. Endless small things were adding to a general atmosphere of discontent, and Molowski, a Russian, with suspiciously too much mentality for his position, according to Culhane, had finally said too much. David frowned.

"Well, tell us about it at the council Monday night. Now I've got something else on my mind. My nephew is coming out here to work. I'm going to put him out with you."

Culhane stared. "With me, sir? What does he want to do?"

"He?" David consulted the letter. "He wants to 'hear the sounding symphonies of the great chanting wheels!'"

Culhane's eyebrows met in a tangle of black above eyes like blue, black-fringed saucers. "What?"

David chuckled. "That's what he says, anyhow. You see, it's like this. He's a good enough boy, but he's got all sorts of fool ideas—wants to write music and all that. No sense as far as I can tell. Went broke down in New York." David grinned reminiscently. "And he says he's comin' out here. So put him wherever there's room for him. He's husky and harmless, I guess, but don't know a shear blade from a die casing. Keep an eye on him—but don't let it out he's my nephew. Call him hard, if he needs it. Let me know." He began opening mail.

The young Irishman took the hint and left. He brushed a dexterous mechanics' hand, supple, spatulate of thumb, across his forehead, in perplexity. "Chanting wheels,"

he muttered to himself. It wakened for an instant some Celtic cell, responsive to imagery, in his blue-printed mind. "Chanting wheels!" Then he laughed, and promptly forgot it, nor did he think of it again till long after.

An hour or so later, Miss Hunter, guardian of the Hydraulic private switchboard, laid down her novel, back up, upon the control buttons, and shifted her gum from the left bicuspid to the right rear molar, before turning wearily to the little wicket at her left, through which the world asked permission to enter the Hydraulic. Since the memory of the oldest janitor, Miss Hunter had been thus—a heavy-lidded sibyl atop her stool, murmuring from time to time "Hydraulic" into nasal distances, and charming with expert fingers the writhing serpents of the switch-cords.

She swung toward the wicket—then stared, then patted her hair. The gum, through some secret lingual manipulation, became quiescent.

"What is it?" she asked with the graciousness only accorded one type of person in her catalogue—a handsome man. Maizie Gay, recognizing the tone, stopped on her way to the stock room to see the cause.

The face framed in the wicket broke into a smile, and the line of a Stetson hat gave place to a white forehead and crisp light hair as the hat came off.

"Is Mr. Harde in?" came in a deep, curiously husky voice, with something of the reedy tang of an oboe in it.

"Yes, sir."

"Oh, that's good. 'Fraid he might be out. Will you tell him I want to see him?"

Mercury, met at Olympus' edge by a daring mortal saying, "Say, call Jupiter down here a minute, will yuh? I've got a fine proposition for him," might have experienced Miss Hunter's emotions.

"Say," she snapped. "Who do you think you are, anyhow?"

The grin widened. "I can't discuss personalities through a hole in the fence," said the voice, and before Miss Hunter could chew, the door beside the wicket had opened, and a very tall young man stepped inside.

One knew he had never been in a place like the Hydraulic before—Miss Hunter recognized it dimly. It was not only his clothes, though the young men of the Hydraulic didn't wear soft-collared white shirts,

long fur coats, or jade-green mufflers of flashing silk. No, it was not his clothes—it was a certain impetuosity, a curious detachment of manner, as of one who had never known the discipline of denial or was at all conscious of conventional limitations. Miss Hunter felt as if a mountain brook had tumbled into her corridor and threatened to rise foaming about her.

"You shouldn't have come in without being told," she said, but without conviction. She was quite sure this person would respect no property rights. He stopped gazing about, head up, like a dog in a new place, and swung to her, still smiling.

"Well, I can't go out now, can I? Where's Mr. Harde? I know he's expecting me. He wrote me to come."

Miss Hunter spun to the board like a teetotum, seized a cord, and rang David's office violently. "I'll tell him you're here, sir," she said, prim-mouthed, but the boy was already headed toward David's door, marked "Private," flinging over his shoulder "Thanks awfully, but don't bother." He opened the door and disappeared.

Miss Thompson, tabulating correspondence in her own little office behind this door, caught a glimpse of a tall figure, heard a husky "good morning," received green and gold and brown impressions in dizzying succession, and saw David's own door open and close upon an unannounced young man. She rose in as near panic as Miss Thompson could achieve, and opened the door herself, to discover the tall youth beaming upon David, and patting his shoulder. She returned to the mail, and wondered a little.

David surveyed his nephew as one would an amiable puppy, and motioned to a chair.

"Sit down, Dante," he said. "I just got your letter—what I could read of it. You don't look exactly poverty-stricken."

"Relics of college splendor, Uncle Dave," he laughed. "When do I go to work?"

David sobered. "I'm going to put you out in the shops, Dante," he said. "That's what you wanted, as near as I could tell by your letter."

"In one of those magnificent big places, all wheels and red-hot metal, and crashing sounds?" interrupted his nephew eagerly.

David grinned, and lit a cigarette before replying. The similarity of attitude to the old Raleigh caught him, as the boy leaned forward. "Better jaw, though," he thought, shaking out his match.

"Well—I never heard the hot-press shop described like that," he answered. "But that's where you're going."

"Oh, that's fine. I was so afraid you'd tuck me into an office with long rows of figures in books. I'd like to start to-morrow. Can I?"

David pressed the button on his desk. "I'll introduce you to Culhane. I was just talking to him about you. He's foreman of the hot-press room, and will take care of you."

"Culhane, Culhane—I wonder if he's a descendant of Cuchulain?"

"Who?" snorted David.

"Cuchulain—the great Celtic hero. You know Yeats' poem, 'And Cuchulain, white and broad of brow, with his hair like a cloud of night, went over the land to victory.' Remember?"

"Can't say I do," retorted David dryly, as the shop door opened and the roar of the machines suddenly puffed to them. Raleigh's head lifted sharply at the sound. David noted it.

"That's your 'chanting wheels,'" he said with a grin, wondering what this vivid young person would do with grease and dirt and fatigue, conscious of a queer pang smothered before recognized. The boy was listening.

"Curious mixture of rhythms and tone," he breathed intently. "Seven—four on nine—eight, I should say. Mostly toned to E flat. Overtones too strong."

David, considering this perhaps a devotional rite, politely ignored it. Culhane came in again, his dark hair tousled, and his face streaked with grease. David presented the two men, and smiled at the contrast, between his tall nephew, chiseled to the fineness of a Mercury, glowing with color, and the foreman—shorter, thickly muscled, with his mechanic's square, fine forehead, his impudent nose, and his clean jaws. Raleigh burst into instant speech.

"Awfully glad to meet you," he said, ignoring the other's attempt not to meet his outstretched hand with his own dirty one. "You're my boss, aren't you? I hope I don't fall down a drain, or you have to chuck me for getting wound up in a cogwheel. What do I do? When do I start?"

Culhane blinked under the deluge.

David waved them off. "He's in your hands now."

"I can put you on to number one shift,"

meditated the foreman; "yes, on to press five—to take Molowski's place. Be around at seven in the morning, and I'll see you get fixed up with a badge and number." He surveyed the boy with a shake of the head and a smile, his eyes taking in the long fur coat, the white fineness of the shirt, and dwelling upon the jade-green silk muffler.

"It's mighty dirty work, and hot, too," he volunteered. "Think you can stand it?"

Raleigh's smile slowed and altered. "Why not?" he asked quietly, but with a direct gaze and a sharp tang in his voice that Culhane well knew.

Culhane hastily amended. "Oh—you'll get along all right. Only"—he hesitated, and then went on with a stubborn honesty—"you don't look like you'd fit with that gang of men in the hot-press. They're a rough lot. Mostly foreigners."

Raleigh laughed. "I'm rather fond of foreigners," he said, picking up his hat. "Good-by, Uncle Dave. You're a peach to take me in. Oh, by the way, do I have to join a union?"

It transfixed both men. There was a little silence.

"Can if you like," said Pat shortly. "I suppose you'll want to," feeling uncertainly that any one capable of that scarf would take as well to industrial extremes.

Raleigh spoke astonishingly. "I think they're a silly tyranny. Fancy not being able to work when you want to, and for whom!"

The other two exchanged glances.

"We aren't talking much about that sort of thing in the shops now," said David unmistakably.

"Oh, I won't stir up anything. Art has no place for violence."

In the corridor, Pat turned to the shop.

"See you in the morning," he said briefly.

"Delighted." Raleigh eyed him as a painter his subject. "Yes, you do look like Cuchulain—like Kay Neilson's picture of him."

"Who's he—some new knock-out?" said Culhane suspiciously.

"No. A great man—no one—a hero of Celtic mythology. It doesn't matter." He held out his hand. "I'm awfully glad to have met you," he said with engaging candor. "I think we'll get along fine. Am I to call you 'Mister?'"

Culhane's face split suddenly into a grin, baring his white, even teeth. This fur-

coated young patrician calling him "Mister!"

"Pat," he said briefly. "Culhane, without the handle, in the shops."

"I just wanted to be sure," returned Raleigh, drawing on his gloves. "I once called my major 'Toodles' in a moment of forgetfulness, and was nearly court-martialed. By the way, do you know any place that I can live?"

Pat reflected a moment. "You might try the Y. M. C. A.," he said thoughtfully. "It's about the best bet, I'm thinkin'. Don't know as it would be swell enough for you," he finished, grinning.

Raleigh flushed a little, then laughed. "My dear man, anything with walls and a roof and a bathtub looks like a house of many mansions to me at this particular moment. I guess the Y is a good enough stunt. They'll have a piano there I can use, too. Thanks for telling me; I'll try it out." He held out his hand. "See you in the morning then."

But Culhane did not go. He rubbed his chin and grinned. "You're the first man I ever hired that didn't ask me one thing," he said, smiling.

Raleigh's brow furrowed. "I'm sorry. This is all very new to me. Have I been obtuse?"

"Been—well, I don't know. You never asked me what you was to get."

"Oh, shades of Orpheus, of course. How stupid of me. What's the noble stipend?"

Culhane laughed outright. "Well, the hot-press men gets about eight dollars to ten dollars a day now, counting bonuses—time and a half for overtime."

Raleigh's mouth opened. "Why"—he did mental calculation, slowly—"why, that's about three hundred dollars a month."

"Sure. Ain't it enough?"

"Enough?" The boy rocked with delight. "Why, that's more than Cunning-white gets for his musical criticisms—and nearly three times what the president of the American Philosophical Society, who taught me in school, gets. I'm rich—I'm rolling in wealth!"

Culhane shouted. "Good night!" he roared, and still chuckling, went off into the shops with a sudden screech of metal cutting the air as he swung open the heavy shop door.

Raleigh listened intently; only for a moment came the flaring roar of sound. Then

the shop door swung behind Pat, and the semistillness returned. But in that one instant had come the mingling of hundreds of voices, and Raleigh, in the screech of the unknown machines, caught an undercurrent of menace. He thought with swift nausea of the crushed body of yesterday. For obvious reasons he had not mentioned the accident to his uncle. He felt that if it was to be discussed, word should have come from him.

Now, listening for a brief instant to the battle cry of the machines, he experienced an instant of dread. "The place of chanting wheels," he murmured. Then he laughed, and swung down the corridor and out, with not so much as a glance at Miss Hunter, who had not taken up her novel in anticipation of his return, and had secretly bestowed the gum upon the under portion of the switch-board.

CHAPTER III.

Dutton, who ruled in the little employment office, against whose door surged the changing tide of men demanding a job, possessed a gift of character reading, sharpened by long years of exercise to a knife edge of decision. He had formed a habit of looking over the waiting men, and calling in one or another, regardless of turn, if he read in their faces or attitudes anything of strength or originally. Rarely he failed.

This morning, however, the assortment looked rather sorry. Half a dozen negroes lounged in a corner, in the hapless attire and tropically relaxed attitude that the African never wholly sheds. Near the door, several bewhiskered individuals stood smoking. Dull-red sweaters and jackets bulked them, cloth caps lent haziness to their generally muggy outline. Sluggish eyes and facial angles perilously sharp, indexed their potentiality. An old man, his face drawn conelike into a dirty white beard, streaked with tobacco courses ancient as mountain waterways, stopped above a stove, and fingered a slip of paper anxiously, mumble-gumming like a guinea pig.

Dutton puckered his mouth and began running through the card index, showing where men were wanted, and for what. When he glanced out again, a tall lad, in khaki puttees and breeches and a lumberman's Mackinaw, stood with his back toward him, looking on the falling snow and life-

less gray dawn of early winter. He was whistling.

Dutton saw one of the dark, bewhiskered men suddenly come to life, the sluggishness stripped from his face like a mask. He turned, dark eyes glowing, and laid a hand on the tall boy's sleeve. The whistle stopped as the boy swung round. Dutton saw the dark little man, an Armenian, he thought, ask something, saw the boy nod and smile, and his lips puckered to a whistle again. The dark little man's shoulders began to bob to its lilt.

Dutton picked up a paper on his desk, glanced out, down at the paper, then strode to the glass door and opened it.

"Raleigh," he called sharply.

He caught the foreigner's excited voice—"Oh, yes, yes—that it—my ole mudder's song. Where you hear—"

The boy stopped whistling. "It's in a book of Russian folk songs," he replied. "I am arranging it for violin and piano."

"Raleigh!" said Dutton again.

The boy flashed a smile over his shoulder. "Just a minute," he called. Then, to the man, "Do you know more of them?"

"Oh, yes, many—much," he waved inarticulate hands.

Raleigh nodded as he came up to Dutton, who was gazing, speechless. Men to whom he opened the glass door did not say "just a minute." The boy was speaking to him.

"I'm sorry to keep you," he said, "but that chap knows some rare music. I must talk to him later. Middle-Russian, and extremely difficult to find." Then, absorbing a little of the other's amazed stare, he laughed. "How did you know my name?" he asked.

Dutton beckoned him into the office. "Memo from Culhane," he replied. "Told me to look out for you. Come in."

Raleigh cast a lingering glance at the little Russian, then called, "Meet me here after work, will you? I want to talk to you." The other nodded, abashed into sudden silence by the presence of "Power-To-Hire" n Dutton. It is a curious abasement, taught in long hours of waiting before employment, and it tends to reduce confidence to nil. That the man about to be addressed holds your fate in his usually penciled hand, produces the conscious humility of the judgment seat.

Dutton closed the door, produced a card

from a rack, which Raleigh signed, fished in a drawer for a numbered badge, and scrawled a note across a bit of paper.

"Take this up to Culhane, in the hot-press room. He'll fix you up." Then, still studying the other curiously, "What were you talking to that chap about?"

"Folk music," replied the newest member of the Hydraulic Company, pinning the badge upside down on his shirt. "The Russians have some very old musical modes, that are difficult to trace. This chant——"

A breathing moan, high above them, leaping in crescendos to a shriek, eclipsed further discourse. Raleigh jumped like a deer.

"Whistle," bellowed Dutton. "Go on up—Culhane——"

He pointed to a corridor. Raleigh nodded, and with a sudden sense of compulsion, stepped through a heavily grilled door into a corridor full of streaming men. Raleigh joined the stream, turned to the left with them, and emerged upon a room set with huge machines. The crowd flowed diverse ways. Raleigh hesitated, then turned to a big chap striding by him.

"Pardon me, can you tell me where the hot-press room is?"

"Sure," said the other, with a quick appraising glance. "Goin' that way myself. Just comin' in?"

"Yes. What an enormous place it is," he said, as he looked around at the rooms through which they were passing.

They were stirring into activity. Men in overalls prowled round gigantic, still machines. Down a corridor came a little electric tractor, with a man poised statuelike at the controls, and a little two-wheeled truck wagging like a mandarin in its wake. In the comparative stillness the calls of men came clearly. But even as they walked, sounds—he fancied it so—began to shoot up like giant weeds in the stillness. The rumble of a starting machine surged heavily up an octave. Beside it rose suddenly the white purr of a dynamo, slim, whining, vibrant; behind them the cutting machines, fast and slow, began their meditative grating, broken by the crash of the cut steel and the slivering clang of the severed pieces. More dynamos, one after another, slid up a snarling scale of tones and steadied to pitch to be lost instantly among the big noises.

Then, as Raleigh began to think his ear-

drums could stand not another whisper, began a low insistent throb, mounting by degrees to a deep-toned, persuasive roar. Instantly the sound picture was complete. The other tones fitted themselves into the gigantic main theme of it all.

Raleigh stopped dead, and pointed interrogatively in the direction of the great fundamental rhythm.

"Lizzie and Jane and Polly," shouted his companion. "Them's the three big presses in shop six. We go this way." He turned aside down a long, narrow, dim room, out across railroad tracks and to another building.

"Here's the hot press," he said, turning to face him squarely, with frank curiosity. "Goin' to work here?"

"Yes. I am to see Culhane."

The other nodded. "Ever do any work before?" he asked, with the frankness characteristic of his kind. Steel shaping is not conducive to delicate nuances of personal considerations. All the tact there is in the shops wouldn't make a fly speck on a blue print. The man was looking at Raleigh's hands—strong enough, with powerful fingers, and the broad palm of the artist, but white and unseamed. Raleigh laughed.

"You mean I look rather soft? No. I never did—not this kind. I guess I won't pass out, though. It can't be worse than 'squads east' in the mud. I staggered through a year or so of that."

"Uh-huh. Rotten. Wa'n't it 'el? Well, I got to go now. Culhane's in there," indicating a small shed, set like a doll house amid a towering structure of machines. "My name's McGill. I'm foreman over one unit of punches."

"Mine's Raleigh." They shook hands.

"If I can do anything for yuh, let me know." McGill strode off, his chiseled nose and chin and jaw marvelously at variance with his nondescript costume.

Raleigh looked after him gratefully, with a curious, strong impression of having seen him before; it had amounted to conviction when he smiled. "What a peach," he said to himself, "and what a head to sculpture. How nice everybody is!" He had been feeling a little strange, and more than lonely, and the rough kindness warmed him. He felt he had made a friend.

The hot-press room, as Raleigh saw it that first morning, looked to him like imaginary pictures of the temple of Baal in Baby-

lon. The room's major length stretched to his right some four hundred feet, and to his left another hundred. Squat furnaces, roaring and glowing, lined the wall—individual chapels in this temple of flame. A similar row of them clung to the opposite wall, fifty yards away. In front of each furnace, like pillars down the nave of the cathedral, stood the punch presses, tall, cylindrical, their central piston surrounded by a colonnade of rods, and topped by an intricate arabesque of valve and lever.

As Raleigh looked down the stretch of the presses, he thought he had never seen anything so primitive, so pagan, so utterly remote from the world of intensely practical achievement that it really was. Smoke shrouded it with mystery—black smoke through which the vapor of the hot iron twisted unmixed threads of sharp, green-white pattern. On the general gloom opened one furnace door after another, like the flickering of restless eyelids, and the black was shot for an instant by a bar of fierce rose light. From one punch or another came a flaring crash and a spouting of fountain flames through the colonnade of rods.

Men clustered about the punches or moved from furnace to press—ghostly, strange, their white bodies gleaming bronze when the light fell on them. But they seemed not men at all; the place was working itself—there was nothing human about it. Above and around the shop hung the many-threaded veil of roaring sound, curtaining it from the world men knew; about it wound the black and lustrous tapestry of the smoke, joining all its parts in a universal mystery.

The rose light from furnace or punch flared over it from time to time, casting for a moment gigantic shadows on the smoke ceiling, sometimes catching a punch and its men like statues transfixed at the crest of action, and painting them for a stabbing second in a cameo of rose and black. Thus curtained by sound and knit by the smoke into an enormous indistinctiveness, void of human sound, it did indeed seem some monstrous complexity of another world, going on like the sun or a volcano with its huge impersonal work of creation, in which the pygmy human figure played but puppet parts.

Raleigh was roused by a touch on his arm. He started, to find Culhane beside him, grinning.

"Thought you'd never get done lookin',"

he said; "she's some place, ain't she? Come on into my office, and I'll give you a locker key." They turned toward the absurd little structure McGill had indicated. Culhane swung open a small panel and took a key from it.

"No. 99," he announced. "Take off your coat, and I'll show you where you're to work. Better duck your shirt, too. It ain't no picnic where you're goin'."

Raleigh threaded the lockers, wrinkling his nose a little at the smell of mingled iron and humanity, and presently returned, feeling slightly cold, and enormously naked in his gym shirt.

Culhane looked at him approvingly. Raleigh's lines had been born to him, and nine months of physical laxity had not visibly marred them. "Well, you look all right," he said in pleased surprise. "In pretty good shape?"

"Sort of soft," confessed Raleigh. "I've done nothing since the army. I'll really be glad for some exercise."

The foreman laughed. "Well, you won't complain of gettin' soft here," he said grimly. They walked down the center of the shop on a narrow-gauge track, and stepped aside to avoid the little tractor snorting by with a cradle of hot billets. The men looked curiously at the tall, bareheaded stranger beside Culhane, and made audible comment.

"Hey, get this comin' with Culhane. Ain't it cute and clean?" This from a thick-lipped, powerful man, with little eyes, and a forehead in full retreat. Raleigh heard—glanced at him gravely with a lowering and a sweep of his lashes, but said nothing. Something tugged at him inside. "I shall have trouble there," he thought instantly.

"Looks like a movie guy. Oh, you Wallace Reid!" This from a small, quirk-mouthed person, with a vast and Rabelaisian fund of humor.

Culhane was watching the new man with more care than he showed. They passed a swart trio of Italians, resting beside their press. One of them gestured largely toward Raleigh, with the thumb of dramatic contempt.

"Guarda! Guarda! La figliuola senza la mamma! Sant! Anna che peccato!"

Raleigh stopped, and, leaning toward him, spoke in liquid Italian, using the familiar second person one does with servants.

"Speak not of my mother, dark child of a pig, or I shall change the shape of that

ugly face of thine. And when thou speakest the tongue of Petrarch, do it not as if thy mouth were stopped with dough." He started on.

"*Accidente*," gasped the Italian, and put the lighted end of his cigarette into his mouth. The others stared—also Culhane, with a new light of respect in his eyes.

"You speak their lingo?"

"Yes, I spent a summer in Italy, and the language was rather easy for me. I hate to read translations, you know. They are so inaccurate. That chap is Sicilian, I think; he speaks very poorly, just as——" He was about to finish, "as many Americans," but he remembered Pat's honest 'aint's' and switched to—"as so many provincials."

The Irishman was impressed. "What'd he say to you?" he inquired.

Raleigh laughed. "Oh, a free translation would be—'does your mother know you're out?'"

Culhane joined his laugh, then sobered. "Don't pay no attention to 'em," he counseled. "They always kid a new guy."

"Oh, they won't bother me," replied Raleigh gayly. "I'm hardened. I presume I shall always be the center of the humor wherever it is happening—it was so at college. I had a very unpleasant time with a chap there because he didn't like my wearing purple pajamas and a green bath robe. So I'm proof. It's only an arrested psychology to tolerance, anyhow."

"My Gawd!" murmured Pat, as the strange words billowed about him. "This bird beats me!"

They stopped before one of the presses, and Culhane called a spidery-armed man with a dirty handkerchief bound round his head, who approached, wrench in hand, from the press. "He's Roberts, head of this unit," explained Pat in an undertone to Raleigh. Briefly to Roberts he said, "This man'll take Molowski's place." He turned to the boy again. "He'll show you what to do." He nodded and walked back toward his office, pausing here and there to ask a question or give a direction.

Raleigh held out his hand to Roberts, who gazed at it in surprise and then took it in an unexpectedly fishy grasp. "My name's Raleigh, Mr. Roberts," he began. The other nodded, taken aback. Here was a queer sort of laborer.

"Goin' ta work on number five, are you?"

he said in a tired voice, with a complaint unvoiced in it. "Well, she's the worst ole press in the shop. Know anything about punch steel?"

"My ignorance is only equaled by my eagerness," responded Raleigh, a little nervously, trying to be at ease, conscious of the group of men sizing him up with short sentences and jerks of the head to each other.

Roberts stared, said, "Oh," in a helpless fashion, and retreated from the unstable ground of personal amenities to the more sure footing of work. He explained.

"These here billets," indicating a pile of steel cylinders, "goes in them furnaces. We don't have nothing to do with that. When they're hot, we pulls 'em out, and puts 'em in the press. Watch——" as the furnace door swung open with a blinding glare of light. One of the men clawed at the interior with a long, hooked poker, and drew forth a billet, rose-white, with crisp little lines of red coruscating about its edges. Another man seized it with long tongs, swung it to the press, and set it on end in a saucer-like depression in the center. Roberts stepped to the press, turned a gauge, and amid a hissing and gurgling of invisible water, the billet disappeared down as in an elevator, till only its white top reflected up the little hole into which it had disappeared. Then the punch descended like a long, accusing finger. Dripping with oil, it sank into the hot metal. There was a crackling hiss, a spouting of flames—the press shook. Then press and billet rose together, and another man, as the punch cleared, lifted the billet to a conveyor. At the same time, another was slipped on its place, and the operation was repeated.

Raleigh watched with hypnotized gaze. The sweat was beginning to trickle down his chest, and had beaded his forehead. Roberts finished a run of billets and returned to him.

"See?" he said, wiping his forehead. "You better begin takin' 'em off, I guess. Usually, they's a rest every onct in a while, like now. But now and again, they run right along. We're short another man yet." He looked at Raleigh's hands. "You'd ought ta have gloves," he said indifferently.

A tall man with a closely shaved head, and his thin body sharp beneath his dripping undershirt, produced a pair of sodden gloves from an overall hip pocket, and thrust them at Raleigh.

"Extra pair," he said laconically. "Get 'em at the Hydraulic store. Quarter."

"Oh, thanks," said Raleigh. He drew on the gloves. They were heavy with grease and dirt, and sticky with warmth, and the inside was both gritty and slippery to the touch.

"Ugh!" thought the boy. "I won't have any more piano touch than an ox." But he drew them on gratefully. Some one gave him a pair of tongs. Then the furnace door opened, and the billets began running. Raleigh seized the first, and in his eagerness, took hold too high up. It promptly fell on the floor like a small meteor, and instantly became the center of an oily, though miniature conflagration. Crimson, he picked it up, did likewise with another, and toppled the third too far toward him, only juggling it to the cradle with frantic wavings of elbows. After this, things went better, and he learned to swing the billet, which weighed about twenty-five pounds, from the punch to the cradle in one sweep of the tongs.

He noticed another man join the group, but not till nearly half an hour later did he have a chance to look up. Then, hot, reeking, with his back and shoulders beginning to pulse with a warm ache, he leaned on his tongs, and looked around to find the little Russian gazing fixedly at him out of warm, brown eyes. He exclaimed:

"What luck! Are you going to work here?"

"Yes—I think."

Again came the billets. Raleigh found himself growing used to the continuous din about him, if he did not to the heat and the weight of the billets. By the end of the morning, he found he could analyze the sounds enough to hear his neighbor's conversations without strain, and found the pitching of his voice that carried without shouting.

At eleven-thirty, came the hooting of the siren whistle again, driving all other sounds to silence. Instantly there was magic. Men dropped their tools, and scuttled down the shop toward the locker room. Raleigh walked slowly after them, too tired to care whither or why. Then he straightened. This would never do. He flung up his head, and marched quickly down the track.

Near Culhane's office, he met McGill. The other grinned.

"How you comin'?" he asked.

"Fine," replied Raleigh valiantly. "What's

it all about?"—indicating the men streaming across the shop.

"Lunch. Bring any?"

"No. I never thought of it."

"Most of us do out here, 'cause you have to dress to go up to the Hydraulic lunch room—put on a shirt, anyhow, an' you can't do that without washin', and it all takes time. We only get half an hour. I'm goin' up to-day, though. Come on!"

Raleigh dived into his locker, and pulled on his shirt, hastily soused his face and hands at a row of taps and white basins, and hurried to McGill. The latter roared at sight of him. He had succeeded in smearing his face to a mottled brown, and a rain of soot had settled on his light hair.

Raleigh saw the expression, and smiled ruefully. "I suppose I'm some exhibit," he said. "I feel as if I had been fed on smoke bombs for days, and was breaking out with them."

They hurried across the shops and upstairs to the lunch room, which was of the self-serving variety, and joined the line of waiting men. McGill drew forth a package of crumpled cigarettes, and lit one, shoving the pack once more into his pocket. Raleigh eyed it hungrily.

"I wonder if I could borrow a cigarette?" he asked, questioning the continuance of army policy in the shops.

"Hell, yes. Here." The two young men enveloped themselves comfortably in blue smoke, and leaned against the wall.

"'Bonny St. John still stands on Sterling,'" caroled McGill absently, in a voice of such unconsciously lovely quality that Raleigh flung away from him and stared.

"Great Hat!" he exclaimed. "Where did you hear that—and where did you get that voice?"

McGill blinked. "Huh?" he asked.

"That song—it's the 'Two Sisters o' Binnorae'—an old Scotch ballad."

"Yeah. The ole woman sings it around the house."

Raleigh considered him. "Do you like music?" he asked gravely.

"I sure do," responded McGill enthusiastically. "Do you know that new tune, 'The Bolshevik Blues'?"

Raleigh shuddered inwardly—but bowed to custom. "No, I'm afraid not," he replied. Then, taking hope again, "Do you sing much? Your voice has a great quality—baritone, I should say."

McGill blushed violently, and glanced around. Their neighbors had not heard. He drew nearer Raleigh.

"Naw. I just make a racket all the time. Specially when I'm takin' a bath. Funny how you always want to sing in a bathtub. My kid brother calls me the human callyope."

The line moved forward, and when, with trays of food, they were seated at long tables, Raleigh looked about in interest. The room was full of men like himself as to dirt and clothing, all eating with as much speed as possible. The noise was prodigious. Raleigh saw his little Russian, tray in hand, sit down at a near table, and begin to eat quietly, without troubling to remove his cap. A big tester, opposite McGill, taking his soup loudly, looked across at the covered man with disgust.

"Hell!" he rumbled, sucking in soup like a Cave of the Winds, "hell—*schloop, schloop*—he ain't got no manners." He licked his spoon, back up, with Chesterfieldian superiority.

Raleigh choked into his tray, then looked to McGill, and resumed the conversation of his interest.

"Look here," he said, unconscious of the attention his clean-cut head and clear enunciation were drawing, "if you like singing, why can't we get up a quartet here, and get together?"

He felt a thud on his shoulder, as his right-hand neighbor, a huge-paunched fellow with a walrus mustache and small, happy eyes peering like amiable marbles over his round cheeks, laid a gigantic hand on him.

"You said it, brother," he affirmed expansively. "I'm on. I been a-lookin' for sumpin' like that. You a new guy here?"

"Yes. I'm on press five, in the hot-press." The tabulation somehow pleased him. He belonged.

"I run the picklin' room. Are you a moosician?"

"Well, I'm very fond of it"—cautiously; "are you?"

"I sure am, ain't I, Freddy?" to McGill.

"You bet," responded Fred.

Raleigh beamed. "Great!" he cried, with such enthusiasm that the two grimy stockers, down the table, stopped chewing to look at him with suspicion. "Why don't you two, and two others, a lead and a tenor, come down to the Y. M. C. A. with me some night? I can get to a piano there, and we'll

get going. How about to-night? I know of a lot of fine songs—I was leader of the Glee Club in college." He had not meant this last to get out.

McGill caught it. "You go to college?" he asked quickly.

"Yes." Raleigh hurried on. "Now we can get——"

But his big neighbor, he of the pickling room, drowned him out.

"Well, I'll be damned!" He surveyed him with mild wonder, and a dawning new expression. "What the hell do you know about that? I thought they was sumpin' funny about you. What you doin' in the shops, if you're all eddicated and everything?" he asked.

Raleigh felt the unconscious antagonism, and flushed. He liked these men—amazingly—as he had liked many in his regiment. Why could they not accept him for what he was? He saw in McGill's grave eyes the same question. McGill was different, he felt, and it hurt. He leaned forward and looked straight at him.

"I'm here," he said quietly, but with finality in his tone, "just for the same reason that you are, I presume—to make a living." McGill's eyes dropped, then lifted clearly, with an unspoken pardon in them. Raleigh felt he understood. Lightly, as they rose from the table, he said, "Well, how about it? Can you both come down, and dig up two others?"

The man of the pickling room nodded. "Sure! I'll get Sam Swenson and Bill Hogan. 'Bout half past seven?"

"Yes. I'll meet you in the lobby." They clattered down the iron stairs, greasy with countless feet, and Raleigh reached his press as the whistle rose on the air. He found the little Russian of the waiting room finishing the tail of a pickle.

"Hello there," he cried. "This is luck, isn't it?"

The other nodded, his dull face breaking into a slow smile.

"I show you those songs, *barin*, after?"

Raleigh drew on his sodden gloves. "Yes, indeed," he said. "I'd like it a lot." He picked a billet from the press and swung it to the cradle, talking over his shoulder. "All your folk music is beautiful, and full of color"—another billet—"and the rhythms are intricate and interesting." The little Russian was looking his wonderment when Roberts appeared, and curtly directed him

to a furnace, though there was nothing there for him to do at that time. The boy noted his face fall, sullen, clouded with a smothered resentment—suddenly all animal. He wondered for some time about it. "Does he feel the same distaste for unreasoning authority that I would?" he questioned.

As the afternoon wore away, and his work, through habit, required less and less conscious direction; he began listening with attention to the network of noises about him, contrasting its parts, tabulating its rhythms with expert ear. At the base of all the complex web of sound lay, like a pattern, the pervasive throb of the three great presses. He found himself swinging his billets in-time to it, and tunes, strong, simple, framed on the symmetry of its pulsing, began to form in his mind.

"It's the fundamental theme of the whole place," he thought. "Maybe I can use it for something."

CHAPTER IV.

The final whistle lifted Raleigh out of a reverie, made possible by a month's toughening of arms and back to almost automatic functioning. He straightened, walked to the locker room, and changed to his street clothes.

These Raleigh had chosen deliberately with an eye to the picturesque. The army breeches, patterned with stains, bore still the lines of their Parisian tailor, and the khaki-and-blue Mackinaw, with the sins of many camp fires upon it, undeniably proclaimed itself as Abercrombie's. So, despite dirt and stiff legs, he made a jaunty figure as he left the shop, a Canadian toque of blue on one side of his head. He looked round for McGill, but failed to see him, and marched off to the trolley. He looked back at the Hydraulic, its great chimneys barring the cold blue of the winter sky, and its furnaces adding a fierce note of rose light to the low clouds.

He thought of his first month's work—thought of it in terms of fatigue and dirt, and of new, vivid experience—then thought of the thousands of men to whom it meant dirt and fatigue—men who grew from childhood to youth and from youth to old age under smoky skies. He drew a quick breath and, fighting his way through the crowd about the trolley, boarded it. With forty-five minutes' travel before him, he pulled

a miniature music score out of his pocket, and, before the trolley started, happily lost himself in the beauty of the opera of "Pelleas and Melisande."

He was conscious that some one sat down beside him, but did not look up until an incredulous, cool voice that instantly brought a picture of furs and tailored, trim clothes, said:

"Why—that's Debussy!"

With his eyes still on the page, Raleigh raised a grimy forefinger.

"Wait," he answered, smiling. "Voices are my specialty. You're between twenty and twenty-four, probably well dressed; a graduate of some college east of Albany, and your head rules your heart. You don't know much about music, but like it. You *should* be pretty, but I suppose that's asking too much."

He heard a gasp, then swung round, grinning, to encounter the astounded gaze of two very brown eyes. That was all—for an instant—just brown—like autumn pools, leaf-lined and deep. Then her whole face registered—a small, straight, tip-tilted nose, black brows that swept back and up, and lips parted in surprise.

As Raleigh looked, the chin lifted, and she laughed—a rippling infectious laugh.

"Well—*that* is one of the most amusing things I ever heard. Where did you learn?"

"It wasn't asking too much," murmured Raleigh, his eyes on her face. "It wasn't asking enough."

"I asked—where did you learn character reading by voices?" There was a firm pull to the impersonal that Raleigh instantly acceded to.

"Oh, listening to people talk at concerts. One has to stand five minutes of it in decency, before turning round and glaring. Don't you love this thing?" thumping his music score affectionately.

She nodded, quick eyes surveying him. Raleigh deliberately wiped a smut across his nose with one black-grimed hand to add atmosphere.

"Yes." She evidently was bursting with questions. "I saw it last in Paris, in February, 1919."

"No, really? I was there then, too, studying with Ravel."

"With——" This left her wordless a moment. Then, "And—are you studying now?" with a frankly complete glance that included costume, dirt, and all.

"Yes—an American symphony," he replied gravely, with twinkling eyes, thinking of the thunderous music of the shop machinery. "This month was just the prelude, but the main themes were pretty well brought out."

She picked up the play easily. "Do you like the make-up of the music?"

"Not so much. Brass too loud—music too heavy in general—demands too much of the players. Needs more rests, and the whistle idea used more frequently."

She laughed delightedly, then suddenly, her eyes narrowed at him with inward revelation. Then she looked demurely down.

"You must be in the hot-press shop." She enjoyed his quick look of surprise at the clean hit.

"Now, see here," he protested, "you're spoiling it all. We've got to go back into everydayness." She was like wine to him. "I've nothing left but to introduce myself."

She reached over and pressed the button to stop the trolley. "Oh, that's quite unnecessary, Mr. Raleigh," she said imperturbably, her eyes on her lap.

Raleigh stared, then meekly bowed his head. "I never had a Conan Doyle mind," he said plaintively. "Please explain, Miss—er—"

"Dear, dear—must you have everything diagramed?" She rose as the trolley began grating to a stop, and patted her veil with a gray-gloved hand. "I've enjoyed the lecture on music so much. Good-by."

Raleigh half started up, encountered the elfin sparkle of the brown eyes and promptly sat down, blithely impersonal.

"Good-by," he said pleasantly, touched his cap, and bent his eyes again to his reading. From under lowered lids he saw her face flush suddenly, saw her hesitate, then turn quickly. The bell clanged. The car went on.

"Score one," he thought, but without elation. Then he brightened. "If she's a good sport, she'll give me a clew somehow; if she isn't—"

But he dismissed this as impossible.

CHAPTER V.

The following Monday, the shop council, consisting of David, his vice president, secretary, and treasurer, the general manager, and the head foremen of all the shops, concluded a stormy session in David's office.

Marshall, the vice president, had suggested compromise, a certain accession to the demands of the unions—namely, that the Hydraulic should become a strictly union shop, employing none but union men.

To this, surprisingly enough to the lay mind, had risen bitter objection from most of the shop foremen themselves. Pat had delivered himself.

"You don't know what it'd mean, Mr. Marshall," he said bluntly. "I've worked in closed shops. I know. The men here are happy enough, an' it's just that the union fellows know that that makes 'em crazy to get in. I'll say my shop's the worst—they foreigners'll swallow anything anybody tells 'em. All the trouble's comin' from outside agitators that want to pull a strike for a tight union shop. If the strike comes—"

"If it comes, let it." David's fist banged on the desk, and his jaw grew even more angular. "Pat's right. The Hydraulic has always been an open shop, and open she stays—if we have to shut." The paradox escaped notice. "How's the idea of the Welfare Building going over, Parker?" This to a short man, of Vandyke beard and benevolent gold spectacles and great enthusiasms.

"I'm not sure," he hesitated. "Some of them undoubtedly see what we're after, but apparently lots of them resent what they consider our attempts to amuse them. Not many; but some take it as a sop thrown to them. Of course, I only got that 'through channels.' I don't know, frankly, how it is going to go. We must make a big thing of the opening night."

"What are you planning for entertainment?" asked Marshall.

"Why, that has rather solved itself," continued Parker. "There is a chap in the hot-press shop named Raleigh—a most remarkable fellow." David's eyes closed slightly as he regarded the map of the plant innocently. "He came to me the other day and said that he had organized a quartet and wanted to know if he could give a concert for the men some night, if he worked up a program. Of course, I was delighted, and kept an eye on him after that. I can't make him out, nor can any one else. He is obviously well educated. Dutton tells me that he has gained quite a following among the foreigners because he has gotten together now six quartets—Bohemians, Russians, et cetera. He's been here only a month. Takes

them in rotation down at the Y. M. C. A. where he lives, and drills them. The men love it. He seems to know music."

"Jazz, I suppose, Parker?" said Marshall languidly. Marshall's wife had finally fashioned out of him a politely appreciative symphony patron, and he had reached a point where he basked a little in the greatness thrust upon him.

"Jazz? Not much! He seems to be making a study of folk music, and is using the quartets to that end. Told me he's gotten some interesting material, especially from the Croats. Of course, the Italians eat out of his hand, for he speaks their language perfectly, I am told. He talked to me a lot about 'musical fundamentals' and the 'archaic modes' and the 'dominant rhythm' of the shops. I confess, it was too deep for me."

David rose, and the meeting informally split up into small groups as the men departed. As he left with Parker, David was saying, "Have posters of the concert printed, and push the thing all you can. If he has a nucleus of the foreign element united round him like that, you can't tell how useful he may be." As he climbed into his own car, he was smiling. "The young rascal," he muttered, and rode home in elation.

Judgment of people is prone to establish itself on the level whereon the judge or jury finds itself most at home. Clerics, happening to be soaked in the lore of that noble fisherman, Izaak Walton, to their ecclesiastical finger tips, have consorted with bar-keeps over fly-fishing, before now. Poets have loved butchers and dubbed them kings of mentality because, forsooth, they appreciated baseball together.

So Raleigh, in his fight with Mulgully, touched a spring common in all hearts, and got himself measured by the shop's own scale. On music, the men might be dumb, to kindness indifferent, but pluck they knew. His quartets undoubtedly loved him, but to the majority of the men he was untried in fundamentals, and hence, lacking such trial, was damned.

It happened in this way, over a thing so small as a pay ticket. The pay ticket, resembling an express label, and with the hours of work done during the week tabulated down one side of it, required signature in full on the afternoon preceding pay day. Raleigh was sitting devouring ham sandwiches and grease, one of a group clus-

tered for warmth round a cradle of cooling billets, in the inspection room. Giovanni Montefiore, swart and ecstatic, waved a bologna in one hand and a pickle in the other, and rolled his dark eyes heavenward in delight, as Raleigh recounted an episode in Tivoli, involving a drunken German officer and a pretty Italian girl. Raleigh swung from Italian to English and back again, and the men gasped in awe. All save Mulgully, the man of the retreating forehead, who sat upon one corner of the inspection table, sneering to Doolins, and eating noisily. Raleigh finished his tale.

"Ah, *marvilioso!*" sighed Giovanni, with true Latin bliss in the dramatic, as Clarkson, a wan little clerk with a perpetually wilted collar and strings of lank hair, appeared with the pay tickets. Raleigh took his to the inspector's table and signed it—Dante Rossetti Raleigh. Mulgully, looking over his shoulder, burst into volcanic expletive.

"Hey, bo," he sneered to Doolins, "get this for a moniker!" He bent down to read. "Dant Rositty Raleigh—what the hell do yuh know about that!" Then, with loud inspiration—"Rosy!" he read it. "Ain't that a swell name now? Rosy!" His thick lips mouthed it, and his little eyes twinkled malevolently.

The men grinned and waited. This demanded prompt repartee in kind, or the silence of defeat. Raleigh straightened to his full height, which still brought his eyes below those of Mulgully, a giant.

"My name's Dante," he said quietly, tapping the card in his hand. His thoughts raced curiously, kaleidoscopic. "Now there'll be a row. I hate fighting. If they'd only understand anything but physical success. Freddy'll loathe me if I don't—what a beast this chap looks." He waited.

Mulgully rolled his lips like a rooting pig. "Ah, hell," he sneered thickly, turning a little aside, but looking at Raleigh aslant, under heavy lids, his straight, greasy hair dropping to his rough brows. "Your name's Rosy—Rosy—see?" He turned swaggering away toward Doolins.

The little group of men stirred slightly—Raleigh saw the unmistakable smile pass. It must be now. He whipped out a hand and swung Mulgully toward him.

"You're quite wrong," he enunciated sweetly. "My name is Dante—Dan to my friends. I don't care to have my middle

name twisted into an uncouth jest by a vulgar fool. Is that clear?"

Clear or not, his eyes and jaw made proclamation in language which even Mulgully and the men could understand. Mulgully leaned toward him and began to curse.

"Why, you——"

Raleigh raised his hand.

"Your breath is bad," he remarked with complete detachment, then suddenly flattened his hand against Mulgully's mouth, and thrust him, lunging, back.

Instantly Mulgully rushed, blind mad. Raleigh, expectant, side-stepped, and drove to the other's jaw. With a guttural grunt of rage, the bigger man rocked a moment. Then he turned and rushed again. This time there was no avoiding. They clinched, and Raleigh felt his ribs crack as Mulgully hammered viciously at his kidneys. Like a spring Raleigh bent himself and broke from the clinch, his head whirling, his body racked. He saw it was a question of keeping out of the way. He danced round Mulgully lightly, landing blows at which the other shook his head like a bull at flies.

For a few moments the fight rested there. Mulgully continued his rushes—Raleigh, ever retreating, dancing, watched for a place to land—watched for openings. They came—head, stomach, kidneys—Mulgully laid them all bare. "No science," thought Raleigh through a cloud of pain; "but my God—he can't be hurt." It was so. Raleigh's blows landed again and again, but produced no more effect than a woodpecker on an iron pole.

Both men were panting now. Raleigh, jarred by a crashing blow on the jaw, was losing something of his springing retreat. As he circled, he glimpsed the crowd of watching men, and even to his blurring mind came the similarity of expression to that of an audience he had once seen at a bullfight. Then Giovanni's face swung into vision, an olive epitome of apprehension, and McGill, his eyes black with excitement, his plume of hair rampant, his features mirroring fear, affection, pride.

Raleigh's mind was working with a strange detachment. He was getting licked, just because he was not as big as the other man—and the workmen would always sneer at him. There was nothing in the world, then, but superiority of muscles, and a navvy might make mockery of a Wagner if he got him in a fight. He rebelled against

such a standard—he caught McGill's eye for a moment—and read an imploring and a support there. Well—that's all there was to it—to justify himself. That was easy. But he must justify Freddy's belief in him. But Fred believed in him, anyhow—or else he was not worth the having. Why not stop then, at once, before Mulgully hammered him into oblivion? As the question framed, Mulgully's fist reached the point of his chin, and Raleigh felt his head snap back, with skippering little chains of light at the back of his brain, and a whirling rush of color as the whole shop rose suddenly into the air, as in an elevator that he was not in.

He found suddenly that he was on the ground, Mulgully above him. The question repeated itself—why go on? The same question had come, often, in the trenches, and now, as then, came the same answer—that after all he was *right*. That was all that mattered, after all——

There were shouts that reached him dimly, then he heard McGill's voice and felt a hand under his head. He shook it off, and clambered to his feet, the world spinning like a top tilting on an uneven axis. He saw Mulgully facing him, his face a sneer. Raleigh fell toward him, his hands going mechanically. He heard dim cries.

"Hell, that's enough—let the kid alone—he's all in——"

Mulgully fended him off easily; then Raleigh slipped past his loose guard, and felt his fist sink into the region of the other's eye. The big man snarled surprise, and crashed through Raleigh's arms to his chest. This time he went flat—writhed—staggered up, swaying drunkenly, seeing only Mulgully's face through a darkening veil of pain.

It was like taking gas, only not so pleasant, he thought. The last thing he remembered was falling slowly toward Mulgully, feeling an impact, and he was on the floor again. Then, somehow, came the feeling that the world had changed slowly into a huge inverted cone, with Mulgully's face at the small end of it, the sneer wiped off, an expression of wonder there instead—and something else—he couldn't quite see what. The cone whirled so. He was falling down the cone upon Mulgully's face—he mustn't land feet first. But then—lumberjacks stamped each other's faces, didn't they? But he had fine feeling and—down, down, down. The cone dissolved into twistinglike sparks, possibly atoms—that vanished in darkness,

with a crying of "ning-ning-ning-ning" throbbing through it. Mulgully's face turned into a black cloud that was almost invisible, and suddenly, through the dark mist of it, he saw that eyes had grown suddenly all over the face, like seeds in a pomegranate.

The eyes cried upon him in streams, cold tears—tears without salt somehow, that ran down his neck, and as they ran, talked to him—it was McGill's voice that they used—he could almost make out the words, "That's all right, boy—it's all right, kid—are you coming' round, buddy?"

The tears flowed even more strongly. There really was no need for Mulgully to weep like that, and with all those eyes, too—it seemed an almost indecent display of weeping—"just as if he'd had an eruption of eyes, and was showing 'em off," Raleigh thought; and they were damned cold, too cold—

He put up his hand to brush them off, and opened his own eyes, to find McGill supporting his head, and sousing him with water. Mulgully was bending over him—his face still wearing the expression of wonder—and through his blackening eye gleamed a profound respect. Raleigh started up—he mustn't quit—he was on his feet swaying dizzily, and mechanically his hands went up to guard as he tottered toward Mulgully.

But that worthy hastily seized Raleigh's wrists in a Titanic grip, and grinned—a warm grin, a grin of geniality. His big voice boomed out.

"That's all right, kid—you're not licked—hell—" He rumbled wordlessly.

Raleigh still gazed, his head tingling with a million sharp pains.

"Then—then I'm not Rosy—or anything like that?"

Mulgully's rumbles rose to a roar. He clapped a hand to Raleigh's shoulder, and gestured toward his own bluish eye with the other.

"I'll say you ain't! I was mistook. Say"—suddenly abashed by an unwonted emotion—"you're all right, kid, yuh got the ole stuff. Will yuh shake?"

Raleigh let out a deep breath. "Why, of course," he replied simply, and his hand crunched under the other's huge fingers. With a warm pressure, he turned away. He wanted to get out—to be alone. Though he knew his point was won, and that the fight was after all to him, the reaction was

strong upon him, and he hated it all at that moment—as he had never hated anything before in his life—the coarseness, the dirt—the lack of intimate intellectual companionship. He hated even his quartets, and thought with loathing of the perspiring faces in rows before him, and the rough jests, and the odor of infrequent bathing. A wave of disgust flooded through him, and he thought suddenly of his study at college—of the three windows giving out to the upper porch—of the lines of dark, finely polished woodwork, and the glow of the shaded lamps and the good old smell of his well-bound books. A half sob of protest rose to his throat.

He felt a big arm flung across his shoulders, and raised his head to McGill, who had followed him as he walked blindly out into the crane yard. McGill looked at him with a strange tenderness.

"God—Dan—you're a bundle o' nerve to stand up to that big hunk of cheese like that. You—I"—he fumbled huskily for words—"I'd go through hell for you, Dan," he finished awkwardly, his arm tightening round Raleigh's bent shoulders.

The boy glanced sidewise at McGill, at the sculptured lines of his head and throat, and met his eyes, suspiciously bright, and glowing deeply. His mood broke suddenly, and he laughed and laid a swollen hand on the other's arm.

"Thanks, Freddy," he said quietly, but with everything in his tone.

Quite suddenly, all was right. He looked up at the brilliant sun, and round at the crane yard. Somehow, it was all quite beautiful—the crane, crouched like a giant spider, with a web of cables stretching patternwise, its angled arms softened by the snow. The sky gleamed pure blue, and in the winter air had mysteriously got woven a thread of spring. Years afterward, Raleigh remembered the crane yard that morning, an etching in brown and white, with the sky cut into blue triangles by its cables; the touch of spring and McGill's fine eyes on him. Something had adjusted himself and his surroundings, and the charm that had lain for him in the picture of his study had laid itself like a spell on his present surroundings. No longer he was banished from the world he loved; bigger, more vital, stronger, it was here around him.

The whistle sounded, and McGill and he turned into the shop. As they reached the door of the hot-press shop, they passed Mul-

gully. Raleigh dug him gently in the ribs, and grinned into his face.

"You can call me Rosy all you like, now," he said, and hastened to his press.

And Rosy he became, proudly, to the men of the shop, who needed but this throne of unbeaten courage to exalt him.

Two nights thereafter, Mulgully appeared at a song rehearsal and said "he reckoned he could make as much noise as the next one." He demanded to be taken in, and sang with a blissful disregard of pitch, rhythm, or text, but with such childlike glee that Raleigh had not the heart to say him nay, realizing that he was vaguely trying to make amends by interesting himself in Raleigh's doings. So he tucked him into an inconspicuous place and hushed, as far as possible, his fearful rumblings. Thereafter he remained, an amiable thunderstorm of muttering delight. With true power of assimilation, Raleigh used him for a background of presses in a shop chantey he was composing.

CHAPTER VI.

A week later, as lights began to glimmer from shops and motors, Raleigh dropped off the car at the Y. M. C. A., and made his way to the letter boxes. As usual, the lobby seemed made up of men in a state of arrested tranquillity; most of them seemed to be sitting waiting for something. A few read; some talked. From the pool room came the click of balls; from the café the effulgence of food and the clacking of heavy dishes.

Raleigh crossed to the desk, and asked for his mail. After some delay the clerk, a man with stern eyes and a scarred cheek, opened his box and handed him his mail. Raleigh's eyes danced at one of the letters—in a hand he did not know—small, regular, with short loops and graceful capitals and even compression. He jagged it open with a quick forefinger. It read:

DEAR MR. RALEIGH: You are quite right; I didn't play fair. Mr. Culhane told me about you, and I guessed you as the person he'd described. Will you come to tea Thursday at five-thirty? And bring the music of 'Pelleas and Melisande' with you? I live directly across from Mrs. Harde, and, as you are free at three-thirty you can make it without trouble, I think.

Sincerely,

ELEANOR GRAYSON.

Chuckling, he turned to the other letter. It was from his uncle, asking him to dinner—for Thursday night; the first notice that august gentleman had given of his ex-

istence. He grinned. Things moved. In high mood, he turned again to the desk.

"Oh, by the way," he said, "there's some things of mine have come by express. They're in the basement areaway. Can I get them taken up to my room?"

The clerk turned from some one he was serving with towel tickets, and looked at Raleigh as a king might look at a cat.

"You'll have to see the janitor of the building," he replied, professionally affable. "We don't take care of these things." He started to turn back.

"Where'll I find him?" asked Raleigh.

"I don't know," said the clerk. Then, "His room is in the basement beyond the auditorium."

Raleigh sought the janitor. His blue-denim legs, thrust atop a window ledge, never moved, nor did his eyes lift from the paper that held him thrall.

"Have to git a permit from the office," he grunted, "fer the elevator man to move them things."

"But they sent me to you," answered Raleigh as pleasantly as possible. "I want to get them up to-night, if I can."

The janitor rolled an eye toward him, then rolled it down again and jiggled his paper. Raleigh stamped out and banged the door quite childishly behind him.

He went to the basement areaway, and dragged his boxes toward the elevator and pressed the button. The car descended and ascended to the main floor above him and only after indignant peals descended to the basement. Raleigh tugged at his boxes; the elevator man watched with detachment for a minute, and then began to close the elevator door.

"Here!" Raleigh straightened brusquely, presenting a red face. "Give me a hand with these, will you?"

"We carry no freight 'cept in the morning," the man said flatly. He went off duty in five minutes, and had no intention of having his flight clogged with furniture moving above. He again began to close the door.

"Oh, damn!" Raleigh set his foot in the door and glared.

"Who duh you think you are?" the elevator man sneered, with the patronage of which only a servant when he ruleth is capable.

Raleigh grew very composed. "Help me on with these things, please," he said briefly, "or I'll see that you're dismissed."

There must have been something in Raleigh's manner as well as in his mere words which was persuasive to a lazy man. At any rate, the elevator king decided to lend a hand with the boxes, after all.

An hour later, Raleigh's six by twelve coffin of a room was transformed. Most of the plaster-finished rooms were of a green color, but a few had escaped the eye of the contractor, and bloomed in a cheery and neutral buff. Of such was Raleigh's. Now, with chintz at the window and pillows on the couch, and Cezanne on the wall, it was transformed. Raleigh kicked the packing paper into the hall and fled to the pool for a swim.

In the elevator was the usual gathering of young men—and some not so young—some who were beginning to lose the firm outline of cheek and jaw, and about whose eyes were gathering a web of creases; men who had not arrived, and who, short of a miracle would not, now. Some of them had reached the tragic period of realization. The self-doubts, the vague, gray wonderings of what was wrong with them, why life had not given them what ten years ago they had, with laughter-tipped lips, sought, were beginning to weigh them down.

Raleigh looked them over, quickly, as was his wont, and nodded to one or two whom he knew, with the curiously negative feeling one has for people whom one meets who mean nothing. He particularly noticed, however, a boy slouched against the side of the car. His narrow face seemed inadequate setting for huge eyes that glittered restlessly, and darted from one person to another with a brilliance oddly contrasted to his relaxed attitude. They seemed his only really alive features. His clothing hung slackly on him, and the frayed edge of his soft collar stuck up under one ear.

The entrance to the locked room was barred by an iron grille, where one paid for towels and soap. A small, stooped man with mustaches like grizzled tufts of squirrel tails presided over this grille. Raleigh heard the boy ask for towels and soap.

"Where's yer ticket?" asked the attendant.

The boy looked blank, and muttered something in broken English. The attendant withdrew the towel.

"Ticket," he snapped, "you have to have yer ticket from the office."

The boy turned a bewildered face to Raleigh.

"What he say?"

The man bellowed, after the manner of folk who construe lack of English into deafness.

"Ticket—get yer ticket at the desk." He turned to Raleigh, who had produced his ticket. "Damn dirty foreigner!" he growled.

This told. With a snarl of sudden rage the boy flung himself at the grating. Raleigh's quick hand on his shoulder spun him about, his small face congested with anger. Raleigh shook his head.

"Don't," he said quietly. "It's no good doing that." To the attendant, "Here—take it off my ticket."

The man's face had flushed, and he looked ugly. "I'll—I'll report him," he stammered, his composure returning slowly.

Raleigh looked at him. "I wouldn't," he returned. "Perhaps if you didn't call him names it would help some. He didn't understand you. Let us by, will you?"

The door opened grudgingly. Raleigh dropped a sympathetic hand a moment to the lad's shoulder, and received a quick look of gratitude, shyly silent.

In the glow of swimming, the boy's tenseness relaxed, and he smiled a funny, crooked little smile when encountering Raleigh at one corner.

They dressed together, chatting, and went to the café. Raleigh seized a tray and loaded it.

Hanson, a shoe salesman, who was just ahead of him, turned round and grinned when Raleigh nudged him with the tray.

"Hello, Raleigh," he said. "Glad to see you."

As they sat down, the boy of the pool came hesitatingly, with a meager meal islanded on his tray. Raleigh beckoned to him.

"Sit down. Mr. Hanson, Mr.—I don't know your name."

"Smetana," returned the boy. Hanson grunted, with true middle-class Anglo-Saxon suspicion of anything that ends in a vowel and does not expose three inches of shaved neck. They fell to eating. Raleigh recounted Smetana's unfortunate mistake as to a towel ticket.

As he listened, Smetana's huge eyes darkened. "Dey call names, too," he muttered. "Dey say foreigner—dey say dirty. I *not* dirty—I be American soon—I join de union."

"Union? Where?"

"Ydraulic-Press-Steel."

Raleigh wondered in what department he worked, but didn't let on that he, too, had a number and badge in Dutton's office.

"Why, that's an open shop, isn't it?" he asked. "Why do you join a union?"

Smetana's little face caught fire from his eyes and became suddenly alive, fanatic.

"'Cause de union, he protect de workin' man. We mus' 'ave living wage—we mus' be brudders together—these reech men, dey want all money, all t'ing. What we get if we not join de union? Jus' work all tam, hard all tam, den somet'ing happen——"

His voice dropped, and Raleigh, watching him, saw his face harden suddenly, and it seemed to him that something stirred in the depths of the big eyes, like a half-guessed shadow seen at the bottom of a deep pool. It was only for an instant, but Raleigh drew a quick breath, and felt a cold finger on his spine. That look was no parroting of the jargon of socialism and demagogues; some memory had stirred the boy to the quick.

"Aw, rats!" Hanson cut short the silence angrily. "You fellas make me sick—you never think of anybody but yourselves—you're gettin' more pay now than you——"

"Hanse!" Raleigh held up a warning hand. "No socialistic arguments, please. It ruins my digestion and cramps my style. Come on—I'm going up to my room and smoke a cigarette, and break one of their pet rules."

He rose, Hanson with him. To Smetana he said kindly. "Drop into my room some night, will you? I'd like to talk with you. I'm in No. 513."

"Yes, sir," returned the boy, still flushed, and suddenly shy again. Hanson led to the elevators.

"Funny gink," he muttered, looking back at Smetana. "Rotten egg, I'd say. These foreigners make me sick, with their damned bunk. They're the kind that make all the trouble in this man's country."

"Maybe you're the kind, Hanse."

Hanson stared into Raleigh's grave face. "Me? How do you get that way?"

Raleigh looked at him soberly.

"Hanse," he said, "there's an old Hindu proverb that says, 'Of the tree of discord, its fruits are battles and bloodshed, but its roots are intolerance and intolerance.' It's true. Smetana's not a bad sort—he just wants to be shown. But we—who have been here a little longer—we turn up our

noses at him and the millions like him because they don't talk English and have ideas that differ from ours. We avoid them like the plague. Then we howl frantically because they get into little Italies and Slovakias and Bohemias, in groups, don't learn English, misunderstand utterly the country, fall into the hands of rotten politicians and demagogues, or of real anarchists—and presently throw bombs. Nine-tenths of the foreign trouble is our own fault."

"Whew!" grinned Hanson—"got yer back up, didn't I?"

"You bet you did. Some time I'll take you all apart and put you together on the foreign question, my dear lad." His face fell suddenly sober again. "That's not what's wrong with Smetana, though. It's something deeper, more personal. Something terrible's happened to the boy. Did you notice his eyes just when he quit talking? Looked like there was a ghost inside them."

Hanson laughed.

"Aw, he's just sore on the world. I don't want 'em shooting off their mouths round me, that's all. If they need fixin', that's the government's job."

Raleigh clenched hands of mock despair above his head. "Good Lord! That's just what I mean. Did it ever occur to you that *you* were the government?"

This held Hanson silent halfway up in the elevator.

When they emerged—"Come down to my room for a little game, kid?"

"Sorry—I've got to write letters." Raleigh would not for worlds have divulged his supreme ignorance of the art of craps. The argot was thrilling; he occasionally listened, fascinated by the incantations and imploring verbal ritual.

They went separate ways along the concrete corridor. The corridors were a source of delight to Raleigh. On each floor they were the same, long and square and regularly lighted, with cement floors ruled like a sidewalk, and plaster-tinted to apple-green. Apple-green, when flushing along the sky at sunset, or glowing from silken folds against the warm ivory of young breasts, and apple-green applied to vistas of plaster, are respectively as supple body to dried corpse. The result of the well-meaning contractors had been to create a hospital luster of ghastly brilliance that would have brought nausea to a goat.

Raleigh passed rows of doors regular as teeth in a comb, let himself into his own room, and sank with a sigh of satisfaction into his small island of beauty. His tall lamp's subdued glow lent shadow and consequent space. He had slipped into a sweater and lighted a cigarette with the added zest of petty crime, when there came a light knock.

"C'me in!" bawled Raleigh, his eyes running over a quartet arrangement of "Kentucky Babe."

The door opened timidly to admit "The Worm," who gazed at Raleigh with envy, awe, disapproval, and admiration crowding each other over his scant face. Raleigh waved his cigarette to the one chair.

"Sit down, boy—what's on your mind?"

The Worm—Raleigh had so named him from a characteristic of perpetual writhing—gazed with his wide-spread eyes winking regularly.

"Gee," he said presently. "Aren't you afraid they'll catch you smokin'?"

Raleigh snorted. "Do they suppose they can keep five hundred young men from smoking simply by making rules—as if we were all in prep school!"

"'Tisn't a *rule*," murmured The Worm, sidling into Raleigh's chair and hugging a notebook closer to him. "They just ask us not to smoke cigarettes in our rooms."

"Yes—and then snoop to see whether we do or not. Much better make it an out-and-out rule. They don't come out square on it, that's what annoys me so. 'We ask you not to smoke,' they say and then pull long faces if you do." He puffed angrily, and dropped his eyes again to the quartet impatiently.

At this The Worm should have wriggled out. But he only writhed a little on the chair. His big, light-blue eyes, with sparse pale lashes like occasional gorse along a Highland pool, fixed on Raleigh. He squirmed with embarrassment. Raleigh ignored him for a moment, then sat up, laughed, and blew a cloud of smoke at him.

"What is it? I'll bet you want me to subscribe to something. What's up?"

Thus adjured, The Worm rose on end.

"I—I wondered if you'd come to the Bible class meeting to-night," he vouchsafed shyly.

"I'll have to ask you to excuse me," replied Raleigh. Then, "Sorry, old boy, but I'd be no good whatever."

As a matter of fact, the night before he

had been extended a similar invitation to attend this evening's Bible class by the conductor of it himself—one Mr. Brahley, and in refusing had got himself involved in a discussion on religion in which—though not fundamentally irreligious—he had expressed himself very freely. As a result both had lost their tempers and had parted very far from being friends.

Clarkson's eyes winked thrice at Raleigh's reply, and his toe stirred the rug. "We—we thought that it might be a good thing for the floor." At a get-together dinner of his floor Raleigh had been elected, to his horror, "social" chairman.

Raleigh grinned, and visioned his philosophy class in college. "I don't think that it would. That's not my stunt, you know. I'll keep the floor amused, and get up parties for them—you can gather them into your special department. Now run along—I've got to work—be a good child."

But The Worm was the willow wand of which martyrs are fashioned. He bowed at pressure, but sprang back to position with the utmost patience.

"We wish you'd come," he said, squirming a little.

"Yes, Raleigh, come join us, my boy," boomed a healthy voice from the doorway, and the beaming face of Crawley, the religious chairman, shone like a sun of virtue in Raleigh's door. He sniffed, still beaming.

"Must have been a little fire in here," he glowed cheerfully, with a knowing wink at The Worm, who had begun undulating genuflections at his entrance. "Seems to me I smell smoke."

"It speaks volumes for your olfactory bulb," returned Raleigh smoothly. "I just finished a particularly strong cigarette. Sit down, won't you?"

"No, thank you." The tolerance of his smile deepened. "I'm just trying to interest the boys in the Bible class to-night. You haven't been to any of our weekly meetings, have you, Mr. Raleigh?"

The two focused on Raleigh. He felt exceedingly uncomfortable under that battery of virtue for a moment; then he rallied and refused the invitation again—and finally.

"Well, all right," purred The Worm. "I'm sorry. So will Mr. Brahley be. He wanted me to give you another chance, as he put it."

And with that the pair of them left him at last to his evening's comfort.

Smetana sat in his small, bare room, his relaxed hands hanging over his knees, his white wedge of a face waxy in the moonlight that should have softened and beautified it. But instead it merely looked more tense. His mind was full of Raleigh. He tingled at the memory of his kindly voice and the friendly thump of his big hand. It was the first time that any one had spoken to him in kindness or touched him in sympathy since his cousin's death. He smiled softly for a moment.

Then the whirring in his mind again asserted itself. It had grown slowly, steadily; it was as if he stood on a lonely, long road, and far off, where the sides of it met at the horizon, something was spinning toward him. He could hear the spinning very plainly now, and knew that it was his mind. It was dry, hard, like a wheel that spins in a dry bearing. But there was something wrong with it—it could not find its center. On the polished sheen of its spinning disk rose pictures, drawn out sidewise and dis-

torted—the crushed feet of his cousin—the sister's grief-sodden face—but they always vanished before the smiling face of the man in the touring car. The smile seemed to spin, too, and made a whirling sound of its own faintly.

He stirred uneasily. That spinning sound never left him now. It was a lonely sound, like the wires of telephones along an empty road at dusk. "*Why—why—why—why,*" it sang. There was something of compulsion in it, too. It was as if the whirling sound was drawing closer round the unknown center, seeking a point upon which to converge its snarling, thin hatred. It seemed to urge him to find this center, as if that focus were the only thing needed to draw it into a powerful concentration, to fuse that dry, spinning whine into a shriek of action. Slowly, imperceptibly, the whole swift-circling disk was drawing closer, searching, urging.

Two red spots crept into the white cheeks. Behind his eyes the thing that Raleigh had seen there moved like a caged animal.

TO BE CONTINUED.



A LINE ON THE CABINET

THE average age of the members of President Harding's cabinet is fifty-five years. The oldest member is sixty-nine, and the youngest forty-two. Five of the members were born in the Middle West, two in the Eastern States, one in the South, one in New England, and one in Great Britain. All but one of the members are college graduates. In private life five were lawyers, one a mining engineer, two were bankers, one an editor of agricultural papers, and one a steel worker. One member has served as a United States senator, one as a congressman, and one as both congressman and senator. One member served in the World War as an enlisted man in the Marine Corps.

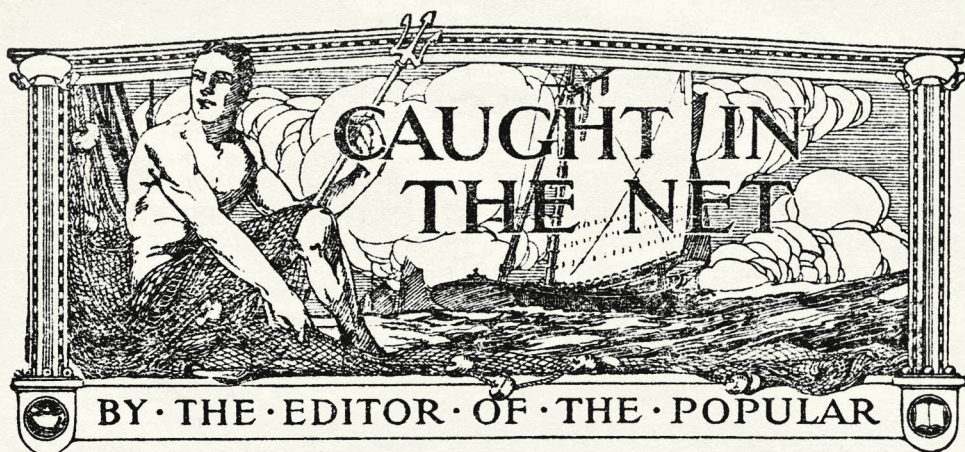


TEARS AND PROFITEERS

EVERY fellow I see," observed Litt Mallory, the Virginia philosopher, "is shedding tears because he's being gouged by the profiteers. But they are alligator tears. What people are crying about is that they ain't profiteers themselves.

"That's why so few profiteers are put in jail. You can't get very far policing malefactors when the public's secretly applauding them. We Americans ain't against profiteers exactly so much as we're kicking ourselves because we ain't one of them. Think that over. When you see a fat fellow blossom out in a brand-new, great big limousine, do you hate him because he's got the price out of your neighbor or because you haven't had the gumption to get it yourself?

"That sounds like hard philosophy? It does, my friend. But think it over. How long can any abuse last in the United States if the majority of the population is dead against it? The truth of the business is that too many of us are shouting: 'Down with the profiteers—but let me get mine!'"



THE FEAR OF FAILURE

THOUSANDS of men miss success every year because they let their minds dwell on the fear of failure instead of on the picture of triumph. They get into the habit of thinking: "What would happen to me if I failed?" They wonder what people would say if they went broke. They think so much about falling down that they side-step making decisions, approach every opportunity with hesitance, and put only a part of their energy into the jobs confronting them.

They are like the man who threw out his chest and announced, as if he spoke a great truth: "I'd rather begin in a small way and work up gradually to something worth while than to tackle a big proposition and then go blooie!" That man was fooling himself. He was thinking, not of how well he would "begin in a small way" but of how sure he would be to fail if he tackled "a big proposition." He had taken his own measure and found himself capable only of little things. Instead of thrilling at the thought of success, he quailed at the possibility of defeat.

It is the man that fixes his mind on the big and difficult things who succeeds. If you can start big and hold your nerve, you will finish big. Start as "big" as your opportunities permit. If you choose the smaller of two opportunities, you are afraid of the larger, and you deliberately postpone the great grapple with fortune. And, once having run away from opportunity, you have established within yourself a dislike for big things. When your next chance comes, you will think even more of how uncomfortable and disagreeable it would be to fail.

"I am an old man and have seen many troubles, but most of them never happened." Whoever said that pronounced a guiding principle for those who crave success. Failure is the product only of thoughts of failure. Success admits of no rival in the mind.

WHEN STAKES WERE HIGH

IT is whispered that there is an unusual amount of gambling going on these days—that the slap of cards and the rattle of dice echo throughout the land. Perhaps this is true; perhaps there are games being played for as high stakes as were played for in the California gambling halls in the days of forty-nine, on the Mississippi River steamboats, or in the palatial gambling houses of Canfield and Phil Daly. But even if this is true, it is quite certain that gambling in America—or any place else—will never again attain the proportions it reached in England in the latter years of the eighteenth century and the early years of the nineteenth.

In those days of fast living and hard drinking, Brook's Club, in London, an exclusive organization whose membership included most of the leaders of England's social and political life, was the great gaming resort, and many a young man of bright prospects passed out of its doors, after a night at the tables, with a load of debt that burdened

and handicapped him for the rest of his years. The father of Charles James Fox, the latter, as speaker of the House of Commons, being America's best friend in England during our Revolution, paid debts aggregating a hundred and forty thousand pounds for his brilliant son—and even that could not save the young man from the clutches of the money lenders to whom he had resorted to enable him to pay his tremendous losses at cards and dice. Fox perhaps was the most desperate gambler of a group of men who thought nothing of risking small fortunes on the turn of a card. One day he sat down to play at dice at three o'clock in the afternoon. The game continued without pause, except for food and drink, until five the next afternoon. And then, after twenty-six hours of gambling for large stakes, Fox went to the House of Commons and made one of the most brilliant speeches of his career. Another youngster who played them "high, wide, and handsome" was Lord Slavordale, who, before he was of age, in one session lost eleven thousand pounds at dice, won it all back with a single lucky throw, and cursed because the stakes hadn't been high enough to make winning really worth while.

Cards and dice were not the only forms of gambling. Wagers of large sums were made on the expected duration of life of public men. Future marriages also were subjects for speculation, and freak bets of various kinds were common. One was made by a certain "Buck" Whalley, a sporting Irishman, who bet that he would walk from Dublin to Jerusalem, play ball against the walls of the city, and walk back again. And he did it. The trip took him nine months, but he won twenty thousand pounds by making it. Another freak wager was one made by the Earl of March, who bet that he could send a message a distance of ten miles quicker than any horse could carry it. As this was before the time of the railroad, telephones, or the telegraph, he found no lack of takers. The ingenious nobleman stationed professional cricket players along the route, and the message was placed in a ball which was thrown from hand to hand. He won.

Of course, this wild gambling had serious consequences. Debt and ruin stalked the gamblers, and not a few, staggering under terrible losses, and despairing of ever being able to pay them, took their own lives. The vice was not confined to the aristocratic members of Brook's Club. Gambling was a passion with all classes of society—even clergymen were known to place large wagers. And it had a hardening effect on peoples' characters. It is said that when an unfortunate man fell into the Thames River onlookers at once began to bet on his chances of getting out alive, and that would-be rescuers were restrained so that the gamblers would have a fair run for their money. The man drowned.

OUR CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES

FIVE million dollars and seventeen years were spent in Germany in chemical research before artificial indigo was perfected—but the discovery brought a monopoly of the world's production in this commodity, rendering the indigo crops of

India comparatively valueless. The commercial significance of this achievement is concretely indicated by the fact that in 1897 the indigo crop in India was worth twenty million dollars, while at the time of the opening of the war it was valued at only three hundred thousand dollars. Another instance of the result of such unstinted research work was Professor Haber's discovery of a process for fixing the nitrogen of the air in the form of ammonia and nitric acid. Previously, for the nitric acid necessary for munitions, fertilizers and various other industries, all countries were largely dependent on the nitrate beds of Chile. Having as much air as the next country, Professor Haber's discovery made Germany independent of all external sources for all nitrogenous compounds. Otherwise she could probably not have held out more than a couple of years in the war, under the British blockade.

The moral of these things is obvious. Chemical science progresses so rapidly that any nation wishing to continue "self-supporting" in the tremendously broadening field of chemical products must let its chemical industries be constantly guided by scientific research and discovery and must be willing to devote vast sums of money and unlimited time to such research.

Since the war so rudely awakened us to our deplorable dependency on Germany for dyes and many drugs and necessitated our making a belated start in such productions as

well as in regard to those other products of chemical industry, war gases and high explosives, we have for the first time become free and independent as to most of the essential chemical products. But it is plain that we must clearly recognize that we cannot afford to rest on our laurels. To maintain our position in this field of chemical industry—which has come to mean the protecting of a great part of our national industry and the insuring of our ability to produce munitions for our defense in war, if need be—our chemical industries must consent to spare the time and money to research that Germany has.

Happily this is being realized. And in safeguarding our position a fine start has been made in the organizing of The Chemical Foundation, a body comprising five hundred of the biggest chemical firms in the country. This association has acquired from the Alien Property Custodian all German patents seized during the war covering dyestuffs and various other chemicals, with the idea of licensing their use by Americans and thus with the aid of the government defeating German and all other encroachment in these industries which have come to mean so much to us. The Foundation is a corporation run without profit, aiming only to help us retain what we have won in the chemical world. It constitutes, in itself, a most hopeful sign that we will succeed in doing this. And it should encourage us meanwhile to build up our high-school chemistry courses, our college staffs and laboratories, and our postgraduate schools to aid in this vital work by supplying the necessary laborers in the research end of the chemical-industries field. Here, as elsewhere, eternal vigilance is the price of safety. If our chemical industries continue to realize this, we would seem to have good ground to hope for a future in these activities incalculably better than our past

TO PROTECT OUR WILD FLOWERS

EFFORTS are now being made by different associations interested in the preservation of the wild flowers of America to rouse the interest of even those indifferent as to flowers, wild or otherwise, in preserving them. The lead in the movement has been taken by the Wild Flower Preservation Society, of which Mrs. N. L. Britton, of New York City, is secretary-treasurer and which has branches in Chicago and a number of other cities. Some of the most valued species of wild flowers, it is stated, are nearly extinct, others are threatened with extinction, and appeals to be more careful are to be made to wild-flower enthusiasts, who strip the woods and fields of them and are more to be feared than the indifferent people.

A short time ago Mrs. Britton told of the efforts made to prevent some of the species from becoming extinct, either through ordinary recklessness or carelessness of wild-flower lovers in collecting them. She says that those in the movement for their preservation are trying to enlist the aid of the Boy Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations, and school children. Associate clubs coöperating in the work are lately reported from different parts of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, the District of Columbia, Texas, Florida, Washington, California, and other States and places and a definite plan of coöperation is to be arranged by degrees. Mrs. Britton says that an active chapter of the society, formed in Chicago recently, is coöperating in the movement to protect the wild flowers with twenty-six associate schools and thirty-five of the local clubs of that city.

Wild-flower "sanctuaries" for their preservation are also multiplying. There is little construction work and no manuring, cultivating, spraying, or training needed when a sanctuary of the kind is established. Any secluded, shady nook among trees or rocks, when found, can be used for this purpose. Among the wild flowers the society is most anxious to preserve are the trailing arbutus, hepatica, Dutchman's-breeches, bloodroot, spring beauty, adder's tongue, lily, columbine, marsh marigold, violet, trillium, moccasin flower, and Jack in the pulpit.

The proprietor of a fern and flower farm where, among others, rare wild flowers, only found in quiet spots, are raised, issued a circular very recently in part of which he said:

"Human vandals, real-estate 'improvements,' forest fires and other incidents of civilization are responsible for the almost total disappearance from our woods and fields

of many of the finest American wildings. It is not too late to save them, however, by providing sanctuaries."

The society is now endeavoring to have school children taught to love the wild flowers and the birds they attract. As most children are attracted by wild flowers they are expected to be ready pupils. One of the organizations coöperating in the movement is the New York Bird and Tree Club, of which the late John Burroughs was honorary president.

AIR SANATORIA

WHILE the air-mail service of the United States government is beginning to show satisfactory results, other uses are being contemplated for aëroplanes and, it is expected, will be ultimately developed. Since the air-mail service was started about three years ago, aëroplanes in the service have flown over one million five hundred thousand miles, a recent statement of the information bureau of the post-office department says, carrying about forty-nine million letters. Yet this branch of the service is practically in its infancy.

The latest use of the aëroplane to be suggested is recommended by medical scientists, who advise the carrying of people suffering from throat or incipient lung troubles on trips in aëroplanes as a cure. A short time ago it was reported from Washington that one man, who was rendered voiceless during the World War, was advised by Doctor Charles A. McEnerny, of the public health service, to make an aëroplane flight. He was taken up in a government aëroplane at Bolling Field into pure, rarified air, the aëroplane reaching an altitude of fourteen thousand feet. When brought back to the field he had recovered his voice and made the announcement of its recovery to his mother over a telephone. On behalf of the air service it was then pointed out that a Roanoke, Virginia, girl, a singer, one of the first to volunteer as an entertainer for our soldiers, suddenly lost her voice early in 1918 and recovered it in a similar way. Every known remedy had been tried to restore it without result until the fall of the same year, when she was visiting at Lima, Peru, and accepted an invitation to take a trip in an aëroplane. At a height of about ten thousand feet her voice came back and in the evening, when the trip was over, she sang in the palace in Lima at the request of President Legula.

A surgeon in the Royal Air Force, England, lately called attention to several cures by air trips of certain ailments ranging from colds to phthisis and influenza. In cases of incipient tuberculosis and similar ailments, rare, pure air is looked on as the principal curative agent. Some experts now predict the aërial sanatorium and the aëropathist as likely to be realities in the near future.

Sanatoriums in this country for incipient tuberculosis patients and those with kindred ailments are generally to be found in high altitudes. A typical institution of this kind is the Ray Brook Sanatorium, which is a State institution, for incipient tuberculosis patients and others suffering from lung and bronchial troubles, and it is situated in the heart of the Adirondacks, the highest mountains in New York State, where the air is clear, pure, and rare. The main part of the cure when the patients are in a weak state is sitting for a number of hours each day in the open air. Many recoveries of patients have resulted from the carrying out of this system.



POPULAR TOPICS

TYPHOID fever, according to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, is a vanishing disease in the United States, especially in the larger cities. The 1920 typhoid death rate for 68 cities having a population of over 100,000, was 3.7 per 100,000. In 57 of these cities the average typhoid death rate in 1910 was 19.6 per 100,000, and in 1920, 3.5 per 100,000. For twelve cities of a half million or more population the 1920 rate is even more encouraging, only 2.8 per 100,000. New York City's rate was 2.4; and Chicago's 1.1 per 100,000. Of these larger cities Pittsburgh showed the greatest im-

provement, the typhoid death rate decreasing from an average of 65.0 per 100,000 for the period 1906-1910, to 2.7 in 1920. The rapid decline all over the country is attributed to the improved quality of our cities' water supplies, and to the increase in vaccination against typhoid.



RESTORATION of the devastated sections of France is progressing rapidly. So far the French government has spent 40,000,000,000 francs—about \$3,000,000,000—for this purpose. Ninety-nine per cent of the destroyed main-line railroads again are in operation, as are 65 per cent of the disrupted highroads, and 93 per cent of the damaged canals. Of the 3,600 bridges ruined in the course of the war, 2,200 have been rebuilt, and 78 per cent of the 277,000,000 cubic meters of trenches have been filled. Crops for 1920 were 50 per cent of prewar figures, as compared with 24 per cent in 1919.



VISITORS to New York City again may view one of the famous sights of the financial district. The gallery of the Stock Exchange, closed to the public since July, 1914, has been reopened. Visitors are welcome between two and three any afternoon, except Saturday or Sunday.



UNCLE SAM has eighty-three million dollars interest that he wants to pay to owners of temporary Liberty Bonds who have neglected to exchange their certificates for the permanent bonds with interest coupons attached. There are over seven million such temporary bonds, aggregating over a billion dollars, still in the hands of people who have neglected to change them for definitive bonds.



LAST year we exported 850,000,000 yards of cotton goods, valued at \$400,000,000; as compared with 326,000,000 yards, valued at \$51,000,000, in 1913.



IN 1920 divorces granted in England totaled 4,041, almost twice the number granted in 1919, nearly three times the number in 1918, and eight times the number in 1913. A special court has been organized to handle the congestion in cases of this character.



THE census of 1920 places the number of people of foreign birth in the United States at 13,703,987, an increase of 358,442, only 2.7 per cent, over 1910, or an average annual increase of 35,844 for the decade. If these aliens had distributed themselves equally in the forty-eight States, the annual increase of foreign born per State would have been only 747. Unfortunately they have not done this in the past, and a quarter of our alien population lives in New York State, and almost half of it in the States of New York, Pennsylvania, and Illinois. New York has the highest ratio of aliens to native born, 3.9 in every ten of population; and North Carolina the lowest, one in every 426 of population. There now seems to be an encouraging tendency to spread out among the newcomers, for of the twenty States in which the alien population increased in the last ten years, Arizona shows the largest rate of increase, 66 per cent, and Illinois the lowest rate—.2 per cent. New York State had an increase of only two per cent. Kentucky, with a decrease of 23.2 per cent, heads the list of twenty-eight States which lost in foreign-born population.



WE'VE often heard New York City called an ideal summer resort, but never a farming community. Yet there are 842 farms within the limits of the greater city. Five of these farms are in thickly populated New York County, which includes Manhattan Island. They total 138 acres, and land and buildings are valued at \$233,872. The 1920 principal crop harvest was 120 bushels of corn and three tons of hay. All of which seems to prove that you can find anything under the sun in "Bagdad on the Subway."

"The Whisky Bottle Baby"

By Robert McBlair

Author of "Apology Accepted," "Read 'Em and Weep," Etc.

"Fish" Kelly becomes a hero in spite of himself

IT was a bright day if you looked at the sun. But "Fish" Kelly was looking at the distinguished abdomen of his "light-complected" father-in-law. The abdomen was adorned by a gray vest across which was swung a heavy chain which looked like gold. Fish, who had no more fear of his father-in-law than he had of a man-eating Bengal tiger, knew that if he raised his popped eyes he would see a square belligerent face of light yellow, a cropped mustache, and a terrifying glare through a pair of rubber-tired spectacles. So he let his eyes stay where they were. Mr. Clinton was a lawyer, but to Fish he always had the unpleasant aspect of a justice of the peace. Not that Fish ever associated him with either peace or justice.

"You done los' yo' job at Mister Greenberg's delicatessen," Mr. Clinton snapped. "Don't interrupt me! You spends three hours a day eating me out of ham and chicken. An' you won't do nothin' when I asks you. Ain't you never had no raisin's? Or did yo' mammy drag you up by de scruff of de neck?"

Fish blinked his prominent eyes as an argument in rebuttal and pouted his long lips.

"I ain't no nurse," he muttered.

"You ain't no nothin', dat's what's de matter wid you," retorted the lawyer.

They were standing in the yellow sunshine before Mr. Clinton's neat, white clapboard house in Huntersville. Between them, in a white reed baby carriage covered with mosquito netting, Fish Kelly, junior, aged three months and the cause of all the fuss, lay calmly on his pillow, like an egg-shaped drop of ink, and sucked industriously on an empty rubber nipple.

"You know Macedonia got to help her ma in de kitchen," went on the father-in-law; "and you know dis baby ought to git some fresh air. An' you don't want to roll him,

'cause you say it ain't a man's job. Well, den, I'll give you a man's job. If you don't want to roll dis baby, den you brings me thirty dollars for dis month's board." Mr. Clinton's voice rose to a bellow. "I ain't gonna have no long, skinny, gloomy nigger settin' roun' my house eatin' all day, I don't care who he married."

For a wild moment Fish contemplated turning on his rundown heel and walking defiantly away. But his mind recalled the plump chicken that had been killed for dinner, and the fit of madness passed. He grasped the handle of the baby carriage and began pushing his offspring up the granolithic sidewalk, away from the more thickly settled colored residential district.

"Don't go dat way. It's too rough," commanded the grandfather.

Plotting murder, Fish wheeled the carriage and proceeded slowly in the direction of public ridicule and humiliation. He and Macedonia had moved out to the suburb of Huntersville to stay with Mr. and Mrs. Clinton a week or so before Fish, junior, was born. Now the grandparents looked with such adoration on their minute grandchild that Fish was afraid it would be a long time before he and his increased family might return to the peace and freedom of their room on Queen Street. But, for once, he was glad he was not on Queen Street. Out here he would stand less chance of being seen by any of his cronies.

But there were other things as bad. The day was Sunday, and the windows of the scattered unpainted dwellings seemed to be full of comely colored ladies. Fish had a weakness for desiring to shine before the opposite sex, and if his color had been any lighter than coal tar, he would have blushed rosily as he shuffled behind the conspicuous carriage. To his ears the air was full of imaginary titters. He pulled his black slouch hat farther down over the potato-like undu-

lations of his cranium, pouted his lips, blinked his eyes, and tried to forget his appearance by conjuring up complicated curses, on his father-in-law.

He had just finished wishing that Mr. Clinton would break a mirror, lose his rabbit's foot, and have his path crossed by a black cat, when his attention was diverted by rude shouts of laughter. At the street corner two of his friends, Lawyer Little and Ted Harpy, were clinging to each other in convulsions of mirth. Lawyer Little's greasy opera hat had slipped to the back of his conical head and his round bacon-colored face was creased with mirth and pain. He straightened and pressed his hands to his sides.

"Take him away," Lawyer gasped, his spherical body in the old, greenish, long-tailed coat shaking like jelly. "He's killin' me!"

"Miss Fish Kelly out fo' a walk wid her baby," chuckled the giant Ted, his shoulders gleaming through the tattered sleeves of his blue shirt.

Fish blinked, then grinned sheepishly. "What's matter wid you all?" he demanded. "You crazy?"

Lawyer took out a red and white handkerchief, wiped his eyes, and erased some of the shine from his countenance.

"Boy," he cried jovially, "what you doin' now? Done stop pushin' vegetables an' took to pushin' babies? Is dat it? Well, why not? He yo' baby, ain't he? He got to have some air, ain't he?" Lawyer was too kindly to keep up a jest too long. "How come you ain't down at Mr. Greenberg's?"

Fish grinned. "He fired me when he heerd 'bout de new sto'."

"Heerd 'bout what new sto'?"

"My new sto'," returned Fish, grinning more broadly.

"What's dis? What's dis?"

"Mr. Clinton he gwine set me an' Macedonia up in business. We gwine have a delicatessen lunch room all for our own selfs. How's dat?"

"Dat takes money," remarked Lawyer, much impressed.

"Sho' it do! Mr. Clinton gwine put a thousan' dollars into it. Say he want a business for little Fish, junior, when he grow up."

"Sho' mus' think a heap of dat chile."

"He think more of dis chile dan he do of his right eye," Fish expanded proudly.

"Dat's de reason I pushin' him now. De place whar we gwine have de lunch room ain't vacant till de first. Mr. Clinton say I got to push dis chile, else I got to pay board."

"You want to make some money?" asked Lawyer suddenly.

Fish sobered. He had had experience with Lawyer's schemes before. Lawyer, who lived by his wits, was splendid at invention but a little poor at execution. His schemes usually had an explosive quality that caused their participants to end up just one jump ahead of Police Officer Johnson. To say the truth, Lawyer had spent a total of no inconsiderable period as a guest of the city. In fact, his good health might justly have been attributed to an occasional month devoted to repairing the county roads. But every man, they say, has his price; and there were few things Fish would not have done at that moment to earn thirty dollars for board money.

"Sho' I wants to make some money," Fish replied. "But I don't want to git in no trouble."

"No trouble; no trouble at all," Lawyer hastened to assure him. "Just a little idea o' mine, an' you are 'zactly de man we need. Come on, let's go up to 'Hammer John's' new place an' talk it over."

They pushed Fish, junior, up the side street to a yellow shanty on the corner of a cluttered up lot. A bearded white goat, tethered to a stake, chewed on a sheet of tin and watched them gravely. Fish parked the baby carriage in the rear, where it could not be seen by a passing father-in-law, and entered the cool, moist interior of Hammer John's new place. They sat down at one of the three wooden tables, Lawyer called: "Three shots, Hammer;" and from a fragrant den at the rear Hammer John brought them teacups half filled with a cloudy, greenish fluid.

"Down wid liquor!" suggested Lawyer, and Fish swallowed his portion, which seared his throat like a hot iron.

"Double distilled," said Lawyer, smacking his lips. "A man's drink. Lissen here, Fish Kelly."

Lawyer's scheme, which he proceeded to unfold, had all the earmarks of an idea that had hatched in that crafty gentleman's mind: a scheme by which things were equally divided—his partners took the risks and he took the profits.

"Dey ain't no trouble sellin' dis stuff by de bottle," explained Lawyer. "Dat's easy. De trouble comes in gittin' it deliverd. Dey's taken to stoppin' trucks an' pushcarts an' everything. A cullud gemman ain't got no privacy, not even in his hip pocket."

He knocked on the table for another round of drinks.

"But I done hit on a fine scheme. I done bought me a pretty white baby carriage. Yas, suh. Look jes' like dat one o' yourn. Got white coverin's and a 'skeeter nettin'. Ain't no cop gwine lif' a baby's 'skeeter nettin' lookin' for liquor. Naw, suh!" Lawyer cackled loudly. "'Fraid he make dat baby cry, an' its ma she come out an' bus' a milk bottle on him. All you got to do," he said to Fish, "is push de baby carriage full o' liquor to de address I gives you. Officer Johnson ain't gwine ask *you* what you got."

Fish thought heavily. "S'pose he do?" he inquired.

"If he do, which he ain't, all you got to say is a tall, thin, cullud gemman give you a quarter to push de carriage to a place."

"S'pose he take me to jail."

"Dat's easy." Lawyer dismissed this with a wave of the hand. "Jes' tell it to de judge."

"S'pose de judge don't b'lieve me?"

"What's matter wid you?" snapped Lawyer, angered as was usual by Fish's superfluous logic. "You'd find trouble in Heaven! Does you want to make money or don't you?"

"How much does I git?"

"You gits a fourth of all de profits."

Fish pondered. "A fourth," he remonstrated. "An' I runs all de risk. How much is twice fo'?"

"Twice fo' is eight," answered Lawyer, frowning.

"A fourth ain't enough," Fish stated emphatically. "I ought to git twice dat."

"You git twice dat, an' I puts up all de money for de liquor!" cried Lawyer. "An' I furnishes de customers, too!"

"All right," said Fish. "I ain't anxious git in no trouble, nohow. You git somebody else. I ain't gwine push no liquor in a baby carriage 'less I gits a eighth of de profits, an' dat's dat."

"'Less you gits how much?" asked the astounded Lawyer.

"Dat's what I said. A eighth I gits, or I don't push nothin'."

Lawyer hid a grin behind his tilted teacup. He had not expected a windfall from Fish's weakness in mathematics. "All right," he assented magnanimously. "You gits a eighth, den. I wants my frien's to make money when I do. A frien' o' mine is a frien' o' mine."

The liquor, and this unanticipated financial success, fired Lawyer's imagination. He was used to dominating Fish, and he thought of putting him to further profitable uses. Half-formed ideas began scuttling round in his mind like rats in a garret. Of a sudden one of them became fully formed and leaped out into the conversation.

"You say Mr. Clinton think a heap of dat baby?"

"He think mo' of dat baby dan he do of his health," said the proud father.

"Have another drink," urged Lawyer, pushing his own cup across the table. "I'll be back in a minute." He waddled out to the rear of the building, where Ted Harpy had gone a few minutes before.

Fish drank Lawyer's drink and began to feel strong. The cobwebby room suddenly seemed beautiful. He rose to his tall, thin length, thrust a hand into his black vest, and began to sing in a high, quavery tenor:

"I got wings, you got wings,
All God's chillun got wings.
When we git to heaven gwine to 'just our wings
An' fly all over God's heaven—"

He was interrupted by a large, callous palm that clapped itself over his mouth. Hammer John was using language in his ear. "I jes' opened dis place 'cause dey run me out of downtown. You tryin' git me run out o' here, too?"

Fish, displeased at having his singing interrupted, impacted his fist against Hammer's flat nose. Hammer had grasped him by the neck and was on the point of annihilating him when Lawyer Little rushed up and, with some difficulty, interposed his bulk between them. He hastily led the still belligerent Fish out to the rear of the shanty and fastened Fish's hands to the handle of the baby carriage.

"Go home, 'fo' Hammer kill you."

"Hammer an' what army?" demanded the temporary lion, resisting.

"Time you took dat baby home, anyhow," added Lawyer, the tactician.

Fish, realizing that perhaps this was so pushed the baby carriage, which seemed to him somehow strange, down the incline to

the sidewalk. At the corner he turned to shake a farewell fist, and was surprised to see Lawyer Little's globular form waddling hurriedly in the opposite direction. Half a block in advance of Lawyer and just turning a corner he descried a white baby carriage. It had disappeared before he identified the man who pushed it.

"Maybe dat was me pushin' it," Fish murmured; then chuckled at the way his thoughts were twisted. He cocked a glassy eye at the sun. "Time dis baby was gittin' another bottle. Wisht I had some cloves."

He still more regretted the absence of the cloves when he saw Mr. Clinton awaiting him in front of the clapboard house, and he tried the expedient of holding his breath.

"How come you a half hour late?" snapped the thickset father-in-law, who was enjoying his Sunday by supervising the details of his household.

Fish let out his breath all at once and almost bowled Mr. Clinton over. "I was talkin' business wid a gemman."

"Yeah," snarled Mr. Clinton. "Your breath smells like business. It's a wonder my po' little gran'child ever got dis old wid such a father. Go in de house an' git dis baby's bottle."

Fish retrieved a nipples bottle of milk from its pan of warm water in the kitchen and delivered it to the grandparent. Mr. Clinton pushed back the wicker awning from the baby carriage and raised the mosquito netting.

"What's dis?" he demanded. "You got dis baby's head covered up?" He lifted the blanket—and then cried: "Whar's my baby? Whar's my little Fish?"

Fish leaned forward and looked into the carriage with mouth and eyes agape. In it lay merely a white blanket and an unfamiliar pillow. Mr. Clinton stripped it of the blanket and disclosed a brown, dispirited whisky bottle, uncorked and empty.

"Dis ain't my baby carriage!" shouted the infuriated grandparent. "You go git my baby 'fo' I kills you."

But, Fish, already on the way back to Hammer John's at a high rate of speed, turned the corner so fast that he skidded, and he appeared so suddenly over the edge of the incline that the white goat stood on its hind legs and bleated a bleat to the effect that it would sell its life dearly. But Fish was brought to an abrupt pause at

Hammer John's doorway, which was filled with Hammer John.

"Whar my baby!" panted the excited parent.

"Does I look like him?" asked Hammer unfeelingly. "Las' time I seen him you was pushin' him down de street. If he beat you back here, he's de fastes' movin' baby I ever seen."

"Don't projec' wid me, Mr. Hammer," Fish pleaded. "Mr. Clinton waitin' wid de bottle in his han' an' I ain't got no baby to fit to it."

"Is you really los' dat baby?" Hammer began to display some interest. "How come?"

"I jes' ain't got him—dat's all!"

"When de last time you looked in de carriage an' seen him?"

Fish pondered. "I ain't seen him to-day at all," he confessed. "But Mr. Clinton say he was in de carriage when he give de carriage to me."

"Den you don't know whar you los' him," announced the experienced Hammer. "He mought 'a' clumb over de back of de carriage an' crawled off into de weeds. Jes' de same as wid me an' my goat. I los' him an' I didn't know when or whar. But I foun' him easy enough."

"How you find him?" inquired Fish eagerly.

"Jes' put a advertisement in de paper. Dat'll fin' anything quick as a wink."

"Sho' 'nuff?" Fish grasped wildly at this straw.

"Right off," Hammer assured him. "Wait till I locks up an' I'll go wid you to see de cullud gemman what runs de *Clarion*."

A hurried walk of several blocks brought them to the ink-smeared shack that housed the *Clarion*, but the editor was out. A cinnamon-colored pickaninny, however, helped Hammer to find the issue in which his advertisement for the white goat had appeared, and deprived of the editor's literary guidance they were forced to use this as a pattern. After twenty minutes of great mental stress they left the following advertisement for insertion in the next issue:

LOST—One baby. Color, black. Markings, black. Size, very little. Answers to the name of Little Fish. When last seen was being pushed up Church Street by his father. Finder return to Mr. Clinton, Huntersville, and receive suitable reward.

Fish's generous feet shuffled more and

more slowly after he had parted from Hammer and came in sight of his thickset father-in-law who, baby bottle in hand, still waited beside the strange babyless baby carriage in front of the white, clapboard house. Mr. Clinton had been pacing up and down, and when he caught sight of Fish, empty-handed, he strode toward him.

Fish's knees turned to water, and his thoughts turned to prayer. Things had happened so rapidly since he took those drinks, he was only just beginning fully to realize that Little Fish was lost, and that he would be blamed. Unable to justify himself, he hastened to think up an excuse.

"Whar my baby?" shouted Mr. Clinton.

"What baby?" asked Fish, sparring for time.

"What?" Even the lawyer, experienced in repartee, lost his bearings at this sally.

"I means my gran'baby what I give to you jes' now in dat other baby carriage. Dat's what I mean."

"What other baby carriage?"

"Is you crazy?" demanded Mr. Clinton.

"Dat's de baby carriage you give me. I ain't had my han' off it."

"If you ain't had yo' han' off it, how dat baby git out widout you seein'?"

"Dey mus' warn't no baby in it."

Mr. Clinton put his hands on his hips and stared.

"Is you crazy or is me?"

"Well, I ain't," retorted the father. The hot sun was beginning to give effect again to the green lightning he had swallowed, and his African Irish began to rise. "You give me a baby carriage an' tole me to push it or not eat. I pushed it. I done my share. I didn't see no baby in it, when you give it to me."

Mr. Clinton was nonplused. He remembered now that he had found the covered carriage in the shade of the house, had rolled it from there to the sidewalk, and had then called Fish. He was not sure he had actually seen Little Fish in it.

Before the conversation could proceed further, the comely light-brown Macedonia, high-coiled hair gleaming in the sun, strolled from the house to inspect the feeding of her infant.

"Was Little Fish in the carriage?" Mr. Clinton asked her.

"Sho' he was."

"Den somebody done stole him," said Fish.

Macedonia looked from one to the other, then let out a scream that brought Mrs. Clinton's gray hair and gold spectacles to the window.

"Let's go inside and figure out what to do," suggested Mr. Clinton weakly, putting an arm round his daughter. In the parlor, Mrs. Clinton tried to calm Macedonia, who was on the verge of hysteria. Mr. Clinton sank heavily into a chair and Fish took a remote seat with a despondent conviction that Fate, as unusual, was laying a trap for him.

Macedonia had calmed sufficiently to demand the details from Mr. Clinton, when there came a ring at the doorbell. Fish stumbled over two chairs and returned with an envelope. As his education had never proceeded so far as reading and writing he turned the missive over to Mr. Clinton. And Mr. Clinton, in a voice of mingled fear and indignation, read the note aloud:

"Yore gran'baby will be returned safe an' sound if you put one thousan' dollars in the Lightning Stump at nine o'clock to-nite. If you tell the perleece, or try any funny tricks, yore baby's thoat will be cut from year to year and we will deliver his gizzard to you by return mail. Awaiting your reply we are respectfully the black hand."

Mr. Clinton passed the note to the trembling women. At the bottom of the penciled scrawl was a roughly drawn hand.

"Lawdy! Lawdy!" moaned Macedonia. But Mrs. Clinton, after reading the note, was less impressed.

"Some tricky nigger," she decided. "We ought to phone de police an' have 'em watch dat Lightning Stump all night. Den dey'd ketch him when he come for de money."

"But," objected her husband, "the letter say if we tell de police——"

"He ain't goin' commit no murder an' git hung for it," Mrs. Clinton interrupted.

"An' I ain't gwine take no chance on his doin' it, neither," snapped Mr. Clinton. "Dat baby is worth more dan a thousan' dollars to me."

"Lawd, yas!" chimed Macedonia.

"What I gwine do is dis," announced the lawyer. "I gwine put one thousan' dollars in real money in the stump, like he say. Den he can't have no excuse for doin' Little Fish no harm. An' I ain't gwine tell de police, 'cause he might have a frien' at de police station what would inform him of it."

"Dat's right," echoed Macedonia.

"You ought to tell de police," repeated Mrs. Clinton.

"Naw, suh," retorted Mr. Clinton. "Better let 'em have dat thousan' dollars I was gwine put in de lunch room for him when he growed up dan have de lunch room an' no Little Fish."

"Who brought dis note?" inquired Mrs. Clinton suddenly.

"A boy," said Fish.

"Would you know him if you seen him again?"

Fish pondered. "I didn't pay him no mind."

"Ain't dat jes' like dat good-for-nothin' nigger," cried the father-in-law. "Fish, you come outside. I got somethin' to talk to you 'bout."

Outside, Mr. Clinton, with a guarded look toward the house, murmured to Fish:

"Go up in de attic an' git my shotgun. Clean it good, an' put it behin' de storm door whar we can pick it up when we go out to-night. Put my pistol wid it. I'm gwine downtown an' git dat money an' git some shells for de shotgun. You be here when I git back, an' don't say nothin' to de ladies."

Fish, his eyes protruding with excitement, gloomily went indoors and climbed the stairs to the attic. To his mind the situation was getting less and less satisfactory. He had not the slightest yearning to exchange shots with any member of the Black Hand. His idea was to put the money in the Lightning Stump while there was yet some cheerful daylight, and then leave the stump as rapidly as might be. By the use of some finesse, however, he had managed secretly to cache the shotgun and pistol behind the storm doors before Mr. Clinton returned for dinner.

That meal was not a gladsome affair. Macedonia ate with an appetite increased by grief, but Fish was haunted by the fear that this meal might be his last; and Mr. Clinton brooded upon the intrinsic value of a thousand dollars. Only Mrs. Clinton seemed to have preserved a normal equanimity.

Time passed for Fish all too swiftly after dinner, for eight-thirty came and found him, with a revolver, and Mr. Clinton with a shotgun, walking along beneath the stars. Mr. Clinton's house was on the very frontiers of the suburb of Huntersville; and the Lightning Stump—a charred heaven-struck rem-

nant of a weeping willow—sat a mile away in the center of lonesome fields. The two unwilling adventurers soon had left the granolithic walk and were stumbling through tangled grasses. After twenty minutes of darkness and silence, during which Fish's blood had gradually become congealed with fear, the demonlike shape of the stump suddenly lifted its withered arms before them.

"Lissen." Mr. Clinton's usually strident voice had shrunk to a tremulous whisper. "I puts de money right here. See? Now you goes to dat big stump over dere an' lays down an' waits. I gwine hide over by dat little tree. Den we sees 'em either way dey come."

"How come we can't wait together?" inquired Fish, his teeth chattering.

It irritated Mr. Clinton for Fish thus to voice his own fear. "You do like I tell you," he snapped.

"Well, don't shoot 'less you see somebody."

"Why not?"

"'Cause when you shoot I runs," Fish announced. "An' I don't want to run 'less I has to, 'cause I might run into somebody."

"You got feathers on yo' legs, you chicken!" Mr. Clinton rasped.

"I ain't lookin' for no Black Han'," retorted Fish, trying to prolong the discussion so as to keep Mr. Clinton with him. "Not on a dark night like dis."

"You got a gun, ain't you?"

"You take both de guns an' let me go home," Fish suggested.

"You git over dere whar you belong!" Mr. Clinton aimed a kick at Fish, and that lean gentleman, preferring a deferred to an immediate danger, reluctantly moved away through the uncanny dark.

He came soon upon his post, beside the clay-crushed roots of an overturned chestnut, and lay down in the fresh fragrant odor of dewy grass. The darkness about him seemed to hide fierce, black men with phosphorescent eyes, each with a pistol pointed at his heart. The beating of his heart, Fish felt, could be heard a hundred feet away, and he had a creepy sensation that some one was on the other side of the overturned roots. He would have arisen and fled except he was afraid Mr. Clinton would mistake him for a kidnaper and fill him with buckshot.

The feeling that some one was on the other side of the tree roots became stronger and stronger. An unmistakably human,

probably colored and possibly familiar odor, seemed to touch his nostrils. He could stand the suspense no longer. With the noiselessness of a cat he crawled to where there was an opening, large enough for a man's body, between the overturned roots and the prone tree trunk. Through this he slowly projected his head and shoulders. Emerging on the other side, he peered behind the roots and saw no one. He was just turning to squint down the length of the tree trunk when something weighing about two hundred pounds fell on the back of his neck and squashed his face into the soft earth. Into his jolted and astounded mind came a hiss of warning.

"Keep still, Fish Kelly. Don't, I gwine cut yo' th'roat!"

The weight on his neck was released and Fish turned his protruding eyes upward. The face fitted the voice and the avoirdupois. It was Lawyer Little.

"Might as well cut it as scare me like dat." Fish crawled all the way through the hole and brushed off his face. "What you doin' here?"

Lawyer chuckled. "Me? I 'tends to git some money out of a stump."

Fish stared. "How did you know?" Then comprehension dawned on him. "Is you a Black Han'?"

"I'll say I is. An' I 'tends to fill my black han' wid money. Lissen. Did he put real money dere?"

"Real money, wid a picture on it an' everythin'," Fish assured him.

"Did he tell de police?"

"Naw, suh. He wanted dat chile's gizzard to stay whar it would do de mos' good."

"Lissen to me," said Lawyer. "Dis mornin' you an' me went in pardners, didn't we?"

"Yeah. I was to git one eight' of de profits."

Lawyer nudged him. "Is we still in pardners?"

Fish thought heavily. He was badly in need of thirty dollars for board money.

"We is in partners," he agreed, "but I got to have mo' of de profits."

"One eighth is plenty when I takes all de risks," Lawyer objected.

"All right den. We ain't in partners. You go git dat stump money; den I go git Mr. Clinton; an' den we go an' gits you."

Lawyer repressed his desire to do mur-

der. "How much does you want now?" he demanded.

"What's twice times eight?" asked Fish, whose mathematical powers didn't reach such heights.

"Sixteen."

Cupidity grew in Fish with the sense of victory. "How much is twice times sixteen?" he asked.

"Thirty-two."

"Den I gits one thirty tooth," announced the shrewd trader.

Lawyer tactfully hesitated. Then: "All right," he grumbled. "Now go out an' git dat money."

"Hold on," said Fish. "Whar's my baby?"

"He in his carriage right at de head of de street you live on, in a clump of bushes. I was gwine push him out of de bushes an' let de carriage roll right down de street by itself to yo' house. Now go git de money."

"First I gits my share," announced Fish, gloating upon his brief authority over Lawyer, who usually dominated him.

"You is de mos' unreasonable nigger!" cried the stout gentleman. "How I gwine pay you 'fo' I gits mine? How we gwine tell how much a thirty tooth is 'fo' we sees what's dere?"

"Dat's easy. You know how. A fo'th is fo' dollars, ain't it? A eight' is eight dollars, a sixteen' is sixteen dollars, an' a thirty-tooth is thirty-two dollars. An' dat's what I git 'fo' anything else happens."

Lawyer became desperate. He knew the futility of trying to reason with Fish after that potato-shaped black skull had once harbored an idea. He drew forth a wallet.

"Here's yo' thirty-two dollars," he snapped. "Now, will you go git dat money?"

Fish pocketed the bills. "Why should I go git it?" he asked. "It's yo' money. I got mine." He became alarmed at the animal-like sound of rage from Lawyer's throat. "Mr. Clinton right straight de other side dat Lightnin' Stump," he propitiated. "He can't see you if you keep low."

Lawyer, after a moment of cautious peering, took up his opera hat from where it lay on the grass and, bending over as far as the generosity of his figure would permit, made a bee line for the Lightning Stump and its treasure.

Fish watched him. His bulk had become all but indiscernible when suddenly near the Lightning Stump the darkness was pierced

by two arrows of flame accompanied by the reports of two revolver shots. Lawyer's globular figure became visible above the horizon as he leaped wildly into the air. Then with a sound like the roaring of a great wind he began returning toward Fish through the high grass with the speed of a deer. Two more shots rang out and again Lawyer leaped high as if vaulting the bullets. He passed Fish like a running cannon ball, and the diminishing noise of his retreat through the shrubbery was like the progress of a hurricane.

Behind Lawyer came pursuing footsteps and Fish experienced an unpleasant thrill of surprise at recognizing the dome-shaped helmet and wide shoulders of Officer Johnson. The policeman, not having Lawyer's incentive, made less speed through the underbrush, and nearly opposite Fish he tripped and fell. While he was struggling to arise another figure appeared on the scene. It was Mr. Clinton, who cried: "Fish! You, Fish!"

"Dis ain't Fish. Dis is Officer Johnson," said that worthy.

A horrible thought suddenly disturbed Fish in his contemplation of the scene. Lawyer had flown without the thousand dollars. What would now happen to Little Fish? Would the other Black Handers follow out their threat? Thoughtless of consequences he leaped up and dashed in pursuit.

He heard a yell behind him: "Dar another one!" There came the terrific *bang* of a shotgun and the as yet unscattered shot made unlovely music over his head. He ducked so suddenly he went forward on one shoulder, cutting his forehead on a rock, scratching his face and tearing his coat. He was on his feet in a flash, and his speed increased.

Mr. Clinton let go the other barrel but with no appreciable effect. "I missed him," he said to Officer Johnson in disappointment. "How many was dey?"

"I was fightin' wid six of 'em 'fo' you come up," said Officer Johnson. "Dat make seven. Well, dey gone now."

"Yes, dey gone," cried Mr. Clinton with heat. "'Cause you done scared 'em! Dey done lef' my thousan' dollars, but dey got my gran'baby! What you doin' buttin' in?"

"Mrs. Clinton, yo' wife, she ast me to," replied Officer Johnson with dignity.

"Ain't dat jes' like a woman," groaned the attorney. "Did she show you dat letter? Now dey ain't no tellin' what's gwine happen to my baby. Like as not dey'll kill him."

"Dat's right," Officer Johnson agreed. "I was readin' in de paper dis mornin' how some Black Handers in Chicago cut off a baby's two arms an' sent 'em home to its pappy."

"Is dat all you got to say," snapped Mr. Clinton, "after you done *cause*' de baby to be kilt?"

The offended policeman withdrew into a shell of silence and they tramped angrily homeward without further talk. When, still angry, they entered the sitting room of the Clintons' residence twenty minutes later, they were confronted by an astonishing spectacle.

In the ease of shirt sleeves Fish Kelly, his face cut up as though by a tremendous battle, even his shirt torn, was eating freshly fried ham and eggs off the best parlor table, and being waited on by no less a person than Mrs. Clinton herself. Seated beside him was Macedonia, and in her arms, his long lips fastened upon a full bottle of milk, lay "Little Fish" Kelly, junior, as lively and as pert and as black as ever.

"Oh, poppa!" cried the radiant Macedonia. "Ain't Fish wonderful? He had a big fight and took Little Fish away from 'em all by hisself."

"How many men was you fightin'?" inquired Officer Johnson professionally.

"Seben," said Fish, his mouth full of egg.

Mr. Clinton sank into a near-by chair. The truth of the matter was that Fish had merely found the baby carriage in a clump of bushes at the head of the street and had rolled it home. But Mr. Clinton, neither then nor even after, was aware of that, and the correspondence in numbers between the men Fish and Officer Johnson had fought was convincing. He sat and gazed at his son-in-law with frank admiration.

Later that night, in the darkness and privacy of his bedroom, Fish looked up at the ceiling and allowed his soul to expand. A hero, with a month's board money in his pocket. No work, no rolling of baby carriages, for thirty days.

"Settin' pretty!" said Fish to himself, and fell asleep grinning.

The Blue Room

By William Hamilton Osborne

Author of "Skinny's Sanctuary Suds," "The Talk of the Town," Etc.

That incipient lawyer, Perry Wendell, rediscovers
the old adage about there being strength in union

TERRY WENDELL sat at a desk in the writing room of the Young Men's Club in River City, late one afternoon, when a man named Thatcher tapped him lightly on the shoulder. Thatcher was a River City manufacturer. He owned the hoisting engine business that bore his name. He was a young man, a rapid-fire man, a big man. What is more, he looked the part. He was a very classy gentleman, indeed.

"Wendell," said Thatcher, fumbling in the breast pocket of his coat and bringing forth an envelope, "highway robbery. I don't care who hears me say it. That's what your concern has charged me for their last six months' work."

Terry Wendell opened up the envelope. It contained an unpaid bill. The bill was a bill for legal services rendered by Cowen, Covington & Black, leaders of the River County bar. Terry Wendell blinked his eyes as he looked it over. It was highway robbery. That much was clear. He folded the bill up, returned it to its envelope and handed it back to Thatcher. Then Terry Wendell shrugged his shoulders.

"Not guilty," returned Terry Wendell. "I'm not employed by Cowen any more."

"Employed," echoed Thatcher, "I thought you were a member of the firm."

"Glad you thought so," replied Terry.

"Your name was on their letterhead," persisted Thatcher. He was a very observing gentleman, this man. But Terry Wendell only shook his head.

"Concession to a young man's vanity," he said. "I was on a salary basis all along."

"What are you doing now?" demanded Thatcher.

"I've hung my shingle out," said Terry.

"In business for yourself?" demanded Thatcher.

"That's me."

Thatcher held out his hand. "Give me a couple of your cards," he said.

"Now, wait a bit," said Terry Wendell. "I'm in business for myself, all right, but I'm not in the business of enticing any clients away from Cowen, Covington & Black."

"You're not enticing me," retorted Thatcher; "I tell you that I'm through with Cowen, Covington & Black. And if I can't come to you, why, then, I'll go to some one else."

Terry Wendell handed him a business card. And eventually Thatcher came to Terry Wendell. He breezed into Terry's office at three o'clock one afternoon. He came without warning, and he came not alone. With him were two other hard-mouthed, well-dressed business men. Their advent was wholly unexpected, and it occurred at an unpropitious time.

Grindstone & Greene were lawyers with offices in the Melrose Building. Grindstone & Greene were cheap, aggressive, blatant. But they were successful, too. Terry Wendell's name was lettered on their door—this was the shingle that Terry had hung out. Terry was subletting from Grindstone & Greene a private room. A cubby-hole of a room it was, furnished with a battered desk, three ill-mated chairs, a disreputable, discarded filing case or two, and a second-hand typewriter. Terry gritted his teeth every time he entered his private office. For the use of this office and for a part interest in their stenographer and office boy, he was paying Grindstone & Greene a hundred a month.

When Thatcher and his two companions entered the arena of events that afternoon Terry was seated in his office. His door was closed. More than that, his door was locked. Behind this locked door Terry Wendell was engaged in the performance of a menial task which every struggling young lawyer finds

it necessary to perform, but which he struggles to perform in secret. Terry was hammering out law work on his secondhand machine. Every time he did it he blushed with shame. The actual work was nothing to him. He was a born typist. The keys of his machine were as the keys of a piano to a composer—he could think well with his fingers on the keys. But not in business hours. The fear of discovery numbed his faculties, crippled his professional style.

Terry was still banging away at his machine when Thatcher pounded imperiously upon the door. Terry stopped writing. Hastily he dragged a cover over the machine. He slammed three law books upon his desk and opened them at random.

"Come in!" he exclaimed.

Thatcher rattled the doorknob. "Can't get in," returned Thatcher. Terry sprang to the door and drew back the latch.

"Boy must have sprung the lock," said Terry.

"Nobody to stop us," said Thatcher crisply. "We came down the line until we spotted your name on the door."

Terry swung his own revolving chair into the middle of the room. "Sit down, gentlemen," he said, "I'll get another chair."

It took him an appreciable length of time to get it. During the interval his three visitors remained standing, as men will. When Terry got back, dragging the chair behind him, Thatcher was scowling. He was still scowling as he took his seat. Thatcher's seat happened to be Terry's swivel chair. This chair, under Thatcher's vigorous treatment, tilted too far back. And Thatcher scowled some more. But he got down to business, nevertheless.

"Wendell," said Thatcher, "these gentlemen take the midnight train for Seattle. They've been here three days. I've finally convinced them that it will pay them to do business with me and that it will not pay them to do business with anybody else. We've just got down to cases—we've arranged details at lunch. Do you remember the contract I had with the Jersey Coast Docks people a year or so ago?"

Terry remembered it very well indeed. He had drafted it, himself, for Cowen, Covington & Black. But he said nothing of all that to Thatcher. That contract was supposed to be one of Cowen's masterly creations.

"Cowen," went on Thatcher, "has got my

only copy, Wendell. Give me a blank piece of paper. I'll sign an order for it. You can send a boy over to Cowen, Covington & Black. We want to use that contract as a model."

Terry nodded. "I'll get the boy," he said.

He pushed a button on his desk and waited. There was no response. He pushed the button twice, thrice, many times, with no result. He rose and stepped outside. There was no boy to be seen. Terry tapped on Greene's door. Greene was in, and Terry made an inquiry.

"Sent him to the courthouse to copy off a deed," said Greene.

Terry went back to his cubby-hole. He gulped and held out his hand. "Give me that order," he said to Thatcher, "I'll go over to Cowen's myself and get that copy of the contract."

"My Lord, no," said Thatcher, "I don't want Cowen to know that I've come to you to get my business done. It's none of his affair."

"Right," said Terry, "but my boy is out. I'll ring for a messenger."

"Not so you can notice it," said Thatcher, "the boy that takes this message has got to be coached." Thatcher's scowl deepened. But he dug down into his pocket and brought some sort of document to the surface. "One of our Boston contracts," he said to Terry, "good as far as it goes. You can use it for a model."

"I know this contract, too," nodded Terry, looking it over. He seized a pencil and a yellow pad. "If you gentlemen will tell me what you want," he said, "I'll fix you up."

"Better get your stenographer in here," suggested Thatcher, "there'll be a lot of pro and con before we get the thing boiled down."

Terry, gulping some more, rang for his stenographer. And no reply. "Excuse me just a moment," he apologized. Once more he departed, leaving them fuming and fretting in the cubby-hole. He stole down the inner corridor and knocked on Grindstone's door. Grindstone was in. Grindstone was busy with Miss Graham. Miss Graham, her face very much flushed and her eyes apologetic, stammered her explanation to Terry Wendell.

"I heard you ring, Ter—Mr. Wendell," she assured him, "but Mr. Grindstone was dictating. I didn't get a chance to answer."

Grindstone turned impatiently to the intruder. "Well, what is it now?" he demanded testily.

"How soon," queried Terry, "are you likely to be through?"

He addressed his question to the girl, but Grindstone answered. "I've got a week's work here that I must get off," said Grindstone.

Terry explained the circumstances. He explained the importance, the urgency of the matter that he had in hand. He might as well have addressed himself to a stone wall. Grindstone brushed the appeal aside with a flick of his finger. He settled back into his chair.

"Read me that last sentence, Miss Graham," he commanded.

Miss Graham did not read the last sentence. She started up and grasped the desk telephone. "Mr. Wendell," she said, "there's a stenographic bureau in this building—"

"Let him get it," grunted Grindstone; "that's his business. Read me that last sentence, *please*."

Terry called up the public bureau in the building. No go. It was too late in the afternoon. Their people were all rushed. He called up two others in the vicinity. And again without result. Beaten, he went back to his cubby-hole like a galley slave at night, scoured to his dungeon. He explained some more.

"Now, look here," he continued desperately, "if you gentlemen will give me the details, and will go about your business for about an hour, I'll have these contracts ready for you when you get back."

Thatcher, with ill grace, gave him the details. He did it in a hurried, furtive manner. It did not take him fifteen minutes. At the end of that time the three men rose and bowed and left.

"In one hour, gentlemen," said Terry Wendell.

The instant they were gone, Terry once more locked his door. This sort of thing was regular old pie for him. He ate it up. For fifty minutes he beat out the old familiar clauses on his old machine. He dashed into the building of this contract with inspirational fervor. He made it a better contract than the Boston contract, a better one than the Jersey Coast Docks masterpiece had been. This was a job that he was wholly fitted for. Within the hour he had four

fair copies of the contract, all neatly backed and fastened.

He was just finished when there came a knock upon his door. Terry sprang to open it. He fell back, disappointed. The office boy was there.

"She said that you was looking for me," said the boy.

Terry snatched up the written order that Thatcher had left upon the desk.

"Buddy," he directed, "take this to Cowen, Covington & Black. Show it to anybody there. Tell 'em you come from Mr. Thatcher—there's his name. Tell 'em that and nothing else. Bring back the paper that they give you and do it right away."

He closed his door once more. He slumped into his desk chair. He started to read over the contract he had just prepared. He had finished three pages when there was another knock. This time he was ready to take on all comers.

"Walk right in, gentlemen," he cried. He was elated. He was in an exalted state of mind. He had done a good job and he knew it for the thing it was.

The door opened once again. The gentlemen did not come in. Somebody else did. Miss Graham entered—the stenographer.

"Thatcher out there, Molly?" queried Terry Wendell.

"Nobody's out there," returned the stenographer, "and Mr. Grindstone's gone. Terry, when you rang, he was dictating nothing to me, just nothing. That stuff could have waited for a week, Terry, it's a ghastly shame."

"All over now," laughed Terry, "shut the door, Molly, and come in. I want to tell what I roped this afternoon."

He was still telling when there was still another knock upon the door.

"Stay where you are, Molly, girl," he whispered, "I've got to show these chaps that some of my surroundings are high class, at any rate."

Somebody pushed into the little cubby-hole. It was not "these chaps." It was Buddy, the office boy. Buddy was chagrined, indignant.

"They didn't give me nothing," explained Buddy, "they told me that this Mr. Thatcher was there, then. They told me he'd attend to it, himself."

"Good work," said Terry, "he'll bring it with him when he comes."

But Thatcher did not bring it with him.

And Thatcher did not come. Terry, fuming, waited until five o'clock; he waited until half past five. Not a word from Thatcher. Terry called up the hoisting-engine plant. No Thatcher; he had left for the day some hours before. He called up Thatcher's clubs. No Thatcher there. He crept miserably into the outer office. Molly Graham was still at work on her machine. Terry told her all about it.

"Wait until six and call up his home," suggested Molly.

But Thatcher was not home. At least that was what they said to Terry Wendell. Terry rang off. Molly was ready with a common-sense suggestion.

"If those two men are going to take the train to-night," she said, "Thatcher will want them to sign up before they go. You'd better send those papers up to Thatcher's house. Mark them 'Important,' on the envelope. He can't go wrong. There's six hours left between now and twelve o'clock."

"I'll take them to his house myself," said Terry.

He did. He left two copies of the contract at Thatcher's big place on Chatham Road. With them Terry left a note telling Thatcher where he could be found. He kept the other two copies in his pocket, to answer the purpose in case the three men should look him up at the club. He spent the evening there. He went home at half past twelve. No Thatcher. No message on the telephone.

Terry did not get a chance at Molly until lunch next day. Then he told her all there was to tell.

"You know just what this means?" said Terry.

"What?" returned the girl.

"You know," persisted Terry, "it means—the throw-down. And for just one reason. Thatcher didn't like the layout here. He's gone back to Cowen, Covington & Black. Cowen has done this job for him. And made a mess of it, I'll wager."

Terry was exactly right. That very thing had happened. Thatcher had gone back to Cowen. Cowen, smarting still under Thatcher's erstwhile denunciation of him as a highway robber, had found it wise to attend in person upon Thatcher and the two magnates from the Pacific coast. Cowen, who never worked under whip and spur when he could avoid it, found himself working under whip and spur now. He turned out the new contract in a jiffy. It had to be

done that way or not at all. Thatcher had signed the contract. He had as much faith in Cowen's legal ability as he had in Cowen's legal skill in charging for advice and services. Cowen chalked up five hundred dollars against Thatcher and called it a day. The Pacific coast men were free to take their train. Thatcher went home.

He was home, as a matter of fact, when Terry called him up. He had not answered because he did not know just what to say. Thatcher was home when Terry left the two copies of the contract at his house. At first Thatcher regarded Terry's overofficiousness as a piece of impudence. Later in the evening, however, he had sufficiently cooled off to allow his curiosity to work. Thatcher wondered vaguely what kind of a contract this young Wendell had turned out. He picked up Terry's draft and read it. He grunted as he did so. Terry's contract was more than water-tight. It was air-tight as well. Thatcher turned to Cowen's masterpiece of the afternoon. Cowen's contract was generously full of holes. And Cowen's contract had been signed. The die was cast.

Thatcher sat down that night and wrote a brief, high-class note to Terry, telling him that his Seattle men had kicked over the traces and had declined to come to terms, and that the whole deal was irremediably off. He thanked Terry, nevertheless. He inclosed with his note a check for ten dollars to pay Terry for his trouble.

Terry showed the check to Molly Graham.

"Now, Molly," went on Terry, "this is a fine illustration of the thing that I've been up against—of the thing I'm going to be up against for many a long year to come. I dropped a good salary at Cowen, Covington & Black's——"

"Because I told you to," returned the girl.

"Because you told me to—having more faith in me than I've got in myself," said Terry, "and because I was chasing the ultimate objective——"

"The ultimate objective being——" interposed the girl.

"To make enough for two," said Terry.

"Terry," cried the girl, "you haven't used such sentimental language for a week."

"Probably not," returned Terry with a doleful grin, "if not, it's because the ultimate objective has got me winded. It's a will-o'-the-wisp, Molly. It's got me beat. It keeps dancing always on ahead."

"Man, dear," pleaded Molly, "can't you

ever exercise a little patience, now and then?"

"Where's the incentive to be patient?" returned Terry with a boyish grunt; "how many more years do you think I'm going on like this? Listen, Molly; the money-making business, the kind of business I can handle, the kind I want, the kind I've got to have—is Thatcher's kind of business. If I get one paying job from Thatcher, I'll get a score a year. He's got business. He controls business. He can turn a dozen River City men my way."

"You'll get him in the end," the girl reassured him, "you just watch out and see."

"I won't get him in the end—I can't get him in the end," persisted Terry, "because we can't look each other in the eye. Not after yesterday. The thing's a farce. Listen, Molly. Yesterday this man Thatcher was after just one thing. He wanted a contract that would sew those Seattle men up tight. That's all he wanted. Nothing else. I am the man to draw that contract. I can deliver the goods. Thatcher needs me in his business. I need Thatcher in my business. Thatcher comes to me. We meet. What happens? Thatcher walks right in and turns around and walks right out again. Now, why?"

"There's just one reason. I haven't got the means to set the stage, to dress the part, to bait the trap. Five thousand a year wouldn't provide me with an outfit that will go with Thatcher's kind. When am I going to have five thousand a year to spend on my family, when I get one, let alone spending that money on my office?"

"Cowen, Covington & Black have got a fifty-thousand-dollar plant—I was part of it myself. When Thatcher steps into their outer office three girls jump up to wait upon him. When he gets to Cowen's private room, all Cowen has to do is to press a button—the office does the rest. Not one of these things does Thatcher any good. He knows it. They merely figure in the bill. If Thatcher comes to me I can hammer out for Thatcher on my secondhand machine a better product than Cowen ever dreamed of drafting. And it's that contract, nothing but that contract, that Thatcher wants. And yet, the whole thing is all off."

"The instant Thatcher came into the office, yesterday, something hit him; hit him hard. Shame. He was ashamed of himself, ashamed to drag those two big dock

men from Seattle into the layout that I've got. And there you are. Thatcher's all right. I'm all right. But I've lost him—irretrievably. Why? Because my own surroundings, all of them—everything save you—are cheap and small and mean."

"I warned you against Grindstone & Greene," the girl reminded him.

Terry shrugged his shoulders. "I'm there for just two reasons, Molly," he returned. "Whither thou goest I will go. I want to be with you. That's the first reason. The second reason, in your estimation, may be more to the point. I sized up almost every vacancy in River City before I came to Grindstone. I can't get anything anywhere in town as good as he gives me for the money. It's the best that I can do."

"That's why I went to Grindstone," nodded Molly; "it was the best that I could do myself. That firm is making money. They pay me twice the salary that old Judge Elkins did."

"And they make you do four times as much. Why do you let 'em do it?"

The girl's eyes moistened. Impulsively she placed a warm hand over Terry's. "Because," she faltered, "I want to save some money for the same thing that you're saving it yourself."

Terry indulged himself in another boyish grunt. "I'm not saving any," he returned. "I'm in business for the benefit of a clothing store in town here, a boarding-house keeper of my acquaintance, a club, and Messrs. Grindstone & Greene. They get it all. You're working like a slave and getting somewhere. I'm getting nowhere. It's a nice outlook for both of us. Particularly for me."

The girl tapped Terry's hand again. "The worst of it is," she said, "I can't seem to help you out. I'm not resourceful, Terry. I'm not like you—not clever."

"Me—clever. Ye gods," gasped Terry Wendell.

"I got you into all this," went on the girl. "I did it because I knew that you could work it out somehow. I know you will work it out, Terry. But I can't work it out for you, Terry. I wish I only could." Her grip tightened on his hand. "Listen, Terry," she exclaimed, "you and I just mentioned my old boss, Judge Alexander Elkins. Terry, I've been up against it many, many times—problems of my own I couldn't solve. No thoroughfare—that sort of thing. I've

always gone to Judge Alexander Elkins. The judge has always helped me through. Terry, do one thing for me. Go to Judge Elkins."

"That poor old duffer," replied Terry indulgently, "he's got too many troubles of his own."

"He's always had troubles of his own—and troubles of everybody else's," said the girl; "he's an expert in troubles of all kinds. Go to him, Terry."

Terry Wendell shook his head. "Dead wood," he said; "you had to leave Alexander Elkins because he couldn't pay you a living wage. He's in a worse fix than I am. What can a man like him have to say to me."

"You go to Alexander Elkins, Terry," persisted the girl. "Talk the whole thing over with him."

Terry nodded. "I'll talk the whole thing over with somebody—but not the judge," he said. "Before I'm twenty-four hours older I'll know just where I stand."

Before he was twenty-four hours older he did know just where he stood. Five minutes after he left Molly Graham that afternoon he went around the corner to call on Willoughby.

Willoughby was as far removed from dry rot as any man could be. He was a middle-aged practitioner—a live wire of the new school. He had the kind of office and the kind of business that Terry Wendell would have given ten years of his life to get. Willoughby was in, he was at leisure, he was friendly, and he was willing to talk. He liked Terry. Terry asked a few impertinent questions that were, however, pertinent and to the point.

"No trouble to show goods," said Willoughby pleasantly. "Last year was just about an average year with me—I took in twenty thousand dollars."

"Ye gods," said Terry, "that's the kind of talk."

"Out of that," smiled Willoughby grimly, "I paid twelve thousand dollars in office expense. That leaves eight thousand for my family and me."

"Eight thousand dollars is money," returned Terry.

Willoughby nodded. "It's money," he conceded. "I've been practicing law for twenty years. I'm satisfied with what I've earned save for that one thing—I don't get one mouthful to eat until I've paid twelve thousand dollars out. I can't help it, though. I've got a business that involves

a mass of detailed work. Terry," he said suddenly, "you've got something on your mind."

Terry had much on his mind. He eased himself of it—he told Willoughby what had happened just the day before.

Willoughby laughed sympathetically. "Terry," said Willoughby, "it was in the panic of 1893 that I made up my mind to become a professional man. I chose a profession because business men all around the city were going bankrupt. I went into the law because Judge Alexander Elkins told me to. He said a lawyer could get along with no expense. He said that if a man could find a hook to hang his hat on, he could practice law. That was back in 1893. Now I'm spending twelve thousand dollars before I get a dollar for myself."

"What's the answer?" demanded Terry.

Willoughby smiled an insinuating smile. "Father leave you any money, Terry?" he inquired.

Terry shook his head.

"Not married, are you?" queried Willoughby.

"Willing to be," said Terry.

"Terry," went on Willoughby, "you're a bright boy. I know you. I've seen you work. You've got the makings of a great, resourceful practitioner in you. I can see you one of the biggest lawyers in this town. But you've got to take advice."

"That's what I'm here for, isn't it?" smiled Terry.

"There's but one solution to your problem, Wendell," went on Willoughby, "only one—and a very pleasant one. You've got to marry a rich wife."

"Marry a rich wife?" echoed Terry, aghast.

"Exactly," returned Willoughby.

"But——" protested Terry.

Willoughby took out his watch. He had some people waiting for him. "But—nothing!" retorted Willoughby; "you came here for advice. You've got it. It's the very best advice I've got to give. Good day."

Terry went to Johnny Barton's office. Johnny's office was in the Mutual Building. It was a small office with but one window in it. It was subdivided by a partition into two small rooms. Johnny's private room was where the window was. A busy young girl sat at a typewriter in the outer room, bathed in a glow of artificial light. The whole thing to Terry seemed quite unimpressed.

sive. As a matter of fact, this looked like failure rather than success.

"Mr. Barton's out," the girl told Terry with the air of one repeating a set formula; "he's at the county clerk's office when he isn't here. He's always here before nine-thirty in the morning and after four-thirty in the afternoon. Will you kindly leave your name."

"It's of no consequence," said Terry. He started out. He did not get farther than the door. Johnny Barton in the flesh came swinging in. He dragged Terry into the inner room.

"Thought you were always out except before and after," said Terry.

"Just finished a big, hard title," said Johnny, wiping his brow, "so I called it a day and quit."

"I don't see what you need an office for," said Terry.

"Every lawyer's got an office, hasn't he?" said Johnny Barton.

"If you don't mind telling me——" began Terry, and forthwith sprang upon Johnny Barton his line of very objectionable cross-examination. To Johnny it was, however, in nowise objectionable. Johnny, in fact, seemed very glad to talk about the thing. He scowled fiercely as he jotted down some figures on his pad.

"There's the story, old man," said Johnny Barton; "this year it stands me in twenty-three hundred and fifty dollars, plus incidentals—say twenty-five hundred over all. That's this year, mind. Next year—who can tell?"

"More?" queried Terry.

"Oh, of course, more—it's always more," said Johnny Barton.

"How long have you been in the business?" queried Terry.

"My boy," said Johnny Barton, "I've been right here for seven years."

"Got any children?" queried Terry.

"Children," cried Johnny Barton in despair; "lead me to them. You ornery cuss, you don't suppose a man in my circumstances can get married, do you? I've got to support that young lady in the outside office. How in thunder can I support anybody else?"

"Seven years," mused Terry. "Jacob served seven years to get Leah, didn't he?"

"He served twice that long to get the girl he wanted," grunted Johnny Barton; "that seems to be my case."

Terry left Johnny Barton's office in a muddled frame of mind. He did not like Johnny Barton's office for a cent. He would not have held a dog fight there. Yet Johnny Barton, with more or less of a contented grin upon his countenance, was paying out twice the money that Terry paid Grindstone & Greene. Terry walked twice around one block, in an unsuccessful attempt to get one encouraging feature out of his afternoon's experience. He found himself, suddenly, in front of the old Taylor Building on Maiden Lane. The Taylor Building was the oldest office building in the town. It looked it. Its very atmosphere breathed senile decay. Terry hesitated for a moment before the entrance.

"Oh, well," he thought to himself, "I may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb."

He strode through the dingy hall and took the elevator to the top floor. On the top floor, in the rear of the building, were the offices of Judge Alexander Elkins. Terry swept into the judge's outside office. There was no one there. He pressed on, into the judge's spacious private room. There was no one there. He passed on, into the judge's library.

There, in the library was Judge Alexander Elkins. He was seated at one end of a long mahogany table, whose top was covered with green billiard cloth. Judge Elkins was alone. Before him on the table was an open law book. His head was resting on the back of the easy-chair in which he sat. The judge was fast asleep.

Terry tiptoed to the window, took a seat, and looked about him. He had been in this library twenty times before, but he had retained no mental picture of it. Now, its proportions, its atmosphere, appalled him. It was a huge apartment, with three big windows in it. Its four walls were lined with law books. It was carpeted in green. It was well furnished in old mahogany—old and scarred and weather-beaten.

Terry stole back into the other rooms. He looked the whole place over. He drew a long breath. It seemed to Terry as though everything, the judge included, had been there for a hundred years. The office reeked with legal atmosphere. David Belasco would have lifted this law library bodily to the stage of a metropolitan theater—would have made a hit with it. It was ideal for the private chambers of a vice chancellor. It was a picture. It was a dream.

Yet, just as it stood it meant dead wood, dry rot.

Terry crept into the library once again and woke Judge Elkins up.

Alexander Elkins was, perforce, a shabby old man. He was a dignified old man, a kindly old man. He possessed a distinguished and distinctive personality. For all the tide of affairs had passed him by, his eye still kindled with fire and pride and youth. Had he been a canny politician, this man would still have been upon the bench.

He listened carefully to all that Terry Wendell had to say and smiled indulgently. He shrugged his shoulders.

"You have no troubles, my young friend," he said, "your life lies all ahead of you. But look at me. My clients have died off. I have upon my hands this expensive suite of offices——"

"Do you mind telling me how expensive?" interposed Terry.

"More than the traffic will bear, my dear young friend," returned the judge, "nine hundred dollars is more than I can well afford to pay."

"Nine hundred," gasped Terry, "you mean nine thousand."

"Five years ago," went on the old gentleman, "they forced me up to nine hundred dollars a year. And they forced me to sign a five years' lease. That is not all. My lease expires next May. Then what? The superintendent tells me that they will demand two thousand dollars for this suite."

Terror shone from the old man's eyes as his mind dwelt upon this iniquity. "It is prohibitive," he went on, "and I don't know what to do. Where can I go? What shall I do with all my law books—all my furnishings? I suppose," he went on miserably, "this is the way that old lawyers peter out. I suppose this is the end."

It was late that afternoon when Terry Wendell reached his office. Molly Graham was alone and hard at work. She was tired, too. There were dark rings under her eyes. She started as Terry swung up to her desk.

"Terry," she cried, "you're a different-looking man."

"Why not," smiled Terry. "I did just what you told me to. I've had a lengthy talk with Alexander Elkins."

"And Alexander Elkins told you what to do."

"Not so you can notice it," said Terry; "he had no advice to give me. He's in a

worse fix than I am. He wanted me to give him some."

"Something has happened," persisted the girl.

"Right," nodded Terry, "Judge Elkins and myself are going to form a partnership."

The girl's face fell. "Terry," she cried, "the old man has no business."

"So he told me," returned Terry.

"He has no money," said the girl.

"He also told me that."

"You were right about him," went on Molly Graham. "Dry rot. Dead wood. He's a fine old man, but he's all in. I'm telling you the truth."

"On your head be it," smiled Terry blandly; "you sent me to him, and I went."

"It's not too late to back out," said the girl.

"No," said Terry.

"Then back out," said the girl.

"I haven't gone in yet," laughed Terry, "I merely said I was going to form a partnership with the judge. I shall, too, if he'll let me. So far I haven't told him. Poor old boy, it's the one thing left for him to do."

"Terry, are you crazy?" demanded the girl.

"Merely altruistic," returned Terry, "I'm going to give the old man what he wants."

Naturally it took some preparation to give the old man what he wanted. Terry started in next day. He gave Grindstone & Greene formal written notice that his arrangement with them would terminate on the first of the following May.

"And," Terry said to Grindstone, "I'd like to take Miss Graham with me, too."

"Miss Graham," nodded Grindstone, "will stay here."

She did stay there, till June 15th, the day on which her year was up. Once free, Molly went around the corner to the Taylor Building, to take charge of the varied interests of the ill-mated firm of Elkins & Wendell. She was glad to do it. To her, it seemed like going home.

She found six names done in gold lettering on the judge's door. Three of these names she knew. The other three she failed to recognize. She pushed on into the outer room. Johnny Barton's little clerk, Miss Spies, was sitting at a desk. At another desk in the same room sat a callow—and very likely callous—youth, who was doing nothing and doing it exceeding well. Miss Spies

bore down upon Molly with wide open arms and kissed her vehemently upon her left cheek.

"There's your desk, Miss Graham—with the flowers," babbled Miss Spies. Molly sank into her old chair at her old desk in her old corner. She felt really overpowered. But Miss Spies kept gayly on.

"Mr. Upson—one of our bosses," said Miss Spies, introducing the youngster at the desk; "you'll find his full name on the door."

Mr. Upson came over and shook hands. "Glad to have somebody to help me repress this irrepressible," he said to Molly with a jerk of his head toward Johnny Barton's little girl.

Miss Spies dragged Molly into the inside office that once had been Judge Alexander Elkins' private room.

"Mr. Cairns and Mr. Jackson use this office," said Miss Spies.

"Where's Mr. Cairns?" demanded Molly.

"He's here only in the mornings," said Miss Spies.

"And Mr. Jackson?"

"He's here in the afternoons. As a matter of fact, they've both gone out to lunch."

The judge was in the library. He was fast asleep. "This," said Miss Spies, "is Mr. Barton's room."

"Oh, it is, is it?" returned Molly Graham; "where is Mr. Barton, then?"

Miss Spies swung into play her sing-song formula. "He's only here before nine-thirty in the morning and after four-thirty in the afternoon. He's at the county clerk's office if you want to see him now." She came near asking Molly if she would kindly leave her name.

"The judge gets here late," mused Molly.

"And leaves early," said Miss Spies.

"And Mr. Wendell?" queried Molly, with the air of one who has the right to know.

Miss Spies dismissed Terry with a shrug of her young shoulders. "Oh, Mr. Wendell's never here," she said.

"Oh, he isn't, isn't he?" said Molly.

She went back to her desk. Miss Spies went to lunch. Mr. Upson had already disappeared. Molly swiftly put her desk in order. She smiled to herself as she did so. She was beginning to understand something of Terry Wendell's altruism. Terry's fine Italian hand was quite apparent. He had picked this crowd with thought and care. She stole into the judge's room and touched

the judge upon the shoulder. The old man woke up with a start.

"My dear, dear child," he cried.

Molly Graham came near hugging him. She wiped her nose. The old man wiped his eyes. He nodded with a sprightly air, however.

"You must see to it that I stay awake, my dear," he said. "I have much to do. I shall have more. I have a case to try this week for our young confrère, Mr. Barton here. I expect, ultimately, to be a very busy man. Your young friend, Terry Wendell, has arranged all that. He is a remarkable young man."

He was even more remarkable than the judge gave him credit for; more so than Molly thought him, too. Having been absent from the office all the afternoon, Terry swung around to Molly's house that night. He told her all that was good for her to know.

"There's the answer," nodded Terry. "Johnny Barton has lopped a thousand dollars off his last year's budget. The two birds in the inside office are getting better accommodations for hundreds less than they can get anywhere in town. We have a classy office, a classy office force at low-record salaries. And Upson, at the outside desk, pays us enough so we can make both ends meet. Every man jack of us is putting up a front."

"The judge——" queried Molly.

Terry smiled. "The judge," he nodded, "is paying four hundred dollars where it used to cost him nine."

"And you?" persisted Molly.

Terry tapped himself upon the chest. "Altruism incarnate," he returned; "it doesn't cost me anything at all."

Molly, as a rule, was ultraoptimistic, but her enthusiasm never reached the point of hysteria. This thing looked good to her. But she expected difficulties, and they arrived according to her calculation. With the air of a man who flicks a fly from his coat lapel, the judge shuffled off ten or fifteen years of his age. He appeared one day with a new top hat and a new, well-tailored suit of clothes. He tried a jury case for Johnny Barton in one of the upper courts, and won it hands down. That settled it for the judge. He was back once more in harness, and he did not care who knew it.

He turned over a new leaf. He reached the office early. He stayed late. And with disastrous effect. He forgot that the office was no longer his office; that he was but an atom of an aggregation. He moved about at will, regardless of the rights of others. If he got tired of sitting in his library, he sauntered into the private office, once his, but now dedicated to the exclusive use of Mr. Cairns and Mr. Jackson. He planted himself in the window there, engaged the attention of the one or the other upon some knotty problem that he had to solve.

If it became necessary for him to give dictation, he monopolized the attention of Molly Graham for hours at a time, sometimes for all day. Johnny Barton was particularly perturbed. Johnny Barton's clients were trained clients. Johnny had trained them. They came early in the morning, late in the afternoon. Johnny did a land office business during his office hours. And when his clients came, it was Johnny's privilege to hold the center of the stage. He did not get it. The judge was always busy now, at the place of honor at the green baize table; was always painfully among those present. Johnny complained to Molly Graham. Molly took the matter up with Terry Wendell.

"Yes, yes," said Terry sympathetically, when she acquainted him with all the office troubles, "too true." He said it, hat in hand, as it were, with his foot in the stirrup. Terry was an unsatisfactory proposition these days. He was never in the office. He was always on the go. He listened to Molly and to everybody else, deferentially and with an air of detachment. He was always thinking of something else. He cloaked his movements with an air of mystery. Even with Molly, he was close-mouthed. Molly knew what it meant. Terry was up to something smart. When he was in trouble, Terry's lamentations could be heard from here to there. When he was up to mischief he kept his own counsel.

"Now, listen, sister," he said to Molly Graham, "Johnny Barton and the rest of these gentlemen are confronted with a condition, not a theory. They are getting more for their money than they can get anywhere else in town. Let them rave. In the presence of the greater problem that confronts us, these trivialities don't count."

"What is the greater problem?" queried Molly innocently.

"I'll tell you, sister, as soon as I get time," said Terry.

"There is a greater problem, Terry," went on the girl, with a bit of trouble in her eyes; "don't you think it's time you settled down to practice law?"

"That's another thing I'll do," said Terry, "just as soon as I get time."

On a certain gloomy afternoon, some six months later, the agent of the building crept into the office and slipped a typewritten letter into Molly's hands. It was addressed to Elkins & Wendell, lessees. Molly read the letter. She slipped it into the drawer of her desk. When Terry came in, she drew him into the private office, which was empty at the time, and exhibited it to him. It was a notice to the firm that the Taylor Building would come down, and that all tenants must vacate by the first of the following May. Terry read it. His eyes brightened as he did so.

"Good enough," he nodded; "couldn't be better. I was riding for a fall."

"Terry," wailed the girl, "what are you going to do? Mr. Barton and all the rest of the crowd gave up their offices to come in here with you."

"With their eyes wide open," nodded Terry.

"They'll be sore at you, Terry," protested the girl; "it puts them in a hole."

"And it gets me out of one," smiled Terry.

"How?" she demanded; "you can't get any other place the size of this for less than twice the money anywhere in town."

"I don't want a place for less than twice the money," returned Terry. "Listen, Molly; it's due to you that all the internecine strife in this office has been stilled. You've got the old gentleman under your thumb. You've got all our inside problems solved. You're a wizard at that sort of thing."

"Now, it all goes by the board," said Molly.

"We had a problem that you couldn't solve," said Terry; "our great trouble has been that this building is no good."

"How, no good?" demanded the girl.

Terry smiled. "You're like the judge," he said. "For him, this building is the finest one in town. You couldn't pry him loose from it with a crowbar. As a matter of fact, we're the right people in the wrong place. The Taylor Building is the oldest office building in the city. It's on a street now given over to restaurants and

motion-picture palaces. And its tenants, except for the people in this office, are, in the main, an aggregation of crooks. I didn't find it out until it was too late. Johnny Barton doesn't know it to this day. But other people do. I made up my mind some time ago that we'd have to move. The judge was my problem. I am still altruistic, you perceive. You and he and I—we've got to stick together."

"What are you going to do?" persisted the girl.

For answer Terry took the typewritten letter and started for the judge's room. "I'm going to break the dire news to the old man," he nodded. "I'm going to advise him that, through circumstances wholly beyond anybody's control, the well-known crowbar is about to pry him loose."

The intervening months passed swiftly. When the crisis finally eventuated, the old judge fidgeted and fretted to such an extent that it made him sick. Terry, acting under a physician's orders, shipped the old man to a modest boarding house in a winter resort in the lower end of the State. He was to stay there two months at the very least. The old gentleman was game. Every active business man, he felt, should recuperate from time to time. He stuck it out for two months. Then he wrote Terry that he was ready to come home. Terry went down to Sandyside and got him.

On the way back to River City in the train, the judge drew from his wallet the neatly engraved card of a lawyer of the name of Pettingill. He had received it through the mail. The lawyer of the name of Pettingill had established himself in the new Blandy Building, on the corner of Main and Monroe Streets in River City. The receipt of this card had made a great impression upon the old man.

"He must be the grandson," the old man mused, "of old Stephen G. He bears his name. The old man was the firmest friend I ever had. He did more for me than any other living influence of my time. I think," said the old man to Terry, "that when I get back to River City I'll run in and see this young man Pettingill."

When they reached River City Terry bundled the judge into a taxicab and gave a brief direction. They alighted in front of a magnificent new office structure.

"This is a wonderful building," said the judge.

"This is the Blandy Building," nodded Terry.

"The Blandy Building," mused the judge; "haven't I heard that name somewhere before?"

"Your friend Pettingill is in this building," nodded Terry.

"I should so like to see him," said the judge wistfully.

"We're going up to see him now," replied Terry.

Young Pettingill, it seemed, was on the top floor of the building. They shot up to the top floor and they found his office. He headed a list of four men whose names were done in gold letters on the ground-glass door. Terry opened the door and drew the old man inside. The old man gasped in astonishment.

"This is unusually spiffy," he remarked.

It was. They stood, in fact, in a magnificent apartment. This consisted of a long, well-furnished, outer room. This room was, apparently, a mile or so in length, and about fifteen feet in width. There was a rich green carpet on the floor. The walls were lined with law books—there were law books by the thousand, so it seemed. Two or three young women were in evidence. One of them stepped forward.

"Mr. Pettingill," said Terry carelessly.

"He's in—I think he's disengaged," returned the girl.

The girl led them to Mr. Pettingill. Mr. Pettingill, it appeared, occupied a private office exactly opposite the outer door that bore his name. Mr. Pettingill was evidently not disengaged. As a matter of fact, he was seated at his desk, dictating to a stenographer. Two admiring clients on the other side of his desk were following his dictation.

"Beg pardon," exclaimed Terry, "we'll wait. Here's Judge Alexander Elkins come to shake hands with the grandson of his old friend."

Judge Elkins was looking like a million dollars. He shook hands with Mr. Pettingill, with an affectionate effusiveness. The occasion was a happy one. The incident increased Mr. Pettingill's importance in the eyes of his immediate clientele.

But Terry dragged the old judge off. "We'll be back in half an hour," he said.

"Do," said Pettingill, settling back into his chair.

"How's everything working, Pettingill?" queried Terry.

"Like clockwork, so far as I'm concerned," said Pettingill.

Terry drew the judge out into the corridor. "Judge," he said, "the grandson of your old friend Stephen G. looks like ready money, doesn't he?"

"Blood tells, sir," said the judge, "the man is young, but he forges right ahead. Already he has made great strides."

"You'll have a chance to see more of him," nodded Terry. "Judge, our office is on this floor, too."

"I remember that you wrote me," said the judge.

"Just come with me," said Terry. He led the judge halfway down the corridor and halted him before another door. Upon this door appeared the judge's name. Under it was Terry's. Under that was Johnny Barton's name. And Upson's—he of the desk room in the old suite—was the last.

"You see," said Terry, "there are four of us in all."

"Beggars cannot be choosers," smiled Alexander Elkins.

Terry swung the door open and led the judge within. The old man once more gasped in astonishment. "Why, this is spiffy, too!" he cried.

It was. They stood in a magnificent apartment that consisted of a long, well-furnished room, a mile or so in length, about fifteen feet in width, with a rich green carpet on the floor, thousands of law books on its walls. The place reeked with business prosperity.

"Is this my office," faltered the old gentleman; "there must be some mistake."

"There is no mistake," smiled Terry; "there are your law books on the walls. Here is your green carpet, renovated, recut, relaid. Here, at this end of this long room, is your old green-topped table. Here is your leather swivel chair."

"I see it—I see it all," nodded the bewildered old man, "but I don't believe I can afford extravagance like this."

"This," smiled Terry, "is only the outer office of the suite. You have a private office. Here it is."

Terry led him into a private room exactly opposite the outer door that bore their names. But they walked right in and turned around and walked right out again. The young lawyer of the name of Upson was seated in that room at the desk, in the presence of three clients, dictating in his most

professional manner, a letter to his stenographer. The stenographer was Molly Graham. Mr. Upson was considerably annoyed at the interruption. Terry and the old man backed precipitately out of the door.

"Busiest law office in the universe," said Terry; "there's a reason."

He led the old man to the swivel chair at the old library table. The old man sank back into his seat. As he did so, he started up again. For at that instant a familiar-looking individual stepped out of a private office far down the line and ushered two people across the narrow space to an outer door. This man was Stephen G. Pettingill, the third. The judge rubbed his eyes.

"Bless me," he faltered, "I don't believe I understand at all."

"Let me explain," said Terry; "we call this library the outside office, or we call this outside office the library; sometimes one, sometimes the other as occasion may demand. When you're sitting here, it becomes the library. You've seen outer offices before."

"None quite so overwhelming as this," remarked the judge.

"As a matter of fact," said Terry, "it's not so spacious as it seems to be. Beside your cozy corner at this end, there are six stenographers to occupy this room. Six stenographers and a multitude of clients."

"When they come," quavered the old man, shaking his head.

"Oh," said Terry, "they come. At this present moment there are clients in every inside office in this suite." He took the old man by the arm and walked him slowly down the whole length of the room. "Bearing on this outer office," went on Terry, "there are six private offices, each with a swinging, green baize door."

"I see," returned the judge plaintively; "a very splendid suite. But from my point of view, prohibitive."

"That," said Terry, gripping him gratefully by the arm, "is the impression that we've striven for. Now come with me again."

He led him once more into the corridor of the top floor. "Now, judge," said Terry, "keep your eyes open, if you please. These six outside doors here each leads into our suite. Count them for yourself."

The judge counted them. "There are six," he conceded.

"You are a client," went on Terry, "we'll say, of our old friend Mr. Jackson. Being a client, you find his name upon the directory in the hall downstairs. You get the number of his door. You find it. Here it is. Perhaps you study it before you go in. You find Mr. Jackson's name at the head of four lawyers. You conclude that these four are occupying a modest suite together. You swing in, through the door. You are suddenly propelled into a suite magnificent. And there you are."

"Just as I was myself," nodded the judge, "and yet——"

"Six doors, judge," Terry reminded him, "four names to a door. Four times six is twenty-four. Twenty-four lawyers to the suite. And there you are."

"But," faltered the judge, "beside ourselves, I saw but two. Where are all the rest."

"Right now," nodded Terry, "there's a member of the bar inside behind each green baize door."

"That's only six," quavered the judge, "and you said twenty-four."

"Judge," smiled Terry, "if you'll take pains to analyze the situation, you'll find that most young lawyers are out of their offices most of the time. When they need an office they need it mighty bad. I've given these lads what they need the most. And I've taken a leaf out of Johnny Barton's book. Each of the twenty-four of us has office hours."

The judge thought it over. He was a fair mathematician. "That gives each of them two hours apiece in his own office," he said; "is that enough?"

Terry chuckled. "You've hit the nail upon the head," he said; "just follow me some more."

He led the way back into the outer office of the suite. At the far end of the long room there was a door bearing on its ground-glass pane this strange device: B. R.

"Enter," nodded Terry, standing to one side. The judge laid his hand upon the knob, and struggled with it.

"This door is locked," he said.

"And here," said Terry, "is the key."

He inserted the key into the lock, turned it, and threw open the door. He drew the judge into a fair-sized apartment, reeking, more or less, with tobacco smoke. The room was noisy. Scattered about it were a dozen typewriting machines. Every machine was

in operation. At each machine there sat a smooth-faced chap, sans coat and waistcoat, hammering away at the keys for dear life. These gentlemen glanced up at Terry, nodding as a matter of course. But when they saw the silk-hatted figure of the judge, they sprang up in alarm.

Terry held out a soothing hand. "Don't be frightened, gentlemen," he said. "Judge Alexander Elkins here is one of us. Judge," he smiled, "this is the blue room. Into this blue room our clients shall not look."

Terry took Molly Graham to dinner at the Rendezvous that night. For the first time in many moons Terry laid his cards, face up, upon the table.

"Into the blue room we'll take a look," he said with a smile.

"Oh, you think you're awfully smart," said Molly, "keeping everything to yourself that way."

"Does the thing get over? Did it make a hit with you?" asked Terry.

"It will make a better hit when I know what's what," said Molly.

"Judge Elkins," went on Terry, "is extremely anxious to know what his share in this expense is going to be. I want you to break the news."

"Let me know the worst," said Molly.

"You can tell Judge Elkins," nodded Terry, "in your own way, of course, that because we're using his stage presence and his stage properties, the show won't cost him anything at all."

"You can't afford that, Terry," said the girl.

"Having the judge there tones the whole place up. You can tell Judge Elkins something else. Tell him that twenty-two young, upstanding members of the local bar maintain their business offices in our suite in the Blandy Building at the nominal overhead of one thousand dollars per year per man, office help and telephones included."

"No!" cried the girl.

"Whisper," said Terry, "this is for you. My profit on this nifty little enterprise will be five thousand dollars every year."

"It's wonderful," gasped the girl.

"It's altruism," smiled Terry. "I'm only giving these boys what they want. And I haven't scratched the surface of the thing so far. To-morrow I sign up for the whole top floor of the Cotton Building. I'm going to put thirty handpicked young lawyers in that suite. And after them there'll be the

stock and bond brokers—the young insurance men. And if you don't mind, Molly, I'd like to have you do my banking for me, please."

"Why should I?" asked the girl.

"Well," laughed Terry, flushing to his ears, "I half promised an old friend of mine named Willoughby that I'd marry a rich wife."

It was fifteen months later on a certain afternoon that Thatcher, a local hoisting engine manufacturer, ushered two busy-looking business men into the Blandy Building suite.

Three young women sprang to meet them as they entered.

"Mr. Wendell in?" asked Thatcher.

Mr. Wendell was. Miss Spies seated the newcomers at Judge Elkins' green baize table where they might look about them at their hearts' content. They looked about them. Miss Spies returned in a moment, and led the way into Terry Wendell's private room. Terry was seated at his desk, dictating to two stenographers at one and the same time. Terry dismissed his stenographers, rose and shook Thatcher by the hand.

"Wendell," said Thatcher, "I have watched your rapid progress at the bar with interest. Due to your own unaided efforts you have made the law a phenomenal success."

Another short story, "Scandalous Asphyxiation," by Mr. Osborne, will appear in an early issue.

"What can I do for you?" asked Terry.

"These gentlemen," nodded Thatcher, "are from Seattle. My relations with them for the past few years have been in the experimental stage. I have advised them that I shall be glad to make a permanent arrangement with them—only I want them tied up just a little bit tighter than before."

Terry pushed across his desk a box of superfine cigars. He pressed a button on his desk.

"Bring me file No. 999," nodded Terry, "and tell Miss Spies to come in here."

Miss Spies fetched in file No. 999. "Suppose," said Terry to his visitors, "that we use this old draft for a model. It's one I drew myself."

"Gosh," cried Thatcher, "there's business for you. This man's got a memory like a steel trap."

It took an hour and a half to polish these men off. At the end of that time Terry left his office to go home. Drawn up at the curb was a little closed coupé with Molly at the wheel. Terry leaped in and off they sped.

"What do you think, Molly," said Terry Wendell, "Thatcher and his Puget Sound friends were back again to-day. Thin edge of the wedge, eh? I think now, as soon as I can get through with altruism, that I'll start in and practice law."



JOHN BULL DROPS HIS GLASS

SENATOR MEDILL McCORMICK, on his return from a recent trip abroad, commented on the fact that in two days in London he had seen but one man wearing a monocle, which was once—on the musical comedy stage, at least—the distinguishing mark of the aristocratic Englishman. The senator blames the war for the discarding of the single glass.

Apparently a silly affectation, the monocle was invented for a utilitarian purpose. Years ago the British army authorities ordered the retirement from the service of all officers who were forced to wear glasses. Some near-sighted genius, with keener brains than eyesight, devised the scheme of getting around this order by wearing *one* glass. Later the monocle was taken up by the officers of the Guards regiments, and became fashionable in civilian society. Now that John Bull is confronted with the necessity of working harder than ever before, it seems that he no longer has time for his "glass."

The Thunder Maker

By L. H. Robbins

Author of "The Detour," "The Prodigal Nephew," Etc.

WHAT HAPPENED IN PART ONE.

Are you a weather sharp? Yes? Then how would you explain three nights of violent storms and increasingly intense cold in your particular neck o' the woods while the rest of the country was sweltering? You couldn't? Neither could Doctor MacCracken, head of the weather bureau at Washington, when the first two nights of this freak weather was reported from the Delaware Valley. He read that Evangelist Gideon Giles had prayed for cooler weather at a camp meeting—but he wanted a scientific explanation and went to western New Jersey to get it. The first storm had disrupted the camp meeting and the second had damaged crops. The third killed Gideon Giles and devastated the whole valley in terrible fashion. If Henniker Hant, head of the ice trust, had a theory, he was too busy trying to get to Cupper Wold to talk about it. The rest of the story concerns what happened at Cupper Wold.

(A Two-Part Story—Part II.)

CHAPTER VIII.

PENN CUPPER.

BEFORE we can properly understand the Delaware Valley cold wave we shall need to understand Penn Cupper.

W. Penn Cupper—he seldom used the "W"—inherited from his father a scientific inclination and a two thirds interest in the firm of Cupper, Kling & Caspian, manufacturers of pharmaceutical products. From his mother he acquired a hair-trigger temper and a taste for the Arabian Nights' entertainments.

At seventeen he had been expelled from three preparatory schools. At twenty-two he had exhausted the patience of three colleges. His theoretical education being then, in a manner of speaking, completed, his father's large, old-fashioned hand took him in charge and put him to work in overalls in the drug factory of Cupper, Kling & Caspian, which, in the early years of the century, covered much ground, as all well-informed Philadelphians know.

Strange to relate, the heroic treatment administered by Cupper, senior, agreed nicely with Cupper, junior. Forgetting the pleasures of life which he had sampled ad lib., the son of the old man fixed his eyes upon the top of the Cupper, Kling & Caspian ladder and began to mount, rung by rung, ploddingly and painstakingly.

For some months he pasted labels upon

bottles of cough medicine. He was then allowed to operate a pill-making machine. In the year following he traveled extensively with the shrewdest salesmen in the employ of the firm and studied the intricacies of the market, meeting druggists, both wholesale and retail, and comporting himself with tact and discretion.

From one of these trips he returned with an idea. It was in the good old days when the right of free citizens to take any medicine and all the medicine they liked had not yet been challenged by legislation.

"Father," said Penn, "I've heard you say that the patent-medicine wave is at its crest. Do you believe that?"

"It is the general opinion of manufacturers," Cupper, senior, answered, "that nothing but an increase of population can increase our sales. The country is consuming at top capacity. Why do you ask?"

"I have an advertising scheme," said the young man, "that hasn't been tried. Something brand-new."

"What more can we do than we are doing?" replied his father. "Where will you find a barn or a newspaper that doesn't spread the fame of our products?"

"Listen." Penn unfolded his plan while the old gentleman listened with interest.

"It's worth millions," Cupper, senior, declared at last. "But we must get the jump on the other fellows. We must work it quietly."

So quietly they worked that the idea was in full operation before the business rivals of Cupper, Kling & Caspian got wind of it. And this was the scheme.

Simultaneously, by preconcertion, in hundreds of communities where local option and alcoholic dryness held sway, local physicians began to give free public lectures on the patent-medicine evil. In every instance the lecturers illustrated their discourses with the bottled products of Cupper, Kling & Caspian.

It was not always easy to secure doctors for the purpose. Some perceived the true inwardness of the proposition and callously asked what there was in it for them. Some of these went so far as to decline haughtily the retainer, or honorarium, which the Cupper agents were authorized to offer in cases of stubbornness. These physicians demanded a percentage based upon the increase in sales of the Cupper remedies in the vicinity following the lectures.

To the credit of the medical profession be it said that such instances were comparatively few. Most of the doctors served gratis, believing that they served the public welfare.

That year the partners of Cupper, Kling & Caspian divided an extra eleven hundred thousand dollars, and the reputation of Penn Cupper as a worthy son of his sire became established. He was known now as the Young Man and had a desk in his father's office. He preferred to spend most of his time, however, in the laboratory where the chemists of the firm, under the guidance of Mr. Kling, devised new and attractive forms of medicine to keep pace with the fickle taste of the consuming public.

Thus for five years he labored, living quietly with his parents in Rittenhouse Square, taking little pleasure except in his work and his books, and so behaving as to win the confidence of all, including Cupper, senior, who died content in believing that the fortunes of the firm rested upon capable shoulders.

It is not to be said that the Young Man in his apparently willing apprenticeship had played a part. With his natural liking for science he had really enjoyed the game. But now that the steady hand of his father was removed, he began to disappoint those who had watched him come up.

There were disagreements with the other members of the firm over questions of policy.

When an act of Congress placed a ban upon the promiscuous sale of many of the most popular and profitable of the Cupper distillations, Mr. Kling and Mr. Caspian were disposed to bow obediently to the law. They advised diverting the plant into the manufacturing of such medicines as were not forbidden.

"With our capital and our resources," Mr. Kling said, "we can compete successfully with all the standard drug concerns in the world. Our reputation may be poor in Washington, but it remains **A1** with the trade. We can turn aside into new lines and——"

"And make a dollar where we once made ten," said young Cupper. "No, thank you. I don't need to put on arctics yet. I will fight this ruinous government meddling clear to the supreme court. Meanwhile, we keep on making the usual Cupper remedies. If the government interferes with our distribution, we will find ways to beat the government. We will teach the cussed government that this is a free country."

The cussed government took a good deal of teaching. It fined Penn Cupper when he violated the law, and when he violated the law again, it continued in its error and fined him seven times as heavily as before. He hired the sharpest Philadelphia lawyers and fought the case up to the highest court, to find that court a stone wall.

Said Mr. Caspian, when he left to take a position of responsibility with the reputable house of Riggs Brothers, in Cleveland, and bade the Young Man farewell, "You should have let well enough alone. It will take you twenty years to live down the bad name you have made for yourself in the last three."

"I want no advice from you, Mr. Caspian," the Young Man retorted.

The other partner, Mr. Kling, already had sold out to him and retired to hunt foxes in the Radnor neighborhood. Thus Penn became sole proprietor of the business. By all the laws of fortune he should have failed speedily. He had dropped the pilots who had helped his father guide the ship. He had flouted public opinion and defied public authority.

Yet, when fifteen years had passed, he was rated as one of the wealthiest of drug manufacturers in the world, and this in spite of the fact that he had reduced the plant of Cupper, Kling & Caspian to one quarter its former size, and in spite of the further

fact that the remedies of the house of Cupper had almost entirely disappeared from the American market.

He still produced a few simple palliatives, such as Cupper's Dandelion Oil for Rheumatism and Cupper's Rhubarb and Soda Tablets for Indigestion. But Philadelphia knew that his chief market lay beyond the Pacific in the vast and teeming land where poppy growing had become a capital offense.

In 1906, China declared finally against the traffic in opium and implored the other nations of the earth to help her put it down. In 1907 Penn Cupper paid a visit to Japan and spent some weeks in Kobe, to which interesting seaport he began in the following year to ship quantities of well-made packing cases bearing the legend "Pharmaceutical Products."

Heads by the hundred were lopped off in China, among them distinguished ones. But Penn Cupper continued to wear his at the top of his spine. Now and then a Kobe smuggler would be hanged by the neck in Tsing Tau or Shanghai, in easy sight of the wharves. But it was no hanging matter with the house of Cupper, Kling & Caspian.

Steadily the well-made cases of pharmaceutical products flowed westward from the Cupper factory, and as steadily a stream of remuneration flowed eastward to swell the Cupper fortune.

But as Penn Cupper's pecuniary credit rose, his social credit fell. It fell to zero when Mr. Caspian brought suit to compel him to drop the Caspian name from that of the firm, Mr. Caspian giving as a reason that his value to the Cleveland firm of Riggs Brothers was impaired by the reputation which the Cupper firm was gaining for itself as poisoners of Asiatic populations.

After that episode the face of Rittenhouse Square became hard toward Penn Cupper.

CHAPTER IX.

CUPPER KINGS IT.

After Penn Cupper had his collision with the government in the matter of his patent medicines he liked to consider himself a man without a country. After the disclosures in the Caspian case, wherein the source of his new fortune was made clear, he became a man without a city.

He would have sold the family home in Walnut Street where his father and mother had lived and died. But a better idea struck

him. He boarded up the doors and windows with sheathing painted yellow. He caused a huge canvas sign, "For Sale," to be hung across the front.

Then he went away and forgot the house save when, once a year, he ordered the boarding and the sign repainted. For years the house was an eyesore in one of the exquisite neighborhoods of America. When would-be purchasers approached the real-estate agents they learned that the price of the property was eighty million dollars.

Lacking a country in which he could have his way—curiously, it did not occur to him to move to China—Cupper proceeded to establish a principality of his own over which he could rule as absolute master.

People of wealth had begun to take up the cheap farm lands of middle New Jersey and convert them into beautiful estates. He went farther afield to the then neglected region of west Jersey bordering the Delaware. He bought the little railroad village of Killingby and changed the name to Cupper Wold. He acquired possession of the farms in the vicinity and razed farm buildings that had stood before his grandfather's day.

Included in his purchases was a wooded ridge that bore the neighborhood name of Horseshoe Mountain. From tip to tip this horseshoe-shaped ridge measured three miles. Its crest commanded a wide view of a lovely countryside. Its rocky hollow, long known as Shadow Valley, the haunt of lonely owls and venturesome picnickers, held a jungle of woods and thickets, out of whose depths flowed a spring-fed stream that emptied into the Delaware near at hand.

Upon the bend of the mountain Cupper erected his palace. Around his domain, with the mountain for its core, he built a stone wall twelve feet high and twelve miles long. Then he settled down to play. His pleasures in that period of his career were titanic and attracted the attention of the Sunday editors, who are ever on the watch for the freakish and the bizarre in human conduct.

Weird stories were printed of prodigious things done behind the stone walls of Cupper Wold. An entire forest was moved from one part of the estate to the other. Hills were leveled to make room for lakes.

One nerry reporter trespassed upon the forbidden ground far enough to discover an inclosure, acres in extent, completely walled and roofed with glass, wherein Penn Cupper

conducted farming operations in the dead of winter. Flowers were blooming, vegetables growing, and fruit ripening in that giant hothouse. An interesting chapter in that story was the reporter's fight with armed watchmen and his escape to the outer world. Another chapter could not and cannot be printed, although it may be heard along Park Row. It related to some guests whom Cupper was entertaining—or who were entertaining Cupper—that wintry day. There was often company at the Wold. Local tradition says the guests usually arrived and departed under cover of darkness. Certainly they did not figure in the society columns.

Much that was written of Cupper's activities in those days was doubtless exaggerated, for very little real news ever leaked out from the guarded gates of the twelve-mile wall. Sightseers were taboo. Since the world had snubbed Cupper, therefore Cupper snubbed the world. The greater the public interest in his affairs, the closer he drew the veil.

It was definitely known, however, that this modern Aladdin employed, instead of a genie, a force of Italian workmen said to number five hundred, and enough steam tractors and gasoline work motors to equip an army, as armies went in the happy years before the whole world had to go to war. His laborers dwelt in a town of their own within the wall. They had a priest of their own tongue, and a padrone whose rule was both strong and kindly enough to keep them content. When one of them wandered away, he was still as unfamiliar with the English language as when he left Genoa, and of little value as a source of information.

With the coming of the war, Cupper Wold ceased to be an object of public attention. But Penn Cupper ceased not. Late in 1914 he appeared in New York and immediately became the talk, if not the joke, of the town, for he traveled in the style of a potentate from some half-barbaric land. His retinue included chauffeurs, porters, secretaries, house servants, even a chef and a pastry cook. It took the entire seventh floor of the Astorbilt to house him.

The morning *Gazette* described him as tall and spare, with the flashing eye of a falcon and a manner at once elegant and impetuous. We may quote from that newspaper:

Although his personal wardrobe requires only seventeen trunks, which were hauled overland from Cupper Wold in his own baggage camion,

his friends in New York need not fear that he will not be suitably clad, for it is given out at the hotel that one of his objects in visiting the city is to purchase raiment to replenish his run-down supply. Tailors are urged to form in line at the Thirty-ninth Street entrance and thus avoid blocking Fifth Avenue.

The depleted state of his vestments was indicated in the brief moment when he was visible to the populace yesterday afternoon upon his arrival. He wore a sealskin overcoat, a red velvet morning coat with green silk trousers, and white doeskin shoes.

Three times in the article the always colorful *Gazette* called him the King of Morphia, and was sued by Cupper next day for damages in the sum of half a million dollars for each offense, or fifteen hundred thousand dollars all told.

The newspaper countered this action pleasantly by thanking the King of Morphia for the compliment. A day later it published on its first page a letter from Mr. Cupper's attorneys, in which letter they reopened the old Philadelphia scandal in order to announce once and for all that Mr. Cupper did not manufacture, and had never manufactured, morphine or any other derivative of opium.

The *Gazette* apologized to Mr. Cupper, therefore, publicly and handsomely, for calling him the King of Morphia, and added as a footnote a dispatch from its Philadelphia correspondent. This dispatch declared that the chief product of the Cupper factory was, indeed, something else than morphine. It was a chemical product of Mr. Cupper's own discovery, said to be greatly superior to poppy juice in inducing blissful dreams.

Thereupon Mr. Cupper forgot the meanness of the *Gazette* and undertook to help the reading public also to forget it by entering upon a number of noteworthy enterprises. He tendered an endowment of half a million to a highly reputable college of pharmacy, which tender was briskly rejected. With part of the same money he encouraged the founding of a society whose object it would be to round up the poor little ruddy-cheeked children of the farming districts and bring them to New York for one bright week in their dull and pitiful lives.

His liberality to charity in that winter was princely. The Astorbilt was thronged with people lying in wait for him. At eleven o'clock daily he held a public levee in what the *Gazette* called the royal bedchamber. To those receptions came beggars of all sorts.

To the merely impecunious he doled out one thousand dollars a morning in dollar bills. To people with interesting stories to tell he gave away more. Promoters and inventors with half an idea could win his backing.

Munificently he backed, for example, the association that advocated a system of moving sidewalks for Fifth Avenue, also the band of enthusiasts who desired to teach the latest dances to the inhabitants of cheerless Norfolk Street. He was broadly impartial in his kindness. On the day when he was elected to honorary membership in the League to Preserve American Neutrality he was also decorated with a medal by the League to Avenge Belgium.

In these and a wearisome number of other ingenious ways he laid siege to New York and succeeded thereby in achieving almost as much local publicity as the war, so that many persons, on opening their newspapers at breakfast, asked: "What's Penn Cupper doing now?" and afterward looked to see how far the Germans had pushed.

What was his game? Not even his intimates knew.

"You can search me," said Henniker Hant, when questioned as to Cupper's motive. "As near as I can figure out, he is only trying to have a good time."

The friendship with Henniker Hant was one of the by-products of Cupper's trip to the Orient. Since then he had entertained the man at the Wold. At the opening of his cometlike career as a metropolitan celebrity he had picked him up again.

Hant was by way of becoming a celebrity himself. What his own game was he knew very clearly. It was to gain the interest of Penn Cupper in the project, dear to Mr. Hant's heart, of acquiring control of the New York ice supply. To this end he paid court to the King of Morphia with all the force of his large and imposing personality. He could use some of that Chinese money nicely in his ice monopoly scheme.

The two were seen together everywhere, in theater boxes, in taxicabs, in the gayest cabarets and dance halls—Henniker Hant, big and black and powerful, agreeably subordinating himself to the whimsical dominance of the tall, thin, eager-eyed Cupper. The roof gardens called them "Henn and Penn."

Buzzard and hawk, they hunted diversion arm in arm that winter—or let us say, wing in wing—and Henniker Hant got his money.

Afterward he had the ill grace to say that Penn Cupper needed to be locked up in some safe retreat for boobs and suckers.

CHAPTER X.

THE QUEEN.

One person in town knew, at that period, what Penn Cupper's game was. That person was Miss Patricia Anvers, of the Anvers family which for two centuries and a half has kept alive the tradition of Dutch integrity and dignity in New Amsterdam. Patricia knew Penn Cupper's game within a week after her mother had permitted him to endow the Society for the Amelioration of the Lot of Country Children with funds to carry on its project.

"My dear Patricia, I should think you would feel honored," the mother said. "It is true, I know, that he doesn't belong to one of the really old Philadelphia families; but his people have been respectable there for generations, and his father and mother were above reproach."

"You are not thinking of my happiness, mamma," Patricia replied. She was tall and graceful and completely beautiful. She could have made good as a cloak-and-suit model, high-born though she was. It happens that way oftener than the bolsheviks admit. "You are thinking only of his money, mamma, dear. You are just a bit dazzled by it. Fess up."

Mrs. Anvers denied the impeachment. "At the same time, my child," she said, "I don't know where in the world you will find another man who combines both position and money so nicely."

"But he has no position, mamma."

"Nonsense! Won't he have if he marries you? And we are so desperately poor, if anybody knew——"

Still Patricia demurred. But Cupper called, and sent orchids by the armful, and otherwise advertised his passion; and one night he declared himself. There was no silly sentiment in his proposal. It amounted almost to a proposition.

"It will gratify my vanity more than I can ever tell you," he said, "to see you established as the queen of my little realm at Cupper Wold. You see, I offer you not only love and homage, but gratitude as well."

"Gratitude?" queried Patricia.

"Your family is an old and distinguished one. Even in Philadelphia there is no girl

who can bring more to a man in social prestige. You will help me demonstrate a certain thing to those snobs down there."

"I see," said she. "You wish to prove to them that you are still socially acceptable in spite of their excommunication of you. Is that it?"

"That's it," said Penn bitterly. "I may as well be frank. I thought I didn't care, but I do. I'm tired of being an outcast."

Patricia made her answer thoughtfully and gently.

"I am sorry not to be able to accommodate you, Mr. Cupper. But it happens that I am signed up to go to Paris next week with the Red Cross."

"What a waste!" cried the dejected suitor. "Can't you—can't we, I mean—can't we hire somebody to go in your place?"

"But we can't hire anybody to do the particular work that I have been called upon to do. It will demand the very qualities that you require in your prospective queen—established position, the ability to meet big people and deal with them as an equal—in a word, prestige. I am afraid the Red Cross needs me more than you need me, Mr. Cupper."

In the Paris *Herald* fifteen months later Miss Anvers read of his marriage to a young woman known to the New York theater public as Tinita, Queen of the Arctic, who was all the rage that season as the leading girl in the skating ballet at the Arena.

"Well, long live the queen!" thought Patricia, and went on patiently with her task in the American Red Cross in France.

If any one thinks that Penn Cupper's marriage to Tinita was a morganatic one in the sense that he chose for his wife a woman beneath his station, let the idea be scrapped instantly. There was no condescension, as the *Gazette* pointed out editorially. It was a quite congruous alliance which the King of Near Morphia made with the Queen of the Arctic. The *Gazette* wished them long life and bade the populace rejoice.

Tinita was, in fact, a queen, even with her skates off. Instinct and inclination fitted her for the part; she lacked only such a throne and such an opportunity as Cupper offered her. Although the eldest daughter of a more or less humble driver of taxicabs—in Avenue B her name was Bertha Minch—she had read much and dreamed more on the subject of society life.

Unlike many of her East Side girl neigh-

bors, she harbored no disfavor against the American nobility. A hard-working and ambitious little woman was Bertha Minch, as sensible as she was pretty, and Avenue V looked just as good to her as Avenue B.

If she had known the truth about the social status of the tall, thin, slightly bald spender who sat in the first box at the left of the Arena stage, night after night for six weeks, there might not have been a July cold wave in the middle Delaware Valley and this history would not have been necessary. But nobody warned her.

When the writer stops to reflect, he is appalled at the "ifs" that go into the making of the tale. If Penn Cupper had stuck to his game of marrying some one in the Patricia Anvers class—if Bertha Minch Cupper had not been a constant reader of the society pages—if Mrs. Henniker Hant had not forgotten the debt which her husband, the president of the Ice Trust, owed to Mrs. Cupper's husband—if Doctor Wyckoff had taken time to look behind him before starting his flivver runabout out from the curb in the main street of the town of Aberdeen—then some other narrative would be filling these pages.

Cupper's falling in love with Tinita, Queen of the Arctic, was a thing beyond his plans and calculations. When he dropped in at the Arena the thought of finding a queen there for the realm of Cupper Wold naturally was far from his mind. Cast down but not discouraged by Patricia's refusal to share his throne, he had carried his campaign into new neighborhoods, though all of them were within cab-hailing distance of the fashionable avenue.

In that winter and the next, six daughters of Blue-Book families rejected him, and still he persevered. Thrice the overeager society reporters endeavored to settle matters for him by announcing his engagement. In all three instances indignant parents caused the announcements to be retracted. But the very coupling of his name with names held in high regard by Tinita, who read the society columns twice a day, influenced her enormously in his favor. If he could propose to those swell young women, he must be swell himself, thought Bertha Minch.

Dressed in pale-blue tights and ostrich feathers, she was as lovely and supple and blithe and bewildering as any creature under the spotlight. The Arena press agent thought so, and the general public agreed

with him. Penn Cupper thought so, too, and rented a box for a week, and then for the season. Across the footlights he courted her, and behind the scenes.

One night he drove to her home with her—not in one of his own cars, be sure, but in a taxicab operated by a grim-jowled person of fifty years who kept an eye on them through the glass all the way to Avenue B, greatly to the discomfort and even danger of street-rambling pedestrians. Nor did the stern-visaged taximan drive away from the curb until the house door had been opened by the stout and motherly Mrs. Minch. When Cupper had become the taximan's son-in-law, they grew into a warm regard for each other.

Penn's love for Bertha Minch was the one honest love of his life. Such loves come to the worst of men.

"If you was the Queen of England," said Mrs. Minch to Bertha on the wedding night, "he couldn't adore you any more than what he does."

They were married on the Arena ice after the last curtain. The broken-hearted Arena press agent did his duty like a gentleman. The wedding had as much space in the newspapers of the town as the second battle of Ypres. Tens of thousands of young women envied Bertha Minch her good fortune.

But was it good fortune that had come to Bertha? After a stay at Palm Beach and a month or two at Cupper Wold, she began to wonder what was wrong with her romance. Imagine the story of Cinderella to end in some such manner, as follows:

So they were married and lived happy for as long as it took Cinderella to discover that her husband was no prince at all. Not in all the land was there a royal person who would be seen on the same side of the street with him. All he had was money.

Such an awakening came to Bertha, and it made a difference to her. If she had wanted to consider money as an inducement to matrimony, there was young Joe Huebstein, who had hung around the Arena stage door for months before Cupper came along. Huebstein had more money than he could ever spend, and youth and good looks and an inexhaustible reserve of good humor. Joe had friends, too, scores of them. Cupper had no friends; he had only servants and cyclophants.

Our Cinderella sighed. She had played her part like a good fellow. The prince had

fallen down in his. He had failed to present her at any court. Was he ashamed of her? She had too much of the self-confidence of youth to believe that. She had also the daily evidence of her eyes and ears. Penn loved her devotedly. The trouble, she suspected, was that no court was open to him.

"Why don't we invite some of your very nicest friends out here to play with us?" she asked one day.

"My nicest friends?" he laughed. "Bless your heart, little girl, I have no nice friends. I have no friends of any sort. That's why I married you. I was lonely."

They were riding through the Wold in the June sunshine. From the leafy roadsides their picturesque "peasants" saluted them, caps in hand. The pair on horseback might have been a duke and a duchess in olden Italy.

She finished her ride in silence. Their way was the winding road up the outer face of Horseshoe Mountain to the mansion at the top. As the grooms led their horses away, the king and the queen ascended the broad steps to the door and paused to gaze abroad over the hills and lakes and woods of their province. Queen Bertha was not blithe to-day, nor had she been in a long while. Cupper drew her to a bench and made her sit down while he stood before her, looking elegant, as always, and a bit anxious.

"I was lonely," said he, "so I married you. You are thinking it was downright selfish of me to drag you out here to share my loneliness. Well, it was. But I'll make amends."

He hailed a passing servant.

"Bruno, fetch the railway guide." To his bride he continued: "We shall go away from here; we shall travel and see places and people. Will that please you?"

"I am not hard to please, Penn," she answered. "But what's the good of being a queen with only laborers and servants for subjects? I ought to be happy, very happy, but I'm not. Shall I tell you what I think is the matter?"

He sat down beside her to listen. She bent her riding crop over her knee and began.

"I wasn't born to be a lady of leisure, Penn. I've got to amount to something. They say that's the ruling passion of men—to amount to something, to make good—

while a woman's is to be loved. But it isn't so on the East Side where I was brought up. Down there every girl, like every boy, starts out in life with the urge to climb, to accomplish, to overcome. We have to want to make good, and want it desperately, for it's that or go under. The worst thing an enemy can say of us is that we are worthless. It's our fighting word. And I feel so—so worthless here."

"Would you like to go back to the stage?" he asked.

"No. I could never do more there than I have done. I couldn't go higher; they would keep me skating till I was a grandmother. I want—I don't know what I want that you can give me."

Bruno brought out the railway guide.

"Don't bother to open it, Penn," said Bertha. "I don't want to travel. Hotel friendships are only fluff. We'd meet nice people, maybe, but—how many of the people we met at Palm Beach have troubled themselves to send us even a post card? May I tell you what I want most?"

"I'm waiting to hear," said Cupper.

"It is to be respected by people I can respect—by a host of them. It is to be a respected member of a respected group, and to have you a member of that group, Penn, dear. People scowl at 'gangs,' but everybody has to belong to a 'gang' of some sort, or he isn't in the world. We can't live apart from people and be happy, Penn. And here we have no one."

"In simple English," he responded playfully, "you'd like to be in society. Is that right?"

"Yes, Penn."

"Leave it to me," he promised. "It's time you had a little variety. I've been so contented, I haven't done any thinking for you. But we shall change all that."

It was a promise easier to make than to keep. He could change hills into lakes and lakes into hills. But could he change the stony stare of any group of "nice" people into a welcoming smile for the ballet skater who had married the wholesale poisoner?

CHAPTER XI.

THE OUTCASTS.

Cupper looked over his social register, selected the names of a dozen poor but proud Philadelphians and summoned their owners to Cupper Wold for a house party. All of

them sent regrets except Carlo Callowhill, who arrived on the appointed day with his golf kit and his rheumatism and without his mother and sister. The Callowhill ladies, he explained, had a previous engagement at Brown's Mills.

He had changed for the worse in the years since he and Cupper were fired out of Princeton. He had the poor taste to remark upon corresponding deterioration in his host. At dinner he eyed Mrs. Cupper appraisingly until her husband yearned to strangle him. He played golf on Cupper's velvet course for two days, drank himself to sleep on Cupper's champagne for two nights, and went back to his home city full of gossip.

The house party having fizzled, the Cuppers had Bertha's people out from New York for a month. Mrs. Minch went about with both hands raised in wonder, like a pair of animated exclamation points. It all was so grand and beautiful—"spacious" was her word. Never had she dreamed of bedrooms and flower gardens and dinner tables and bathtubs so spacious.

Minch, with no taxi to drive, was ill at ease and grumpy. Low-born folk had no business in such a place, he insisted, despite his wife's repeated reminder that Bertha's parents were quite as good as Bertha. He gave his son-in-law pointers on horses, for he had driven a hansom cab in the palmy days of those things and he knew horseflesh. Cupper got along very well with him, and with Mrs. Minch and the little Minches, too. The month was, all in all, the happiest the Cuppers had had, or were to have.

Late in the summer they went to Newport, where lived a number of now sober fellows whom Cupper had known in his school days. Unfortunately they remembered Cupper too well, and perhaps they wondered with a little apprehension how well Cupper remembered them. No invitations rewarded Cupper's most adroit overtures. He explained to his wife that the summer colony was busy with Red Cross work; but he had no notion that the explanation deceived her.

The experience gave Bertha an idea. When autumn came, the pair took an Astorbilt apartment more modest than Cupper's bachelor quarters, and Bertha went in for war work, abetted by her husband, and aided by his money.

On various committees she soon met women whose splendor in the social firmament was as that of the star Sirius on a

January night. They were glad to take Bertha's money. Some of them were glad even to meet her, in a hotel sort of way, and to study her as a very interesting specimen of human nature. But that is as far as it went. Women whose mothers had entertained Penn Cupper's mother drove away north or south from the Astorbilt door and left Bertha with nothing more in the way of social trophies than signed receipts for contributions to funds.

She accepted the situation with the East Side philosophy that is cheerful because it expects so little. She knew that the war was drawing nearer to America, and that the big people were really busy in meeting its growing demands. It gave her satisfaction to discover that she could amount to something, even if, in another sense, she amounted to nothing; for some leader of war work had found out that she was a hustler, that she could make good. Tasks began to come to her.

She was asked to take lists and call on people. As a solicitor among big business men she had notable success. She called one day upon Henniker Hant and got ten thousand dollars out of him, though he was down on her card as good for only five hundred. She was asked to sit as a member of committees on purchasing yarn and on recruiting nurses. Regarding the sock-knitting potentialities of the East Side she was able to give advice that brought her into direct touch with the very overlords and overladies of the war relief boards.

It was something at last, and it satisfied her. But Cupper fumed. He had not been snubbed for ten years without learning to detect a snub a mile away against the wind. He knew very well that his wife and he were looked upon as outsiders, rank ones, and tolerated only for what they could give to the fashionable interest of the hour.

When we stop to analyze the matter we see that there was no earthly reason why they should have been considered in any other light. But Cupper did not stop to analyze. He had been born with a certain right: he had wantonly forfeited that right, and blindly now he wanted it back, raging inwardly when it was withheld.

He went to see Henniker Hant. It was his last card. The man whom the papers now called the Ice King was utterly outside the fence of fine society. Yet there existed a dashing and flashing circle in which Mr. and

Mrs. Hant were conspicuous—a social constellation that rose, as it were, after midnight, when the standard and familiar groups had gone to bed.

It was known as the Impossible Set, but it was a set, at least. It got its doings printed in the newspapers, too, if that meant anything. Penn remembered that Hant, at Bertha's solicitation, had given a handsome check to the Society for the Relief of Starving Montenegrins. That was encouraging.

The dark, massive, impressive man set his face to register cordiality when Cupper entered.

"Hello, Penn. Have a chair. Want to hear how our ice scheme is going, eh?"

"No, not that," said Cupper. His half million, lent and forgotten, had put Hant on the path to fortune. "Henn, it's about my wife."

"Ah!" There was a good deal in that "Ah!" The big chap's eyes sparkled a little. "Let me say that you certainly picked a pip-pin, Penn. But you were always good at picking 'em."

"She is all that," replied Cupper, wincing. "But, Henn, they don't treat her so well as—I should like to see that little woman treated. She was born to shine, but who gives her a chance? She thinks it's because she used to wear blue tights. I know it's because she had the bad luck to marry a social leper."

"You a social leper, Penn? What rot!"

"I must cry 'Unclean!' all my days," sighed Cupper. "But is that any reason why Bertha should be friendless?"

Hant eyed him curiously.

"Would you and Mrs. Cupper consider an introduction to the crowd that my wife and I travel in?"

"Try us," said Cupper. "There's no greater favor I could ask."

"I'll speak to Sadie," Hant promised. "Expect to hear from us."

For a week or two Cupper expected. Then he and Bertha met the Hants face to face in the foyer of a theater, and Hant made believe not to hear Cupper's greeting. He looked flustered, too, which is not the way of a man of colossal nerve.

Mrs. Hant's defensive turn of a large ivory shoulder was as unmistakable as a straight-arm jolt in football.

Next day Cupper called at Hant's office.

"You dirty ingrate!" he said.

"Penn, old man, I'm sorry, but it can't

be helped. Sade won't listen, though I've done my best for you."

"Waitresses are becoming high and mighty," Cupper sneered. As everybody knew, Mrs. Hant had once carried a tray in a restaurant.

"Don't be nasty," said the Ice King. "Sade isn't stuck up. But some one printed in a newspaper here some two-edged poetry last year, before your marriage. It was about the Ice King, meaning me, and the Ice Queen, meaning the lady who is now your wife. It was only fun, but a dozen people cut the thing out of the paper and mailed it to Sade, and she can't forget. Then, too, I was fool enough to tell her about the donation I made to your wife's war fund."

Cupper's stored-up wrath of ten years as an outcast broke its dam at last and swept over the man before him in a vitriolic flood. When the worst had past, he said in conclusion:

"I warn you that I mean to lower you and your waitress wife down to the level where I found you. Once you called me a boob and a sucker—the time you blackballed me in the Capital Club. That was all right. But last night you and your wife slighted a good little woman who never harmed you—who's worth a thousand of you. Who in perdition are you to snub her—you and your hash slinger?"

Hant, left alone, sat disturbed for a minute. Then he laughed.

CHAPTER XII.

THE INVENTOR.

The Ice King laughed at other times that day when he thought of the impotent ire of the King of Morphia. His sharp eyes had seen signs of approaching dissolution in the man—signs that Cupper was able at ordinary times to hide.

Those quivering cheek muscles and twitching fingers meant that Cupper would not menace any enemy of his very long. Hant remembered his earlier opinion that Cupper needed to be locked up. He wondered if there was any truth in a bit of talk he had heard—talk to the effect that the drowsy Chinese were not the only victims of the products of the Cupper factory.

While Hant laughed, Cupper was busy at the telephone. He called his man of affairs at the Wold.

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"Simons, do you remember a wild-eyed chap who had a scheme for making ice? We gave him some money once."

The secretary went to look in Cupper's benefaction book, finding there the name of the wild-eyed genius—Axtell, one of the multitude of mendicants who had besieged the Astorbilt in the days of Cupper's sensational extravagance. Supplied with Axtell's address, Cupper drove to an outlying district of Brooklyn and found the genius at home and busy in a workshop in the cellar. It appeared that Axtell filled in his time between spells of invention by vulcanizing auto tires. He was little and old and stooped. His eyes were like Cupper's in their eager, hungry brightness.

"You told me once, Axtell," said Cupper, "that you could make ice at practically no cost to the producer."

"At practically no cost after the plant is built," Axtell corrected him, "except for machinery replacements. It may take a million dollars to start."

"What's your idea like?"

The inventor was canny. "Do you know Henniker Hant?"

"I do. Why?"

"Then I won't talk to you."

"Has Hant tried to get your secret?"

"Twice. But I am too smart for him. The thief!"

"Suppose I tell you that I am out to break Henniker Hant and his Ice Trust and to make ice cheap. Will you talk then?"

Gladly Axtell talked.

"Where is it always cold?" he asked.

"At the north pole."

"No, no; nearer—only a mile or two away."

"Down in the earth?"

"Above the earth. In the upper air. Down from there on the hottest summer day the aeroplanes come coated with ice. There's the source of cold, and beyond that, outside the atmosphere, is the cold of space—exhaustless."

"Well, how——"

"Tap it," said Axtell. "Why not? Look here."

From a safe in the brick wall of his cellar workshop he fetched plans, blue prints, models. While Cupper studied them with kindling eye, Axtell rattled out a volley of explanations. Years of talking to the deaf ears of financiers had made him as glib in his patter as a monologist.

"It sounds good," said Cupper, at last. "But I shall want an engineer to go over it."

"What engineer?"

"Don't worry. One that I own."

Next day the owned engineer went over the plans in the presence of Axtell and Cupper and promptly resigned from Cupper's ownership. "I won't be a party to such a fool experiment," he declared.

"But it may work. Do you deny that?" asked Penn.

"That's the trouble; it may work. And when it works, look out. The forces of nature are large and strong and jealous. Don't monkey with the buzz saw."

"You will keep still about what you have heard here?" Cupper asked.

"My professional honor has never been questioned, I believe," replied the engineer, and went away with the sensation of having had contact with Bedlam.

Other engineers were found. Lawyers provided protection for Axtell in his patent rights. Steel mill agents, a railroad traffic manager, and the secretary of a coal combine were consulted.

At the end of the winter Cupper went back to his West Jersey domain, taking with him Axtell and a force of people who had never been there before. Bertha, busy in useful endeavors, remained in the city.

The frost was out of the ground in Shadow Valley, the arbutus was in bloom under the pines, and the first bluejays were jawing among the treetops on the morning when Cupper led his little host of surveyors and masons and structural steel men down the hill from his palace into the hollow of Horse-shoe Mountain. In the middle of the valley, where the mountain sides of the horse-shoe were widest apart, the surveyors set up their transit and drove the first stake.

By the end of April the recess of the mountain had been vastly transformed by the same many-handed genie that had wrought changes so striking in other parts of the Wold. Teams and tractors and swarthy men built a dyke across the little river that issued from the hillside springs. The April rains contributed to the project, until Cupper, looking down from the great house on the mountaintop, saw a sky-blue lake where only a tangle of unkempt forest had been before.

Because the lake was blue—Bertha's color—and because it was an essential part

of the scheme of revenge he had conceived for her sake, he named it Lake Tinita.

Through those spring days the scheme filled his mind, excluding all else. By day he rode about his estate, actively superintending the labors that willing hands undertook for him. He oversaw the laying of a two-mile spur track from the railway station at the edge of the Wold to the open end of the mountain valley.

He was on hand when the first train of laden gondolas from the Pennsylvania mines passed over the spur to sidings in the shelter of his mountain fastness. Beholding that operation an outsider would have declared that Penn Cupper was hoarding coal—coal desperately needed where the free peoples of the world were toiling to preserve their freedom. But no outsider saw, and the few outsiders who knew about that diverted fuel had excellent personal reasons for keeping still. As for Cupper, he had forgotten the war in Europe. He was making ready to wage a war of his own.

Beside that same track he watched the arrival of flat cars bearing huge steam boilers, castings, girders, columns, flanges, and machinery parts that defied identification. Between the mountain walls he saw a mighty smokestack rise, while near it big derricks moved their giant arms above a wide and shallow pit, an amphitheater set down into the floor of the valley by the workers in stone and concrete. Within the pit the workers in steel put together the frame upon which the vital part of the experiment depended. The rat-a-tat of the riveters was heard in a region that had known no sound like it but the drum of the yellow-hammers.

In spite of the close vigilance a rumor went abroad that Cupper was constructing a munitions plant. But the hint received scant mention in the newspapers, for every bucolic corner in the East had its new factory in those urgent days. Rich men were giving their yachts to the navy, converting their summer homes into hospitals and convalescent camps, lending their property for scientific uses. Cupper was not molested.

In June he brought Bertha out from the city and showed her the wondrous works he had wrought.

"The Delaware Valley is too warm in the summer for the Queen of the Arctic," he told her. "I will cool it off for you. How would you like to go skating on your new lake in July?"

Later she mentioned that Henniker Hant had honored her with a call at her hotel.

"With his wife?"

"No; it was, I suppose, a business call. He inquired very kindly after your health."

"Let him let my health alone."

"And he asked me particularly if I knew the whereabouts of Mr. Axtell. He had the idea that Axtell was here with you."

"Why did he want to know?"

"To warn you that, in his opinion, the man is a lunatic."

"If Axtell is a lunatic, I'm another," said Cupper. "Hant knows perfectly well the man is here. He has tried twice to get in to see him. I can understand why."

Penn Cupper chuckled in exultation. His revenge was beginning to work.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE THUNDER MAKER.

Watching Cupper and Axtell together, Bertha saw two men with but a single idea. They consulted constantly. The husband, consumed in his plan, neglected the wife for whose avenging the plan was made.

Even more intent was Axtell. Up at day-break, he was still up at midnight. Cupper's activity came in fits and starts, with intervals of languor, but Axtell was never at rest; he never let down; he drove himself as he drove the work in Shadow Valley, with passion.

It occurred to Bertha that he drove her husband along with the engineers and the laborers, and that his was the mind that dominated at Cupper Wold. She recalled Hant's warning. Perhaps the little inventor was not quite a lunatic, but at least he was what Avenue B would dub a "nut." He reminded her of the genius who, while conducting the orchestra at the Arena, would sometimes chastise the violinists with his baton.

As the year edged into summer she saw Axtell's excitement rise with the temperature. She understood that the all-absorbing enterprise was nearing completion. There came a day when a haze of smoke rose from the tall new stack and hung above the valley.

The day was a blisterer. Even on the verandas of the palace on the mountain crest the heat was oppressive. Bertha was burdened by it, but Cupper seemed unaffected. He went away in the warmest hour

of the afternoon and failed to reappear until sundown. He was alone, Axtell having remained at the plant, and he was smilingly elated.

After dinner they sat on the piazza and looked down into the dark hollow of Shadow Valley, Bertha in lightest attire fanning her cheeks and sighing. Not a breath of air was stirring; the heat wave had the whole region in its grasp.

"I never believed it could be so warm in the North Temperate Zone," she complained.

"Is it too much for you?" asked Cupper.

"Then I'll have it made cooler."

Through an open window he reached for a telephone.

"Give me Mr. Axtell," he spoke. And then—

"Axtell, we're pretty warm here on the hill. Can't you send us a breeze?"

Again he sat beside his wife. The glow at the tip of his cigarette shook a little. His eyes were fixed on the shadowy valley, and he bent his head, listening. Creeping through the stillness of the night came a low musical murmur from far away—a whir that reminded Cupper of the hum of countless cicadas in a distant grove and caused the more practical Bertha to think of the song of an electric vacuum cleaner.

Slowly, audibly it rose from low C to middle C. There it hung a minute, then ascended more slowly and with increasing distinctness to high C. A puff of warm air touched their faces. A moment more and the clematis leaves at the piazza rail were fluttering in a fresh and steady breeze from the valley.

Cupper watched Bertha in the twilight, waiting for her to speak.

"Penn!" she cried. "What a magician you are!"

"A modern magician," he agreed. Enthusiastically he made her a present of the breeze, then poured forth the story of his dream and his ambition.

"This is only the beginning, the test of the engines," he said at the end of his tale. "If the thing works, we shall build plants near every great city. We shall revolutionize the ice-making industry. Where will Hant be then, with his ice ponds and his ice houses? What will become of his ammonia machines, of the money he has invested and the companies he controls? I will break his monopoly like that—" Cup-

per snapped his cigarette in two and flung the pieces away.

Bertha had listened in growing awe. "And you have done this all because his wife won't associate with me?"

"That's my only reason," he answered. "Do I prove that I love you?"

The breeze had gained in force. He touched her bare arm. "Your skin is cold," said he, and went to fetch shawls. The heat of July had given way to a coolness like that of May. The clematis leaves had hard work to hold on to their vines. Above the steady humming of the wind among the trees of the lawn and around the corners of the piazza arose the monotonous murmur in the valley below. Cupper reached again for the telephone.

"What's she doing now, Axtell? Two hundred a minute, eh? What's that? All right, if you're not afraid. Let her run at five hundred for five minutes. Better wrap up."

To his wife he said, "We must go in. Axtell wants to send the big fan up to five hundred revolutions a minute. If you stay out here you'll be blown off the mountain."

They went inside, where Bertha commanded the servants to close the windows. Such an order would have been warranted if only as a protection against the sudden chill that had filled the air.

Cupper listened at the door and heard the giant fan in the valley increase its note to a scream. He felt the thud that came when a new and furious gale leaped out of the hollow and fell upon the house. He heard something else—a sound that gave pause to his heart. In another second he was laughing and saying to his wife:

"I thought one of our boilers had let go. But it was only thunder. Look, my dear." He switched off the house lights in order better to see a strange thing happening in the western sky, where the last glow of twilight was fading.

Overhead the stars were clear. Nearer the horizon cloud shapes were forming, whirling, reaching outflung arms toward the zenith. A streak of lightning left the picture dark; a crash of thunder followed. A savage dash of wind-driven rain blurred the window-pane, and bits of hail struck the glass like pebbles.

Alarmed by the uproar out of doors, Bertha found the wall button and set the room

alight. Her husband stared at her with glittering eyes.

"I have made it rain!" he cried. "Do you hear me, girl? I have made it rain!"

His egotism had always seemed to her to be only whimsical and forgivable. To-night it frightened her.

From the stairs next morning she heard angry voices in the breakfast room. Axtell and her husband were quarreling over nothing more momentous than the question whether it was Elijah or Elisha who produced precipitation in Bible times.

"At any rate, I am the second man in the world to cause rain at will," Cupper bragged. "Do you realize what it means? Do you know that one fourth of the land surface of the globe is worthless for want of rain? Did you ever see those leagues of deserts beyond the Rockies where nothing grows but sage and cactus? Why, man, I'll feed the whole world off those waste places. I'll be the greatest benefactor to the human race in all history. I'll——"

"You!" Axtell broke in. "You make me tired. You talk as if you had anything to do with my invention but lend me some of your dirty money to try it out. I'm the man who made it rain. Get that through your head."

They went away still wrangling, and Bertha saw no more of them until evening, when they came up the hill from Shadow Valley arm in arm. Cupper was not a drinking man, but pleading exhaustion he paid sundry visits to the sideboard before dinner, Axtell always accompanying him. Both men were jaded and unstrung.

After dinner Axtell departed, saying as he left: "To-night we put her up to eight hundred, maybe a thousand." He took with him a fur overcoat, a winter cap, and mittens.

As on the previous evening the weather was hot and sultry, with not a cloud to veil the blazing sunset.

"Are you sure there has been no message from Hant?" asked Cupper, as he and his wife took their places again on the west piazza.

"I'm sure, Penn. Why should you expect one?"

"I notified him that our first test was to be made last night. If he wasn't somewhere in the neighborhood, I miss my guess. Axtell says that Hant has actually been here on the place talking with him, trying to

buy him and his idea away from me. It happened some weeks ago, but Axtell kept still about it until this morning when we were scrapping over the glory."

"Why did you notify Mr. Hant?" Bertha asked.

"Malice, pure malice," her husband replied. "What's the sweetness in revenge unless your enemy knows what you're doing to him?"

"And you expected to hear from him?"

"In my telegram I let him think there might still be a chance for him to come in with us. He will bite, if I know him. He will come begging. Then—ah!"

Below the house and far away in the gathering darkness the drone of the great fan began—a deep bass hum that slowly climbed the scale as on the night before, until like a siren foghorn it set the ears to throbbing.

"Penn, do you know how far around the country your last night's storm reached?"

"Why?"

"The hail did a lot of harm here. One of the gardeners tells me there's hardly a peach or an apple left on the trees; and the corn was beaten down to mere stumps."

"I don't care," said Cupper. "When we have proved our idea I'll pay for all the damage we do. We can't stop a discovery like this for a few dollars' worth of garden truck. Here comes the breeze. Feel it?"

This evening was a repetition of the first, with the exception that at ten o'clock a bolt of lightning struck an oak tree within a few paces of the house and hurled fragments of bark and slivers of wood through the windows on that side. Following that incident, the gale howling out of the valley tore a length of cornice off the roof and hurled it crashing down upon the driveway.

For the first time in her life Bertha knew physical fear. Cowering among the pillows of a couch, shuddering with the house under the furious blasts, she saw her husband striding up and down the room in a veritable ecstasy, chuckling, gloating over his triumph, luxuriating in the roar of the tempest of his causing.

She was chilled and shivering, but he showed no sign of feeling the cold, no sign of consciousness that she was near. He had quite forgotten her. He paused to pick up the telephone.

"Axtell, what's she doing now? Pshaw!

that's barely turning. Step on her, Axtell! Spin her up a little. Give her a thousand."

Bertha caught the receiver out of his hand.

"Mr. Axtell," she cried, "never mind what Mr. Cupper says. You've done enough for one night. Do you hear me?"

"I hear you, Mrs. Cupper. It's all right; I'll quit. I doubt if she'll stand any more to-night, anyway. How's the weather up there?"

"Dreadful," Bertha answered, forcing a laugh. "If you have any kindness in your heart, you will stop now and let us thaw out."

Hours later in the night she heard the voices of the two men in the house. Their words were indistinct but their tone was exultant.

When morning came she took breakfast alone. After an hour her husband appeared.

"Where are you going?" he asked in surprise, noting that she wore, instead of a silky morning gown, a traveling suit.

"I am going away from here until you are done making it thunder," she answered.

"Perhaps it is just as well," said Cupper. "The real test comes to-night. It may tear things up a bit."

He handed her into her car. She clung to his hand.

"Won't you come away with me, Penn?"

"What? Run away at the moment of victory? No, my dear. To-morrow, maybe, but not to-day."

When she looked back from a bend in the descending drive she saw him talking with Axtell. He did not see the good-by wave of her hand.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CALAMITY.

Since there are no intelligent witnesses who can tell us at firsthand of the happenings at Cupper Wold on the evening of July 15th, we can do no better than trust to the insight and the imagination of Doctor MacCracken, chief observer of the national weather bureau at Washington, whose book lies before us.

"On the morning of July 16th," writes Doctor MacCracken, "accompanied by Thomas Melick, of Princeton University, I journeyed by automobile to the spot where the Cupper Wold—formerly Killingby—railroad station once stood.

"Our last five miles of the trip were difficult. At one point the ruins of a frame house barred our passage. At many points we had to remove fallen trees from the road before we could proceed.

"Nothing whatsoever was left of the railroad station. Building, platforms, signposts, all were gone. Facing the station were the great iron gates of the motor drive. Oddly, the gates remained standing, locked, also the stone gateposts, though the gatekeeper's lodge was a heap of stone and mortar and the stone wall that once shut the public out from even a glimpse of the estate was down as far as the eye could see.

"Following the drive, we penetrated into an area as desolate as any war-devastated region in France. Not a tree was left standing for two hundred yards on either side. When a trunk still remained upright, its branches were gone. In one case I saw the trunk of a tulip tree literally stripped of its bark as by machine-gun bullets. The expanse of meadow and lawn and woods which should have been green and lovely was blackened; one would have thought it fire swept. Such was the effect of the intense cold that preceded the annihilating tornado.

"By the winding drive we ascended the noble hill from whose summit the mansion had looked out across the beautiful countryside. Here again stone walls had been demolished. In one sturdy bit of masonry I saw one of the freaks of the storm. An oak plank had been driven end-on into the wall so neatly that it seemed to have been set into the stone work by intention. That face of the mountain was shorn of vegetation utterly; the very grass was blown away.

"At the crest we looked into the yawning hole that was once the cellar of the Cupper house. The destruction was complete and appalling. It staggers the mind to think what must have been the experience of the inmates. I was told by some Italian laborers, a number of whom were prowling around the ruins in search of treasure, that parts of the house and articles of its furnishings had been hurled by the winds to points three miles away.

"By a singular bit of luck, the workmen's village, which lay in a remote corner of the estate, escaped serious harm. The half dozen or more tornadoes rushing from various quarters of the compass to meet above the horseshoe-shaped mountain missed the vil-

lage, though they suffered very little else of Cupper Wold to remain. The only deaths in the place were due to the five minutes of awful and almost unbelievable cold that ushered in the catastrophe.

"Down the slope beyond the house, in the glen known as Shadow Valley, we saw evidences of that cold on every side. For the most part the ground was muddy as in a spring thaw, but in the shadows of the bowlders it was still frozen even at noon, when we arrived. The artificial lake in the glen was white in the middle with a floating mass of disintegrating ice. I learned that men had walked across from shore to shore early in the morning.

"At last we stood at the edge of the pit out of which all this evil had sprung. In another chapter I describe the monstrous fan wheel that whirled here, to its own destruction and that of the surrounding region, also the system of trusses that held it in place and resisted the upward pull of its stupendous vanes. For such knowledge as we have of the machine we are indebted to the admirable courtesy and frankness of the widow of Mr. Cupper, who saw it in the weeks of its construction.

"The pit was about four acres in extent. That morning it resembled nothing that I have ever seen except the ruins of a great factory. Massive steel girders were twisted and bent like strips of tin. A mighty hand had reached down from the skies, as it were, and torn the huge fabric apart as one tears a spider web.

"The engine houses were gone. The steam boilers lay tossed about like toys. A heap of rubbish showed where the smokestack had lifted its muzzle toward the level of the mountaintop. All around us the mountainsides were bare and cheerless as a stone quarry.

"As to what happened at the pit every investigator must form his own theory. Mine will be found elaborated in another part of this book. The suggestion that the Cupper machine actually 'sucked a hole in the sky,' as the newspapers have expressed it, seems plausible to many, and perhaps with reason.

"They have as evidence the amazing fall of the barometer in the surrounding territory, and this evidence cannot be disputed, for the acute barometric depressions which occurred simultaneously with the three tests made of the Cupper machine are matters of official record.

"I admit that the machine did succeed in drawing down currents of the cold upper air. The hail squalls and the other instances of precipitation are proof abundant, even without the testimony of the inhabitants of the region as to the startling drop in temperature.

"But when popular theorists go so far as to declare that the Cupper fan prevailed against the counterbalancing inflow of the atmosphere to the extent of making an 'opening' in the earth's air envelope, through which the cold of space reached down and for one brief and blighting instant touched this planet with its deadly finger, then I cannot agree with them at all. The idea seems to me to be preposterous.

"I grant that for some minutes on the night of July 15th the mercury recorded a lower degree of temperature than has ever been known outside of the laboratories. In those frightful minutes the cold was so intense, no doubt, as to freeze the oil in the bearings of the giant fan. This freezing probably caused the breaking loose of the spinning monster, sending it whirling like a giant toy to a height purely speculative, from which it fell at last, its energy exhausted, at Sumerville, thirty miles away. But the notion that the fan wheel broke away through 'racing' in a vacuum of its own creating strikes me as erroneous.

"It was the breaking loose of the fan that did the greatest harm, of course. If the fan had remained in position and gradually reduced its speed as on the two previous nights, the depression would gradually have decreased and the atmosphere been restored to balance without any undue manifestations of atmospheric fury. But breaking away suddenly and ceasing in an instant to function, as it did, it left a low at that point for nature to fill up, which nature proceeded to do in her own immediate manner by sending an unchecked atmospheric flood toward the center of the disturbance. In the ensuing rush of air the six whirlwinds or tornadoes resulted. The earth tremors recorded on the seismograph drums at Princeton, Rutgers, Lafayette, and elsewhere, were doubtless caused by the shock of the tearing loose of the gigantic machine.

"But I cannot assent to the notion that

interstellar space was let down through the earth's envelope to the earth's surface, picturesque though that fancy may be.

"Imagine, if you will, a stupendous suction wheel rotated at the bottom of the ocean. Conceivably it might lower the sea surface just above it. But could it pull down the surface all the way to the bottom against the inrush of the surrounding walls of water? So in considering the Cupper Wold affair, we must think of ourselves as at the bottom of a vast, free ocean of air——"

Thus learnedly and earnestly Doctor MacCracken pleaded for his view of the matter. But people go on believing what they like.

In the pretty town of Aberdeen they believe, every man, woman, and child, including Banker James J. Lunn, who is now a ruling elder in the Presbyterian Church, that the Delaware Valley cold wave of July was a sign sent from Heaven in response to the prayers of Evangelist Gideon Giles.

Henniker Hant, president of the Ice Trust, was found under a hedge within a mile of the main gate of Cupper Wold, wrapped in his linen duster and dead from exposure. His funeral in New York was a quiet affair, most of the members of the Impossible Set being out of town at the time.

There was never a funeral for Penn Cupper and Inventor Axtell. There was no need for one. Like Enoch of Holy Writ, those two worthies were translated, carried up, and to this day no man knoweth where they came down.

About Bertha? She has lived and learned. In memory of her husband she opened a neighborhood house in Avenue B, a combination of day nursery, dispensary, playground, visiting nurses' home, gymnasium, and theater.

If you attend her little theater some night to see her young folk put on better plays than are given in Broadway, you will find the very toniest people in New York in her audience, for it is considered fine and fashionable to support her work among the poor. At almost any first-night performance you may see the wonderful Mrs. Stuyvesant van Zimm and the exquisite Mrs. Pomfret Carteret seated in the front row, with Tinita, Queen of the Arctic, between them.

The Croyden Mystery

By William MacLeod Raine

Author of "Tangled Trails," "Wyoming," Etc.

Even after the murderer of Hungerford was arrested Detective Evans had something coming to him—and he got it

EVANS, on house duty at headquarters, finished his story and got the laugh he expected from the reporters and the other plain-clothes men present. Barney O'Hara joined in the mirth at his own expense. He was used to being the butt of the big detective's jokes, but he was a good sport. He did not mind being laughed at for a "rube," but he objected silently to the way Evans did it. The man was a bully. He rode over his feelings roughshod with an ill-nature born of a churlish spirit.

The old desk sergeant read Barney better. He had noticed the boy's light, firm step, the steely glint in the steady, blue-gray eyes.

"Better lay off the kid," he had once told the plain-clothes man. "One o' these days he'll either knock you cold or show you up for a boob."

The eyes of Evans had narrowed and grown chill. "Knock me cold! Show me up! Where d'you get that stuff, serg? I can take care of hayseeds like him fast as they come."

"Take a good look at the way his shoulders fill that uniform. Give the eyes in that brown face the once over, Evans. I tell you he's got packed in his fists a kick like a mule. And he's nobody's fool. You've picked the wrong man to run on."

The detective laughed without mirth, his gambler's eyes expressionless. "Have I? Well, it's my funeral, serg. I'll take a chance. See?"

Barney's red head, tanned face, and open, friendly eyes had come straight from the wide range to the city. He had jaywalked across the street corner to headquarters through the traffic, asked a few questions, studied for a week, taken the examination, and been measured for a blue uniform with brass buttons.

O'Hara was green. He knew it. But his

superiors noticed that he never made the same mistake twice. He had a single-track mind that chewed on a problem till he had stripped the meat of it, as a terrier does at a bone. He listened to the reporters and the other men on the force, absorbing information in a silent, unobstrusive way he had. That was what he had been doing to-night when Evans had dragged him into the talk to jeer at him.

Pat with the ending of the big detective's story the telephone buzzed. The sergeant reached for the receiver.

"Yes. . . . Yes." The sergeant's feet came down from the desk and hit the floor. He came rigidly to attention, not to miss a word. "Found him murdered, you say? Ten minutes ago?" Automatically the officer's eyes lifted to the clock on the wall and registered the time on his brain. It was less than a minute after ten o'clock. "Don't touch anything till the officers get there. Keep everybody outa the room. Understand?"

He hung up. His voice was crisp and businesslike. "J. Wilkes Hungerford found murdered in his rooms. O'Hara, step across and notify the captain if the operator hasn't got him yet. Evans, take charge of our end of it."

Within three minutes an ambulance with the police surgeon was clanging through the streets. At its heel was a police patrol in which sat Evans, two other detectives, three reporters, and two men in uniform. One of the two was Barney O'Hara.

The Croyden Apartments are on the edge of the business district, in that part of Denver where the old families used to live before they migrated toward the Country Club neighborhood. It is a marble-halled, expensive place where hothouse dwellers congregate because the problem of living is made easier for them there.

The news of the murder had already spread through the house. When Barney and the other officers stepped from the elevator at the fourth floor the hall was thronged with men and women, a fair sprinkling of them in evening dress. Apartment No. 47 was filled with people staring at the ghastly exhibit on the lounge, or gathered in groups in excited talk. Whoever had notified headquarters had failed to comply with the sergeant's orders to let nobody into the room until the arrival of the police.

Evans reduced to order the medley of confusion. He quickly cleared the rooms, after he had sifted out the late comers from those who had first seen the murdered man. Meanwhile he set guards at both the front and back entrances of the building to prevent any tenants, or the guests of any, from leaving before they had been examined. Barney admired the sheer brute efficiency with which he got results.

Hungerford had been found dead by Miss Helen Radway about six or seven minutes after ten o'clock. She had at once notified a party of friends who were playing bridge in the next apartment. Neither she nor any of the rest of this group knew who the man was that had called up the police.

A casual examination showed that Hungerford had been killed from behind. Death was due to a wound in the back of the neck. A small round jagged hole about the size of a bullet showed there.

"Shot from behind," announced Evans to the officers in his dogmatic way. "Probably never knew who killed him. Fellow slipped in behind him through the open door. Hungerford was very deaf and wouldn't hear him come in. Had a Maxim silencer, I reckon. Accounts for nobody hearin' the shot. Crowd in No. 46 prob'ly laughin' and talkin' so loud they wouldn't 'a' heard, anyhow."

Barney looked at the wound carefully. Around it, for a distance of about a half inch on each side, was a bruised discoloration of flesh.

"Where was the body when you saw it first?" he asked Miss Radway later.

A young man moved forward a trifle to answer. The policeman from the open range noticed that this man hovered close to Miss Radway and that she rather pointedly ignored his presence.

"Right here by the desk. He must have been sitting at it when the murderer came

in by the open door behind," the young man said.

"You were among those who got here first?" Barney asked.

"Yes. As soon as Miss Radway screamed I came running."

"Did we get your name, sir?"

"My name's Belding—Roger Belding."

He was a fattish man, full-faced, with eyes that had a trick of dodging. O'Hara's gaze traveled down his immaculate dress suit.

"He's right, is he—about where the body was lying?" Barney had turned to the young woman.

She nodded, silently. It was plain that her nerves were highly strung. What she had seen had shaken her composure, but she held herself with a tight rein. The girl was amazingly pretty. Of that there could be no doubt, even though the color had been driven from her soft cheeks and there was an expression of something very like terror in the deep violet eyes.

Evans, who had been making some measurements with a tape line, came forward. "If you don't mind I'll ask the questions, Mr. O'Hara," he said with heavy sarcasm.

To himself Barney presently admitted that the detective cleared the decks with economy of words and action. Inside of twenty minutes he had pieced together a story of the evening's doings in apartment No. 46. Before the hour had died away he had triumphantly decided on the murderer, though he did not say so in as many words.

The Clarendons lived in apartment No. 46. Among their guests for the evening had been Miss Radway, Roger Belding, and J. Wilkes Hungerford. It was rather an informal sort of affair. Wine and cocktails were on the sideboard and had been served now and then. Two or three had drifted in rather late and had cut in at one table or another. There had been a good deal of occasional hilarity between rubbers.

At about a quarter to ten Hungerford, who had brought Miss Radway in his car, excused himself on the plea of an engagement at his rooms. He had told two or three that he was going to meet his cousin Terry Haddon and expected to have a row with him. Soon after he had left the apartment Belding, who had shown evidence of being restive at not sitting at the same table with Miss Radway, maneuvered the girl into a curtained alcove French window. They sat there, in view of those at the card tables,

until exactly ten o'clock. Then Helen Radway, a flame of anger burning in her cheeks, had stepped out of the alcove and joined those inside the room. Belding, bowing, had drawn the curtain back to let her pass. Two or three ladies smiled covertly. It was plain he had incensed the girl.

Belding himself, to recover his composure probably, retired behind the curtains for four or five minutes, then sauntered out smoking a cigarette and cut in at the nearest table. In the meantime, Miss Radway had shown signs of nervousness and had presently followed Hungerford with the excuse that there was something she wanted to tell him at once. She was a young woman of high spirit, given to following her impulses, and none of the party were much surprised when she went.

A moment later her scream of terror had lifted the card players to their feet and brought them flying into the hall. They had found her, colorless to the lips, clutching the back of an armchair and looking down at the dead body of J. Wilkes Hungerford.

This was the story that Evans pieced out from the testimony of a dozen witnesses. He bullied it out of them insolently, as though he suspected each one of the murder. Presently he dragged from the janitor a bit of information that looked like a clew. The man had met a young, well-dressed man hurrying down the stairs. He carried a cane, was gloved, and was plainly in a state of agitation. He had hurried past him without a word. The janitor described him as dark and slender, thin-faced, with eyes that told a story of a man shocked and startled into fear.

Evans whispered to one of his assistants, who presently disappeared quietly. Meanwhile he got Miss Radway alone into a room with the officers and put her through a searching quiz.

"You're holdin' back on me," he said, setting his square jaw. "You know a lot you haven't told. Better come through, miss. No use trying to protect any one. It'll come out sure. The janitor must 'a' seen this fellow hurryin' away just about the time you reached Hungerford's rooms. You saw him, too. Who was he?"

The girl's hand, resting on the edge of the table, caught at it to steady her. "I—I didn't see any one," she gasped.

Evans looked at her, snarling, with all the

menace of a caged wolf. "Was it Terence Haddon you saw beatin' it?"

She swayed. For a moment Barney thought she was going to faint. But she crushed back the weakness. "I—I didn't see any one. What right have you to—to torment me like this?"

"Why did you follow Hungerford to his rooms?"

"I—wanted to see him—about a private matter."

"What matter?"

"I prefer not to discuss that."

"Were you engaged to be married to him?"

"No."

"To Mr. Belding?"

"No." The answer came swiftly, with a scornful lift of the fine head.

"Do you know what Haddon's appointment with Hungerford was for?"

"No." She added a word to that. "I presume about the settlement of their uncle's estate. They had been quarreling about it—differing I should say. Mr. Haddon was not satisfied with the way Mr. Hungerford represented him and his sister, Miss Marie Haddon."

"Did Haddon tell you this?"

"It was common talk among those who knew both men."

"Did Haddon tell you?" he reiterated.

"I don't know. I've heard him say things."

"Heard him threaten Hungerford?"

"No-o." But it was clear the young woman's heart was faint within her. Other witnesses had heard young Haddon's wild talk, too.

"You stick to it that you didn't meet Haddon to-night, either in Hungerford's rooms or in the hall outside?"

"I've already answered that," the young woman said uneasily.

Evans, his bulldog jaw clamped, leaned forward and looked steadily at the girl. Presently he spoke, his eyes boring into hers. "Didn't you follow Hungerford to his rooms because you knew he had an appointment with Haddon and you were afraid there might be trouble?"

O'Hara saw her throat move as she swallowed her alarm. "I—don't have to answer all the impertinent questions you ask me," she said, after a long silence in which her eyes fought with those of the detective.

"Was Haddon in love with you?" de-

manded Evans, his strident voice heavy and dominant.

"His business and mine, I think," she answered quietly, color flooding her cheeks.

"Or you with him, miss?"

She turned and walked out of the room as though he had not been there.

O'Hara, at the door, moved aside to let her pass. His honest Irish heart resented the third-degree method of Evans. Yet the brown-faced policeman believed that in her lay the key to the mystery of who killed Hungerford. She might not know it, though he doubted her entire innocence of knowledge. She knew more than she had told. The detective had not touched the right spring to open her mouth.

There came presently a knock at the door. O'Hara opened it, to let in a plain-clothes man and a young fellow of medium height, dark and slender, whose eyes flashed round the room in apprehension. His glance fell upon the body lying on the divan, and he shuddered.

"You are Terence Haddon?" Evans asked harshly.

"Yes."

"You were in this room to-night, less than an hour ago. Don't deny it. There are witnesses."

Haddon said nothing.

"There's evidence that you had an appointment with Hungerford to-night at his rooms, that you kept that appointment, and that you tried to slip out unseen by taking the stairway instead of the elevator. I want to know what passed between you and your cousin," the detective demanded.

The dark young man gave a little resigned lift of his shoulder. "Nothing," he answered.

"Wha'd you mean nothing?"

"I mean that I came to keep the appointment and found him lying dead on the floor."

"Wha'd you do?"

"Nothing. I lost my nerve and bolted."

"Was that when Miss Radway saw you?"

"Just as I started downstairs—yes."

"Did you say anything to her?"

"No. I wasn't sure she saw me."

"Why did you bolt, as you call it?"

"I had talked foolishly about what I would do if he tried to rob me and my sister of our share of the estate left by my uncle. I knew that if he died without a will we were his heirs. I was afraid I'd be accused of killing him. So I did a bolt."

"Did you call up the police?"

"No."

"So your cousin was dead when you first saw him to-night?"

"Yes. I swear to Heaven he was," Haddon cried.

"You'll probably get a chance to swear to it before a jury—and maybe they'll believe it," jeered the detective. "Meantime, I reckon, I'll take you with me down to the chief, Mr. Haddon. He'd like to hear you tell what you know about this."

Barney knew that Evans had already tried, convicted, and hanged Haddon in his mind. But there was something about the young man that the policeman liked. The evidence pointed straight to him, but sometimes signposts are not true.

After Evans had finished his examination of witnesses and of the apartment Barney was one of two officers left in charge of the rooms. He spent his time quartering over the ground and fitting together several bits of information he had picked up with his eyes. His investigation took him into apartment No. 46 and back again to Hungerford's rooms by an unusual but direct route.

The steely eyes in the brown face were quick with life. He was thinking—thinking intensely, dovetailing facts and suspicions into a theory that would meet the evidence without doing violence to it. He knew that Evans had made at least one important mistake. *Hungerford had not been shot at all. He had been stabbed with a sharp instrument—and O'Hara could put his fingers on the weapon any time he wanted to do so.*

In his notebook he jotted down certain cryptic words and others less enigmatic.

H. left Apt. 46 at 9:45.

Notice of murder phoned headquarters few seconds after 10. Therefore H. was killed between 9:45 and 10. But—was he?

Neither Miss Radway nor Belding left 46 till after 10. Dozen witnesses to prove this. Therefore perfect alibi for both. Unless—

Haddon in cousin's rooms between 9:45 and 10:05. Motive for crime established. Opportunity established. Subsequent guilty actions established. But—he didn't do it.

Show Cap knob. Also ledge. Finger prints.

See Miss R. soon as off duty.

Arrest murderer to-morrow morning.

Barney closed his notebook and put it into his pocket with a boyish grin. Over the telephone he got into touch with his captain and was relieved from duty at the Croyden. As soon as he reached headquarters he and the captain and the chief went into a conference of three. From it they

emerged to be driven to the home of Miss Radway, after the chief had whispered instructions to a couple of plain-clothes men.

It was past midnight when Helen Radway and her father met the officers in the living room. The young woman was pale and trembling, racked by emotions she tried in vain to subdue and control. Inside of a few minutes she had broken down and told all she knew.

The chief of police liked the dramatics of his business. That was one of the reasons why he called a meeting at the Croyden next day instead of at his own office. When Terence Haddon was brought into the apartment of the Clarendons between two officers he found waiting there for him Miss Radway and her father, the Clarendons, Belding, the detective Evans, the chief of police, and the old sergeant of detectives who had received the news of the murder the night before. Barney O'Hara was one of the officers who came up with Haddon from the city hall.

The prisoner was pale, but no whiter than the young woman whose eyes flew to meet his the instant he came through the door.

The chief came briskly to business. He was an oldish man, lean and tough, with a leathery face touched sometimes by a sardonic smile.

"I'll say to begin with that we've got the man who killed Hungerford—got him roped and hog tied with evidence, as Barney would say. That right, Evans?" The chief cocked an inquiring eye at the plain-clothes man.

"Sure as I'm a foot high," the detective answered promptly. "I had him inside of an hour behind the bars."

Helen Radway made a little despairing movement of her hands toward Haddon. From her throat came a sound that was half a sob and half a moan.

"I'll just sum up," the chief said. "We were notified at thirty seconds after ten o'clock that Hungerford had been killed ten minutes earlier. This gives an alibi to everybody at Mrs. Clarendon's party. Hungerford went to his own rooms about a quarter to ten. He said he was going to meet Terence Haddon, that they had had trouble, and that he expected more trouble. Haddon was seen to leave the building by the janitor and by Miss Radway, probably at about ten-five, or maybe two or three minutes later. He was trying to make a get-away by the stairs

unnoticed. The janitor says he was white, 'like he'd seen a ghost.' Haddon says he found Hungerford lying dead on the floor and admits he did not call anybody or notify the police. It's believed Hungerford left no will. Therefore Haddon is one of the two who would benefit by his death. Are my facts right, Evans?"

The detective nodded. "It's a straight open and shut case, chief."

The chief's sardonic grin came out for a moment and was gone. "Let's make sure of that." He turned to the girl who sat on the lounge with her hand in her father's. "Miss Radway, you were the first to see Mr. Hungerford after his death—except the man who telephoned headquarters. Will you tell us what happened, from the time that Mr. Hungerford left the room?"

The young woman's eyes met those of Haddon again before she spoke. It was as though they begged him to forgive her if anything she said might tell against him. Her voice was very low but clear.

"We finished the rubber, and I went with Mr. Belding into the alcove there. He asked me to marry him. It was not the first time. I had always refused him. Last night I told him I cared for another man. He jumped to the conclusion that it was Mr. Hungerford. He—said I had encouraged him—which isn't true—and that nobody else would marry me while he was alive to prevent it. He was greatly excited."

"How do you know?"

"By his voice and his manner. His hand kept twisting the knob on the end of my chair back. It came off in his hand. I got up and left him. For a few minutes I watched a hand being played. I was troubled about something. I made up my mind impulsively that I must see some one. So I left the room."

"Who did you want to see?"

She moistened her lip with the tip of her tongue before she answered almost in a murmur. "Mr. Haddon. I—I wanted to tell him—something."

"You wanted to tell him not to quarrel with his cousin."

"Yes."

"You knew he was quick-tempered."

"I don't know that at all," she denied quickly. "I just didn't want them to quarrel. When I reached the door of Mr. Hungerford's apartment I found it open. The lights were on. He was lying on the floor

near his desk. I ran in. Then I saw he was dead and I screamed."

"Did you see Mr. Haddon at any time?"

"I saw some one going downstairs. It—it looked like him. I wasn't sure."

"That cinches the case against Haddon," Evans broke in vindictively. "He must 'a' just come outa Hungerford's rooms."

"Yes. He admits that. The point is, did he kill his cousin or find him already dead?" The chief turned to Barney, again with the sardonic grin that expressed his attitude toward life. "O'Hara, we'll hear you now."

The brown-faced officer stepped forward. "First off, chief, I noticed that Hungerford hadn't been shot. He had been stabbed. The wound was too jagged for a bullet hole and there was a bruise all round it where the handle of the weapon had crushed the flesh. Then, too, the direction of the wound was downward, just as it would have been if some one had struck from above while his victim was leaning forward. A bullet would have plowed straight ahead."

The chief looked at Evans and chuckled. He had his own reasons for wanting the detective taken down a peg or two. "Sounds reasonable," he said mildly.

"Seemed to me we oughtn't to jump at the conclusion Haddon had done this, not without covering the whole ground first," Barney went on. "I had noticed one or two things; so soon as I got a chance I went into Mrs. Clarendon's apartment and kinda cast an eye around. O' course I went into the alcove. There was a little railed porch outside it and a ledge runnin' along the wall to the next apartment and beyond, a kinda narrow ledge, but wide enough for a man to walk on if he was careful. I followed that ledge to the next window, pushed it open, and stepped into a bedroom. There was a telephone in it. I knew now who had killed Hungerford and how he had done it."

"Bunk," sneered Evans. "What's the use o' tryin' to show Belding did this when he's got an A1 alibi. He didn't leave the room at Clarendon's till after ten."

"And Hungerford's watch stopped when he fell from his chair. It stopped at exactly ten-four."

"Then it must 'a' been wrong," retorted Evans, his eyes sultry with anger. "We know this killin' was done before ten."

"How do we know it?" asked Barney quietly.

"We know it because some one phoned up at ten and told us about it, you boob."

"Yes, but we don't know he didn't phone before he killed Hungerford and not after. We don't know that he didn't phone just to fix up an alibi that would let him out on the time."

"Where would he phone from, according to your fairy tale?" demanded the detective.

"He phoned from Hungerford's bedroom after he climbed in at the window."

"With Hungerford sittin' at his desk not thirty feet from him?"

"You've said it. Hungerford was deaf as a post, almost. He wouldn't hear. Then the murderer stepped outa the bedroom, crept up behind him, and stabbed him like I said."

O'Hara swung on his heel. A forefinger shot out straight at Roger Belding. The splendid supple body of the officer seemed to crouch as for a spring. His eyes flashed a menace at the fat-faced man who stood trembling before him. "Isn't that how you killed Hungerford, Belding?"

"I—I didn't kill him. I've got an alibi. I couldn't have done it. His watch must have been wrong." Belding's flabby cheeks were chalky.

"It wasn't wrong. Earlier in the evening he compared it with those of Mr. Clarendon and another guest. It was right to a tick. We've got you, Belding. I suspected you first from your dress suit. Two of the buttons had brick dust on them where you brushed against the wall as you came along the ledge. One of 'em is frayed, and there are spurts of blood on one sleeve, though you sponged the stain off when you got home."

"How do you know?" quavered Belding.

The chief pulled out a suit case from back of his chair and drew a dress coat into sight. Traces of the brick dust still showed on the buttons. The bloodstain could not be detected with the naked eye.

"That's not all," Barney went on, implacable as the day of judgment. "There was blood on your hand. You noticed it as you crept back along the wall and you wiped it off on a brick. Your finger marks are written there for us to read. You used your handkerchief, too, but, of course, you destroyed that when you got home."

"You've worked out everything else, Mr. Sherlock Holmes," jeered Evans heavily.

"What about a weapon? Have you found that, too?"

Barney stepped lightly forward to the alcove and dragged out a chair. It was a pretentious but cheaply made piece of furniture, an imitation of expensive hand-carved mahogany. Two round knobs decorated the top of the back, one at each end. He unscrewed one of these. With the knob as a handle was a very long pointed screw nail.

"Here's the weapon. There's blood on the screw and on the bottom of the wood. The lower part of the handle exactly fits the discolored bruise around the edge of the wound. The murderer took this with him, brought it back, screwed it into place, lit a cigarette, and stepped back from the alcove into the room. He hadn't been out of the alcove more than four minutes on his errand."

A queer, strangled gurgle interrupted O'Hara. The fat-faced man flung out a hand wildly as though to ward off the fate closing in on him. His knees buckled under him, and he sank down on the floor unconscious. He had confessed guilt.

Helen Radway walked straight across the room to Terence Haddon and gave him her hand.

"I knew you didn't do it, Terry," she told him, and her eyes flashed a message that went to his heart like water to the roots of a thirsty flower.

"I knew you knew it," he said simply.

In later days, after they were married, both of them agreed that their engagement dated from that moment.

Barney and the old desk sergeant walked downtown together. Evans met them in the corridor that leads to the detective headquarters at city hall. Evidently he had been waiting there for them. His face was livid with anger. He knew the chief had used this raw patrolman as a weapon to rebuke him. His vanity and his egotism were outraged, for he was sure the whole department would laugh at him both publicly and privately.

"I got a word to say to you, O'Hara," he said thickly, a threat in his voice. "Dirty work, I call it. Playin' your own hand and keepin' evidence from me." He added a word that fighting men do not tolerate, and to the insult added a blow.

Barney paid his debt in full there and then. He thrashed the bully till Evans cried enough.

The old desk sergeant lingered a moment after the young fellow in uniform had gone.

"Didn't I tell you to lay off the kid, Evans, or he'd knock you cold or show you up for a sucker? He's done both. How d' you like yore own medicine, anyhow?"

He followed Barney into the office, grinning.



A CHAMPION SMOKER

DOES your pipe go out? After an evening of smoking is there a large pile of burned matches on your ash tray? Shame on your head, then, for you are a careless smoker. You allow your mind to wander off to less important matters than good tobacco, and your pipe revenges itself for this neglect by going out. Of course, if your idea of a perfect evening is the old brier, a can of your favorite mixture, and the latest number of *POPULAR* you have a good excuse—you can blame it all on the editor, whose aim it is to publish stories so interesting that while you are reading them you'll forget even a well-seasoned pipe filled with a perfect blend. But for how long can you keep your pipe alight when you are "just smokin'?" Half an hour—amateurish! An hour? Only fair. At the British Tobacco Fair, held in London last spring, fifty really expert pipe smokers contested to see which could keep a single pipe going longest. First prize was a bicycle, and second prize nine gallons of ale—or was it the other way about? At any rate, first prize was won by a Mr. Woodcock, who managed to keep a clay pipe alive for two hours and five minutes. The winner of second place smoked one pipe for one hour and twenty-eight minutes. The rules allowed forty seconds for lighting up, and re-lighting was not permitted. So far as we know, Mr. Woodcock is the undisputed champion slow smoker of the universe, but we'll wager that he isn't satisfied—that he has his eye on the world's record of two hours and twelve minutes established in 1907. Perhaps with another year of practice he will be able to break it.

Under the Joshua Tree

By Henry Herbert Knibbs

'W AY out there where the sun is boss,
Under the Joshua tree,
'Long came a man on a played-out hoss,
Under the Joshua tree:
Says he, "I reckon I'm a ding-dang fool
For gettin' het up when I might stay cool,
And if you're a hoss—then I'm a mule,"
Under the Joshua tree.

"The sink's gone dry and the trail's gone wrong,"
Under the Joshua tree:
"I'm gettin' weak—and you ain't strong,"
Under the Joshua tree:
"As sure as my name is Jo Bill Jones,
We got to quit right here," he groans,
"And the buzzards'll get our hides and bones,"
Under the Joshua tree.

Now that hoss wa'n't much on family pride,
Under the Joshua tree,
But he aimed to keep his ole gray hide,
Under the Joshua tree:
So he says to hisself: "I'm mighty dry,
But there's no use quittin' while you can try,"
So he cocked one foot and he shut one eye,
Under the Joshua tree.

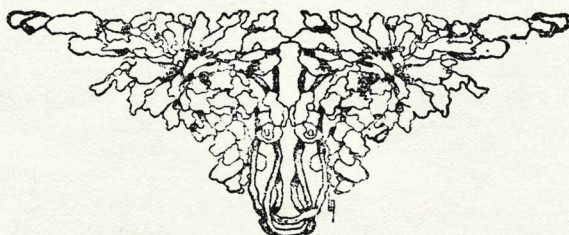
Bill took to crawlin' round and round,
Under the Joshua tree,
Diggin' like a dog in the bone-dry ground,
Under the Joshua tree:
But the hoss stood still on his three feet,
Lookin' like he was plumb dead beat,
Till he seen his chance—and he done it neat,
Under the Joshua tree.

Ole Bill rose right in the air,
Under the Joshua tree,
And oh, my gosh, how he did swear!
Under the Joshua tree:
With a hoss-shoe branded on his pants,
He let six whoops and he done a dance,
While the ole hoss waited another chance,
Under the Joshua tree.

Bill stood up, for he couldn't sit
Under the Joshua tree:
And he rubbed the place where the hoss-shoe lit
Under the Joshua tree:
Says he: "By gum, I'm seein' red!
And I'm blink-blank sure that you ain't dead!"
And it wa'n't no cooler for what he said
Under the Joshua tree.

He forked that hoss like he'd never been
Under the Joshua tree,
His head was thick—but his jeans was thin,
Under the Joshua tree:
He pulled out slow, but he made the ride,
With the ole hoss thinkin' down inside,
"I made a kick—and saved my hide,"
Under the Joshua tree.

There ain't no moral to this here song,
Under the Joshua tree:
If you don't go right you'll sure go wrong,
Under the Joshua tree:
But to set and look at a ole hoss-shoe,
And figure that luck will pull you through,
Don't always work—there's hoss sense, too
Under the Joshua tree.



The Vultures

By Wilbur Hall

Author of "No Piker," "Charlie Comer's Christmas," Etc.

Here is the tale of a bulldog struggle. When the "vultures" swooped, after old George Noll's death, Sam Eliston, county public administrator, found his hands full

AN old man, feeble and ailing, and unmarked by dignity or distinction of any sort, dragged himself into the office of St. Luke's Hospital one summer afternoon and applied for admittance. Questioned by a busy clerk, he gave the name of George Noll, the address of a boarding house not far away, and his age as seventy-six. Somewhat petulantly he disclaimed relatives and close friends, and, as to his reason for coming to the hospital, mumbled ungraciously that he did not "feel pert."

The room assigned to him, he paid for in clean, new bank notes; when he was escorted to it by an attendant he sat down on the bed for a moment, growled because the sun was streaming through the windows and because the corridor was noisy, and dropped back on the cold white of the counterpane—dead.

Somewhat indignant, as hospital people are likely to be, at this deviation from the monotony of their routine, the head nurse and superintendent sent word to the landlady of the dead man; she returned the information that she knew nothing of him whatsoever save that he had lodged with her "off and on" for eight years, that he had, that very morning, destroyed some papers in a stove in his room, paid his room rent, and gone away, for which, she averred, she was not sorry, since "he was an old grouch, though good pay."

Duly, thereupon, the superintendent had the dead man's pockets searched for papers. There were none—a twenty-dollar bill and some small change in a purse comprised the fruits of that investigation. Visibly annoyed, they examined his clothes then for tailors' labels or laundry marks: such, if they had ever existed, had been removed. Highly impatient, at last they telephoned the authorities, and sighed with relief when an

undertaker's wagon drove away, carrying out of their lives the inconsequential mystery of George Noll.

This was the only ripple of interest stirred by the sudden dropping out of life of another human being—until the day after his death. Then, as an undertaker's assistant removed from the body the cheap vest, he was aware of a stiff, crisp rustling, as from a paper lining the garment. Full of curiosity, he ripped open the seams and there fell to the floor at his feet five thousand nine hundred dollars in bank notes. His cries of astonishment brought others into the morgue; there were four men present, then, when the money was counted and when they found, suspended by a worn rawhide thong about the neck, duplicate keys such as are used in safety-deposit-box locks. Immediately, after telephoning a hint of the story to a friendly newspaper reporter, the undertaker summoned the coroner and the public administrator of the county and, with punctilious care, turned the case over to them.

And so, quite suddenly, an old man who, living, had seemed of no consequence whatever, became, dead, of very great consequence indeed; for he had gone to his grave a mystery, leaving behind him a considerable sum of currency and evidence that, somewhere in hiding, were other sums of that thing he had hoarded and guarded in life and incontinently abandoned with it—money.

Money! The city buzzed with the story of George Noll and with speculations as to who he had been, whence he had come, what would be found when that key unlocked its secret, and to whom his property would go when it was found. But mainly it buzzed with talk of those bank notes and those keys; the buzzing spread and the circle of interest and speculation widened. Money! The odor of the word, as it were, rose and

drifted, and the vultures wheeled slowly and came cruising in, stretching their long, scaly necks and turning their blood-red heads from side to side as they looked down to spy out the land and to watch for the coming of their time to drop, plummetwise, to the feast.

Money!

II.

The offices of the law firm of Carew, Carter, Ellis & Morgan were located in a shambling and broken-backed building in the old part of town; they were dark, close, shabby and reached by devious passages and corridors. In these particulars, it may be observed, the rooms were not unfitting business quarters for the firm: its ways were dark, it kept its own and many other people's shameful secrets close; its litigation and its methods were shabby, and it reached its ends by ways that were devious. Offices and firm shared an unwholesome air and, together with the clients who called there, seemed glad to hide away from the pitiless cleanness of sunlight and freshness.

Largely the practice of Carew, Carter, Ellis & Morgan was criminal practice; reputable attorneys were sometimes heard to say that to become a client of that partnership was to confess guilt. The establishment made a precarious living on questionable damage suits, ingenious technical defenses, hung juries, defendants with plausible alibis, appeals, writs of error, delayed trials, and through the inexplicable absence of mind of accused men and women whom it represented, who, if given freedom on bail or bond, so often and so unaccountably disappeared and forgot to come back to face trial.

The firm was said to be party to many of the mysteries of the night world of the city; rumors went about that it would undertake to provide, with equal facility, on payment of its fee, a defense at bar, a stubborn jurymen or two, an experienced witness to any fact, statement, appearance, or representation, or even a skilled professional criminal to perform any black service proposed or needed.

Carew, Carter, Ellis & Morgan had not been always in this way of business. Than Martin P. Carter, one of the original founders, no man had ever stood higher in the community; the reputation of the firm had been built on his integrity and ability. But

he was long since dead. Carew, somewhat younger and neither so able nor so scrupulous, had been elevated to the bench, had retired therefrom under rather peculiar circumstances, and was now presumed to be receiving some share of the profits of the firm to which he loaned his name as his only contribution to its activities. Those profits were not huge, apparently, or else his proportion was unduly small—certainly he was impecunious and the honorable title he bore a travesty, for he was shabby, dispirited, wretched. Of the two younger members of the firm Shortwell Ellis was reported to be in ill health and temporarily in the country, but actually he was a broken fragment of a man, mumbling and slobbering about the grounds of a county institution, incurably insane.

So, out of the wreckage of the past, there now loomed only big Tom Morgan. He was a great, gross, overfed man, floundering heavily a few paces in advance of bankruptcy, and snatching salvation from penury with desperate fingers, careless of the muck and filth in which he found it. In his youth he had possessed a remarkable mind, as brilliant and as many-sided as a diamond—and as cold. He had been a commanding figure in those days, too, and a potent and persuasive advocate, particularly before a jury. But, perhaps because of the influence on him of Shortwell Ellis and the business he was presently bringing to the firm, he became an underworld hack, contracting bad habits and worse practice.

When his acuteness and courtroom power began to slip from him his more profitable business went with them; the collapse of Shortwell Ellis precipitated the downfall of big Tom. There remained to him now only a very shrewd and adroit mind, and the dregs of the legal practice of the lowest criminal variety. He retained all the old-time suite of the partnership and its name; but the rooms became more and more foul and dank, the law books became moldy and discolored, carpets faded, wore away; nothing was renewed nor refurbished. Carew, Carter, Ellis & Morgan were like a structure, once strong and useful, that has become surrounded by stagnant waters and gradually decays—foundation and superstructure slowly sinking in the mire and visited only by humans for whom such is a convenient refuge, or by furtive varmints to whom such is a haven.

There were waiting for big Tom Morgan, on the morning after the death of George Noll, two men. As was the rule and practice in the offices, these two had been shown into separate rooms in the suite of ten; something of their characters and their relations with the head of the firm might have been deduced from their actions as they cooled their heels on his pleasure.

The first to arrive and to greet, in surly fashion, Nick, the shifty-eyed office boy, had been hailed by the latter as "The Duke" and had been shown into the room which had once been occupied by Judge Carew. No sooner was the door closed behind him than the cheaply flashy Duke, yawning and apostrophizing bitterly some errand that had kept him up pretty well around the clock, threw himself into a deep, worn chair and fell into instant sleep. The second visitor, upon whom the office boy had looked with frank and impudent disfavor, gave the name of Gest, was shown into a second cubicle, and there began to pace the floor, pulling at a ragged beard, and starting nervously whenever a door slammed or footsteps were heard anywhere in the big suite.

He was the first to be summoned. Big Tom Morgan, dirty, unshaven, slouching, lounged in a leather-covered chair, a pad of paper at his elbow, a law book open before him on a rest. He did not look up at the entrance of his caller, nor did he cease puffing at a cheap, black stogy, nor did he pause at all in his perusal of his book or the making of his notes.

"Wait a minute," he growled shortly.

Gest frowned. He was a nervous little man, who stood instead of sitting—who, in fact, paced about rather than stood, and occasionally broke into a comic near trot. He seemed never to be able to go rapidly enough, nor to get others to do so; as though to check and chafe him Tom Morgan always kept him waiting and always took the deliberate and devious, instead of the direct course with him. As Gest paced to and fro, he combed his beard angrily, yet was scrupulous not to give the big lawyer offense.

At his leisure, big Tom Morgan said, with heavy slowness:

"Did you read of that St. Luke's Hospital case this morning, Harris?"

"Noll?" Gest jerked. "Yes. Dropped dead. Five thousand in his vest. When they searched him."

He chopped his sentences up and fed them

out jerkily, as though each one were an afterthought on the one before. Now he added explosively:

"Easy picking, eh?"

"Perhaps," Morgan replied thoughtfully.

"What do you know about Eliston?"

"Public administrator? Boob! Softy! Pie for me."

"You're pretty positive, Gest. But this may mean something big. There were deposit-box keys, you know. And I've known these old ducks to show up a fat estate sometimes. There'd be no bungling here, Gest!"

His last observation was something more—it held a warning, or, perhaps, a threat. Gest broke into a trot.

"Certainly not. Don't you suppose I know anything? I'm no bungler."

Morgan paid no attention.

"It's too late now," he said, "to get a cut of the money the undertaker found. But somebody must be there when that safety-deposit box is found. See? If Eliston is a boob he's honest, you can bet on that. All boobs are honest. But some one else could locate that box."

"Of course. His attorney, say."

"Could you get the job?"

"Not alone. But Judge Carew could get it for me. How's that?"

"Why Carew?"

"Old-time politician. Young Eliston's father probably knew him. Pull old friendship stuff. On the boy."

"I'll try it that way. But if you slip up on getting at that deposit box, you could get papers—signatures—dates—all that sort of thing. That is, if you were foxy enough."

"I'd get everything. Don't worry! How about the split?"

"One third to you."

"My God, Mr. Morgan, what d'ye want? I'd do all the work. And take all the risk!"

"And I would get you the work and give you a chance to take the risk. I guess you're not my man, Gest. Run along. And go out through the New High Street door, will you; I've got some other people waiting for me. Good-by!"

Gest wet his lips, wiped his forehead, hung on his heel a moment. Then he laughed. "Can't you take a joke, Mr. Morgan?" he inquired. "I'll take one third. When shall I come back?"

"Don't come back. Keep as far away from here as you know how—and a little farther. And if anything comes of this, re-

member that I'll be checking up on you." He glanced up from his work for the second time during the interview. "Perhaps you've heard of Ray Hatton, Gest?"

"Oh, say, Mr. Morgan. I'm no Hatton. I wouldn't——"

"Of course you wouldn't. Not after being reminded of Hatton. Good-by. I'll get word to you—fix up a way to keep in touch."

Gest hesitated, opened his mouth to speak once more, changed his mind and went out, without being favored with another look or sign. As he stumbled through the dark corridors toward New High Street, he uttered an imprecation against Tom Morgan's greed. But he did so under his breath fearfully. And at once his mind began to harry the problem of how to double cross Morgan—"if anything came of this."

Meantime, Tom Morgan had sent for The Duke. The latter was an alert, ready, and unscrupulous young gentleman, born in a New York tenement, raised on the streets of New York and San Francisco, educated in the messenger service, and given what honorable degrees he carried by the police and the courts. He was dressed as cheap sports dress, but he was no cheap sport. He was quiet-spoken, sleek, secretive, and he had a wide acquaintance in the night life of several cities.

He was not a gunman, nor, indeed, a criminal, but he knew where he could lay hands on either or both. By keeping himself free of vices and by "shooting straight" with every one he gained and maintained a certain position; and, as the secrets he held for bigger and more respectable men than himself gave him some influence with them, he was looked up to and respected by the denizens of the world where influence is often valuable and sometimes invaluable.

When the slovenly office boy summoned him The Duke started awake in a breath, instantly shaking off all weariness and the clinging languor of sleep, and walked briskly into the lawyer's office. Morgan threw him a glance and a short, "Hello!"

The Duke leaned against the desk.

"Matthews had a skirt," he said, without preliminaries. "I got a jane to put the screws on her. By next week Matthews ought to be ripe to come through."

"I see." Morgan made a note and turned a page of his legal volume. "You don't tangle yourself up in skirts, I believe, Duke?"

"Say, what kind of a nut d'ye think I am?

The guy that lets a jane grab him is on his way."

"Sometimes," Morgan agreed. "But they're useful, too. Take Matthews' case."

"Well, take Matthews! Ain't I just told you I'm going to get my dukes on him by working his skirt?"

"I understand. I was thinking of my side of it."

"Oh, well!" The Duke shrugged.

"And I'm looking for another skirt now, Duke," Morgan went on. "Did you read the papers this morning?"

"I been too busy."

"Read that." The lawyer threw the youth a newspaper, indicating the display head above the tale of the death of George Noll. Presently the Duke looked up, tossed the paper aside.

"I'm hep," he said. "It's a pipe. D'ye ever hear of 'Snow' Bustamente?"

"Yes. But he's an ex-convict."

"Sure. But not here. Nobody knows him here. And he's got the goods—woman and all. Listen!"

He leaned closer and sketched his scheme. Tom Morgan listened attentively, but without a sign. He suggested difficulties; The Duke met them. At length the lawyer sat back in his chair.

"At Quaist's place at ten, then," he said. "And if we work this thing right, and there's a pot to divide, I'll see that you get part of Harris Gest's cut. He's a rat; I'd rather double cross him than run straight with him. Beat it, now; we haven't got more than a million years!"

III.

Samuel Eliston, public administrator of the county, had been in politics since his eighth year. At that time a presidential campaign was on and his father, once State auditor and a belligerent partisan of McKinley's, had given the boy a torch to carry in the election-eve parade. The virus had taken and Sammy had dedicated himself to the principles of the Republican party. They became a religion with him; being an earnest and conscientious boy and growing up to youth and manhood with those characteristics developing strongly in him, he made a single-minded partisan and his indefatigable labors in behalf of the party of his choice—or his inheritance—made it inevitable that he should come to be regarded as properly deserving of concrete recognition.

When he was thirty-odd it chanced that a slight schism arose in the county organization and in the fight several promising slates were irreparably smashed. For the comparatively unimportant office of public administrator several candidates appeared; out of the *mêlée* two emerged with high hopes. But neither one could muster a majority; between the two stools the nomination fell, dropping plump into the lap of Sam Eliston. No one had anything against Sammy; for most of the leaders and steerers he had performed faithful service in times past; the office was a minor one, carrying but one clerkship as patronage. Taken all in all, the party managers considered the outcome a happy one and, as nomination meant election, Sammy was given a pocket-sized ovation by the delegates and, a few weeks later, elected practically unanimously.

Earnest and conscientious preparation for the duties he was about to enter upon disclosed to Sam—what he had not known before—that the public administrator was the official upon whom devolved the task of administering the estates of persons deceased who left no known heirs or none competent to administer for themselves. Even in the exalted state of mind of a youth selected for a position of trust and honor in his county, though, he realized that, save in an extraordinary event, his trusts would be trivial and his honors light. Disillusionment, however, was no shock to Sam Eliston; service to the party was something, and he might be able to look forward to advancement. So he settled down to an earnest and conscientious application to a monotony of small affairs.

The discoveries following hard upon the death of the mysterious George Noll bowled Eliston over at first. Claimants, or persons quite obviously laying the foundation for later definite claims, appeared within a few hours; by letter, telegram, telephone, and personal approach the public administrator was importuned for information concerning the deceased, was formally notified that heirs were on their way to his office, often from distant points, or was requested to hold off all proceedings pending the inception of something or the imminent appearance of somebody certain to bring to light the sole and rightful heir.

None of all these promised appearances was made, however, nor any of these claims actually presented until it came time, in all

decency, for the interment of the body. On the fourth day after death, therefore, all that remained mortal of George Noll was consigned to earth, Sam Eliston following the plain coffin to the cemetery and mumbling responses to the service read by an obliging young curate, both of them impressed with a vague feeling of unavoidable duty to the mysterious dead and the unknown living to whom he had once belonged and to whom, perhaps, he had once been dear.

Meantime Sam had set himself earnestly and conscientiously at the task of locating the hypothetical kinfolk. At first he was inclined to take seriously all the messages and all the claims and shadows of claims that came to his attention, with a resultant confusion of mind that sent him to bed nightly with whirling brain. He was disinclined to suspicion of any motives or assertions, and he might have found himself badly involved had it not been for one incident that braced him like a shock of cold water.

George Noll died on June 9th; his story was published, and widely published, too, on the tenth and eleventh. About a week later the landlady of the house wherein the old man had had his room telephoned that a letter addressed to him had arrived in her care. Presently Eliston sent Jess Merriweather, his lifelong friend and now his clerk, to get it. It proved to be a message, written in pencil and on poor paper, by a woman living in a Middle Western town, and read thus:

DEAR UNCLE: Why don't you write us and tell us how you are? I am worried about you because your last letter says you are sick. If you will write me I will come and take care of you. Please write right away. Your affectionate niece,
SARAH BACON.

Eliston glanced at the date of the missive: it was June 6th. On its face the letter was convincing; a few days later, when a telegram came to the lodging house begging for news of Noll, Eliston wired the Bacon woman that her uncle was dead. Immediately he received answer that she was on her way West to claim the body and take it home for burial. Eliston turned from the numerous other claims and claimants with suspicion and some distaste, and awaited Sarah Bacon with an interest that he could not conceal. But, on the day that she was due to arrive, in order to have everything in readiness for her, he took out her letter, sent untimely to her uncle's address. By

chance his eye fell on the postmark: it was dated June 10th. The letter had been mailed on the day that morning papers all over America had chronicled the death of the mysterious man in a city on the Pacific.

Sarah Bacon came. She was a hard-faced, keen-eyed woman, who held herself firmly, but was obviously anxious. Having no sense of the dramatic and no desire for theatricals, Sam Eliston merely showed her the postmark.

"You're wasting your time, Miss Bacon," he observed.

One shrewd appraisal of him satisfied Sarah Bacon. She paled and fled, and Eliston never saw her again.

The incident changed his whole attitude and habit of mind toward the case; in a sense it changed him, in that brief time, toward his fellows. With something akin to panic he realized that there were people who would go any length to win the money he held in trust. He became cold, impersonal, cautious. His earnest and conscientious attitude toward life remained, augmented by suspicion. Presently, to these characteristics, were added a pertinacity and tirelessness called forth by the puzzles presented to him by the Noll case. The man in him developed; his character formed and was fixed. He became a sort of shock-headed, snub-nosed, unexcitable, and methodical bulldog, with that animal's devotion to a cause, with his unfriendliness to strangers and suspicious individuals. He was gripping the idea that the estate of George Noll should go to its rightful owners or to the State, and to no one else whomsoever.

Being unimaginative and lacking a brilliant mind, he determined to take up one task at a time and finish that, if he could, before attacking another. In his earnest and conscientious way he jotted down the points that he felt must be cleared up; the first of these he pinned to his desk top, thus:

Locate Deposit Box.

To that effort he gave everything he had in himself.

Meantime, he had been approached by many persons with offers of assistance; most of them wanted something concrete for themselves. Detectives, lawyers, handwriting experts, investigators, bankers, politicians—they had all the deepest anxiety to be of service—at so much an hour, a day, a month,

or "by the job." He was decent to them all, but he turned them all away. And the word soon went around that Sam Eliston was either a stupid and ungrateful ass, or a clever and scheming young gentleman who would bear watching. Sam shrugged, plodding away at his desk, or chasing clews or theories, or going from bank to bank with his aggravating keys. Then Judge Milton Carew called on him.

The judge wanted nothing for himself; he had long known and respected Hughes Eliston, Sam's father, now dead, and if he could be of service to the boy he was ready to be called on. For example, who was to be attorney for the public administrator?

The conversation led to the appointment of one Harris Gest, whom Judge Carew could recommend most highly, and did, receiving Sam's earnest thanks for his interest. So Gest came into the case, busied himself at once, and, because of his greater experience in such matters, almost immediately located the bank in whose vaults George Noll had deposited his valuables.

"That's bully!" Sam Eliston cried, on this news. "I wouldn't have thought of going out of town to find it. We'll go right down, Mr. Gest."

"Call me Harris. Shorter. Friendlier. And there's no use your going down to Wil-lows. I don't mind."

"I want to go, man! Much obliged."

"Better let me save you the trip. I could bring everything. In here."

"Thanks; but this is all new to me, and I wouldn't miss opening that box for a thousand dollars. Come on, we'll make a junket of it—eat down there and charge it to the county!"

He was as exuberant as a boy. Gest forbore further objections and entered into his principal's mood. They took an interurban car and an hour later were at the bank.

The cashier was a pleasant, round little man, given to briskly rubbing his hands and his chin, and very cordial, but businesslike.

"Everything in order now, gentlemen, if you please," he said. "You don't know me; I don't know you. It will be proper, I suppose, to identify yourselves."

They did this, with all formality.

"Thank you, gentlemen. Now, what can I do for you first?"

"Answer a question or two, Mr. Cravens, if you please," Eliston said. "You have read of this Noll case, I suppose?"

"Yes. In a general way."

"Your deposit-vault man has told Mr. Gest, over the telephone, that the keys we have belong here. Did you know Mr. Noll?"

"Never saw him or heard of him in my life, until the papers came out with the account of his death."

"Your manager knew him, perhaps."

"He tells me not. Hollingsworth, who was in the vault department for fifteen years, probably did, but he died last year. There is one man who may help you—the watchman downstairs. Quite a remarkable man himself, in his way. Been with the bank for twenty-five years. Will you step down to the vaults with me?"

As he led the way Harris Gest caught Eliston's arm and held him back a pace.

"Get rid of him," he said, in a mysterious whisper. "Don't need the whole town around. When the box is opened. It's your business!"

Eliston smiled.

"Oh, Mr. Cravens will be all right," he said. "We won't need any one else, of course."

"Don't need him!" Gest urged earnestly. "Don't trust anybody. Heirs will be showing up. By the score. If you let everybody in."

"All right, Gest," Sam said good-naturedly. "We'll see. I want to talk to this remarkable man of Cravens' now."

It appeared at first that the remarkable man was not likely to develop any startling information, however.

"George Noll?" he repeated slowly. "Never heard of him. Old man? Never saw any one of that name. We've a lot of old men in the vaults, but no Noll."

"He might have used another name," Eliston suggested.

"Might, eh? Why? Did he have more than one name?"

"He was eccentric—peculiar. I thought perhaps——"

"What did he look like?"

"I can't tell you very definitely. He was about seventy-six, wore black clothes, and carried a cane that he hooked over his arm a good deal. He had white hair and a small, full beard. And he was quite deaf."

"Just so. Exactly like every old man in the world, eh? Cane over his arm—wait a minute! He couldn't have been Melas?"

"Melas?"

"Meelas or Melas—I don't know how

you'd say it. It was his password. What's your key number?"

Eliston took it out and read the number sunk in the bow.

The remarkable man led them into the vault; his eye ran around the small room.

"Twenty-one-seventy-three. Um-m-m! Melas! That's him! You'll find him signed up under the name of George Brown. I remember him well."

"But what is Melas?" Harris Gest interrupted, with some irritation. "Is it a name? Or a breakfast food? What does it mean?"

The remarkable man looked him over.

"Password," he grunted. "And I ain't a mind reader. It was Brown's word, not mine."

Eliston spoke.

"Do you remember when he was last here, Phelps?"

"Matter of eight—nine months."

"He had rented this vault for several years?"

"You'll find it on the books. Around ten years, I'd say."

"Did you ever talk with this Mr. Brown?"

"No. Nor nobody else ever did. He was a grouch. Never heard him say a pleasant word."

"How often did he come in here?"

"Two or three times a year, maybe. He'd sit at one of the tables a long time, figuring and counting, and scowling. If anybody came near him, he'd cover his things up with an arm, like a dog guarding a bone."

Gest, stopping in his rapid pacing up and down the narrow place, broke in abruptly.

"Did you ever see what he did? What he had in his box? What he put in or took out?"

The watchman favored Mr. Gest with a cool stare.

"I make it my business to 'tend to my business," he said sourly.

"Quite right," Eliston observed. "Well, Mr. Cravens——"

Gest came up, hurriedly—pulled Eliston aside.

"It's a mistake, I tell you," he said irritably. "To have a mob. When you open things up."

Eliston laughed good-humoredly.

"It may not be a bad idea to have witnesses, you know, Gest. If there happens to be anything in that box, and the heirs are discovered, we ought to——"

"Go ahead," Gest said. "Do it your own

way. But take it from me there'll be plenty of heirs. If you tell everybody. What you find."

"I'll compromise with you by getting rid of the watchman, then," Eliston said. "But I want Cravens here. Now, Mr. Cravens!" He turned to the banker. "If you don't mind getting the master key, please, we'll have a look."

The remarkable man withdrew without a word. The banker stepped toward Box No. 2,173, taking from Eliston the two keys found on the dead man's body.

"Let me make a guess as to what you will find, Mr. Eliston," he said, as he tried the keys. "From what I have heard, this man Noll or Brown was a retired business man of small means, very close, very secretive, very suspicious. His funds were just sufficient to see him through—the five thousand dollars and odd that I have read of your finding on the body was his last money. In this box—I've seen several of them opened under similar circumstances, in my time—will be found a few keepsakes, perhaps a will, perhaps some record of the man's past, and nothing more. Be prepared for that sort of discovery, for it is the sort I anticipate."

"That will be enough for me," Sam Eliston laughed. "The money he had in his vest was enough to worry me sufficiently, Mr. Cravens. And I am inclined to think you are right. In a moment we will know."

The banker turned the two keys, the door swung open, the long, black box was withdrawn. Gest pushed in, his fingers cold. Cravens put the box down and laid the long cover back. What they saw were a small Bible, two pocket memorandum books, a pasteboard box, and a package, neatly sewed into cloth and marked, in a scrawling hand, "Receipts." Nothing more. Gest reached for the pasteboard box.

"Wait a minute," Eliston said, pushing his hand aside. "We're in no hurry; let's take things in order and not mix them up. We'll start with this."

He picked up and thumbed through the Bible. It was a neat, cheap volume, printed in 1876, but showing no signs of wear. It was unmarked, and a careful search failed to reveal any inclosure between the leaves. The flyleaf was blank.

"No information there," he said, with disappointment. "Odd he should have left it here, of all places."

"Not so odd," the banker retorted. "It was a gift, valued by the old man. See, his name had been written there."

Eliston looked more closely at the flyleaf. Then he discerned that there had, indeed, once been an inscription. But it had been carefully erased; try as they would they could make out nothing.

"Erased clean," Eliston said. "It has been that way all along—no trace left behind to furnish a clew to his family. Well, now the box."

He lifted it out. It was a haberdasher's glove box, but bore no name nor address. Again Gest came crowding in, teetering on his toes, but again the public administrator checked him. The cover was removed. Eliston laughed aloud.

"Eccentric? Well, I should say he was! Sea shells and moonstones!"

The box contained nothing else, though they turned out its contents and though Gest looked hopefully for a false bottom—some hiding place within. Nothing but such small shells and bits of stone as tourists always gather on Pacific beaches. Gest's face began to lengthen. After one look at the loot he turned away again; began to trot back and forth, pulling at his beard almost with anger. Perhaps against poor dead George Noll—with a feeling that the old man had defrauded the vultures!

"Shells and stones," Banker Cravens observed, meantime. "Exactly so. An eccentric, with his principal carried on his person; and a cautious and methodical eccentric, as witness those receipts there."

"You are probably right," Eliston said, absent-mindedly. "But I am more interested in finding out who he was than in finding out that he had something for me to worry about. What I am looking for these ought to tell us."

He picked up the two pocket notebooks. One was many years old—contained, in fact, a calendar for the year 1898. On its soiled leaves were a few addresses, such as those of patent-medicine concerns and sanitariums, many rows of figures, all unfooted and apparently meaningless, and a few brief quotations from what might have been sermons or editorials. In addition several diagrams which Cravens and Eliston looked at curiously and without enlightenment.

"Like the game of dots and squares we used to play when I was a boy," Eliston observed. "Perhaps this other one——"

He took up the second memorandum book. It was of much later origin, although it contained no date. But it was almost full of diagrams similar to those few in the first book. Eliston frowned; the banker studied them intently, then laughed.

"Send them to Sam Loyd," he suggested dryly. "They are acrostics, Mr. Eliston—plain puzzles!"

They had that look. A checker board of lines, with numbers placed, with no apparent order, in some of the squares, and dots or groups of dots here and there. At this view, certainly, they were inexplicable enigmas.

Gest, joining the others, broke out angrily.

"The old faker!" he cried. "A born trouble maker! You can see that. Made a mystery of his life. Left nothing but mysteries after his death. All these are just nonsense! Let's get back to the office, Eliston!"

"We are wasting time here, true enough," Eliston agreed. "You were right, Mr. Cravens—and perhaps Mr. Gest is right, too. An eccentric who was fond of puzzling and bothering people about himself—and who left me a legacy of puzzle and bother! Of course his receipts may help me some."

"Hardly likely," Cravens said, taking up the package. "If he was so careful to erase all record of his past, he would hardly leave anything in this packet. Do you want it opened?"

Gest, snatching out his watch, protested.

"If we hurry we can catch the one-o'clock car back, Eliston," he snapped.

"I don't want to hurry, Gest," Eliston said. "I was planning to have lunch down here at Willows. Let's see the receipts, at any rate."

Gest trotted up.

"If I could get the one o'clock," he said hurriedly, "I could work up the order of distribution. In the Garcia matter. Ought to be done."

"All right," Eliston agreed. "We're almost through here."

Gest opened his mouth to make a last protest, but he was too late. With a quick twitch Eliston pulled loose the threads of the cloth-inclosed package, and the muslin came away in his hand. The contents dropped to the table top.

Gest swore savagely; Sam Eliston and the banker stared with mouths agape. A heap of crisp bank notes, fresh as the day of their issuance, lay before them.

In a moment, while Gest went growling to a corner and back again, and while Sam Eliston gazed at the booty as though fascinated—and a little afraid!—the banker piled and counted it. Then he said quietly:

"I was mistaken, Mr. Eliston, after all. Let me congratulate you on your trust. In round figures you have here an estate property of two hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars!"

IV.

Gest had been right: the publication of the news concerning the hoarded fortune in the Willows State Bank vaults brought about the ears of the public administrator a perfect cloud of claimants. There had been several before; now they appeared from every side—sprang from the ground. Most of those who came were honest people, easily convinced of their mistake on Eliston's showing of the facts; some were honest but obstinate, and Sam soon knew what it was to be the public official suspected, abused, and attacked. Others were less honest and more disingenuous, clinging to their stories tenaciously or making new stories to fit the facts. A few were out-and-out rascals whom only threats of prosecution for brazen fraud could check.

Out of all the welter there emerged no single claim that had a color of substantiality. It began to appear that, if heirs were in existence and were to be found, Eliston himself would have to discover them. And with characteristic earnestness and conscientiousness he set his teeth into the problem, taking up one clew at a time. His first effort was to decipher the name once written on the flyleaf of the Bible, but here he was completely baffled. Chemists and microscopists were called in, but all of them failed. For the moment Sam turned to the password, Melas. But as linguists and college professors made short work of his theory that it was some significant foreign word he faced the realm of speculation, infinitely large and obviously futile.

The diagrams in the notebooks looked simple; Eliston surmised that they were crude maps of city property in which the old man had been interested. Most of them were footnoted with the names of small towns in the West, but diligent search failed to connect the drawings with any known plats or subdivisions or maps. Eventually Eliston came to a full stop on that theory.

None other offering itself, either to him or to those he consulted, he laid that puzzle aside.

Harris Gest, his attorney, meantime, was something of a disappointment. His success in locating the safe-deposit vault had pleased Eliston, but thereafter he appeared to give a stupendous activity and net the most meager returns. His attitude, too, perplexed Eliston.

"What do you care?" he demanded, pacing back and forth in the office and pulling irritably at his beard. "Don't worry. The heirs will show up. Nobody pays you to get gray-haired. About it."

"It looks like my job."

"What for? Let them worry!"

"But if I don't learn more about Noll than I have to date, how can I be sure that some crooks won't come in and get away with the estate?"

"Easy. The burden of proof is on them. Legal axiom."

Eliston turned away impatiently. Perhaps it was evidence of his amateur standing as a public official, he thought, but he certainly was not going to take his monthly salary from the county for lolling in a swivel-chair waiting for something to turn up! Not he. Gest, smiling behind his back, spoke again.

"Don't worry, anyhow, Sam. Old Harris Gest is on the job. We'll find the right people. Leave it to me."

Sam was not greatly reassured. In the face of the high recommendations with which Gest had come to him from Judge Carew his inquiries concerning the lawyer had been *disquieting*: his probity was a matter of opinion, it was said, but his legal standing was low. And, watching the high-strung little man trotting to and fro or pulling frantically at his scraggly beard, Sam had often wondered, without putting his mind on the question, what Judge Carew saw in Gest. However, the Noll estate case was a sufficient problem for the earnest and conscientious young public administrator—he took Gest for the time being on faith. Gest continued to worry the meatless bones of the Noll matter, without apparent results; Sam Eliston set his teeth into them and shook them vigorously, inflexible in his determination to make them yield up their secrets.

What Eliston least anticipated was what happened.

On August 4th the law firm of Carew,

Carter, Ellis & Morgan filed in the county clerk's office, probate department, a will, signed by George Noll and giving "all my property of every kind to my dear niece and heir, Genevieve Riggs."

It was an extraordinary document, dated in a small Ohio town, September 20, 1907, and written with a crude, blunt pencil on a piece of coarse wrapping paper. It was what the law calls a holographic will; namely, one written entirely in the hand of the testator; it was witnessed by two men; it was so little like the document one would expect in such a matter, where a considerable fortune was involved, that it was amazingly convincing. Sam Eliston, remembering his experience with the woman who had called herself Sarah Bacon, examined it immediately and critically, but not skeptically. A fraud would have been a flawless and impeccable piece of work—this will was too crude to be doubted.

Here was a sensation for the newspapers; after the weeks of doubt and fruitless speculation they welcomed it on the first page, with staring headlines. Genevieve Riggs, a rather overdressed country girl of seventeen or thereabouts, was privately described as of ordinary appearance and simpering manner by the reporters; but, in print, she became "the beautiful young claimant of the Noll fortune." Mrs. Grace Riggs, her mother, was a plain, straightforward, self-reliant woman of forty or under, with a confidence in her claims that communicated itself to all who talked with her, and entirely ready to lay bare her somewhat sordid story, holding nothing back.

For the moment here was, indeed, a great relief for Sam Eliston. He read Mrs. Riggs' story closely on the following morning, and believed it. It was disarmingly frank; its very drabness and tragedy made it the more convincing. Late that afternoon, at Eliston's request, Attorney Tom Morgan sent his client, the mother, alone to the public administrator's offices. There, while Harris Gest trotted up and down behind her, checking the tale as she told it, his fingers tearing at his ragged beard, his eyes darting from the face of the woman to the face of Sam Eliston, she repeated her history. Gest did not take a hand in the interview until the very end: it was Eliston who brought out the facts.

"I've read the newspaper accounts of your story, Mrs. Riggs," he began, in his pleas-

ant, open manner. "This office is anxious, of course, to find the rightful heirs, and anything we can do to assist you in—or, rather, if you can help us——"

"I understand," Mrs. Riggs interrupted easily. "Naturally, you've got to be sure. Well, I ain't going to be hard to get along with. Uncle George Noll was a peculiar man all the time I knew him, which was twenty years or so, and I hear he left a lot of peculiar puzzles behind him when he died. I probably won't be able to straighten out those puzzles, because he never told me his secrets—but would you like me to begin at the beginning?"

The woman told her story simply, without hesitation, although at certain points she was embarrassed and turned her eyes aside. She was a small, tired-looking woman, in such clothes as women wear in obscure country towns. She was without means, apparently, and obviously without culture; she used the slovenly English of the lower middle-class American. She identified herself, in short, in every way as the sort of person who would have such a history as hers was.

She had been married, she said, when only eighteen, to a "city man" who had come to the little Ohio town of her birth, and who had favorably impressed her, but particularly struck her parents. This man had turned out to be a thoroughgoing rascal; before she was twenty she was arrested, with him, on a charge of circulating the counterfeit money he had made; and had been sent for a short term to an Ohio penitentiary. Riggs had been given a sentence of ten years and had died before its expiration.

Meantime, while working as a trusty in the hospital ward of the prison, she had become acquainted with an older man, named Burt, who had given her his real name later as George Noll. He was ailing a great deal, and as she was kept at her duties in the infirmary they became intimate friends. It so happened that they had been released within a few months of the same date and, because of his great kindness to her, and because she was compelled to go to a new place and start her life over, she had taken him as a lodger in her small home.

Presently she told Noll that she was to become a mother.

"If the baby is a boy," he said, "you name him for me, and I'll leave him my money."

To relieve the embarrassment under which Mrs. Riggs labored, Eliston interrupted.

"This man Noll had money at that time, then, Mrs. Riggs?"

"Yes. He often told me he had. He said he could leave a boy in good shape."

"Do you have any idea where he got it?"

"Yes. He had been a forger, I believe—once he had been in the same gang as my husband."

"Go on, please," Eliston said.

"The baby was a girl," Mrs. Riggs continued. Noll had waited to discover this fact and then had left, without warning and without leaving any information as to his destination or as to whether or not he would return. As a matter of fact, he did not come back nor communicate with the woman at all until the child was five or six years old.

"During those years you made your own way?"

"Yes, sir."

"Will you tell me how?"

"I worked in a laundry and in hotels—anything I could get. I had a hard time."

Noll had returned as suddenly as he had disappeared. He was sick again and Mrs. Riggs took him in. Genevieve, the little girl, took a great fancy to the old man; she loved to wait on him. Gradually he began to be drawn toward her and one day he took Mrs. Riggs' breath away by summoning her and demanding ink and paper so that he could make a will in the child's favor.

"It put me all in a fluster," Mrs. Riggs said slowly. "I couldn't find no ink or paper in the house, and I was so excited I couldn't think what to do about it. There was no near neighbors, but some men were working on a new house down the road a piece; Mr. Noll told me to go get them for witnesses."

"I went running over and came back with Mr. Martin and a young fellow named Burns. Mr. Martin was the carpenter; he laughed and said he thought his carpenter pencil might do. So I snatched up a piece of wrapping paper as we came through the kitchen, and Uncle George wrote his will on that—the will Mr. Morgan put in court yesterday morning."

"Can you find those two witnesses, Mrs. Riggs?" Eliston interrupted.

"Mr. Martin lives in Elgin, yes. I wrote him and he said he'd come and testify for me any time, if I could pay his expenses. I don't know how I can, but—well, Mr. Morgan says not to worry, and I mustn't think

about that now. The other man—this Burns, I can't find. I lost track of him years ago. But Mr. Morgan says one witness is enough. That's probably true, isn't it, Mr. Eliston?"

"I imagine it is, Mrs. Riggs, though I'm not a lawyer. Well, the will was drawn?"

"Yes, sir. After Mr. Noll got better he stayed around a while and then he said the climate didn't agree with him and he'd have to come to California again. He promised he'd send for me and Genevieve some day, but he never did. I used to get a postal card from him now and then—I kept one or two of them. But they weren't signed and didn't give me any news. I tried to keep track of Uncle George, but it was hard. And for a year or so now I hadn't heard a thing about him, till I read about his death in the papers."

"You didn't come on here immediately, though?"

Harris Gest broke in, for the first time.

"You didn't read about his death when it occurred, Mr. Eliston means, Mrs. Riggs," he prompted.

"Oh, no," the woman replied composedly. "I don't know as I would have seen it at all, if a neighbor hadn't happened to find the piece in an old paper. She had heard me speak of Uncle George and the will. So she brought me the piece. That was a week ago; let's see—last Wednesday; yes. It was only last Wednesday that I heard. So I got Genevieve ready as quick as I could and took the train. I didn't know any lawyers here, but Mr. Morgan was recommended to me by a woman I met on the train." Mrs. Riggs glanced hastily at Gest, trotting up and down behind her, and then leaned toward Eliston. "He's all right, isn't he—this Mr. Morgan?" she asked anxiously.

"I believe he is a smart man," Eliston replied, in a low tone, and reservedly. But he wished, for the woman's sake, that she had fallen into other hands.

"It means a lot to Genevieve," Mrs. Riggs said, her lip trembling. But she did not cry; Eliston thought that she was beyond tears, and her dry eyes moved him more than weeping would have done.

He cleared his throat; leaned back.

"Well, well, Mrs. Riggs," he said; "I don't believe you have any cause for worrying. It ought to be possible to expedite—hurry things along pretty well now. Let me see if——"

Gest spoke again sharply.

"I suppose your attorney, Mr. Morgan—isn't it Morgan? Yes. I suppose he is ready. To file the necessary petitions. In the matter."

Mrs. Riggs nodded.

"I believe so," she said in a controlled voice. It was obvious that she disliked Gest—she turned trustfully to Eliston now. "I certainly hope so. Because I have no money. He thought perhaps you would be willing—or there would be some way to make me a payment out of the estate. That is, to have the court do it."

"We will take that up," Gest snapped, rather roughly. Eliston frowned at him, feeling distaste for the abrupt and brutal manner of the advocate. But Gest was trotting back and forth again—did not appear to notice. "We'll let you hear, Mrs. Riggs. Delicate matter. Got to proceed with care. In such cases."

"Mrs. Riggs understands that, I believe, Gest," Eliston interjected tartly. He turned to the woman.

"What sort of family did Mr. Noll come from, Mrs. Riggs? What part of the country? Do you know where his relatives are?"

The woman sighed.

"I can't help you there, Mr. Eliston," she said, at once. "I'm sorry, too. But men that get into jails don't talk much about their families, if you've ever noticed. They take different names and get away from their homes and their folks as far as they can. Uncle George was that way. He told me once that he came from good folks—but I never knew what he meant."

"You think some of his people are still living, though?"

"They may be. They may be right in this town. But if they are you can be pretty sure their name isn't Noll and they never heard of Uncle George!"

Eliston turned to his safe—reached for the exhibits that had been found in the deposit box. At sight of the notebooks Mrs. Riggs uttered an exclamation.

"Those were Mr. Noll's, weren't they?" she inquired. "I knew it. You haven't found some queer diagrams in them, have you—kind of squares and figures, without any meaning?"

"Yes," Eliston said, brightening. "You can tell what they mean, then?"

But the woman shook her head.

"No, I've seen them, and once I saw

Uncle George making one. But he wouldn't tell me what they meant—what they were for."

It was the same as regards the password "Melas"—she knew nothing of it. She had seen the Bible—yes. Understood that Noll had carried it about with him for good luck, because she knew he never read it. Had no idea what had been written on the flyleaf. In short, was as much in the dark as was Eliston himself.

Mrs. Riggs left the public administrator convinced beyond all questioning that she was the rightful claimant, in behalf of her simpering daughter, to the estate of the dead man of so much mystery. Harris Gest seemed equally convinced, but showed a sudden—and surprising—streak of obstinate disinclination to admit it. He explained his brusqueness to the woman in this way. But he agreed that a mere formal showing would probably be sufficient in order to obtain a small allowance from the court for the woman and her daughter pending the probate hearing. Meantime Martin, the carpenter, and witness to the will, was to be summoned, together with a woman who had known Mrs. Riggs in Ohio, and who knew of Noll and the relations between the two; and certain depositions were to be taken and certain records sent, for that would confirm details of the claimant's story.

Sam Eliston could not forget, however, that he did not yet know anything more of Noll's origin and family than he had known before. It was possible that there was another will—perhaps several of them. There was nothing in the old man's history, as so far recited, that went to show that he was aught but eccentric, retiring, fond of mystery. Out of the past Eliston felt he must bring forth some tangible shape or form; his only keys, obviously, lay in the strange collection that had come from that safe-deposit box, and back to them he returned, with his old doggedness.

He began to feel that he could force the secret from them by sheer determination to do so, if he persisted. He had a strong conviction that, because it was right that he should know and might be very wrong and do much evil if he did not, the powers of mystery and darkness must give way before him and some light must shine through. He was no mystic, yet he began to have almost a superstition, or a faith, that he could dissolve the shadows he confronted and pene-

trate to truth. And he was so strong in this faith that what happened neither surprised nor excited him—he was prepared for any revelation.

What first happened was that there came to his office one afternoon a fresh-faced, strong, homely Irish girl, giving the name of Mary Rooney.

"You'll excuse me, maybe," she said; "but I just come to find out if this old Mr. Noll that left the gobs of money was my old Mr. Noll, God rest his soul!"

Scenting a claimant, Sam Eliston asked:

"What made you think you knew him?"

"I was reading how glum he was, like, and how he carried his cane, and how he always paid in greenbacks, and that's what our old Mr. Noll did."

"Our Mr. Noll?"

The girl laughed.

"I wait on table at the Astor House, in San Luis. That's how I mean."

With Sarah Bacon in mind, Sam asked easily:

"Was this Mr. Noll of yours—interested in you?"

The girl broke into another of those disarming laughs of hers.

"Saints above, no!" she exclaimed.

"Never a bit of it, sir. He wasn't interested in nobody at all. The whole time he was eating at my table he never gave me so much as a pleasant word or a five-cent piece! Closer than an orange peel he was, this Mr. Noll."

Eliston relaxed.

"It may have been the same man," he said. "But as I never saw him——"

"That's what I was reading, and that there was no picture of him, either. Well, but there was, though!"

"A picture of Noll?"

"Sure. I took it. It was only the other day I found it. This is himself, sir."

She drew from her hand bag a small, faded picture of an old man, slouching in a chair in the sun against the side of a house, his hat over his eyes, his head bowed. His fringe of longish hair and his beard showed, and little else.

"He was asleep when you took this, Miss Rooney?"

"He was that. And mad as a fiddler when I showed it to him after."

Eliston knew, from descriptions, what the late George Noll had looked like; that this kodak snapshot was of him there could be

no doubt. He smiled at smiling Mary Rooney.

"There was no picture of him that we could find before, Miss Rooney," he said, "and this one may be very useful to me. I think you may be well paid for your interest."

The girl sniffed.

"Not me!" she said. "You're a pleasant-spoken gentleman—and after you've waited on table for a few years you get to look for pleasant-spoken gentlemen, they're that rare!"

Sam blushed at the compliment.

"Where did you say you worked?"

"The Astor House. An old place, but clean. In San Luis."

Eliston puzzled. The name of the place—a suburban town thirty miles from the city—was perfectly familiar to him; he tried now to remember what had called it to his attention directly within a few weeks past. Then he started up. It was one of the towns named on those diagrammatic scrawls in George Noll's memorandum books!

He brought them out; turned the pages rapidly. In a moment he found the page on which, as a footnote to the map thereon, was written San Luis. In the frame above were three dots; the numbers 21 and 13; at the top the number 7191. His fingers trembled; he felt oddly certain that he was going to know, in a moment, what—

He looked up at Mary Rooney, his face flushed.

"When was Mr. Noll at the Astor House?" he asked.

As though she had anticipated the question—Sam felt almost that she would and that she did!—she turned to the back of the snapshot.

"I looked it up in the register before I came," she said. "It was May 12, 1917. He stayed three weeks. See?"

Sam Eliston collapsed in his chair, wiping his forehead—strangely strung up, and as strangely let down.

"A calendar!" he exclaimed. "Calendars, all of them. Look, Miss Rooney—read those figures backward."

The woman read them.

"Well, the odd thing that is, now!" she exclaimed. "This five, now—like the queer numbers they use in church——"

"Roman numerals?"

"Them's the ones. And the fifth month is May!"

Sure enough there was, in one corner of the page, a small Roman V.

Eliston, sensitive to some strange mental influence that was almost occult, turned quickly, while he was thus tense, to another problem—wrote the word Melas. And, employing the hint from the diagrams, wrote it backward also.

"Merriweather!" he cried, turning.

His clerk popped in his head, agog at Sam's visible excitement.

"Jess, I'm getting along—all at once. This is Miss Rooney, Mr. Merriweather. She has been of a lot of service. The diagrams in the notebooks are calendars. Melas is Salem. Sure as you're standing there! Salem, Massachusetts, or Salem, Oregon, or Salem—some place! Get the district attorney's office to loan you Dan Green, or one of those boys, and you telegraph to every Salem in America. Ask about a Noll family—see? Or, wait. One last look at the Bible, Jess. Hand it to me!"

He took up the little volume, opened it to the flyleaf, and extended it toward the gaping Miss Rooney, who was as excited as he was, without knowing why.

"Can you make out what was written there? No! And no one else can. If we had that name——"

The Irish girl crossed to the window, into which the afternoon sun streamed. Eliston was suddenly silent, watching her—feeling acutely that strange sense of power over the secrets that had baffled him; feeling irresistible against those mysteries. The truth was that he had been so long doggedly and obstinately wrestling with the puzzles, so absorbed by them and so lost in them, that the first ray of light he had had now fell on a background of incoherent detail and brought out from it pictures in sharp relief. He knew nothing of the necromancy of second sight, and yet he was thrilled by an exhausting but high-pitched sensitiveness that made him believe that the mere will to power over these problems would be fruitful in him.

His eyes, strangely bright, followed the waitress as she went to the window. She peered at the flyleaf closely; lowered it.

"Sure, they rubbed it out good——"

Sam Eliston laughed abruptly, a high-pitched, nervous laugh. Merriweather thought he was unhinged by his worry; the Irish girl stared at him with a little terror growing in her face. For the young public

administrator was reading, as though from the page dangling in her fingers.

"Salem George. Derby, New Hampshire. 1872."

Merriweather crossed to his chief's side; stood gaping at the page. By some freak of reflection the strong sunlight disclosed the track some sharp instrument had made in tracing the penciled words long since so carefully erased. It seemed like magic! But it was the sort of magic Merriweather could not scoff at, since he himself could read what Eliston had read. He turned to Sam.

"Shall I wire that town—if there is such a town, Eliston?"

"Wire the town constable. Ask about the George family—and a Salem George." He turned to the Irish girl. "We've found the family of the dead man, Miss Rooney," he said.

The girl grunted; put the Bible down.

"Maybe you have, sir," she said, with some asperity. "I hope so, I'm sure, if it'll do you any good. But you'd better have a drink of water, I'm thinkin', if ye've nothin' stronger. You look like a ghost!"

V.

Harris Gest, at eleven o'clock at night, with a worried and hangdog look upon him, paced up and down, up and down, in the office that had once been occupied by the unfortunate Shortwell Ellis, of the firm of Carew, Carter, Ellis & Morgan. Gest was imaginative—too much so for his own good, Tom Morgan said—and there was something in this close, neglected, frowzy room, left just as it had been the day the lawyer was taken out of it to the asylum, that depressed and almost frightened the little shyster. There remained about the place suggestions and an atmosphere strangely reminiscent, and Gest could not shake off the feeling that, if he turned his back for a moment on the disordered desk and moth-eaten chair, he would face about to find sitting there Ellis himself, incoherent, twitching and hideously marked, as he had been when Gest last saw him.

The feeling gave him the creeps; he cursed Tom Morgan and Nick, the office boy, now drowsing somewhere without like his jailer, leaving him there to sweat and shake with the fever and chills of disgusted fear. With crooked fingers he pulled and clawed at his stringy beard; and strode to and fro with hurried steps over a short beat near the

door, turning each time so that his eyes never left that haunted desk and chair. Where the devil was Morgan, for whom he had slaved and contrived and jeopardized himself in this twice-accursed case?

Noll, the mysterious old man who had died leaving a quarter of a million dollars in cash for the vultures to wrangle and scream over, had been two months buried; a will had appeared in the hands of a woman with a besmirched past devising the old man's property to her daughter; Tom Morgan had filed that will and was pressing the court and the public administrator for a probate that had thus far been unreasonably delayed; and now Gest, whilom attorney for the public administrator, was brought by an unexpected emergency to consult with his solicitous friend, that same Tom Morgan. Gest did not relish the conference, for he was the bearer of bad news, and from time immemorial such messengers have been unwelcome and sometimes visited with the wrath of the recipients of their tidings.

It was considerably past eleven when Gest heard a door open and close down the dark, devious corridor of the suite, and it was ten minutes more before he was summoned. He went into Tom Morgan's office with a comical trot, whistling up his own courage. Morgan, slouching in a big chair and intent on a book, did not look up, but roared angrily:

"Shut that damned racket!"

Gest's merry tune died.

"Excuse me, Morgan," he said jerkily, combing his beard. "Wasn't thinking. What I was doing." He paused, eying his patron, who was not watching, with venomous hatred. In a moment he added explosively: "Hot to-night!"

Morgan paid no heed. Gest walked up and down, but softly, having respect for the temper in which he found the big lawyer. He was perfectly well aware that Morgan was keeping him there, quiescent, only to annoy and harass him—to make him feel humble and subordinated; yet he was no better able, having that knowledge, to throw off the character Morgan forced upon him.

As though aware through what stages this menial of his was passing the big lawyer sat frowning over his book, pulling at a black stogy, and postponing recognition of him until Gest was sufficiently tense and miserable. Then, and not before, did he take out his black cigar and observe coldly:

"You're a hell of a wise guy, Gest!"

"Not when I'm traveling with you, I'm not!" Gest exclaimed. "I can't keep up with you. I'm a fool. And you prove it to me!"

Morgan laughed sourly.

"As if you needed proof! Well, I guess you're right." He gave the shyster the favor of a stare. "You're a fine toad, you are! You've bungled everything you touched. If you weren't working for Eliston, who is a bigger boob than you even, he would have knocked us higher than Haman on that register business."

"He never suspected," Gest interjected. "If I'd had my way——"

"Your business is to do things my way and get by with them! Eliston has found enough hotel registers with the old man's name signed in 'em, I should think, without your letting him pick out the only one we had—or wanted."

"That's all over with. Now."

"It is. But how about those pocket memorandum books and that old Bible? Why didn't you burn them up when you first found them? But no—you left them there, and look what they've gotten us."

"We couldn't have made away with those," Gest protested. "Eliston isn't such a fool. As that."

"He isn't such a fool as he looks, I'll grant that! I'm not worried yet, but with these New England women he dug up hanging around we've got to step light and easy. And fast, too, do you hear? That's why I sent for you."

Gest stopped in his course. Before he could speak, however, Morgan went on:

"I've been brooding this nest long enough now, Gest! Something's got to hatch. You're going to get Eliston to put this probate onto the calendar this week Wednesday or you're going to get out. Can you understand that much?"

Gest swallowed hard, then with a rush he broke his news.

"I'm already out, Morgan," he blurted. "Fired. To-day."

"Fired?"

Morgan asked the question so quietly that Gest stopped his feverish pacing and looked at him hopefully. But the quiet was the lull before the storm. The lawyer heaved his gross bulk out of the chair and lurched at Gest as though he would crush him to the floor. The shyster leaped back—put a desk between them.

"Wait, Tom! Look here! Have a heart. It wasn't my fault."

Morgan made another plunge or two—stopped and leaned back against a case, panting—his face purple.

"Not your fault, you toad?" he bellowed. "I suppose it's my fault. What happened? Spit it out! Are you tongue-tied?"

"No. But I ain't going to let you bully me, either, Tom Morgan. I know too much. No, here, Tom, I don't mean that! You've got my goat. Let up on me a minute. You're driving me frantic."

Morgan loosened his collar and swallowed. With some effort he took hold of himself, for he was too angry for his own well-being and he knew it. Although he would have smashed Gest like a fly, he was afraid of further exertion for the moment; with an angry growl he returned to his chair. Gest sidled out and resumed his pacing back and forth, back and forth—his words tumbling from his lips.

"Eliston got back from the East," he began, eying his patron fearfully as he moved and talked. "Brought those two New England women with him. No question but that he's found the right family. But they have no claims. No will. Nothing. Salem George—if that was his name—disappeared. Twenty years ago."

"I know all that, you blithering idiot!" Morgan cried. "Tell me something new!"

"Well, the newest thing is Eliston suspects. Mrs. Riggs. Doubts her will."

"Suspects her of what?"

"Fraud. He hasn't before. He only brought the two George women out. To check up on your case. Identify George—or Noll."

"Go on, you muddy-headed worm!"

"Miss Prudence George—the aunt—she says the whole Riggs story is a lie. Brother wouldn't have done such things. That made Eliston worried. He began to examine dates."

"Where does he get any dates?"

"From those diagrams. In the notebooks."

"What were you doing all that time, you little mink? I thought you made her story check."

"I tried to. But I miscalculated one date. If Eliston can prove his theories. About the diagrams. Noll was in Berkeley when Mrs. Riggs says he was in Ohio. The last time."

Morgan sat back, wiping his forehead.

"Oh, is that all?" he cried, with a laugh

of huge relief. "That's nothing. I suppose you tore that leaf out of the memorandum book, didn't you? Or have you got chalk in your head?"

"I tore out the leaf, of course. But Eliston missed it. That's why he suspects Mrs. Riggs. And fired me."

"You got away with the leaf?"

"Yes."

"Well? What about it, then? You're through, anyway. And what do you suppose I care what Eliston thinks or suspects? He's a fool and you're another one. Anything else?"

"No."

"All right. What are you waiting for, then?"

Gest stopped in his tracks.

"Waiting for?" he echoed stupidly.

"Yes," Morgan replied in ordinary tones. "I didn't ask you to wait."

"Oh, I see. You'll let me know when you want me."

"Yes, if I ever do."

"Look here, Morgan, what do you mean? Are you trying to throw me out? Of this case?"

"I'm not trying anything, Gest. You know the way to the street."

"But, here!" Gest was shaken; ashen. His throat was dry; he clutched at his beard as though he would pull it out. "If you think you can shake me, Morgan! Squeeze me out of this Noll case——"

"Wait a minute." Morgan was cold as steel. "I don't know what you're talking about, Gest. You must have a fever. You're not in this Noll estate matter, as far as I know. You're the former attorney for the public administrator and he's fired you. All right; that's nothing to me. I'll give you one chance to save yourself from being beaten to a jelly and three seconds to take it in. Get out—that's your chance! One! Two! Th——"

Gest fled. His shabby, cheap hat was left behind him on the desk, and this Tom Morgan took in his hands, tore to shreds, threw to the floor, stamped upon, kicked to the four corners of the room. Then, with a grunt, he bit off, savagely, the end of another stogy, and lighted it, resuming his chair and his law book.

It was on the second day thereafter that Morgan was served with formal notice that a contest had been filed against the will offered for probate by Mrs. Grace Riggs in

the matter of the estate of one George Noll, whose real name was Salem George. Morgan winced when he saw the names of the attorneys engaged: Harden & Harden, specialists in testamentary matters, highly reputable, exceedingly skillful in the law, and—here was more cause for wincing!—openly intolerant of the firm of Carew, Carter, Ellis & Morgan. The contest was entered upon in behalf of Miss Prudence George, sister, and Miss Agatha George, niece, of the late Salem George.

Morgan accepted service with a shrug and a wry smile; by telephone he requested Harden & Harden to expedite the case as much as possible, declaring himself entirely ready at any time to go into court. Harden & Harden informed him that they were equally anxious, but newly retained and not, therefore, yet familiar with the case. Attorney Morgan thanked them politely, hung up the telephone, cursed them and their clients and their interests and their punctilious politeness with bloodcurdling blasphemy, and took counsel with The Duke, his "outside man" and with a certain foreign-looking gentleman whose bushy white eyebrows in a swarthy face had earned him the name of "Snow" Bustamente. Out of that counsel big Tom Morgan took what comfort he could, but it was rather cold.

The Noll estate became once more the center of public attention. Sam Eliston, worn, perturbed, worried, and tired out by his efforts, was again plunged into a sea of difficulties, little consoled by the fact that Harden & Harden, themselves New England born and bred and for that reason induced against their judgment to undertake the contest, were now behind him. Eliston recognized that he would be compelled to furnish them with ammunition, and an investigation of his stock of that commodity, invaluable in a fight, disclosed the fact that it was very low. But he was still doggedly determined to fulfill faithfully his trust as public administrator; augmenting that determination he now had a new incentive.

Marvelous to behold, in view of Sam Eliston's life and experience, it was a woman. Agatha George was the first person of her kind the plodding and unimaginative Sam Eliston had ever encountered. Diffident, mannerly, timid, and very gentle, she was like a woman from another world to Sam, vaguely familiar only with the breezy, confident, frank girls of his own California. He

knew little enough of any of them; in a manner of speaking the Republican party had been his sweetheart and mistress. Now he found himself suddenly precipitated into close and confidential relations with this gentle and dependent little creature, and his emotions choked and baffled him.

He could not have told what manner of girl she was—pretty or plain, tall or short, clever or stupid—because he was so intrigued by her trust in and reliance on him. It was as though he had awakened one morning to find a baby left at his door which he could neither turn away nor engage others to rear. What surprised—what dumfounded him—was that something deep inside him responded to her appeal; that he was warmed and thrilled by her implicit reliance on him. And this did not relate wholly to the matter of the estate of her Uncle Salem, concerning which, to tell the truth, she seemed to have no great care nor anxiety, but to everything she did, every question she asked, every problem of conduct or means that came up; to all the details of her great adventure westward to the fabled land of California, and of her life after she arrived there. Never was so helpless a maiden thrust by the fates into the care of so amazed and self-conscious a knight-errant.

When he had deciphered the inscription on the flyleaf of the Bible found among George Noll's possessions and had telegraphed to the New Hampshire town an inquiry regarding a George family in or near that place he had felt confident of positive results. They came at once. There was such a family in Derby, one of the oldest families of that region. Eliston had debated whether or not he should communicate further facts about his quest by wire or mail, but there had kept coming back to his mind the scared face of Sarah Bacon, and he had decided against giving any hint of his reasons. There remained nothing for it but to go himself; and this, using his own money and without any certain knowledge that he would ever be reimbursed, he had done.

He had found the Derby constable—his informant—a garrulous old man who loved to roll on his tongue the savory names and traditions of the neighborhood. He knew the Georges; no one better. They stood high in the community, but their fortunes were fallen and their estate reduced until their only possessions were a weather-beaten

cottage, badly in need of repair, and a one-horse vehicle concerning which the hoary constable opined no one could say whether it or the venerable nag that drew it would be first to go to pieces.

Miss Aggie was the daughter of Jotham, long since deceased, and taught school. She lived with her maiden aunt, Miss Prudence, who was described as "purty poorly." Sam Eliston interjected an inquiry as to whether or not there were any other members of the family—men, for instance. All dead. Quite all? Oh, now that you mentioned it, there had been Miss Prudence's brother, that had been gone from Derby these twenty or thirty years and that was supposed to have gone West and become rich in real-estate venturings.

"What was his name?" Eliston had inquired.

"George, of course."

"But his first name?"

"Oh, that. Salem. Family name. Came down from old Salem Makepeace George, who was secretary to the governor."

"They live up there on the hill, you said?"

"The George Knoll—yes. That's what it's called in these parts. You ain't got news abaout old Mr. Salem, have ye, mister, now?"

"Perhaps," Eliston had responded absently.

"The George Knoll." George Noll. Only he had thought it was George Nawll! The connection, however, was obvious. A palpable identification!

Well, he had gone to the house, had confirmed his conjectures, had explained his errand. There had been an amazing confusion—Miss Prudence had threatened to collapse. Certainly she could not decide what they should say to this kind gentleman from California, but—well—it was so unexpected, so tragic—and Brother Salem has been gone so long he seemed a myth—unreal. And as for anything they could do, even if it seemed advisable—

Agatha George, pale, shy, winsome, had turned to Sam Eliston with grave eyes.

"I'm sure that we will do anything Mr. Eliston wants us to do," she said. "We couldn't do less."

Sam, confused by her implicit reliance on him, had, nevertheless, lost no whit of his earnest and conscientious determination to fulfill his trust in the matter of the estate; the two women were of the blood of the

dead man of mystery, he was in no doubt on that score, and no matter what claims Mrs. Riggs might substantiate the presence of Miss George and her niece seemed imperative.

"I think you ought to go out to California," he said. "The woman who has filed a will may be all right, but if she isn't, all of us ought to help prove it. Can you go?"

That was a question, Sam found, that put the two women all abroad again. In the end it was he who made the necessary arrangements in their behalf—borrowing money, obtaining the services of a neighbor to "look after" their place, keeping back the crowd of curious that gathered immediately the news of his mission spread, buying their tickets—it was he, in fact, who packed their trunks, while Agatha handed him their belongings, piece by piece, and answered, with a growing freedom and vivacity, his questions about the family and herself. What they had done, these ten years or so since the girl's father's death, without a man around Sam found himself puzzling to understand!

Within a few days of their arrival in California the case went to trial. Tom Morgan, astute, cold, adroit, put in an apparently flawless case for Mrs. Riggs and her daughter. The woman herself had told a convincing story, circumstantial and frank—she made an excellent witness. Her daughter's appearance had won her friends in the courtroom, especially the judge, a kindly old man, and the elders on the jury. She was a good foil for her mother, and if she had been coached could not have improved on the part she played.

John Martin, carpenter, appeared and told the story of that strange bedside scene into which he had been induced to witness the will. Under the skillful handling of Tom Morgan he recalled important and vital facts. There was no challenging his story. A neighbor woman, Mrs. Stoney, remembered clearly enough for the purposes of the case the man who had been a visitor at Mrs. Riggs' home in their small Ohio village, and several instances, including Mrs. Riggs' confidences to her about the good fortune that had befallen Genevieve, backed up with a display of the odd will which, the woman asserted, was so unusual as to be difficult to forget.

In addition records and depositions were

presented confirming Mrs. Riggs' story of her own past: her incarceration with her husband, his death, the fact that she had been employed in the infirmary of the penitentiary while there and that one George Burt, a rascal of many aliases, one of which might well have been George Noll, had been a prisoner patient there at the time and had made friends with Mrs. Riggs.

Incidental matters, such as the birth certificate of the girl, and the record of Mrs. Riggs' employment and life for the fifteen years since her incarceration, were all presented. The case was somewhat thin, but it was proof against attack. Marshall Harden, appearing for Miss George and her niece, questioned Mrs. Riggs' identification of the dead man as her old-time friend; Morgan accepted the gage of battle on this point and defied Marden to advance acceptable reasons for his skepticism. The sharp tiff ended to Morgan's advantage.

On the morning of the fourth day of the contest, into which neither Harden nor Eliston had as yet been able to introduce any very promising grounds for opposition, but which they were beginning to fight now with desperate purpose in their hope of bringing out something new, the final touch was given Mrs. Riggs' case to complete and round it out. There appeared in the judge's chambers on that morning a rough and uncouth man who gave the name of Matthew Jackson, who said that he was a hard-rock miner from Arizona, and who asserted that he had once been visited by an old man named George Noll who had displayed a picture he carried with him of a beautiful and winsome child.

Jackson described the old man, related how they had become friends in his lonely Arizona cabin, told of his delight in the picture of the child, and of how, at last, he had begged Noll for it as a keepsake. Noll, he said, had been pleased and flattered by Jackson's interest and had given him the picture, which he had treasured for its own sake until he had read of the case now pending in a chance-found newspaper. Having the feeling that he might be of some assistance to the little girl whose picture had been the source of so much pleasure to him, he had come on, voluntarily and at his own expense, to offer himself as a witness if he could do the child any good.

The photograph he exhibited was unmistakably a picture of Genevieve Riggs, taken

when she was a child of seven or eight. But its particular significance lay in the inscription penned on the reverse by the same hand that had signed the will Mrs. Riggs had presented, and reading: "My adopted niece and heir, Genevieve Riggs." Judge Herbert, greatly moved, had summoned the attorneys for both sides and Morgan had sent for Mrs. Riggs and her daughter. The meeting that followed was affecting.

Genevieve had asked, shyly, if she might call Jackson "Uncle Matt," and he had consented with delight, mopping his homely face and shedding tears. Oddly the relation of this incident and the introduction of this photograph were the trifles that swept away all remaining doubts in the case and had the appearance of the final word in favor of the child as against all others. Almost abruptly after Jackson's successful meeting of cross-examination by Harden, big Tom Morgan, smiling and content, closed his case and sat down.

Probably in the whole courtroom there was but one person who had a lingering doubt as to the right of Genevieve Riggs to the entire estate. Marshall Harden glowered at his papers and thought that he would have been glad of the outcome if any one save Tom Morgan had been counsel for the claimants. The two George women sat, pale and quiet, a good deal confused by it all, but plainly sympathetic with the drab woman and her apparently nameless but appealing young daughter. Sam Eliston had no feelings. He was only biting doggedly into one trifling detail of Mrs. Riggs' testimony that stirred again the shadow of a question in his mind. His suspicions of Mrs. Riggs had been stilled by the evidence; now he was moved more by an obstinate purpose to clear away all doubts rather than one to challenge any claims or create any new hypotheses.

His single question related to a fragment of testimony. In her description of George Noll as she had known him in the penitentiary and afterward in her own home, Mrs. Riggs had spoken of him as a man who "looked like a Bible character, with white hair and beard."

Later Miss Prudence George had caught at this point.

"Do you suppose that the Mr. Noll Mrs. Riggs knew could have been some other man than my brother, Mr. Eliston?" she had asked timorously. "I can't believe that he

was the sort of person she describes—he was always a quiet, decent boy. One can never tell, to be sure. But now——"

Eliston studied.

"What do you mean, Miss George? You both identified the picture Miss Rooney brought in. We've all been satisfied on that point from the first."

"I realize that, Mr. Eliston. But Mrs. Riggs says Mr. Noll had white hair and a beard—my brother Salem was almost completely bald before he was forty. I saw him once, then, when he came home for that visit to us."

"But the picture shows white hair——"

"With his hat on, yes, Mr. Eliston. It was a fringe around his head. He was described that way by the—the undertaker's man. But the top of his head was all bald."

They had discussed this discrepancy with Marshall Harden. But cross-examination had failed to shake Mrs. Riggs' testimony on the point. It had been generally agreed that Miss George had been mistaken; in fact, she herself had wavered somewhat, under the terrifying prospect of going on the stand on this trivial point. In consequence it had been dropped.

By every one but Sam Eliston. Looking at Miss Rooney's snapshot, he saw that it would give any one the impression that Noll had long, white hair. The peculiar baldness of the man who had presented himself at St. Luke's Hospital and whom the coroner had buried had been remarked because of its contrast with the frame of hair that surrounded it. Mrs. Riggs had met this descriptive fact with the obvious answer that he had become partly bald, probably, after she had last seen him. But Eliston, grimly determined to permit the claimants no weak links in their chain, reconstructed Mrs. Riggs' case in his mind.

Supposing that she were a fraud she would need a description of the dead man. This she could get easily. The newspapers had, in fact, carried a rather minute description. But Miss Rooney's picture, taken with a hat on Noll's head, gave the instant impression of a man with long, snowy locks. Mrs. Riggs might easily jump at a conclusion. At best the detail was slight; yet on such trifles, as Eliston well knew, tremendous developments in such cases often hung. With Morgan's case in he insisted that Harden challenge Mrs. Riggs' description.

Harden, opening the case for the con-

testants, made a weak attack on this point. Miss George, placed on the stand for the first time, proved a hesitant and unconvincing witness, especially under the grueling cross-examination of Tom Morgan. Two witnesses were called to testify that George Noll was in a California city at about the time Mrs. Riggs had testified he was at her home in Ohio. These witnesses Sam Eliston had discovered through the cryptic notes in the pocket memorandum books. But their memories were weak as to exact dates—several jurymen smiled when Tom Morgan dismissed the second of them without a question. And shortly thereafter the attorney for Mrs. Riggs and her daughter boldly submitted to the judge instructions to the jury to find for Mrs. Riggs, and pressed the court to close the hearing. Judge Herbert seemed inclined to do so.

Sam Eliston could stand it no longer. There was, it seemed to him, a reasonable doubt of Mrs. Riggs' identification of George Noll. Every one in the courtroom save himself seemed satisfied—even Marshall Harden was only lukewarm in his advocacy of the contest. As public administrator Eliston abruptly demanded to be heard; he asserted that he was dissatisfied with Mrs. Riggs' claims, and requested a week's continuance to enable him to pursue the line of inquiry opened by the small difference in the descriptions of Noll or George by the two women.

Morgan was on his feet with vehement protests. Harden backed Eliston vigorously, not because of faith in the public administrator's suspicions, but because of his dislike and distrust of the criminal lawyer. The battle began to wage hot. Finally Mrs. Riggs pulled at Morgan's sleeve. They held a whispered consultation. Then, suavely, the attorney turned to the judge.

"This is a mountain made out of a molehill, your honor!" he said. "My client informs me that she formerly had a photograph of George Noll made a few years ago, and if she can find it among her possessions here she will have it here to-morrow morning to settle this point. We will consent to a postponement until that time."

"Why wasn't such a photograph brought in long ago, if it was in existence?" Harden snapped.

"Because up to the present time," Morgan retorted, "it has not occurred to the public administrator or the attorney for the con-

testants to use this question of identification as another means for causing an unwarranted delay of the probate of this will!"

"Exception!" Harden growled.

"The case is adjourned until to-morrow morning at ten o'clock," Judge Herbert said.

On the following day Mrs. Riggs produced her photograph. She explained that she had not been asked for it before; had not thought there was any question as to the identification of her prison friend, George Noll. She offered the print as evidence. It was passed from hand to hand. Harden frowned and shrugged. The jurors looked at it knowingly; the judge glanced at it. Sam Eliston, battling desperately against the feeling that something was wrong, while honestly hoping that everything was right, crossed to a window and examined it closely.

It was a picture somewhat similar to the one Miss Rooney had brought to him, and which had long since been introduced as evidence in the case. But this snapshot showed George Noll with his hat removed and with a full head of gray hair. Eliston, doggedly persistent and now beginning to be skeptical, stared at it with amazement, not because of what he saw in it, but because of what all others, including the judge and Harden, had failed to see. He turned to the court and spoke with difficulty, because he was under a strain of excitement.

"This picture is a plain counterfeit, your honor!" he cried. "I do not ask any one to believe it, but I do ask for a few days' continuance, so that I can find and bring into court the photographer who received the picture already admitted as evidence in this case and from it made this faked and fraudulent one."

From that moment the Noll case leaped into prominence again, and thereafter public interest was not allowed to wane until the end. Morgan fought desperately against the continuance Eliston had asked for, but he was defeated. Eliston went immediately to the offices of Harden & Harden and the younger brother was joined in the discussion by his brother, Paul, who had thus far taken no interest in the contest. Between them they enlisted the aid of the police and the district attorney, and a score of detectives went out in search of the photographer. Eliston was so certain they would find. In one minute the claims of Mrs. Riggs and her daughter were undisputed and unchallenged

anywhere; in the next the whole cause had become a battle royal, with adherents on both sides and a bitter fight precipitated.

Having convinced the police authorities and the district attorney that the photograph was a counterfeit, Sam Eliston was able to gain their help and resources in an investigation for which, theretofore, he had had neither means nor assistance. Their search for the man who had "faked" the picture of Noll with hat removed proved fruitless, although it was exhaustive. But when they threw their trained enthusiasm into the case and began to check Mrs. Riggs' whole story against what Miss Prudence George knew of her brother's life and activities and what Eliston was able to tell them from the unraveling of the puzzles in the old man's notebooks they found discrepancies that were not so important as proving where Mrs. Riggs had been mistaken or had deliberately made false statements as they were in demonstrating that she had been the one and had made the other.

Suddenly supplied with the resources the law provides for the investigation of criminal activities Eliston could and did bring to light an astonishing array of witnesses competent to prove certain isolated and unrelated facts about the old man's life. He was amazed to discover how many people had known him: he saw demonstrated perfectly the theory of the police that there is no mystery possible of contriving that does not become simple and solvable once the proper scent is picked up. Sam Eliston was worn to a pitiable state, but he persisted in shaking the case as resolutely and conscientiously with all this new and surprising assistance as he had when he alone had confronted its problems.

The case went back into the court and began to drag wearily. Mrs. Riggs became pale and querulous. Tom Morgan lost weight and showed the condition of his nerves by maladroit moves. He resorted to brutal methods of cross-examination; he broke forth into occasional diatribes that brought down on him the censure of the court. The witnesses Eliston dragged to light offered just enough evidence to shake the Riggs case—Morgan was compelled to meet their testimony with matter he had never before touched on. The strain told. Morgan began to lose ground.

But for all the money expended by the State, now brought into the case by Sam

Eliston's pertinacity and the fraud charge he had made, and for all the work of the detectives and investigators there was still no appreciable flaw in Mrs. Riggs' claims. The woman's drab story held together—not a shred of testimony was offered that actually impeached any of the important points of her case. Doubts were aroused that the court insisted should be stilled by facts, but in the main Tom Morgan's client was safe with the jury.

In those days the jury would have gone out at any time and brought back a verdict giving Mrs. Riggs' daughter the old man's entire property, and no one knew this better than Eliston. Day by day he lived and labored in the hope that a fatal defect would be found—but none such was found. He and Tom Morgan were like two wrestlers, weaker and stronger, but he so desperate that he could not be pinned down, Morgan driving steadily, steadily, toward total exhaustion of all his resources and so to defeat.

But in the meantime, Mrs. Riggs' money was gone. The time came when she was no longer able to pay her daily bill for witness and jury fees. She told the newspaper men as much, and sympathetic citizens came forward with small contributions to help her. This income was negligible. Her plight became desperate. Tom Morgan, too, had done everything he could do to raise money for her cause. Exhausting his resources, he fought savagely to end the trial, but Eliston played successfully for time. Finally, on a certain Friday afternoon in September, Morgan asked for a continuance of three days to enable Mrs. Riggs to appeal to those who believed in her for advances which would make it possible for her to go on. On this showing the case was continued until the following Monday.

As Sam Eliston rose from his place and started from the room Agatha George touched his arm.

"I haven't seen you for two weeks, Mr. Eliston," she said. "Have you forgotten about me?"

"I'm trying to win this money for you, Miss Agatha," he said wearily. "I'd rather be seeing you."

"I hate the money!" she cried vehemently

"I'm beginning to," he said, looking at her straight. "I'll come and see you Sunday, if you'll let me."

But he did not; for on Sunday the vultures were settling lower about their prey.

VI.

On the following morning, as it chanced, a stranger entered the office of Skelling & Banta, real-estate agents, and asked for the manager of the rental department. He was well dressed, brusque, businesslike, but he was noticeable because, although it was a warm September day, he was bundled up and muffled and overcoated as though it were the dead of winter. A disagreeable cough, that shook him frequently, seemed to explain his caution; as a matter of fact he said later that he was only just recovering from a severe case of pneumonia and had to take the utmost care of himself. His name, he said, was Abernathy.

"I have just been sent to this territory by my firm," he began as the rental manager came forward; "and my wife is coming next week with the baby. For a while we want a furnished house."

"I see." The manager appraised him with his experienced glance; reached for a drawer of index cards. "You will want something in the better residence sections, of course—say, seven or eight rooms, garage and servants' quarters——"

"I want something in a quiet neighborhood, though," Abernathy interrupted. "We are quiet people; get us out of the fashionable sections. And we like breathing space around us. I'd rather have a smaller house and a larger lot."

"Um-m-m, I see." The agent brought down a second drawer. "Would an old-fashioned house do? Modern plumbing and all, of course, but not a new bungalow. In fact, a two-story house."

"Where is it?"

"West End Avenue. Thirty minutes from the center of the city by street car—fifteen by motor."

"Quiet? And with a good-sized yard?"

"That's why I mentioned the Nettleton house—it is just what you describe."

"When could I see it?"

"Now, if you like. I'll send one of the boys out with you."

"That would suit me."

The manager called a subordinate whom he introduced as Mr. Tollifer. The latter took Mr. Abernathy to a waiting automobile and they drove to West End Avenue to look

at the Nettleton house. On the way, Tollifer being a promising young southern California real-estate agent and overlooking no "prospects" whatsoever, descanted eloquently on the beauties of his native heath, by and large, the attractiveness of home life in the immediate vicinity, the salubrity of the climate, the amounts of money to be derived from comparatively trifling investments in lots, acreage, and lands. Mr. Abernathy, his coat pulled tighter, his muffler higher and his soft hat lower, coughed occasionally, but gave his garrulous guide no great encouragement. Tollifer needed little, however; he liked to talk about southern California and even a dumb listener presented certain advantages under the circumstances.

The Nettleton house proved to be a hideous, square dry goods box of a place, set in the mathematical center of an almost exact square of a lot, with a few trees breaking some of its worst lines, and with red geraniums—the favorite flower of the southern California middle classes—sprawling everywhere, in masses of shrieking color against the drab yellow of the old house. Abernathy stood at the entrance walk for a moment, looking over the surroundings. On either hand there were houses, but one was vacant—breaking out with agency signs like a feeble man with a skin disease—and the other was some yards away from the common property line. The street was an old one; only in the distance could one see where new growth had begun in trim lawns, staring bungalows, and offensively neat flower beds.

"This might do," Abernathy remarked. "Let's see it."

They went inside. It was plainly furnished with essentials of a considerably older period, none too clean, but showing that it had once been a proud home, full of "stylish" things.

"Your wife will find it very comfortable," urged Tollifer. "This now—here's the place for a nursery! Sunny room. South exposure. Door there into the nurse's room—here to the bath. And this, now——"

"What's the rent?" his client interrupted sharply.

"Well, now, I'll tell you, Mr. Abernathy, this house used to be held——"

"I don't care anything about what it used to be held for. I want to know what it is held for now."

"Yes, sir. Eighty dollars."

"Go back to your manager and tell him I'll take it. Here is ten dollars down to hold it—I'll drop in Monday and sign the lease. I want to stay here and look around a little."

Tollifer took the proffered bill, but hesitated. The rules were strict against leaving prospects in furnished houses until all the formalities were completed, including the payment of at least two months' rent money. However, Tollifer thought, there was not anything in the house it would pay any one to steal, and certainly Abernathy had a way with him.

"It isn't customary, Mr. Abernathy," he said, and added hastily, seeing that Abernathy was about to burst out once more: "But I'm certain it will be all right this time. Yes, I think that would be all right."

"I hope so!" Abernathy grunted.

He walked to the front door with the agent. On the steps was a red-headed and freckled youth with a bottle of milk under his arm and a disarming grin on his homely face.

"Hello," he said cheerfully, as the two men appeared. "Somebody moving in here?"

"Yes," Abernathy snapped.

"I thought so. This is a new route for me, and I'm hustling business. Let me bring you your milk?"

"Don't want any milk!" Abernathy said shortly.

The young real-estate agent interrupted.

"But what about the baby?" he asked. "I thought babies——"

For a second Abernathy had a startled look about him—he flashed an inquiring glance on the uncomfortable agent. Then he gave a short laugh.

"Oh, I forgot all about the baby," he said, in much more genial tones than he had used before. "You see, it was born after I left home—I've been on the road for four months. And—and sick besides. I haven't seen the baby. Yes, son, we'll want milk, after all, for the baby."

"All right, mister," the grinning youth said. "Two quarts?"

"One, I guess, for now."

"Right! What's your name?"

"T. J. Abernathy."

"Aber—huh?"

"Abernathy."

"Do you mind writing it for me? I ain't very good at names."

Almost pleasantly the new tenant took

several cards and bits of paper from a vest pocket, chose one at random, and on the back wrote his name.

"Much obliged," the milkman said, and went off, grinning.

Tollifer said good-by, glad to be quit of this puzzling client. Abernathy went back inside the house, for the first time scrutinizing its rooms, exits, and arrangements. As he went he loosed his coat buttons, threw back his muffler, set his hat back. He was a much younger man than he had appeared in his close-wrapped condition; he was an unpleasant young man to look at, as he went systematically over that dark old house, making his careful examination of it, finally pulling down all the window shades in the upper story, with particular care to see that they made the dusty panes blind from without.

Shortly after four o'clock that same afternoon a smartly dressed and alert young business man walked up to the desk of the new and popular Stanislaus Hotel, and greeted the clerk with a smile.

"Well, Henry," he said, "I suppose you'll be glad to check me out on Monday."

"You going Monday, Mr. Baruch?" the clerk replied. "Sorry for that. But I'll confess I could use your room. About forty times over, to tell the truth."

"You can have it Monday," Baruch said. "Just now I have an appointment and I wish you'd give me that small pocket case."

"The black one, Mr. Baruch?"

"The black one. That's it."

He took the leather folder the clerk handed him from the vault, opened it on the desk, with a careless glance at his immediate surroundings, and disclosed a thick, dark plush lining on which lay, sparkling, a score or more of unset diamonds of various weights. He ran his eye over them quickly, refolded the case, put it in an inside pocket.

"A customer, at this time of night?" the clerk asked idly.

"Yes. Private prospect. I'm through with the retailers already."

"Well, sell him a million, Mr. Baruch."

"I'll try to. If any one calls I will be back about eight, I think. Night, Henry."

"Back at eight. Correct! Good night, sir."

Simon Baruch, the diamond merchant, went out. But he did not return at eight

o'clock. Nor at nine. Nor at all. For he was gone to visit his last prospect.

Jimmie Dickson, the milk boy, was a little late that night when he came to the old Nettleton place where lived his new customer, Mr. Aber—something. He ran up the long, dark walk shortly after midnight—he was almost on the porch before he saw that there were thin gleams of light coming from underneath closely drawn curtains in an upstairs room. As he put down his bottle of milk he noticed that the door was slightly ajar, and it occurred to him that it ought to be closed. For a second he considered ringing the bell and notifying Mr. Whatever-his-name, or closing the door. But it was not his business, he thought; doubtless the man of the house knew what he was doing. Besides, Jimmie was late. He ran to his wagon.

More than an hour later he drove back on West End Avenue, homeward bound, whipping up his tired team and whistling to keep himself in spirits and because he was the whistling sort. But as he came to the old Nettleton place, his tune was broken off. The faint glimmer of light still framed those upstairs windows; the front door, touched by a breath of late sea breeze, stood open.

"Whoa!" Jimmie cried. "That's a hell of a way to leave a door!"

He jumped out and started to run up the walk.

But his pace was checked. Why he checked it he could not have told, any more than he could have told exactly why it became more deliberate as he advanced or why he finally came to a dead stop. Something—something very vague oppressed him. It was not exactly fear. But he was gripped by irresolution—a queer timidity.

The night breeze stirred across his shoulders—the door moved slightly, creaking on its hinges. The thin, dry sound startled Jimmie; without any shame he turned and ran back to his wagon, reaching it with relief, his heart pounding. At the corner of Cherry Street he saw two policemen at a signal box. He pulled up, shouting.

"What the dickens is in you, lad?" one of the officers demanded. "What are you saying?"

"The old Nettleton place," Jimmie gasped. "I don't know as it's anything—but the lights have been on upstairs all night—and the front door is open."

"Well, and what of it?"

"There's something wrong, I know. I got scared out when I was going up to close the door."

"What's the door to do with you?" the officer asked, though good-naturedly. "And just because a door's open is no sign——"

"We'll have a look, Grant," the other officer interrupted. "Turn around and drive us back, son."

He drove them back. They led him up the deserted walk, their footsteps sounding overloudly in the stillness. At the threshold all three listened. There was a complete absence of sound or movement from within; something more palpable than the quiet of a sleeping house. Officer Needham rang the doorbell, and its metallic shrilling seemed almost a scream. But there was no answer from within; no movement.

"We'll have a look then, Needham," the other policeman said.

With Jimmie Dickson close behind them they entered. The rooms below were all dark. One of the officers called out, but there was no reply. They climbed the stairs. They entered the lighted room.

It was a spectacle of disorder and wreckage. Chairs were smashed, tables overturned, a dresser pulled askew in one corner and its cheap plate mirror smashed and the pieces scattered; on one wall was a great ugly smear of blood, still fresh—still glistening in the light. In the corner on a tumbled bed, his pockets turned inside out, lay the body of Simon Baruch.

His last bargain had been made; his last prospect had come and gone.

VII.

About nine o'clock on the following Monday morning, Mrs. Grace Riggs entered the clerk's offices of the superior court of the county and demanded to know what amount she owed, for witness and jury fees, in the Noll estate case. She was told the sum, and she paid it, in bank notes. When she had left the room, the clerk, in response to a request he had received earlier to that effect, telephoned the office of the public administrator.

"Merriweather?" he asked.

"Yes," was the reply.

"Is Eliston in yet?"

"No. He's still on the trail. Been up all night. But I guess he's got something."

"Mrs. Riggs was just in."

"Oh. Yes?"

"Yes. Paid up in full. Bank notes."

Merriweather's voice broke nervously.

"Maybe Sam is right, then?"

"Maybe. I suppose we'll know pretty soon."

Court was convened at ten. Mrs. Riggs and her daughter, and Tom Morgan had come in a few minutes earlier and had engaged in a long, whispered conference, their heads together. Martin, the carpenter who had witnessed the will, stood by a window looking out and pulling nervously at the shade cord. At one side sat Matthew Jackson, the Arizona prospector, who had come so fortuitously into the case with his convincing testimony and the picture of Genevieve Riggs which George Noll had inscribed with her name and their relationship and had given the mining man. Jackson leaned back in his chair, watching the courtroom fill up, eying each new arrival keenly, as though interested in a study of faces or of people.

Quietly at the opposite end of the long table from Mrs. Riggs and her attorney sat the two New England women. Their faces were pale—Miss Agatha, the niece, twisted her hands in her lap nervously and she, too, watched the door of the courtroom, but for one face, not for all. At the stroke of ten, Marshall Harden, their attorney, entered, followed by his brother, Paul—a big lawyer in name and ability, but hitherto not associated in the actual trial with his brother. At his entrance Tom Morgan looked up quickly, with a frown. But it turned into a savage smile as the two Hardens took their places, without so much as glancing his way.

Judge Herbert entered, the crowd rose, he took his place, and lawyers, clients, and spectators sat down as the clerk's voice droned out the formal announcement of the opening of the session and the name of the case. Two newspaper reporters came in, joking under their breaths—a good deal weary of this monotonous and apparently meaningless contest. A witness was called. He was the owner of a small store in a small town in the northern part of the State; through the dates in Noll's memorandum books, Eliston had found that the old man had been a visitor in that town ten or twelve years before, at about the time the Riggs will was said to have been drawn. And now the Hardens began a methodical effort to refresh the

memory of the witness as to the exact date on which he had known Noll to be in his store. Question and answer droned on; answer and question. Part of the audience rose and left. A few others drifted in.

At about eleven a messenger appeared, came to the elbow of the older Harden and whispered something to him. Harden nodded and the messenger withdrew. But the attorney's face relaxed; when he communicated his news to his brother the latter smiled. A moment or two later he asked permission to recall to the stand Matthew Jackson, the witness from Arizona.

This seemingly trivial request had an odd effect. Tom Morgan unconsciously frowned. The witness himself started and his face colored. It was with an effort—watched, incidentally, with the greatest keenness by the two Hardens and by two big, quiet men who had, for the first time, joined the ranks of the auditors of the case that morning—that he got to his feet.

At the same time Ned Strohm, the clerk, caught the eye of the bailiff of the court; that worthy immediately left the room, and in a few moments returned with three lynx-eyed newspaper reporters at his heels, hurrying to their places, stirred by some strange scent of news. Jackson was on the stand.

The elder Harden had risen, with deliberation, adjusting his glasses and turning over some papers before him on the table. He cleared his throat; spoke in a calm, measured tone.

"Mr. Jackson," he began, "the transcript, which I have before me, shows that you testified to a visit made you some five or six years ago by George Noll, the testator in this case. Is that correct?"

"Yes, sir," Jackson said. He had regained his self-possession now; smiled at familiar faces in the jury box.

"Did you ever receive a letter from Mr. Noll? Or did you ever see his handwriting?"

Tom Morgan was on his feet, angry and aggressive.

"I object to that question as irrelevant and immaterial, your honor!" he cried. "The court may understand the appearance of an additional attorney in this unreasonably delayed hearing, but I confess I do not. And, although the gentleman has a perfect right to be here, I shall refuse to permit him to take up the court's time in an aimless fishing ex-

petition when he knows nothing about the proceedings to date."

Judge Herbert leaned back in his big chair.

"There is some ground for Mr. Morgan's objection, I think, Mr. Harden," he said ponderously. "I do not see any foundation in the transcript for the pursuit of such a line of inquiry as you apparently propose to make."

"There is none, if the court please," Harden responded. "But if your honor wishes, I should like to make a statement of my reason for asking the witness these apparently vague questions."

"Please do so."

"I can do it in a few words. We are convinced, your honor, that the will now before you in this contest is a gross and palpable fraud and a forgery. Some one other than George Noll, or Salem George, drew the instrument. We believe that Mr. Jackson can throw some light on the facts. Thus my question."

Morgan laughed aloud.

"I beg the court's pardon—and that of the counsel for the contestants, your honor. And I withdraw my objection."

He, Mrs. Riggs, and even the witness, Jackson, were smiling now. Harden, unperturbed, calm, had the question read.

The witness crossed his knees, eased himself in the chair.

"No, sir. Except for the writing on the back of the picture, I never saw anything Mr. Noll wrote."

"You have seen the will?"

"Not to look close at it; no, sir. I've seen it handed around here, of course."

"Mr. Jackson," the elder Harden said, crossing to the stand, and displaying a pad of paper and a pencil; "I should like to presume on your good nature and ask you to write a few words for the court's inspection on this page."

Morgan rose to object, thought better of it, and sat down, smiling.

Seeing that he was to go on with this part, the witness took the pencil and pad carelessly.

"Certainly," he said. "What do you want me to write?"

"Just a moment, please," Harden said, and started back toward his place.

At that instant Sam Eliston entered the courtroom and, accompanied by a young stranger, came slowly down the aisle toward

the bench. He was hollow-eyed, worn, bent by weariness, but his cheeks had on them a little flush of excitement, and he smiled reassuringly and nodded to Agatha George. The girl gasped and settled back in her place, her own cheeks flaming suddenly; her hands loosed and gripped more tightly again. Eliston laid a bit of paper on the table before the Hardens, motioned his companion to a seat, and took one himself. The elder Harden picked up the scrap of paper and confronted the witness again.

"Mr. Jackson," he said slowly, "I should like you to write the name Abernathy."

Jackson stiffened like a steer at the impact of the poleax. The paper and pencil fell from his hands, with a rustle and clatter that sounded harsh and tragic in the silent room. The newspaper reporters held their breath, looking from the face of the witness to that of Sam Eliston. Tom Morgan was almost as much stricken as the pallid witness, but he recovered instantly and rose. Mrs. Riggs sat a little more stiffly in her chair, and wet her lips. Her daughter simpered.

Meantime, with his eyes stonily on Tom Morgan, the witness, Jackson, had stooped to recover pencil and paper. It gave them all a moment. When he had straightened up once more Morgan had found his voice—was pouring out a denunciation of the clap-trap of the contestants of the will. Judge Herbert was quiescent—waiting and watching the Hardens rather curiously. When Morgan finished, he said: "Overruled," mechanically, and turned expectantly to Paul Harden.

"Well, Mr. Jackson," the latter said, in his deliberate tones; "will you write that name for us?"

"What—what name was it?" Jackson asked.

"The name 'Abernathy.'"

"How do you spell it?"

"We will leave the spelling to you."

Suddenly Jackson threw the pad and pencil aside angrily.

"I'm dam— I won't spell it myself!" he jerked. "You can't make a monkey of me—that's all—I don't care who you are!"

Judge Herbert struck his desk sharply with his gavel.

"Mr. Jackson," he exclaimed; "you forget yourself, sir! Have you no respect for the court?"

"Excuse me, judge," Jackson mumbled.

"But I—this man——" His voice sank into a mumble.

"We don't care to press the witness," Harden broke in calmly. "For the moment we will excuse him from the stand."

Morgan rose once again to object or fortify the shaken witness, but once more he sat back without a word. His accustomed alertness seemed to have been dissipated, his notorious impudence to have failed. He wiped his forehead with an impatient hand, and turned to watch Jackson.

The witness had come down from the stand quickly and crossed toward his chair. As he went the two big, quiet men who had that morning come into the room as spectators rose, fixing their eyes on him intently, and, as he moved they moved with him, one toward the door at the rear, one toward the windows that were open behind where he had been sitting. By most of those present, in the tension of the moment, the two newcomers were unnoticed, but Jackson saw them, and was menaced by them, for he cowered as he took his seat. Tom Morgan saw them, too; and he looked dazedly about him, totally at a loss to determine from what point the next blow was to come, but now quite certain that there was one impending.

"Call your next witness, gentlemen," Judge Herbert said precisely.

"We should like to call Mr. Franklyn Nuffer," Paul Harden said.

If Tom Morgan was in doubt as to the direction from which the imminent attack was to come, his client, Mrs. Riggs, was not, after the announcement of this new name. She turned in her chair, caught one look at the face of the man who was rising to respond to the call, and suddenly laughed aloud—harshly, gratingly. Morgan looked at her, his mouth gaping. Jackson, the Arizona witness, looked at her with a twisted smile. Martin, the carpenter who had witnessed the will, looked at her with his face the color of ashes. Two or three others of her principal witnesses shifted in their places—from the rear of the room a swarthy man with bushy white eyebrows, rose and started to leave quietly. But he was met at the door by the big, quiet man who stood there so causally, and requested to remain. Jackson had followed this movement, too, and he and the rest of them appeared completely to understand its meaning and the check given it. If they had been rats cornered they could not have looked, any of them, more

desperate, more enraged, nor more helpless. Meantime, Franklyn Nuffer had taken the stand. He was, it appeared, a photographic expert, specializing in enlargements, copying of prints, retouching, fine, and difficult work of all sorts with films and camera prints. He owned, he said, and operated, alone, a small shop in an out-of-the-way corner of the city. He was little known by the general public, most of his work being done for professional photographers without his expertness in his particular line.

"That is plain, I believe, Mr. Nuffer," Paul Harden said, at this. "Now I should like to ask you whether or not you have ever seen before the picture which I hand you—one of the exhibits in this case?"

He held out to the photographer the picture Mrs. Riggs had presented as one of her friend and patron, George Noll, taken with his hat removed, and showing his head covered with a heavy growth of hair. Nuffer merely glanced at it.

"Yes," he replied. "I made that print."

"From what, if you please?"

"I copied a small picture."

"Copied it exactly, Mr. Nuffer?"

"No, sir. I made a negative of the picture given me, then I retouched that negative and made this print here."

"Let me hand you another picture, Mr. Nuffer—also an exhibit in this case. Do you recognize that?"

The second picture was the one Miss Rooney, the San Luis waitress, had brought to Sam Eliston in the first days of the investigation.

"That is the picture—or a copy of the picture that I made my negative from for this first one."

"Exactly. Now, Mr. Nuffer, you have said that you took the second picture I have shown you and from that made a negative. You then say you retouched the negative and made the print I first showed you. Is that correct?"

"Yes, sir."

"Now, will you please tell the jury what you mean when you say you retouched the negative?"

"Yes, sir. I gave the old man a fine head of white hair."

A titter ran around the room—a general laugh threatened. Both the bailiff and the judge rapped sharply for order, and the tension returned. Nuffer laid down the two photographs and sat waiting.

"For whom did you do this work!" Harden resumed, always cold, always dispassionate, always deliberate.

"For a gentleman and a woman—I supposed it was a mother and her son. I've forgotten the names."

"Do you see them in the room, Mr. Nuffer?"

"Yes, sir. That is the lady that came, and the man that came with her is over under that window."

He indicated Mrs. Riggs and pointed out Matthew Jackson, the chance-disclosed prospector witness from Arizona.

"That is all," Harden said.

"Any questions, Mr. Morgan," Judge Herbert asked sharply.

"If this case is to be conducted like a hippodrome," Morgan growled, "I shall have no questions."

"The court takes exception to your remarks and warns you to bridle your tongue, Mr. Morgan," Judge Herbert said irascibly. "Proceed with your case, Mr. Harden."

Harden called Samuel Eliston, public administrator of the county. Under considerable strain and as though almost exhausted, Sam Eliston took the stand. Given his own time, he related then, how he had labored from the time of the death of George Noll to unravel the puzzles surrounding the matter. He told of finding the family of the dead man and his true name, of his apparently hopeless efforts to discover whether or not the will presented by Mrs. Riggs was the only existing testament of the dead man, how small incidents had aroused his suspicions of that will, how apparent discrepancies in Mrs. Riggs' own story had come to his attention through the cryptic diagrams in the old man's notes; how her mistake—as he called it—regarding Noll's hair had fixed his suspicions and convinced him of the falsity of her claims, and finally how he had made up his mind that the picture she presented, showing the man with his hat off and his full head of hair revealed was a clever fabrication.

Thereafter, he said, he had spent days and nights, assisted by the police, and by men from the office of the district attorney, in combing the town to locate the photographer who had made the faked picture, and how they had failed.

"I had about given up hope Saturday," he said in conclusion simply.

"That is all clear, I believe," Paul Har-

den said. "But you found a clew, after Saturday, did you, Mr. Eliston?"

"Accidentally; yes, sir."

"Please relate the circumstance."

"On Friday, as the court will remember, Mrs. Riggs asked for a three days' continuance in order to raise funds for paying jury and witness fees and carrying on her case. I had had an investigation made, and I knew that neither Mrs. Riggs nor her attorney nor her witnesses had any funds. I was certain that they were desperate—that they would do anything to win the stake of this trial; almost a quarter of a million dollars in cash. I suspected that there would be some clew in the source from which she got her money. It was suspicion only, but I thought the facts justified suspicion."

Tom Morgan made his last rally.

"Just a moment," he said hoarsely. "I have let this line of testimony go on uninterrupted for a long time now, your honor. But it is getting more rambling every minute; it is also getting dangerously close to perjury, and to defamation of character. I move that all the testimony taken this morning be stricken from the record, and that the court give his instructions to the jury in favor of the testator of the will now before you."

He sat down, wearily, and like an old, old man.

"The motion is denied," Judge Herbert intoned, gravely. "Proceed, Mr. Eliston."

"Yes, sir. On Sunday morning, as your honor knows, the newspapers reported the death, by violence, and after a terrific struggle, of a diamond broker named Baruch, who had been robbed of forty thousand dollars' worth of diamonds. It was the one big crime of the day. Because I was suspicious and did not dare overlook any possibility, however vague, I went to the police station on Sunday morning early to look into the investigation made by detectives—to see what they had found.

"There was nothing to help either them or me, at first. But in the afternoon the policemen who discovered the body reported for regular duty and they told the detectives assigned to the Baruch murder case that a young milkman named James Dickson might be able to help find the murderer. Dickson is in the courtroom and will testify if he is needed. But in substance, his story was that he had met the man who rented the house on Friday, that that man had ordered

milk, and that he had written on a card for Dickson's use, the name T. J. Abernathy.

"The card on which the renter had written that name was shown me. The name was strange to me, of course. I could see nothing in it to help. I dropped the card to the table in police headquarters—by chance it turned over as it fell, and on the reverse I saw the name of Mr. Franklyn Nuffer, photographic expert."

The newspaper reporters, who had been following all this with the closest attention, whispered together, and two of them rose and hurried out. Eliston clasped his hands together wearily, then his eye fell on Agatha George and she smiled at him. His body relaxed; his face flushed; he took a deep breath and seemed suddenly made a whole man again, fresh, earnest, indefatigable, untired.

Paul Harden turned to the judge, with dignity and with his imperturbable calm.

"Warrants have been issued for certain arrests in two criminal cases this morning, your honor," he said slowly. "They are held in the room by officers of the county; if the court sees fit to continue this case until——"

Jackson, the prospector, leaped to his feet—a revolver in his hand. He made two strides toward the door, and the audience fell apart, panic-stricken. But one of the two big plain-clothes men smothered him from the rear.

"No use, Abernathy!" he growled, as they went to the floor.

Tom Morgan, Mrs. Riggs, all her witnesses, were pressed back into a corner. The jurymen rose, talking, gesturing. Judge Herbert adjourned court in shouts, pounding on his bench; but no one heard him. He stood a moment undecided, then came slowly down

from the bench—made his way toward Sam Eliston.

But he was not first to reach that young man. A fresh-faced girl was there before all the others—her arms extended. Sam Eliston reached out and took her hands. He had to lean close to make himself heard, in the confusion.

"It's almost over," he said, trying to smile reassuringly at her. "You're really an heiress now, Miss Agatha."

She gripped him tightly.

"I don't want to be!" she cried. "I hate the money! I hate to have you look at me that way! I don't want the money! I don't want it!"

Eliston's forehead puckered: he could not think she was ungrateful nor priggish.

"Think of the good you can do with it," he began, lamely—he was bolstering up his own good opinion of her. "Don't you see that all this story of Mrs. Riggs was a lie—your uncle——"

She smiled through her tears.

"Silly!" she said. "What I mean is—well, don't you see?"

And Sam, staring, gulping, trying to be earnest and conscientious and not lunatic, suddenly saw. He grinned. He squeezed her hand awkwardly.

Then Harris Gest came running in, panting, and—seizing the arm of Judge Herbert, began to talk very rapidly, almost incoherently, begging a chance to tell something he knew—to tell everything.

His voice rose shrilly. The whole courtroom, disturbed and milling, focused on him.

Sam Eliston laughed quietly, looking into Agatha George's eyes, and brazenly kissed her.



WHAT FOCH THINKS OF NAPOLEON

NAPOLEON was the greatest military genius of modern times, and could he have returned to earth in the dark days of the World War he would in a month or two have "reorganized everything, set to work in some new way, and routed the bewildered enemy," says Marshal Foch in an article in the *London Times*. But the great French soldier's admiration for Napoleon's military genius doesn't make him blind to the emperor's faults, for he adds: "Then he would have come back at the head of his victorious armies—and would have been a great nuisance." Napoleon's ultimate failure, says the marshal, was caused by his overwhelming ambition—he "forgot that a man cannot be God; and that war is not the highest goal, since above it there is peace."

A Chat With You

ONE of our earliest memories, coming to us from the long ago like the springtime scent of a hawthorn hedge, is that of an old Scots song. It is a duet for a man and a girl.

The girl, Jeanie, asks the man, Jamie, what he is going to bring her when he returns from "Germanie." Jamie tells her that he will bring her a fine silk gown, but she is not satisfied with this. Then he promises to bring her a "gal-lant gay" to be her husband. But Jeanie does not like this idea.

With a forthrightness worthy of a war worker in leap year, she proposes to Jamie. "Be my gudeman, yersel', Jamie," she says.

Jamie explains that he does not know how that would do inasmuch as he already has a wife and three children living in Germany. Jeanie complains that he should have told her this before, but he excuses himself on the grounds that her eyes have bewitched him.

Jeanie is no vampire, she has a good Presbyterian conscience and she orders him back to his wife and children.

And now Jamie comes out in his true colors. He has been joking all along. He has no wife and children and he intends to marry Jeanie and none other. Now Jeanie hesitates. "I have neither gowd nor lands," she says, "to be a match for you, laddie."

But in the last verse it turns out that Jamie has real property sufficient to support not only one, but several wives.

It was this verse that we especially liked. The love-making part rather bored us, although it was a relief to learn that Jamie was on the level, but the recital of his property was a treat worth waiting for:

"Blair in Athol's mine, lassie,
Fair Dunkeld is mine, lassie,
St. Johnstoun's bower, and Hunting-
tower,
And a' that's mine is thine, lassie."

The song takes its name from one delightfully cadenced word in the last of a long list of stanzas—"Hunting-tower." The melody is simple and rather monotonous. No ragtime, no jazz, just a quaint and haunting charm. It is the kind of song *Orsino* wanted to hear when he said, in "Twelfth Night":

"Come, the song we had last night.
Mark it, Cesario, it is old and plain;
The spinsters and the knitters in the sun
And the free maids that weave their
threads with bones
Do use to chant it: it is silly sooth,
And dallies with the innocence of love,
Like the old age."



AND so, when we opened a manuscript with the word "Hunting-tower" typed on the brown cover, we were interested, but prepared to be disappointed. No Huntingtower that any

one could write about to-day could equal the old, romantic Huntingtower of our imagination. Strange to say, the story did not disappoint us. It was an exhilarating surprise. It is a tale of Scotland, but of the Scotland of to-day. It is a romance, an adventure, a mystery. There are modern boys in it and modern men, a splendid adventure story well told. Why do we all like adventure stories and all secretly wish for adventures of our own?

The boy that lives in most of us and has a secret longing for adventure is perhaps an instinct moving us to prove that we can meet emergency if it should come.

The author of "Huntingtower" is John Buchan who wrote "Greenmantle" and "Mr. Standfast." "Huntingtower" will run in two parts. The first half appears in the next issue of THE POPULAR.



DID you ever hear of Centre College?

It is an old, but small, institution of learning in the blue-grass region of Kentucky. In proportion to its size, it boasts about the best aggregation of football players the world has ever seen. Football is not such an old sport at Centre, but since its start there, the rise in fame of the college has been meteoric.

Out of nothing but grit and native

ability the Kentuckians built a team that finally beat everything in the South. Last year they came north to Cambridge and met Harvard in a game that will be famous as long as football is played in the U. S. A. Not only as a game but as a spectacle was it interesting, for the old chivalry of the South rose up again and came north in a body with Centre College.

For half the game, Centre held Harvard even; then the superior strength of the great university told, and Harvard won.

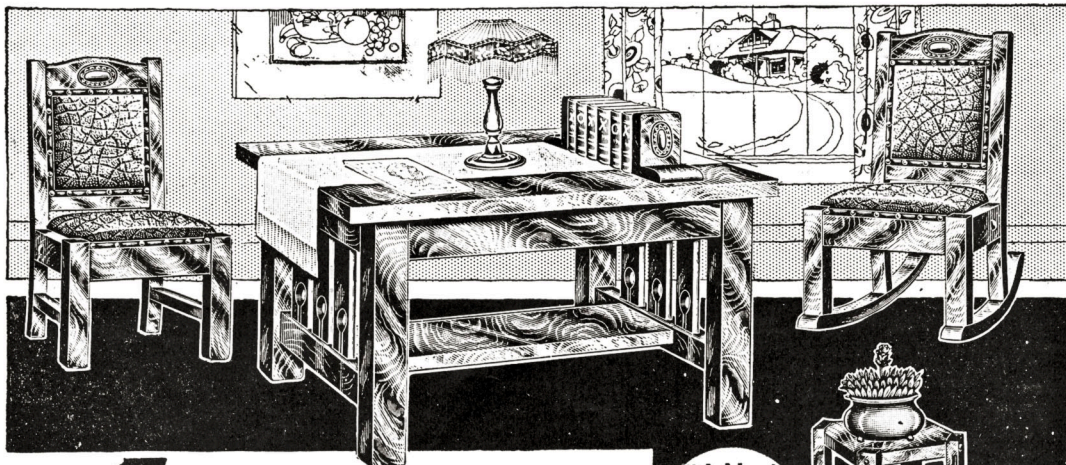
It was a game for both teams to be proud of, and incidentally, a big step toward the better acquaintance of New England and the South.



THIS football epic and with it, the story of a great athlete, Bo McMurray, has been made into the best story of athletics Ralph D. Paine has ever written. It starts in the next issue of THE POPULAR, out in two weeks. Both these stories are sure to satisfy that longing for excitement and adventure that lives in every man who has his future still before him. The instinct for adventure is, after all, our best ally in facing the emergencies of life.

This magazine is, in some sort, dedicated to that instinct. We would hate to lose it. You will find a lot of it in the next issue.





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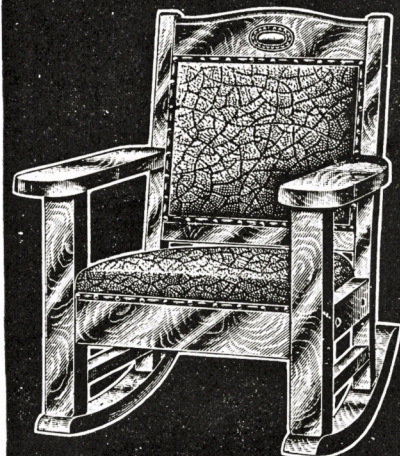
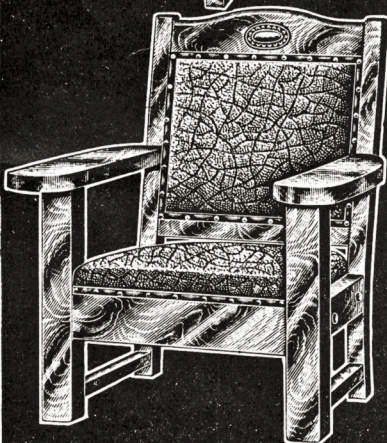
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A FRIEND of mine.
* * * * *
WHO COULDN'T speak.
* * * * *
A WORD of French.
* * * * *
WENT TO Paris.
* * * * *
AND THE first time.
* * * * *
HE HAD to get.
* * * * *
A HAIRCUT and shave.
* * * * *
HE PRACTICED an hour.
* * * * *
MAKING SIGNS.
* * * * *
IN THE looking glass.
* * * * *
SO THE French barber.
* * * * *
WOULD UNDERSTAND him.
* * * * *
AND THEN he went in.
* * * * *
AND WIGGLED his fingers.
* * * * *
THROUGH HIS hair.
* * * * *
AND STROKED his chin.
* * * * *
AND THE barber grinned.
* * * * *
AND FINISHED the job.
* * * * *
THEN MY friend thought.
* * * * *
HE'D BE polite.
* * * * *
SO HE gave the barber.
* * * * *
AN AMERICAN cigarette.

WHICH THE barber smoked.
* * * * *
AND MY friend pointed.
* * * * *
TO HIS mouth.
* * * * *
AND SAID “Likee voo.”
* * * * *
AND THE barber roared.
* * * * *
AND SAID “You BET.
* * * * *
I USED to smoke ‘em.
* * * * *
WHEN I worked.
* * * * *
IN INDIANAPOLIS.
* * * * *
AND BELIEVE me.
* * * * *
THEY SATISFY!”



HERE'S a smoke that talks in any language and needs no interpreter. Light up a Chesterfield, draw deep—and more plainly than words your smile will tell the world “They Satisfy.” It's the blend that does it—and you can't get “Satisfy” anywhere except in Chesterfields, for that blend *can't be copied!*

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