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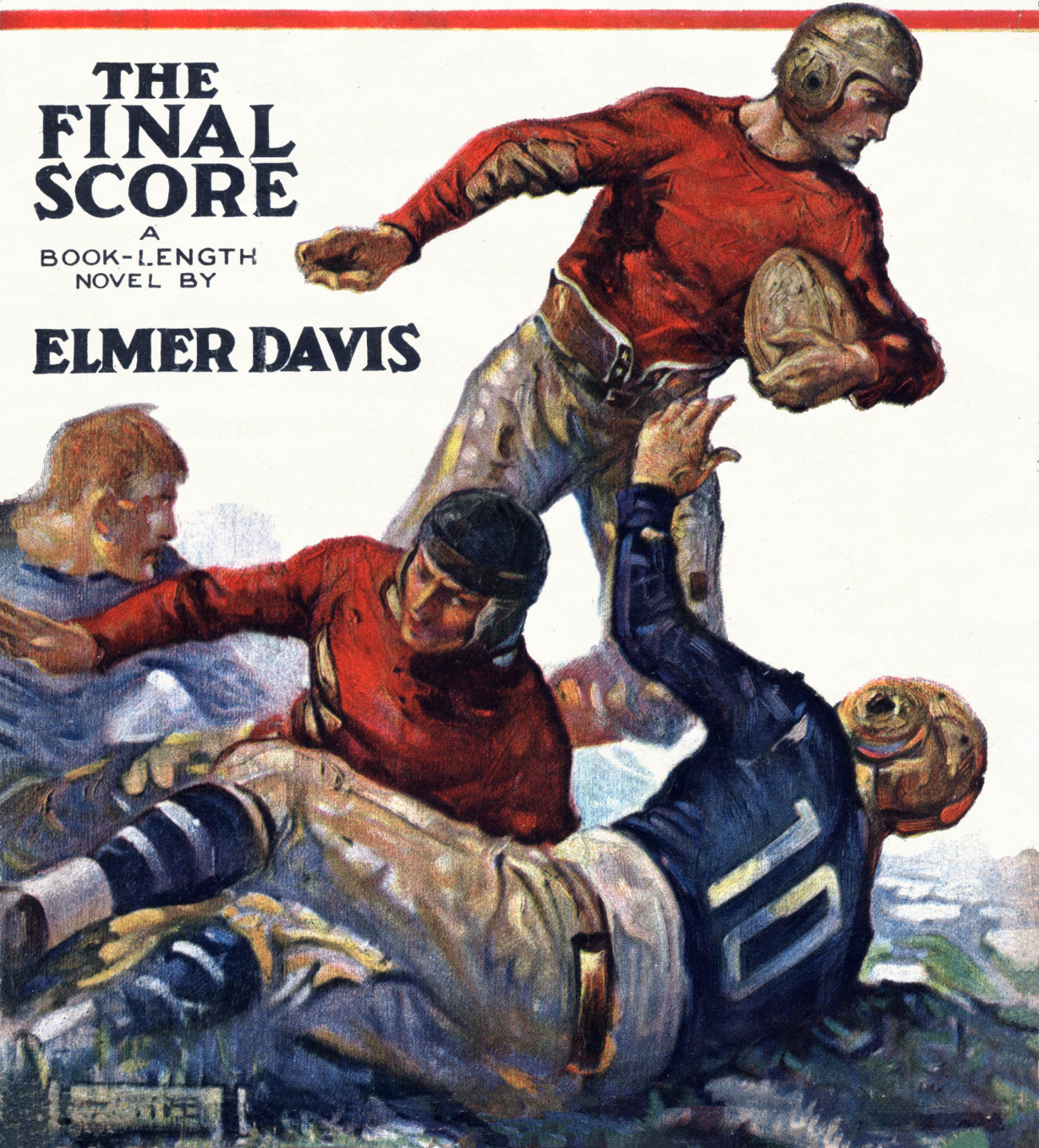
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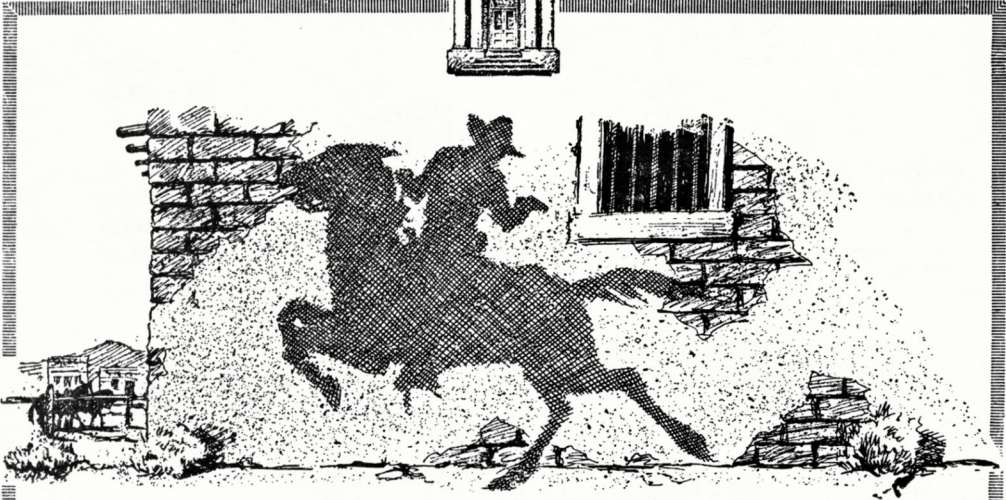
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**THE
FINAL
SCORE**

A
BOOK-LENGTH
NOVEL BY

ELMER DAVIS





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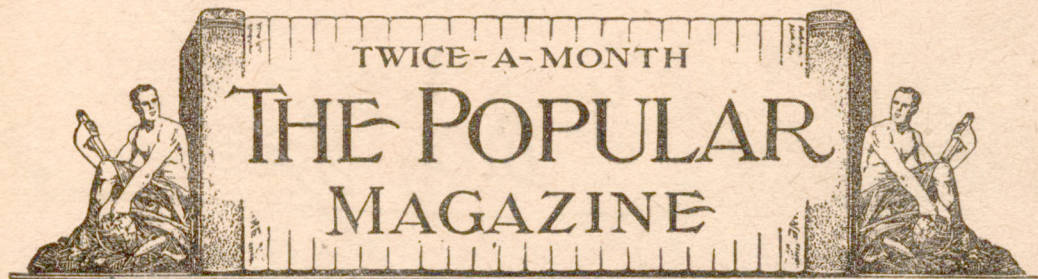
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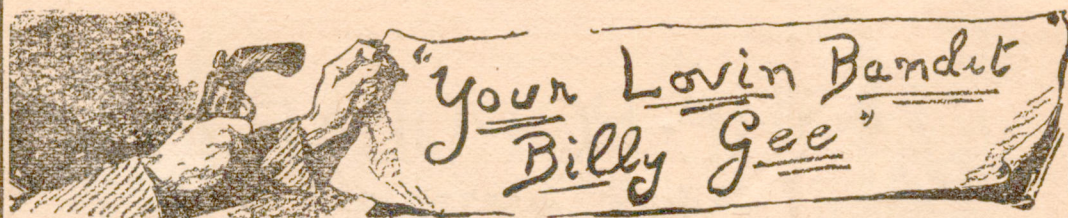
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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. LXXVII.

SEPTEMBER 20, 1925

No. 5



The Final Score

By Elmer Davis

Author of "They See in the Dark," "The Winning of Hollisburg," Etc.

Through the mud of the gridiron to the mud of Flanders; through the disaffections of a losing college football team to the welter of international discord in Paris; Red Rad Gayda always fought with his head up, no matter what the odds, so long as there was a principle to support; and when, in the last few minutes of play, the fate of the game or of life hung upon "the final score," it was he who had the "punch" to carry the ball across the line for the winning touchdown.

CHAPTER I.

THE GAME AND THE MAN.

I WENT out to Cleveland the other day, on invitation of some Slavic societies, to speak at the unveiling of a statue to Radomir Gayda, the Liberator of the Carpathians. Unless you are a Slav you have probably forgotten Radomir Gayda, though you read a good deal about him in 1919.

But the Slavs remember him, for he was one of the leaders of that great Slav uprising that came to a head at the end of the war, blowing Austria-Hungary to pieces and setting up half a dozen new nations in its place.

That movement was largely promoted in America and, as a Slavophile journalist, I did what I could to help it along. Hence this invitation to Cleveland. The men who invited me didn't know

that, long before self-determination was ever heard of, Radomir Gayda and I had been classmates at a small coeducational college in the Middle West.

The Gayda I remember, however, is not Radomir Gayda the Liberator of the Carpathians, but "Red Rad" Gayda, the plunging full back who would have made the All-American if he had played for Chicago or Michigan instead of for Freshwater College; Red Rad Gayda, who broke into the liberator business by liberating us from a long tradition of bad luck and losing teams.

Even after nearly twenty years, that means more to me than what Gayda did in the Carpathians. For they take football seriously, in small colleges of the Middle West; and in my day we took it with quite desperate intensity. We had to. Chicago could lose to Michigan, or Michigan to Chicago, without impairing its reputation as a great university; but the reputation of our little colleges—scholastic and social and above all financial reputation—hung on the reputation of their football teams.

FRESHWATER and Belding, Wyndham and Deland, were all good colleges in the sense that you could, if you tried, get a pretty good education at any one of them. But they were small and poor. For all the propaganda of glee clubs and debating teams, what the people of the State knew about those colleges was what they read on the sporting page.

Freshwater had a good team four or five years before my time, but to college students four or five years is longer than the interval between Jena and Sedan. In my freshman year we lost every game; and, though our professors talked about the moral blessings of adversity, we were ashamed to go home for the holidays to face the jeers of home-town friends who had gone to other colleges.

We were bitter and proud, with the touchy aggressiveness of the inferiority complex; quite literally our souls were sick, with a sickness that could be cured only by victory. Our graduates went out into life in those days with the cringe of defeat already become a habit. Most of them were licked before they started, because in college they had got used to being licked before they started.

My class graduated, however, with the conviction that we would get what we wanted, because in our time the football team had given us the habit. Did we get what we wanted? Well, we came nearer getting it because we went after it in that frame of mind; and whether we got it or not, we were better losers, as well as better winners, because we had known victory as well as defeat.

We owe that—we and the thousands of Freshwater students since our time, who have lived in a generally victorious tradition—chiefly to Red Rad Gayda. Also to "Crab" Casseltine, of course, and Rupert Hatfield, and the rest of that goodly fellowship; but chiefly to Red Rad Gayda. A liberator? I'll say he was.

But Red Rad Gayda and the nation he set free from a thousand years of bondage owe a good deal to our college. If he hadn't got a college education that nation would never have been heard of, and it would never have been liberated and put on the map without the further education he got out of our football team. So, you see, I take football rather seriously; though I'm afraid my notions of its ethical value are rather unorthodox. You will find the generally accepted standard of collegiate ethics in those famous lines of Grantland Rice:

For when the One Great Scorer comes
To write beside your name,
He writes, not that you won or lost,
But how you played the game.

Does He? I've read a good deal of

history—sporting history and world history as well—and it seems to me that history gives most space to the record of who won and who lost. How many Americans know, or care, how statesmen of the past have played the game? Yet we are what we are, all of us, because Sam Adams and Patrick Henry won and the play-it-safers lost; because Jefferson won and Hamilton lost; because Lincoln won and Douglas lost. And as for Red Rad Gayda—

Well, here's the story.

CHAPTER II.

UP FROM SLAVERY.

OUR college owed Red Rad Gayda to Rupert Hatfield. That is to say, Hatfield got him but Beulah Macarthur kept him; and it was a long time before we knew how much we had got. The idea was Hatfield's, of course. Even in those days Hatfield was producing most of the ideas that were manufactured around our simple rural college and, as everybody knows, he has been an idea man ever since.

There are historians who hold that Hatfield's ideas are what is the matter with Europe to-day, but that is not quite fair to Hatfield. Hatfield, unfortunately, is the sort of man to whom people will never be quite fair.

This particular idea, at first sight, had no luster. It was good only because it came at the close of an afternoon of despairing conference which had produced no other ideas at all. We were sitting on the porch of the Phi Chi chapter house at Freshwater College, a few days before the opening of my sophomore year—mine and Hatfield's—talking over the football prospects.

There was Bowyer, the quarter back and captain; "Dad" Coulter, the manager, who played full back; Shettsline and Ellerbe and Hatfield and myself, besides Slater, the new coach. The

thing that worried us was the fact that there was practically no football material in the incoming freshman class. We needed a lot of good freshmen, for that team.

For in those days the little colleges played freshmen on the varsity. This, remember, was long ago—the fall of 1907, when Europe was a prosperous and peaceful continent, Theodore Roosevelt was President of the United States, and Knute Rockne was a freshman in high school.

Yale still ruled unchallenged over Eastern football; Chicago and Minnesota were fighting for the sovereignty of Western football which Michigan had lately relinquished; and Notre Dame occasionally rose high enough to be regarded as a contender for the championship of Indiana.

It was a different kind of football, too. Though the rule makers had been furtively trying to open up the game, and had even talked, not very convincingly, of allowing a forward pass, it was still in substance the old game of mass play. In that game brains counted for little and beef for a great deal; so the big universities, which had the beef, could always beat the little colleges.

A touchdown counted only five points then, and a field goal four; but we little fellows rarely got within kicking distance of the big fellows' goal posts. So universities which had the three-year rule were perfectly willing to meet small colleges whose teams included freshmen, for even with our freshmen they always beat us. Later, however, when we had begun to beat them, they made us adopt the three-year rule too.

WE of Freshwater, then, were counting the new material that afternoon; and we were as despairing as the Jews beside the rivers of Babylon. Among genuine freshmen there was no new material to reënforce that team

that had lost every game the years before. Our only hope lay in two technical freshmen, town loafers whom Dad Coulter had induced to enter college if we would pay their very moderate expenses. Their names I have forgotten, for we always called them "Gog" and "Magog."

Gog and Magog lived in Campusville and on Campusville's semiprofessional baseball and football teams they had played well, in their day. But their day was almost over now; they were both past thirty. Still we counted on them heavily, for there was nobody else to count on.

"They're big husky fellows," Slater, the coach, was saying. "We'll have to build the team around Gog and Magog. Frankly, though, I'm surprised that you haven't more new material."

When he talked of building the team he said "we;" when he complained of the lack of material he said "you." We all noticed that and it was too much for Shettsline, who had a realistic turn of mind which most people called pessimism.

"New material!" he snorted. "Why should we get any new material with our record? If a kid plays on a winning team in high school he wants to play on a winning team in college. Why should he come to Freshwater to take his regular weekly licking?"

"Oh, now, Shettsline!" Slater protested; but even we boys could feel the half-heartedness in his tone. He was a new coach, but the Freshwater tradition already gripped him; he was licked before he started.

"You know it's so," said Shettsline doggedly.

"Suppose it is!" Hatfield flared. "You might at least keep still about it. How can we ever get good material if letter men go around knocking the college?"

"Well, it's no secret that we played seven games last year and lost them

all. Who are you to beef about it, anyway? You said last June you were tired of gettin' licked; you'd go to Princeton this fall. But you didn't. You came back because your dad's chairman of the board of trustees of Freshwater College and he said you had to stay here. That's why you're back and we all know it."

"Anyway, I'm back and I'm going to make the best of it. Crabbing won't get us anywhere."

"Yes, fellows, cut out the crabbing," said Slater uneasily. "We'll build a team around Gog and Magog."

"Gog and Magog!" Shettsline jeered. "They're old and fat and lazy and they won't train. They guzzle beer and smoke all they please and if you make 'em stop, coach, you'll have to do it with a club. They're a pretty rotten pair of props to build a team around. Besides, they've both played professional ball, if anybody wants to make a fuss——"

"Nobody will make a fuss," said Hatfield. "Every team in the State is playing ringers."

"Yes," Shettsline agreed, "and good ringers. We're a hell of a college. When we go out after ringers, all we can pick up is a couple of dubs like Gog and Magog."

He laughed and only I who roomed with him knew that the laugh covered a bitter and aching shame. The pathetic little structure of hope we had built around Gog and Magog, because there was no other place to build it, had tumbled into ruins. He was telling the truth and we knew it.

"Well," said Dad Coulter, after a long silence, "what can you expect? Other colleges give football players free tuition. Their alumni raise funds to pay their expenses through the season. But this college won't even hire a coach. I have to do that and I have to go around town and beg for jobs, so that I can give football players the privilege of workin' their way through college."

"Please come and play on our team and we'll let you fire a furnace for your room rent and wait on table for your board! That's an inducement, ain't it? If only those hard-shells on the board of trustees would loosen up a——"

HE looked hard at Hatfield, who rose with a shrug.

"Oh, go to hell!" he said wearily. "It isn't my fault, or my father's, that the trustees won't hire a coach. And it isn't my fault I didn't go to Princeton."

"Go and be damned!"

Most of us felt that way, for Hatfield had a terrific lot of money—his father owned some coal mines down State—and he spent it on a scale that left the rest of us far behind.

So he stalked up and down the parched and scanty September grass under the maples, while the rest of us stared vacantly into the curls of cigarette smoke, wondering where the synthetic optimism of an hour ago had gone.

"I'd like to use Gog and Magog as half backs," Slater resumed. "But I don't dare to, with left end in the air and a weakness at guard. I mean left guard, of course; you'll still hold down right guard, McCoy."

I grunted. He didn't need to tell me that my chief excellence as a guard lay in the fact that whoever got past me had to step over my feet, which took time.

"And I suppose we'll have to try old Gog at left guard," Slater finished. "Can't leave that hole open."

Hatfield paused in his striding.

"I might get you a guard," he announced. "He never played football, but he looks as if he might—if we've come down to that."

"We've come down to anything," Dad Coulter admitted. "Who's this great unknown?"

"Oh, a big hunkie who works in one of dad's coal mines. Six feet one and he weighs two hundred and fifteen."

"In training?"

"He's always in training. Worked in the mine since he was fourteen; he's about twenty now, I guess. Hard as a brick and fast. I've talked college to him and he seemed willing; but we'll have to fix him up."

"The old, old story!" Dad sighed. "How the devil can we fix him up? It takes all my money to pay the coach and buy equipment and repair the bleachers. I can't feed him."

"Horace Lynn will take a student helper at the soda fountain," I put in. "He told me so this morning. Three dollars a week."

"That helps," said Dad more cheerfully. "'Hod' Lynn won his letter when Freshwater had a real team; he'd make it four dollars for a football man. That would pay this big hunkie's board and laundry and I know where he could fire a furnace for his room rent. But will he work? Gog and Magog won't and I've used up my only two workless jobs on them. And then there's tuition. I can't get any free scholarships—they're all held for ministerial students. It'll blame near bust me to pay tuition for Gog and Magog; can't afford it for a man we don't know."

We relapsed into despair. Tuition was only twenty dollars a term, but that was a lot of money to most of us in that place and time. Hatfield, of course, could have paid the tuition of the whole team out of his pocket money, but we knew he wouldn't.

"Well," he observed thoughtfully, "we can get around that. Make your football players special students. A special student only pays for what he takes. Put Gog and Magog and my hunkie in the current-events class and they'll only have to take one hour a week and pay one dollar a term tuition."

"You couldn't get away with that," Dad protested.

"Why not? They're regular college students, they count in the enrollment; and no college in this State will dare start an investigation of how much work football players are doing. Of course, I can't promise that this man of mine can play football, but if you'll take the chance——"

"Guess we can afford it, at one dollar a term," Dad observed. "You write to your hunkie. What's his name?"

Hatfield consulted a slip of paper.

"Radomir Gayda."

"Fraternity material?" somebody asked.

"Gosh, no!" said Hatfield in horror. "He's terribly rough, but he looks as if he might learn something about football."

SHETTSLINE got up and stamped into the house; I followed to find him mumbling to himself.

"He might learn something about football—and he might not. That's the kind of ringers we get. We're a hell of a college. How long, oh, Lord, how long?"

So Hatfield wrote to his hunkie, who, being assured of a chance to make a living, promised he would come. So, on the day before college opened, Tom Ellerbe and I went down to the five thirteen train to meet him—to meet him and bring him to the chapter house, where, after supper, Dad Coulter would instruct him in his duties.

Hatfield had been assigned to meet Gayda, at first; but he had begged off with prayerful humility. There would be other people from his home town on that train, he explained, and if he met Gayda it was possible they might not understand.

So Ellerbe and I met him; and when we had finally picked him out from the crowd of new students who disembarked from that train we understood

Hatfield's reluctance. Our college got some pretty rough freshmen every year, but this was the roughest yet, in my experience.

His big moonlike face was bright red, his hair was orange red, even the stripes in his suit were pink. He looked like a four-alarm fire in a paint factory. And his obviously new suit exaggerated those absurd styles of 1907 to such a point that even we boys could see the absurdity.

But he was terrifically big as he towered over us, big and broad and powerful; he looked as if he might learn something about football.

"You're Gayda?" he asked.

"Sure, I'm Gayda," he informed us, grinning with a double row of gold teeth. "I have come to play football for Mr. Hatfield. When are we going to start?"

"Not right away," I told him. "Let me take your suit case."

I THOUGHT I had it till he turned his wrist and it flew out of my hand as if a derrick had jerked it.

"That is all right. I carry my own suit case." He looked at us with suspicion. "You guys come from Mr. Hatfield, huh?"

"We'll take you to him," we promised.

That apparently removed his suspicions, for he let us escort him across town to the chapter house, to be laughed at by everybody who saw us. They thought, I suppose, that this was a freshman on whom our fraternity had designs.

They would have known better if they could have seen the reception at the chapter house, where half the residents took one look at Gayda and then ran away to hide the grins that couldn't be displayed in the presence of a candidate for the football team.

I don't believe Gayda would have noticed the grins at that; he hardly no-

ticed that the coach and the captain and the manager had come out on the porch to greet him. He took their hands and dropped them; he looked beyond them, worried and searching; and then his face lit up with a great red glow.

"Ah, Mr. Hatfield!"

"Well?" said Hatfield. "What of it?" He must have thought, as we thought, that Gayda, having come to college on his summons, was going to hang on to him like a clinging vine.

"Mr. Hatfield," said Gayda formally, "you sent for me; and here I am; and I thank you. I am not good talker"—Slavic idiom, the omission of the *s*'s and *a*'s, was breaking out on him under stress of emotion—"but I thank you. My father says: 'My son, you are first of our family to go to college. It is a great opportunity and you gotta live up to it. You must always be thankful to Mr. Hatfield.'"

He paused for breath, then resumed:

"My father says: 'You must make that college proud you are student. America is land of freedom and opportunity and you gotta live up to it.' So I have bought me some college clothes, and I am college student, and we whip hell out of those Belding fellows, huh?"

"We certainly do," said Dad Coulter. "Come on in, Gayda, and have some supper."

"And all that," Shettsline whispered to me, "for a chance to take one hour a week at one dollar a term. I don't know whether this guy can play football, but he's certainly grateful."

He was—too grateful for Hatfield's comfort. Slater and Bowyer talked football to him and told him that it was a proud privilege to try for our team; Dad Coulter told him that half the presidents of the United States had worked their way through college as he was to be allowed to do; and he swallowed their propaganda, apparently, as easily as he swallowed his knife.

I thought it was risky to play up the

honor entailed in making our team which had lost every game last season, but Gayda swallowed it because he had already heard it from Hatfield and in their home town what a Hatfield said was truth. And I could see that this began to annoy Hatfield, especially since some of the crowd began to ask him if he and Gayda had the same tailor.

So, after supper, Hatfield flushed when Coulter told him to take Gayda down to the drug store and introduce him to his new boss and then take him around to the house where he was to fire a furnace for his room rent.

"I have an engagement," said Hatfield sullenly.

"Yes, I know all about that," Dad observed. "You got a date with Beulah Macarthur. She'll wait."

"She——" Hatfield began fiercely, but Dad cut him off.

"She's got to wait. Do that girl good to find out we got to keep this college goin' even if it does put her out a little bit. You see that Gayda gets fixed up all right."

Hatfield picked up his cap with a shrug.

"All right. Come along, Gayda."

Hatfield was a sophomore, and Dad Coulter was not only a senior and football manager, but president of the chapter too. Ill though it suited Hatfield to be seen on the streets with this comic valentine when he was awaited in Beulah's parlor, he had to obey.

Radomir Gayda stared at Hatfield, and back at Coulter, with the beginnings of an amazed revaluation of the whole universe. For a thousand years respect for the aristocracy had been pounded into the Gaydas—in Europe, respect for the mine owner and his progeny.

Much later, Gayda admitted that he had come to college with some vague notion that Hatfield owned it, if not as his father owned the mines, at least in some sort of feudal tenure. Now he

saw the sacrosanct Hatfield taking orders, reluctantly, from an unimpressive man whom he could have licked.

Obviously, then, America was a place where the aristocracy might be cast down and the humble exalted—the land of freedom and opportunity. Gayda had heard that, incredulously; now he saw it proved.

Eventually, much history sprang from that.

CHAPTER III.

REALLY A WONDER.

I HAD a date that evening with a girl of no particular importance who took me over to Beulah Macarthur's. Hatfield was there and was far from happy to see us rolling in; he had wanted Beulah to himself. But Beulah had invited us, not wanting Hatfield to herself; so he had to swallow his disappointment and the rest of us spent a pleasant evening playing bridge and watching Beulah annoy Hatfield. It suited her to pretend that he and Gayda were high-school friends—with the same tailor—and Hatfield, who thought well of himself and his tailor and also of Beulah, writhed.

"Rub it in all you like about his clothes," he conceded wearily, "but don't do it in his hearing. He's heard too much already. He bought that suit to look like a college man. He knows now it's wrong, but he can't throw it away because he can't afford to buy another. You bright little kidders will run this fellow right out of college and when he plays against us for Wyndham or Belding you'll wish you hadn't been so smart."

"He wouldn't do that?" Beulah queried.

"Why not? Wyndham and Belding both made him good offers. What do we offer him? The privilege of getting up before daylight and firing a furnace, and staying up late at night to sling sodas, in order to go out and get licked

every Saturday for dear old Freshwater."

"Well, he knew that before he came," I protested.

"Yes, and why did he come? Because he worked for my father in the mine and to his simple bohunk soul it seemed that playing football at Freshwater would be working for me. Kid me all you like, but that's why he's working here instead of living easy up at Belding. And then we laugh at him. He doesn't owe us anything except that one miserable dollar a term we pay for his tuition; he's working his way and playing football as an act of charity; and then we kid him. Why should he stand it? I wouldn't. No wonder we never have a football team."

"This is a rather brutal college," Beulah admitted. "But it has its points. We'll have to show them to Gayda."

"What can you show him? He doesn't know that anything but football is done in college. He's taking one hour a week and I told him he needn't go to his classes. He's no social star, either; nobody who could be turned into a howling dervish with a shot of college spirit. You've seen him."

"But he hasn't seen me," returned Beulah. "Bring him around to-morrow evening, Rupert. I've got a date, but I'll break it."

"Bring him around?" said Hatfield in horror. "But he's not fraternity material and never will be; and say what you like about equality, barbs don't call on sorority girls in this college or any other I ever heard of."

"Anybody I send for," said Beulah, "calls on me. If you don't want to bring him, let Mac bring him."

Though I had always been afraid of her, I said I would.

I suppose I ought to take time to explain this Beulah Macarthur, but I'll leave that job to somebody else—not that I think anybody can do it. Eventually, Beulah wrote her name in his-

tory; she wrote herself indelibly into the memory and the character of everybody who was at our college in her time. A dozen stories could be written about her, but she belongs to this story only as she affected the epic of Red Rad Gayda.

She was a sophomore, like Hatfield and myself; the daughter of the Greek professor, the most popular and most thoroughly hated girl in our college. She sang and played the piano pretty well and danced and played bridge brilliantly; she could have been an excellent student if she hadn't been too busy with other matters; she had won second place in the State oratorical contest, in her freshman year, with an oration in favor of woman suffrage and then had apparently lost interest in both suffrage and oratory.

She had a date every night and a long waiting list; she had been engaged three times in her freshman year; every man who knew her, at one time or other, believed that he was crazy about her and every girl who knew her hated her on sight and never got over it. All the same—and I have had my turn of hating her, too—there was nobody like her. I don't know just what it was that she had, but she certainly had it.

WAS she beautiful? I don't know. You never had time to think of that.

I had never had much to do with her, for I was not very fast socially in those days. Though I met her and danced with her at parties given by my fraternity or her sorority, I was, when all was said and done, beneath her notice. I'd never had a date with her and I certainly didn't want to walk into her parlor dragging Gayda, who was even more hopeless socially than I. But when Beulah gave orders, she was obeyed.

So the next day I went to the soda fountain where Gayda brooded alone

and told him that a girl had asked me to bring him around.

"I do not care for girls," he said placidly.

"Wait till you see this one. She isn't like the rest."

"I don't want to see her. Besides, I must tend soda fountain."

"Oh, Hod Lynn will give you an evening off if you tell him Beulah MacArthur wants to see you. She just about owns this college."

"That is different," he admitted. "I will come if he lets me off."

This was so gratifying that I didn't wonder why he had had this change of heart; but I know now he took me literally. Everything was owned by somebody. The count had owned the farms of the peasantry, in the old country; Hatfield's father owned the mines. If Hatfield didn't own the college, as Gayda had at first supposed, somebody must own it. Now he knew who owned it and he had been sent for by the boss.

So we went around that evening, and Beulah talked. She must have known, of course, that Gayda and I wouldn't have anything to say; though he surprised me by meeting her with a simple childlike dignity. He thought she was his feudal overlord, but he didn't pull the forelock; he smiled genially and listened while she told us what she remembered.

For Beulah, a professor's daughter, had always lived in Campusville. She remembered good teams as well as bad ones; she remembered great men and famous women of the past; and that night she gave us the best projection of the essence of small-college life that I have ever heard.

As she talked we could hear the roar of cheering sections at football games, the tinkle of mandolins under rose-lit windows, the close-harmony choruses on the campus under the spring moon; we could smell the burning leaves of autumnal bonfires, the spring freshness

of sprouting grass and budding shrubbery, the tonic chill of midwinter winds blowing across the starlit snow.

This college life that we were living took on unsuspected vividness and importance as she talked, and I listened, and Gayda listened, sitting forward on the edge of his chair, his big hands on his knees, his blue eyes alight. I hadn't dreamed the big fellow could take it in so well, but Beulah's eyes had been keener. I suspect that even then she saw possibilities in Gayda.

So, when we got away at last, we walked along in silence; and I felt that to break a leg, or a neck, on the football field would be a cheap price to pay for the privilege of living in that place and time. I had forgotten all about Gayda till he came out with an explosive—

"Huh! I guess we are pretty damn good college! And that is good girl, too. I like her."

"Everybody likes her," I warned him. "There isn't much chance that either of us can see her very often. She's always dated up."

"Oh, that is all right. I could not see her again, anyway. After this, you see, I must work of evenings. Mr. Lynn pays me good wages. I must earn them."

I gaped in amazement; a football man, who had his job simply because he was a football man, felt that he must earn his wages! That had never been heard of before.

"Old man," I said in sudden compunction, "I'm awfully sorry we had to ask you to work at all. Next year, maybe, we'll have some money for football players; but this year we can only give them jobs—"

He laughed, not very loudly, but with intense mirth.

"Work? You college fellows do not know what work is. When you have worked in coal mine six years, just shaking down furnace and minding soda

fountains looks like vacation. I am not sore about that. I was sore when these smart guys laughed at me; I thought I would lick a few of them and then go home. But I have heard that girl tell what college is about and I guess I will stay."

CHAPTER IV.

BUCKING THE LINE.

IT occurred to me later that it would be a merry joke on all of us who had worked so hard to keep Gayda if he should turn out not worth keeping. Early practice had shown that he had some general idea of what the game was about, which was something to be thankful for; our squad at the beginning of the season usually included some behemoths from the bushes who thought you kicked the ball around on the ground. But whether he had the stuff, no one yet knew. That was settled the next afternoon, when we had our first scrimmage practice; and I learned the answer first.

There was a good-sized crowd on the bleachers that day, for hope springs eternal and our college began every season in the faith that this year we would start back up the hill. It was a long and steep ascent to the peak from which we had tumbled and we had to roll up ahead of us our disgraceful record and the habit of defeat it had begotten, as Sisyphus rolled his stone up the mountain. But we had hopes; and we had Gog and Magog.

They started at right and left half back respectively. Masters, a freshman who had shown some stuff, started at left end; the rest of us had all played, regularly or occasionally, the year before—Hatfield at right end; Shettsline and Ellerbe at tackle; Manning and I at guard; Morrow at center; Bowyer at quarter; and Dad Coulter at full back.

It had been a feeble team last year, but the addition of Gog and Magog made it look and feel like a good team

this year. In fact there was plenty of stuff in that line-up and always had been; it needed only coaching and courage to bring it out. Gog and Magog had given us the courage; we hoped that Slater would do the rest.

So we lined up, with Gayda opposite me on the scrubs. His big shoulders loomed above me and spread out on both sides of me. When the ball was snapped he simply leaned forward. The next thing I knew I was flat on my back, six feet behind the line, and Gayda was tackling the runner before he got a start.

"Hey, there, McCoy!" Slater yelled. "Get into it."

I did my best to get into it on the next play, but again Gayda ran over me; and before I knew it I was on the scrubs and he had taken my place on the first team. Personal chagrin buried the joy I ought to have felt at this discovery of a new star, but before the afternoon was over I was back on the regulars, for nobody in our line could stop Gayda. Shettsline and Ellerbe were better men pound for pound, but he was thirty pounds heavier than either of them and if he had much to learn he seemed willing to learn it.

So Manning, who was lighter than I, went to the scrubs while Gayda took his place at left guard. It was a pretty heavy team, for a small college; and beef counted in those days. By night-fall we were quite cheerful. The State Normal was coming over on Saturday, to open the season. They had beaten us last year but now we had hopes of surprising them.

SATURDAY came, a terrifically hot Saturday with the sweltering heat of late September; the State Normal came, saying "Aha!" like the war horse who smelleth the battle from afar. They thought we were their meat, till they lined up after the first kick-off and drove their first play at Gayda.

There was a drive, a crunch, a piling mass of players that tumbled over backward. They had lost five yards. They tried it again, thinking it was an accident, and lost three more. Then they drove at Shettsline, who stopped them where they started; and then they punted and Gog came back thirty yards through a broken field.

Before the scanty crowd on our low wooden bleachers had finished its four rahs for Gog, we were off again, Magog driving through behind Ellerbe. They downed him ten yards from the goal and Bowyer, barking the signals with frantic eagerness, called on Dad Coulter to hit the line.

Now Dad Coulter was a good guy, but not a good full back; he was too light to dent anything but a track tape. But when he got to the line, the denting had been done; he merely stepped over three men who had gone down before Gayda and followed that redhead across the goal. Touchdown in two minutes of play.

We won that game forty-eight to nothing and all through it we felt like prisoners just let out of jail. Gog and Magog earned their keep, plowing through the line, slipping through broken fields, thirty and forty yards at a time; but we had expected that. The news of the day was the discovery of Gayda, who could tear up other lines as easily as he tore up ours.

We ran and bucked and labored in the heat; the yellow-burned grass of the gridiron shredded away under our cleats; the hard dry ground sent up clouds of choking dust that hung low and caked on our sweaty necks, but we didn't mind that. We loved it, for we had started back up the hill at last.

We were all exhausted by the heat when we went to the showers, exhausted and bruised and blown; but after supper we turned out and rang the chapel bell and built a bonfire on the campus and marched in long chant-

ing processions all over town. A lot of fuss, for a victory over the State Normal? It was more than a victory, we felt; it was the Emancipation Proclamation.

That was a little premature.

I came back late to the chapter house and found Bowyer and Coulter in worried conference with the coach.

"What's up?" I asked, though it was none of my business.

Coulter looked up with the air of one hesitating between duty and inclination.

"The State University wants to take us on next Saturday," he announced. "Just got a wire. They were goin' to play St. Marcelline's, but St. Marcelline's had a man killed to-day and canceled the rest of its schedule. So the university wants us to fill the open date. They wouldn't have asked us, either, if we hadn't shown our stuff this afternoon. Freshwater's getting back on the map."

"But we've got a game next Saturday."

"Only a high-school practice game. We can cancel that, easy. What do you think?"

"Sure!" I said. "I'm for it." After that evening of jubilation I'd have been willing to take on Chicago or Yale.

"I think it would be plain damn foolishness," Bowyer protested. "Deland beat Belding twenty to nothing this afternoon. That means they're good and we've got to take them on a week from next Saturday, with Wyndham the Saturday after that. Now we've got eleven pretty good men, but mighty little reserve strength in sight. If the university roughs us up and breaks a few legs, where does that leave us? I'd rather lick Deland and Wyndham than get a lot of glory for holding State University to thirty points."

"What does the coach say?" I asked.

"There's a good deal to be said on both sides," remarked Slater nervously.

"Well, I'm for it," Dad Coulter announced, "but then I've got my personal reasons. They'll give us two hundred dollars and I need it. What say, coach?"

SLATER teetered visibly between two opinions. For in that day our college officially ignored football. The college left it to the students and the students left it to the manager. He bought equipment and paid traveling expenses and hired the coach. He also got the gate receipts, but at a small college, in a small town, these were never enough to arouse envy. If there was a deficit he paid it out of his own pocket. If there was a surplus—but there never was.

Dad Coulter had hired Slater as coach for various reasons, one of them being that he could get him cheap. Slater was a young doctor whose patients had not yet appeared and nobody doubted that his chief interest in our football season was the pitiful two hundred dollars Coulter would pay him. We knew already that he wasn't much of a coach, but he was the best Dad could get.

And Dad Coulter, who would pay him, was going about with a look of ingrowing worry. He had spent all his money and without bigger crowds than could be expected in Campusville he would finish the season broke. No wonder he wanted a game away from home, with a two-hundred-dollar guarantee. No wonder, too, that Slater decided to vote Dad's way. The more money Dad got, the better chance that Slater would be paid. Slater had no personal interest in our college and plain human nature urged him to be sure he got his.

"I think we ought to go," he declared. "It will be good publicity if we hold them down, and I don't believe they'll knock us about much——"

So it was settled, and next week we worked harder than ever. Trick plays that ought to have been saved for

Wyndham and Deland were hastily brought out and hammered into us. We worked and groaned and pounded away for a week of long afternoons. And in the last scrimmage before the game I turned an ankle and the doctor told me I might as well give up hope of playing on Saturday.

Slater and Bowyer agreed with him, so Manning took my place and I spent Saturday morosely lying about the chapter house; for Coulter couldn't afford the extravagance of taking a man who couldn't play. With a few men who, like me, didn't have enough money to accompany the team, I killed time with a listless bridge game, till about five o'clock somebody called up from downtown with the news that we had been beaten only eighteen to nothing.

State University was good that year. To hold it to three touchdowns was a moral victory and our college was quite cheerful that night. But when the team came home, a little after noon on Sunday, it was another story.

They were heroes, but they looked about as dead as the Texan heroes after the Alamo. Every man was bruised and battered; one of the substitute backs had broken a leg; Gog and Magog, limping home with aches and wheezes, had visible doubts about the advantage of continuing a pastime that was so hard on gentlemen of advanced years. They were willing to play football, but a massacre like this wasn't in the contract.

Red Rad Gayda—already the nickname was beginning to stick to him—had done nobly, but he had been up against a large cubical Irishman on his way to All-Western honors. Two years later Gayda would have run all over that man, but the Irishman was just as big and just as fast and besides he was a finished player.

His muscles did instinctively much that Gayda's muscles hadn't learned to do without being told. So on every

play they held each other motionless, with the impact of meteors colliding in space, while the game went on around them.

Gog and Magog had done nobly, too, but they were never the same again. The props around which our season had been built had been subjected to too much pressure. Meanwhile Deland, rather scared by our visible improvement over the previous year, was working hard for the game next Saturday, and our battered warriors were painfully and slowly getting out and going through the motions, unable to do even that with plausible energy. It was a dull and miserable week, of little interest to Freshwater College. But it was a turning point of some importance in the history of central Europe.

CHAPTER V.

PUTTING PEP INTO 'EM.

ONE afternoon, when we were all dressing in the locker room after practice, somebody happened to ask Gayda if he was born in the United States.

"Me?" he asked, pausing as he pulled on the light tan trousers with the pink stripe. "No, I was six years old when we came over. I was born in the old country."

"Germany?"

"Hungary."

"Oh," said Morrow, who happened to be majoring in history and could parade even his small knowledge since it was greater than ours. "So you're a Magg Yarr, eh?"

"Huh?" Gayda stared blankly, then grinned. "Oh, I see. No, I ain't Modjer. I am Slav."

"Slav? I thought you said you came from Hungary. And ain't the Hungarians Magyars?"

Gayda's face contracted; when he thought, in those days, you could see it in the muscular effort all over him.

"The count was Magyar," he announced. "I don't remember much—I was just a kid. But the count, he was Magyar. I am Slav."

"What count's this?" Dad Coulter asked. "One of your relatives?"

"Oh, no." Gayda was plainly shocked at this reflection on the count. "No, the count, he lived on the hill, in the big castle. We lived in the town, down below. He was Magyar. I am Slav."

"What kind of a Slav are you?" asked Morrow. "Pole? Czech?"

Gayda frowned again.

"I dunno," he confessed. "I am not Czech, not Pole, but I dunno what. I must ask my father, when I go home. But all Slavs are brothers."

"Like hell they are!" said Shettsline. "Look at the Poles and the Russians."

"I don't know about them Poles. But the Russians——" His face lighted up. "The Russians are our great strong brothers. Some day they will free all the Slavs."

"Free you? What from?"

The light went out.

"I dunno. The Magyars, maybe. The Rakovskys—Austrians, you call them. I must ask my father. He knows about all this, but I was just a kid. Anyway, the Russians will come some day and free us and all our brothers."

"Yeah," Shettsline grunted, "I suppose they'll come all the way over here to free you from Bryan and Teddy Roosevelt. These are bad guys, these Russians. I read a book about 'em—'Ivan the Serf,' by Sylvanus Cobb. They send guys to Siberia and whip 'em with knouts and all. You better let somebody else free you and lay off these Russians. They're bad."

"I only tell you what I have heard," said Gayda meekly. "We have never seen any Russians in Vereszvar."

"What's Vereszvar?"

"That is the town I came from. It

was not much of a town, I think—no more than Campusville. Just a town below the castle."

"Vereszvar, eh? What a name!" said Morrow, who came from the banks of the Mississinewa. "And the count was the big guy around there?"

"Yes, the count was the big guy. I guess he is yet."

THAT was the first I ever heard of the oppressed nationalities of Hungary, in whose service I was later to do whatever good the Recording Angel can set down against a long black record. And that was all that day. But on Friday evening the whole team gathered at our chapter house after supper to hear Slater's final exhortation before the Deland game and lingered afterward to look over the evening papers from the city, which carried a big picture captioned "Fighting Freshwater Team Which Held the University."

It was good publicity and a good picture; and Red Rad Gayda, who had two or three lines of special mention in the little story that went with it, was right in the middle of the picture and of the group that looked it over. Our spirits rose with every glance, as we looked at that unfamiliar combination of words: "Fighting Freshwater." The hill was half ascended.

Just then Bowyer came out of a study, brandishing one of his textbooks—Grandine's "History of European Art."

"Hey, Gayda! What town did you say you came from? Vereszvar?"

"That's it."

"Is this it?"

Bowyer held out the book, opened on a photograph of a castle, with a saddle roof and curious towers, rounded where you would expect a point and pointed where you looked for roundness. It sat on a wooded hill, with a black range of mountains in the background. Gayda looked at it with a

blankness that gradually lit up with reviving memory.

"Yes, yes!" he said eagerly. "That is the castle of Vereszvar. I saw it when I was a kid. Let us see what it says."

It wasn't much, and we all read it with him:

The château of Vereszvar, one of the best examples of the baroque style in Hungary. It was built in 1672 by Mejrbaoh of Vienna for a branch of the Radolffy family, in whose possession it still remains.

"Yes," said Gayda reverently, "that is the count. Count Radolffy."

"Where's your house?" Shettsline asked him.

The red face flamed into a slow grin.

"You can't see our house," Gayda admitted. "That is down at the bottom of the hill. It is not in the picture."

A REFLECTIVE pause; he glanced at the newspapers on the library table.

"But in America," he observed cheerfully, "in America we get in the picture, huh? My father was right, I guess; this is the land of freedom and opportunity."

On Saturday we went over and played Deland. Yes, I was there and did my duty; nothing to write home about, but they didn't gain much through my part of the line.

That game was a heartbreaker. We hadn't beaten Deland for years. Victory was long overdue and we got inside their ten-yard line three times. But the final punch wasn't there; and the simple trick plays that Slater had taught us, confident that they would work for us because they had worked when he played for the State University three years before, were an old story by this time to every football player in the State.

Dad Coulter was too light to break the line, and Gog and Magog were

through before the first half was over—winded and breathless, barely able to stagger around. They had cut practice all week on the plea that they needed rest, but they evidently needed more rest than they had got in the course of their various diversions. Red Rad Gayda was doing his stuff, tearing holes in the line, but Gog and Magog couldn't rise to the occasion.

Three times inside the ten-yard line, but twice we were held for downs and once, Bowyer tried a drop kick that went wide. Most of the play was in their territory, but toward the end of the last half they made a couple of long gains on tricks they had been saving till they needed them. That brought them within thirty yards of our goal and a place kick did the work. The final score: Deland, four; Freshwater, nothing.

It might have been worse; a good many Deland students had bet money that they would win by twenty points. All in all, we could set it down as another moral victory. But you can't go through a whole season on moral victories and there was hard and sullen conference in the chapter house on Sunday afternoon.

"If Gog and Magog would only train and practice——" Slater sighed.

"That's up to you, coach," said Bowyer fiercely. Though Dad Coulter paid the coach, we letter men had a feeling that he was jointly employed by us all. "You've got to make 'em train."

"I've spoken to them," said Slater uncomfortably.

"Spoken!" Tom Ellerbe growled. "Say it with a club, to those big guys. What kind of a team will we have if anybody that wants to can cut practice?"

"I'll tell them," Slater promised unconvincingly.

Shettsline openly sneered.

"Tell 'em? What can you tell 'em? They're doin' us a favor by playin' at

all and they know it. You can't hire Eckersalls and Coys for five dollars a week. These guys could get jobs at five dollars a week without goin' to college, without havin' to work hard every day and get roughed up every Saturday. I don't blame 'em a bit. What can you do if they won't work? Fire 'em and take a couple of half backs from the scrubs? You've got a fat lot to pick from."

That was true, every word of it. We could crack no whip over Gog and Magog. They might have been made to work by a he-coach, but not by Slater.

Still it looked as if we ought to beat Wyndham the following Saturday. They had a great tradition and a lot of college spirit, but not much of a team that year. Then a trip into Kentucky, another into Illinois; and then the grudge game of the season, Belding on our home field, on the Saturday before Thanksgiving. With the stuff we had shown against the State University, we ought to beat them all; we strutted about that week as if we had beaten them already.

WYNDHAM first; and it rained. It poured, a driving torrent of cold rain that soaked us all through in two minutes, a rain so cold that we shivered even in the panting fury of line play. The field was ankle-deep in water with a foot of mud underneath and the bleachers were all but empty. Our coeds, and the moral antifootball element among the male students, stayed at home en masse.

I saw Beulah Macarthur, hunched down behind the wire fence along the side lines, in a rubber raincoat and a draggled leather hat; but she was the only girl there. Even our yell leader stayed at home with a sudden cold and the improvised cheering of the handful of faithful rooters was pretty sad. Wyndham actually outyelled us; for a band of last-ditch supporters had come

over with their team, and they cheered it with an unquenchable zeal that made a big difference on that cold and cheerless day. Perhaps a decisive difference.

We slipped and slid and sloshed about and fell face downward in icy water and sticky mud. Fumbles? There were dozens. Once Red Rad Gayda smashed through their line, picked up a wet ball that had dropped from a half back's frozen fingers, stiff-armed the full back and went floundering on with a clear field.

Then—twenty yards from the goal, five yards ahead of the nearest pursuer, he slipped, slipped and skidded in the water, plowing up a fan of spray; and before he could get up, they tumbled on him. Magog fumbled on the next play and they punted out of danger.

So it went. We all did our best—even Gog and Magog; but Gog and Magog had little left to give and we were still depending on them for the final punch. Then came the fatal break once more, toward the end of the game. On one of Slater's open-face trick plays the soggy, slippery ball bounced out of Masters' hands and a Wyndham man picked it up and staggered toward the goal.

Bowyer and Hatfield and Gayda, our fastest men, went after him; they skidded and stumbled, Hatfield went down; Gayda slipped and tumbled over him; and Bowyer, starting six feet behind and hanging grimly on, was still six feet behind when the ball crossed the goal line. They missed the kick, but the final score was Wyndham, five; Freshwater, nothing.

This was becoming tragic. We had lost two of our three big games by margins so small that obviously we ought to have won them both. The city papers wondered what was the matter with a team that was falling down after such a good start, and we wondered too. But the next Saturday was a

pleasant interlude, when we relieved our feelings at the expense of Daniel Boone University.

Magog was lame that day, or said he was lame, so Gayda was switched to left half and he went through those unsuspecting Kentuckians as an automobile goes through the gate at a railroad crossing. We won that game thirty-two to nothing and everybody supposed Gayda would stay in the back field. But Magog's professional pride had been offended by the triumph of his understudy. On Monday he came out with no sign of lameness; and Slater, remembering the great expectations of September, restored him to the back field and put Gayda in the line.

We had our misgivings about that and Shettsline dared to express them openly; but after all we had won another game and we were sure to beat Belding, and Dad Coulter was known to be making frantic efforts to schedule a Thanksgiving game with the unanimous approval of the team. We had tasted glory and wanted more.

OUR thirst remained unsatisfied the next Saturday when we went to play Wiskinskie Tech. I don't know what kind of tech school it was, or is, but the team seemed to be preparing to be lumberjacks or truck drivers. We held that mountainous line from end to end; the play was all in their half of the field. But it was the old story; we were good, till we reached the ten-yard line.

If Joe Ring had been discovered earlier, we'd have won that game; and anybody but Slater would have seen long ago that this big fat freshman was really solid muscle and could do the hundred in ten seconds with a little encouragement. But Slater stuck to Gog and Magog and not till Gog sprang a Charley horse in the last ten minutes did Joe Ring go in and show that he had the makings of a great half back.

The game ended nothing to nothing and we went home in black bitterness that we determined to take out on Belding.

For Belding, too, was in a slump that season. They had returned only one letter man from the previous year—"Long Tom" Railing, who was captain though only a sophomore. He was a splendid full back and the best kicker in the State, but he was all they had and Deland and Wyndham had both walloped them by big scores. It was our most important game, and if we won it by forty points our season could be set down as at least a qualified success.

So on Thursday evening there was a big pep rally in the gym. Bowyer made a snappy speech; Slater made a depressingly complacent speech; and misguided persons dragged Red Rad Gayda up to the platform to grin and gasp in voiceless silence. The fiery eloquence that moved a plenary session of the peace conference in later years must have been somewhere inside of him, but it was still bottled up. After that there was yell practice, with a new leader replacing the gentleman who still suffered from a cold. And who was this new leader? None other than Beulah Macarthur!

Girl yell leaders are as common now as married women who won't wear their husbands' names, and in 1907 they were as rare. We felt something indecent in the very idea, especially as it became known that Beulah had not been selected by any proper authority. She had simply decided that our college needed a new yell leader and had appointed herself. But within ten minutes the appointment had been ratified unanimously, for she was good.

When we had all been pepped up by fifteen minutes of yell practice she surprised us with a new college song—that song which has become the national anthem of our college, painfully known to our athletic rivals—"Freshwater Blue." She had written the words her-

self. They were rather silly, of course, but no more so than the words of any other college song; and whatever the failings of the libretto, Beulah had shown sure judgment in going back into history and exhuming the air of that great marching song, "Tippecanoe and Tyler Too." It had marched William Henry Harrison into the White House and after a few rehearsals we were sure it was going to march us to victory.

I walked home with that refrain, "To Freshwater Blue, we'll all be true," ringing in my ears, as exhilarated as I had been on the evening Beulah talked to me and Gayda. It had been a great evening, but it sticks in my memory for a reason quite distinct from Beulah's pep rally. Gayda overtook me as I neared the chapter house and explained that he was coming up to borrow a book.

"What do you want a book for?" I asked, utterly confounded.

"Oh, I am not studying or anything like that," he explained apologetically. "I want that book of Bowyer's, with the picture of the castle at Vereszvar. I will read some more about it."

"There isn't any more about it in that book," I told him. "I've looked."

"Then I will read some other book," said Gayda placidly; and I could feel in his voice a patient determination, that "will of the Slav" that Dostoevsky said could uproot a fortress. "I wrote to my father and asked him what kind of Slav I am, for if all Slavs are not the same I must find out. But he don't write American very well and I don't read the old-country language very well. So I would like to read a book."

He paused.

"A guy could learn a lot out of books," he announced, as Einstein might have announced the discovery of relativity to an incredulous world. I guess you guys do learn a lot, huh?"

"Some of us do," I conceded cautiously.

"By gosh!" said Gayda. "I think I will. I am glad I am college student."

CHAPTER VI.

KICKS AND FUMBLES.

BELDING came down on Saturday. Their whole student body came with the team, for the colleges were only twenty miles apart—marching from the railroad station to the field in hollow square, with the coeds in the middle.

That precaution was not wholly unnecessary, for Freshwater-Belding games had often produced riots; and if the riots were started by townees on both sides there were always students who were willing to join in. Each college knew the feeling of retreating under a barrage of bricks.

The Belding crowd massed on the splintery wooden bleachers on one side of the field; our crowd, somewhat diminished—for the faint-hearted had already deserted a team whose record was as bad as ours—on the other, with Beulah in front. In her blue sweater and short white duck skirt, with her long hair gathered in a blue ribbon and streaming down her back, she looked so gallant and competent that the Belding crowd gave her a cheer, and our crowd had to return the compliment. That started the game off in an atmosphere of good sportsmanship and friendly rivalry wholly out of tune with the real feeling on both sides.

For somewhere in the State were perhaps a hundred high-school students who would come to Freshwater if we won this game and go to Belding if we lost. Somewhere in the State were four or five rich men, with hardening arteries and softening hearts, who would tack on codicils leaving money to Freshwater if we won and to Belding if we lost. That was the real issue, underlying the emulous rivalry of the two colleges.

Victory was a matter of vital interest

and security to both sides. And as I saw Long Tom Railing, tall and dark and morose, glaring around him at his sadly inadequate team, I had time to feel sorry for him.

Railing got the kick-off, but Hatfield downed him as he tried to run it back. Gayda stopped their first play; Shettsline the next; Hatfield broke up an end run; and Railing punted, a beautiful seventy-five-yard spiral. We had a long way to go, but Joe Ring, who had replaced Coulter, made forty yards around end on the first play, and then Gog and Magog began smashing the tackles where Shettsline and Ellerbe cleared the way.

We went so fast the linesmen couldn't follow us, first down after first down; our bleacher crowd was howling incoherently; Beulah had given up any effort to organize their uproar till this march had ended. Before I could believe it possible we were lining up, six inches from the goal. In the tense sudden silence the snorting wheezes of Gog and Magog rang loud behind me; Bowyer called the signals that meant right half through right guard.

I spilled my man and rolled over the goal line to get out of Gog's way, and as I rolled I looked back to see the ball bouncing out of his arms, bounding free—a fumble beneath the goal posts. All the world dived for it and fell in a heap, but when the referee had disentangled the mass Long Tom Railing had the ball, a foot in front of the line.

A frantic roar from the Belding bleachers, a snarling groan from ours. Railing dropped back ten yards behind the goal line and raised his arms. As the ball flew back we surged forward; from tackle to tackle their whole line gave way before us; Gayda leaped on, his arms flung high—

Though Long Tom had to hurry his kick, he got it away in time. It rose and soared and twisted, and dropped

far behind Bowyer playing defensive full; seventy yards in the air and it rolled twenty more before he caught up with it. Once more we had to start the march down the field.

So it went, all afternoon. Our line raved and plunged and trampled on them, every play; but the back field wasn't there. Joe Ring and Bowyer did well enough, but our offensive had been built around Gog and Magog. And Gog and Magog, trying hard, puffed and limped and stumbled and finally had to be taken out, replaced by Wheeler and Coulter. They were through.

Once again we lost on a fumble within reach of the goal; twice they held us for downs inside the ten-yard line. Twice Bowyer tried drop kicks that the tricky ice-edged wind carried wide; and once, blackest disappointment of all, Joe Ring, tackled hard but legitimately just as he crossed the line, brought down his fist on the tackler's neck in a fit of freshman petulance and we were penalized fifty yards for his breach of etiquette.

Belding had no offense to speak of; soon Railing was punting regularly on the first down. His kicks that day averaged sixty-five yards; his team was nothing, but he deserved to win if ever a man did. Late in the second half—as usual—Bowyer backed up for one of those long punts that had such an inconvenient habit of bouncing on if you let them hit the ground.

HE reached for it, but the wind got it and it just grazed his outstretched hands. Twenty-two men tore down the field after that erratically bounding ball. A Belding back reached down for it five yards short of the goal; it bounced off his knees. Dad Coulter snatched it up behind the line and before he could move a Belding man had plunged at him and brought him down. That was all, but it was enough. The

final score: Belding, two; Freshwater, nothing.

I saw the latter part of that game from the side lines—my ankle had cracked again—shivering under my blanket, as the chill from the frozen ground seeped up through me, sinking from depth to deeper depth of black despair. It was all well enough to say that Belding hadn't beaten us; that we had gained ten times the ground they did, made ten times as many first downs; that our own overconfidence had beaten us, our own overwrought nerves; that, above all, Long Tom Railing single-handed had beaten us and not his team. That was beside the point, a vain demurrer to the unanswerable argument of the final score.

The timekeeper's whistle blew; amid howls from the Belding bleachers our team staggered off the field, stumbling toward the gymnasium with hanging heads. Beulah tried to rally her cheering section to give a final sportsman-like salute to the victors, but nobody would respond. It would have been too grotesque.

Our crowd scattered in silence, too sick and bitter even to curse. The Belding student body reformed its hollow square and marched across the campus and down Main Street to the railroad station, defiantly singing "Belding's Banner Bright;" and not a brick was thrown. That was the measure of our abasement, that not a brick was thrown. All Campusville was licked, more thoroughly than in any past season of foreseen and unbroken disaster.

CHAPTER VII.

HAVING HIS SAY.

THE black pall still hung over us on Sunday night, when the team met at the Sig U house to elect next year's captain and wind up the season. Somebody had brought in the early edition of the Monday morning city papers and

we all gathered round and read the paragraph, in the summary of the State football season, that disposed of us:

Freshwater was the big failure of the year. It was a heavy team and a fast team and should have beaten all three of its traditional rivals. It made a good start and a bad finish. It won its easy games by big scores and lost its hard games by small scores. It had everything but the winning spirit.

That was true and every one of us knew it. But Slater broke the silence with a characteristic—

"Don't let nasty sneers like that worry you, fellows. We know we've done our best."

"Like hell we have!" said Shettsline fiercely; and he could say it, for he always did his best. "Even if we had, what difference would that make? We got licked. Now let's get busy and elect a captain and forget this season."

Dad Coulter had just come in and now he edged forward into the center of the circle.

"The season ain't over yet. I've scheduled a Thanksgiving game."

We all looked at him with dull apathy that gradually changed to nervous uneasiness as we studied his face. He looked insecurely defiant, like a martyr on his way to the stake who isn't quite sure he believes in the faith he is dying for.

"Who with?" somebody asked.

Dad had to swallow two or three times before he got out the answer:

"The Fortville Athletic Club."

We broke out in a simultaneous roar.

"No! No! Not those professionals!"

Fortville was one of the newer industrial cities up State and its athletic club's football team was its pride. Most of that team had played for Michigan or Chicago or Notre Dame or Dartmouth or Cornell. It was better than the State University, far better than the little colleges. But that wasn't why we roared.

"They count as amateurs," Dad growled. "Yes, we all know they get paid. They're ringers. But we've played all season against colleges with second-rate ringers; we've played ringers ourselves. Needn't get so moral just because we're goin' to play against some good ringers."

"Well," Morrow snorted, "I won't go up there and let that bunch of hired bruisers run over me just so they can say they licked a college team. I'm goin' home to eat Thanksgiving dinner with the folks."

"Me, too," came three or four unidentified voices.

"Listen, Dad," said Hatfield. "You know Fortville's been trying to schedule a college game for years and nobody will touch them. They know they could lick any of us by forty points. Of course they could! They're professionals, hired men from all over the country. It's no fair match. We've eaten enough dirt already without going up there to let them run over us so they can brag about how they slaughtered Freshwater. Think of the college, Dad!"

"I've been thinkin' of the college for quite some time. The college that won't support athletics and lets the manager do it all. I had just about enough money to finish the year and graduate, if we'd broken anywhere near even on the season. I need that degree for business and pleasure, but the football season has put me four hundred and sixty in the hole, not countin' the two hundred that I had to put up as forfeit on this game—for they knew mighty well at Fortville that you'd try to run out on it. They've offered me five hundred for that game. If we play it, I can graduate; if we don't, I quit college next week and go to work to pay my debts. Think of the college! The college that wouldn't turn out to see us play Wyndham in the rain.

"I've said my say and you guys can

take it or leave it," he went on. "Maybe your sense of delicacy would make you feel easier if I got out." His black eyes swept us defiantly; he was the lightest of us all, but he had plenty of heart. "I'm goin' back to the Phi Chi house while you make up your minds. Say all you like about me in my absence. If any guy has got anything to say about me in my presence he can come up and say it there—only he'll have to back it up."

"Stay here," Hatfield snarled. "We'll all say our say here and then back it up."

"Let's hear from the coach," Shettsline suggested.

Slater reached for his hat.

"Fellows, I don't think this concerns me. I'm not a Freshwater man and since it's a point of college honor——"

SHETTSLINE'S hand fell heavy on his shoulder; he sat down hard.

"You stay here," said Shettsline. "You've been runnin' out of things all season, but you won't run out of this. What do you say?"

"Well—of course in the larger universities this would never happen——"

"That's all right. It's happened. If you were one of us, what would you say?"

Slater shivered; at last, a decision that he couldn't dodge.

"I must say I agree with Morrow and Hatfield," he admitted. "It outrages all my ideals of sport. It would disgrace the college. We haven't had such a bad season, fellows. We held the university; we won two games. I'm sorry for Dad, but speaking as a graduate of one of the larger universities where standards of sport are more highly developed, I advise you to cancel the game."

"Suppose he don't cancel it," Shettsline demanded.

"That's up to you fellows," said Slater, twisting his hat in shaking fin-

gers. "So far as I'm concerned, the season's over. If you fellows want to play Fortville nobody can stop you, but I'll have to let it be known that I have nothing to do with it."

Tom Ellerbe's grim face thrust forward at him.

"Have you got your money?"

"That doesn't concern——"

"He has," came Dad's voice from across the room.

Tom stood up with his hand on the coach's collar; he jerked Slater to his feet.

"Then get out before we throw you out."

Slater's footfalls rang on the bare floor of the hall; the door slammed behind him.

"Thank God we're rid of that!" said Shettsline. "That ought to be worth two touchdowns to us. But you hired him, Dad."

"Well, did you expect me to get Stagg or Yost? I gave you guys the best I could. Now hurry up and——"

"Dad," Hatfield put in, "you're right about this being the business of the college. I've got my father converted to support athletics, but he can't convert his board of trustees. Let me be manager next year. He'll let me spend my own money for football, anyway——"

"How does that help me?"

"Dad, if you'll cancel that game I'll pay the forfeit——"

"I'll stay in debt till hell freezes over before I let you pay it. We've chewed the rag enough. Take a vote on it. Who'll go?"

"I won't," said Hatfield.

"Nor I," said Morrow.

The rest of us were silent—all of a mind, but each reluctant to speak first.

"Gog and Magog!" Dad snapped. "How about it?"

Gog was rolling a cigarette in the corner, his feet on the long table; his little eyes glistened as he grinned up at the manager.

"I'm through," he announced. "Ten years ago I could have stood up against Fortville, but not now. I know some of you guys think I've laid down on you. If anybody wants to say that to me, now is the time to say it. I may not have been so good, but I was better than anybody else you could have put in my place. You guys go if you like. I'll stay at home."

"That goes for me," said Magog.

There was a silence.

"Well," said Red Rad Gayda, "I will go. By gosh, Dad, you and I will play them if we find nine more men, huh?"

HIS pink face was mild as ever, his gold teeth beamed fraternally as he surveyed us; but there was a bite in his voice.

"We did not have to play football," he observed, "but we wanted to and Dad put up his money so that we could. If manager pays for season, he must manage. We must not run out on him."

"Oh, you don't know what this is all about," said Hatfield impatiently. "It isn't how we feel. It's a point of honor—college spirit. You're not a student so——"

"That is so," said Gayda. "I am only one of these second-rate ringers Dad talks about. But I think this college or any college is just what it is in the minds of its students. I have heard about college—you remember, Mac, when that girl talked to us? It is good college for her. It is good college for us, for we have played football for it. We have got no thanks. The students do not come out to our games when we get licked. They will not help us, they will not even yell; and when we get licked they say: 'What a punk team!'"

"All right! They have run out on us, but we have worked for the college. Now shall we run out too, be as bad as they are? Dad Coulter is manager; he has said Freshwater College

will play at Fortville. Now shall we say no, we will run out on him like the rest of them run out on us? I will go to Fortville."

"I feel like Hatfield," Shettsline grumbled. "But I'll go."

"Here too," said Tom Ellerbe. "And none of you guys need to hang back for fear you'll get roughed up by this Fortville team. Maybe you'll get roughed up a little bit right here at home, before we take the train."

"Are you talking to me?" Hatfield demanded.

"You've read the post card; if it was addressed to you, keep it."

"I'll go," I put in, more to avoid hostilities than because I wanted to go.

Then, one by one, the waverers fell in line—even Morrow, finally. All but Hatfield.

"You're a fine lot," he said morosely. "You all agree with me, but you haven't got the courage to go through with it. Well, I won't go, anyway."

Gayda got up and held out his hands.

"Mr. Hatfield, I beg you to go."

We were as amazed as Hatfield; we didn't see that Gayda's panting intensity was that of the vassal, solicitous for the honor of his feudal lord.

"Mr. Hatfield, what will they say at home if you run out on the team? Not on Dad Coulter, not on the college—on the team! They have run out on us, but we will stick. You go home for Thanksgiving and they will say: 'Why ain't you at Fortville with the team? Radomir Gayda from across the tracks is there; why ain't you there?' And you will tell them you ain't there because you got too much honor and college spirit. Maybe I don't understand college spirit. They will not understand that back home either. They will not understand how you have got too damn much honor to play out the schedule."

"Mind your own business!" said Hatfield in white-lipped fury.

Nevertheless, the next day he was out for practice.

CHAPTER VIII.

BEST IN THE WORLD.

SO we came to the bitter end of a bitter season and found there an unexpected store of sweetness. The three days between that evening and Thanksgiving were a sort of Indian summer before the onset of the storm. We took things easily, for it would have been foolish to work hard in a brief interval between two violent games; and besides we could no longer line up two teams for a scrimmage. The coach was gone; Gog and Magog were gone; most of the substitutes, sharing our work without our glory—such as it was—decided that the family expected them home for Thanksgiving dinner. So when we assembled for signal practice and tackling drill on Monday afternoon there were just fourteen of us, and fourteen men went to Fortville on Thursday.

Bowyer as captain was running the team now and he gave us only one injunction.

"These big fellows will rough us up pretty hard. They're tough and heavy and they've got a bad reputation for dirty work. And they'll pick the referee. But with only three men on the side lines we've got to stand it. The man who lets himself be taken out for anything short of a broken leg will have me to lick the minute the game's over."

In those days, you see, when a man was taken out he was out for the rest of the game. From that aspect it was unfortunate that only fourteen of us had stayed to the finish, but otherwise it was amazingly good for our morale. For we fourteen bitter-enders came to admire ourselves intensely.

The rest of the college might have curled up and quit, but we wouldn't quit; we were the Old Guard, the men

who wouldn't run out. By Monday night we had forgotten that but for Gayda we would have run out too; we knew, now, that we were going to sacrifice ourselves for a moral principle and we felt that the principle was our collective discovery.

The certainty to defeat actually helped us; we could do our best with no need to worry about the outcome. The nervous tension that threw us out of gear and probably beat us in our three big games was gone now. We took this approaching ordeal with the cheerful serenity of those who have won through to the farther side of hope and fear.

From that there grew, and rapidly, an amazing sense of comradeship, a feeling that we fourteen were welded together by a common emotional experience that no one else shared or understood. The rest of the universe had ostentatiously abandoned us. The college received the news that we were to play one more game with an apathy tinged with disgust. Enough hopes had been sunk in football for that year; the college wanted to forget us. Nobody would go with us to Fortville; there were no more pep rallies; the game was not even talked about. The college had nothing to do with it; it concerned only us fourteen.

BESIDES, the college had a topic of conversation in Beulah MacArthur's new leopard-skin coat, the gift of a rich and sporadically generous aunt in Chicago. It was the only fur coat in Campusville. Though the beginning of that week was as warm as September, Beulah wore the coat everywhere and everybody looked at her instead of at us fourteen eccentrics who were going to play out the schedule.

That, when we understood and accepted it, helped us too. Coach and college had deserted us, but we could play this game for ourselves alone, for the corporate honor of an organism that

was fourteen in one. We were the last survivors, the guys who had stuck; we, when all was said, were The Team, sole owners of the trade-mark. Fortified by that feeling we ran through practice, cheerful, chuckling and contented. The absence of Slater helped immeasurably; and to our surprise the absence of Gog and Magog helped too. Dad Coulter and Joe Ring were the first-string half backs now, with Manning back in the line and Gayda at full back. It was the best line-up we'd had that season and we knew it; we knew that every man there was able and willing to work. Others might not understand, but we knew what we were playing for and we knew it was worth it.

We were a silent lot as we got up in the chill gray dusk of Thanksgiving morning and hustled for the interurban; silent on the long ride to Fortville. But it was a warm contented silence, with no despondency, no anticipatory gloom. We had counted the cost and gone into this with our eyes open; we had earned our own self-respect and risen above the disdain of the rest of the world. The One Great Scorer would write it down that we had played our best at Fortville and that was all that counted.

The day was fiercely cold. The pale unconvincing sunshine of early morning was gone by the time we rode into Fortville between tall smokeless chimneys and factories lying silent in holiday emptiness. That day the whole town would be out at the game. We changed at the hotel and rode to the grounds in a bus, shivering even under blankets and heavy sweaters. The cold had a harsher quality now; there was a piercing rawness in its bitter chill. The faint beginnings of icy fog hung over the city, and in the dead-gray cloud ceiling only a whitish spot kept pace with the hidden sun. The chill grimness of the day seeped into us as we walked out on the field in dogged

silence. We had found it necessary to let ourselves be slaughtered for the pleasure of the mob. We walked out doggedly, then all stood still and gasped.

I was to see big crowds in later years—sixty-five thousand in the Yankee Stadium, seventy-five thousand in the Yale Bowl, eighty-five thousand in Rickard's arena at Boyle's Thirty Acres—but I never saw another crowd that looked so big as that one. I suppose there were not more than ten thousand people in the stands, but none of us had ever played before more than fifteen hundred. To us, a million could have seemed no more.

Ten thousand people and all hostile; they greeted us, when our knot of blue jerseys appeared in the gate, with a unanimous spontaneous "Yah!" They stood up and waved their arms, a gray mass on the tiers of rising seats beneath a gray pall of cigar smoke and icy mist; a gray mass that blossomed with waving clusters of green-and-white streamers, the colors of the athletic club which was going to murder a college team at last.

"If there's any Freshwater alumni in this town," said Bowyer thoughtfully, "they've stayed at home and I don't blame them. But we don't need rooters! We play our own game."

"Look!" Dad Coulter gasped.

We looked along his pointing arm. There in the front row, right behind the low wall that shut off the field, was a leopard-skin coat; and the girl who wore it was brandishing a cane with long streamers of blue ribbon and shouting, a clear flutelike call that carried through the snarling roar around her:

"Yay, Freshwater! Let's go!"

HATFIELD walked straight over to her; we followed him; he leaned over the low wall.

"How did you get here?"

"By interurban," she said cheerfully, her brown eyes snapping. "How did you suppose?"

"Alone?"

"Maybe I need a chaperon, but nobody else would come."

"But you know——" he began, then thought better of it. No use telling these intent Fortville rooters around us that we knew we were licked.

"You ought to have stayed at home," he said severely. "You've missed your Thanksgiving dinner. Go away. You mustn't see this."

"Well, whose grandfather are you?" she demanded. "If you boys don't mind doing it, I don't mind seeing it."

"Never mind him," said Dad Coulter. "You holler as hard as you can, Beulah, and we'll try to give you something to holler about."

Then we walked back on the field where the Fortville team was running signals, eleven big ugly mastodons in green.

"I will say," said Bowyer thoughtfully, "that if we've got only one rooter, we've got a good one. Get into it, gang. We'll do what we can."

CHAPTER IX.

THE RINGING CALL.

THAT game ought to have been reported by Homer, or the man who wrote the "Nibelungenlied;" better yet, by some shaggy, snaggle-toothed, sporting expert of the Stone Age, who danced and sang his story beside the camp fire while his audience gnawed the bones of the losing team. Yet, for reasons which will presently appear, it was never properly reported at all.

I can't report it properly for I never saw the game as a whole. I played through to the finish, but about all I ever saw was the big two-hundred-and-twenty-pound bruiser playing against me. I remember the whistle, the thump of the kick-off, the slow fluttering flight

of the brown ball against the gray sky, Joe Ring dodging and twisting back for fifteen yards, Bowyer growling signals, Gayda's red head streaking through center on the first play—and then I became engrossed in my own troubles.

Yes, I held my bruiser—with Shettsline's help. The man opposite him had played on the Michigan team with Heston, but it took more than that to worry Shettsline. He stopped him or spilled him on every play and generally in time to help me out. Over on the other side of the line Tom Ellerbe was doing as much for Manning. Morrow at center was the lightest man in the line, but Gayda played right behind him on defense and they didn't get past Gayda.

And Hatfield—well, he had been shamed into coming, but when he came he was all there. Again and again he dodged their interference and got the back who was trying to round his end, or drove him off the field at the side line. The Fortville huskies soon discovered that the only place they could gain much was around left end, where Masters fought gallantly but in vain.

We rarely gained ground in that first half and never made a first down, but we certainly gave that crowd its money's worth in defensive play. They beat us back, but slowly. Trick plays? Yes, they had trick plays; but we had Red Rad Gayda. He didn't have then the uncanny nose for the ball that he developed later; he simply plunged through and got the runner before he started.

They had only one play that could gain ground—a plain end run around Masters with a protecting ring of backs surrounding the man with the ball. We could always see it coming; we could always stop it in about three yards. But three yards at a time was enough.

Slowly they beat us back, slowly, slowly; we held them on the twenty-yard line. Bowyer punted, then they

came again. Always around the end, always a piling mass as we stopped them; but always a little gain. Still, the half was half over before they made a touchdown. If we could keep on holding them like that, we'd win another moral victory.

But it was hard, incredibly hard. Faintly I could hear the unorganized snarling roar of the bleachers, a gray mass against the gray sky; gray smoke clouds blew across the tiers of seats; the icy fog came down gray through the dim afternoon. The gray ground, frozen hard, broke and crumbled underneath our cleats.

Always there was this mountainous green-clad monster before me, ready to plunge on me with terrific impact, with hidden hands and feet that searched and jabbed as we went down together.

I ached all over with sharp stinging pains that made themselves felt here and there through the general aching. An instant of breathing space while we tumbled into position, panting; then the snap of the ball, the groaning grunting heave of twenty-two men, the wordless straining with our breath coming in gasping snarls, bodies going down with muffled thuds, upturned faces snatching themselves away from descending cleats.

Every time I went down I thought I never could stand up again. But I always did and braced myself somehow to withstand another smashing drive, while men around me choked and sobbed and cursed and went down, sometimes to stay.

For we were outweighed thirty pounds, and that wasn't the worst of it. These Fortville bruisers had no inhibitions and they had picked the referee. A line of backs drove at Manning, and over him; he didn't get up. Time out. Water brought from the side lines, on the run. Howls from the stands—"Get up, you yellow quitter!"

As we stood, gasping, grateful for the moment's pause, I heard a green-clad giant panting through a chuckle.

"He won't get up. I stepped on his neck."

Manning was carried off; one of our three subs yanked off his sweater and tumbled into the line; their quarter barked signals, the ball was snapped; it all began again. Panting, heaving, cleats braced in icy ground that broke under the pressure, we were at it once more; and once more they were slowly gaining.

Presently Masters went too—somebody's knee had broken his collar bone. And then, two minutes later, when we had got the ball on downs, Dad Coulter tried to break through tackle; five of them grabbed him, he went down under the heap, and he stayed down. Dad hadn't learned, as I had learned in the first scrimmage, that when you went down under any of this Fortville outfit you weren't safe till every fist and every foot had been accounted for. So Dad went out too, and the last of our subs came in.

Three men were out. Not so bad, you say—you moderns, who are used to seeing them go out and come back again; go out when they are winded and come back when strategy requires them? Well, in our day they didn't come back. Manning and Masters and Coulter couldn't have come back. They didn't walk off the field; they weren't helped off. They were carried off, feet first.

The big boys drove us back to the twenty-yard line, but there we held them; Gayda was in the line now, on the defense, and he broke through twice and ripped that end run before it started. Their quarter dropped back and drove a place kick squarely between the posts; and then, as we were lining up, sobbing for breath, the timekeeper's whistle blew and we stumbled off to a corner of the field and fell down. The

news was flashed abroad, to Chicago and Indianapolis and Cincinnati and Detroit: Score at end of first half, Fortville, ten, Freshwater, nothing.

While the bleachers roared, the home team trotted off for fifteen minutes' rest in the clubhouse. Cheers followed it, for that town worshiped its team. No such courtesies for us; we huddled together behind the goal posts, sweaters drawn halfway on and left halfway on because a man's strength gave out before he could get that other arm in. We stretched out groaning, supine on the frozen ground, our blue-clad bodies steaming; every move was agony; we sobbed for breath and it rasped our throats like a steel file.

PRESENTLY Bowyer lifted himself on one arm and mumbled:

"Anyway, we've held 'em pretty well. If we don't crack, maybe we can hold 'em to one more touchdown. So we've got to hang on."

Hang on? I believed that every bone in my body was broken, that no power on earth could get me to my feet again. Beside me Tom Ellerbe, tough Tom Ellerbe, was silently crying, stretched out face downward, his tears a black smudge on the gray frostbitten turf. Sick, I turned away, and saw a vague blur approaching—spotted down, with a flash of blue. I rubbed a hand over my eyes and saw that it was Beulah Macarthur.

I croaked something—her name, perhaps. Anyway, our team sat up, slowly and silently, like a resurrection of the dead; sat up and turned eleven red-smearred faces, caked with grime and sweat, toward Beulah.

"Boys!" she said, and I left myself stiffen, saw the others stiffen, at the ringing call in her voice. It wasn't flutelike now; it was a trumpet. "Boys, you're going to beat them."

We were too tired to laugh; anyway, it would have been sacrilege to laugh

at that heroic gesture. Somebody even managed a feeble "Attabeulah!" She stamped her foot; her voice grew harsh.

"I mean it. You're going to beat them. Listen! They're giving out. People around me on the bleachers are talking about it. These men are old, like Gog and Magog. They never trained much and they've broken training now. They were sure of this game. Now they're tiring and their subs are no good. They're afraid of you—afraid to take their tired old men out and put in the reserves. They'll be satisfied with one touchdown in the second half. But you won't. You've got to make two."

Some of us looked at her dully; some looked away. She'd seen this game from the bleachers. She didn't know what it was like.

"Boys!" she said again and now her voice was soft and warm and pleading. "You've been wonderful. I want to get down on my knees to every one of you, you've done so well. Oh, so damn well!"

Back in that Paleozoic age college girls didn't swear, at least in public. Beulah's "damn" had the kick of a shot of brandy for every one of us, as she had calculated.

"But you haven't done well enough. You played this first half for yourselves, for your own personal honor. You've done so well I'll love every one of you to my dying day, but you haven't done well enough. You've got to play the second half for the college.

"Yes, I know. The college has let you down. You've done all the work; you've taken all the blame; and the college wouldn't even come up here to yell for you. But that makes no difference. And it makes no difference that you've played so well. That won't help the college. Well enough isn't well enough. Moral victories won't do.

You've got to win. Even for yourselves, you've got to win.

"Who will know that you've done well? Fortville loves its team; you won't get any credit in Fortville. Nobody has come up to cover this game for the city papers. Chicago will get it from Fortville. Indianapolis will get it from Fortville. Cincinnati and Detroit will get it from Fortville. And Fortville isn't going to tell the world you played the best game eleven men ever played. All Fortville is ever going to tell the world is in the final score. All that anybody will ever know who wants to know how Freshwater came through to-day, how you boys came through to-day, is the final score!"

SHE paused; we heard a cheer. Down the field was a moving mass, the Fortville team returning, at no very rapid rate.

Bowyer lurched to his feet.

"Come on, gang."

Somehow we all stood up with him, stood in a sort of crude way at attention while Beulah's eyes caught the eyes of each of us in turn and held them with a burning gleam; and then her eyes softened as she held out her arms in a gesture of farewell. Farewell it was, but it looked more like invitation, as she stood there with her open fur coat hanging loose about her shoulders, her arms extended and her eyes moist.

Theatrical? Of course it was theatrical—as theatrical as the slow clumping entry of *Cyrano*, bandaged and dying, to keep his final tryst—as theatrical, and as effective. Each one of us felt that she was holding out her arms to him, that her eyes were wet for his agony, even though some of us hardly knew her and one or two actively hated her.

Every one of us thought that gesture was the unconscious unprompted expression of her deep emotion, but I know now that it was calculated as care-

fully as every word she had said to us. Instinctively calculated, perhaps, but calculated none the less.

For she had been talking to us as man to man—as a very wise coach might have talked, as a college president who understood the emotional contents of football might have talked, as a student who loved the college might have talked to other students who loved the college even though it had let them down. Not as a woman to men, at all.

And her inborn grasp of the springs of action must have told her, perhaps without her conscious understanding, that one thing more was needed to give the razor edge to our steely fresh-tempered determination—a reminder that the comrade who had rallied us was a desirable woman, the most desirable woman that we knew.

Fantastic? Romantic? Well, they fought pretty hard in the days of Richard Cœur de Lion, and they fought their hardest under the eyes and the inspiration of desirable women. Not necessarily women they possessed or hoped to possess, or even wanted to possess; it isn't so simple as that. The impulse works below the surface, but with terrific power. And we had that impulse, overlying all the others, when we lined up for the kick-off and the whistle blew and again a brown ball soared, slowly tumbling, through the air.

CHAPTER X.

WOLVES OF THE GAME.

[SAW the hurried sprint and swerving concentration and piling scuffle as the man who caught the kick-off was downed; then we lined up once more. My bruise's eyes were red; his flanks heaved. The old play, around the end, was started. It stopped. Ellerbe and Gayda, side by side, broke through the line and stopped it. Again it was tried and they stopped it again. Pounded and weary and panting as I

was, I caught a change in the hoarse-spoken signal; again the snap of the ball, the lurch of heavy bodies, a grunt and a groan. I broke past my bruise and saw green jerseys piling up on Red Rad Gayda. Somebody had fumbled and he had the ball.

Up in the bleachers scattered voices began to shout, "Block that kick!" For a beaten team, twenty yards from the goal, a kick was logical enough. Bowyer dropped back, the half backs flanking him; he raised his arms and when I had upset my bruise I saw Joe Ring tearing around right end with Hatfield in front of him—Hatfield like a raging lion, spilling the green mastodons one by one. They got Joe, but he had gained fourteen yards. Six more to go.

The bleachers were dead silent as Bowyer croaked the signals; I felt the wet knife edge of the icy fog on my neck and wrists. Snap—smash—thud! A redhead drove past me, boring into the line; Gayda had made four yards. Two yards to go; he came again; but this time they were all waiting for him and he stopped in his tracks.

"Ninety-two, twenty-three——"

Tom Ellerbe ducked back and grabbed the ball and shot around through the hole that Shettsline had torn in the green wall. A mass of backs rose before him; Ellerbe plunged head on into them, staggered, and fell with four men holding him, across the line. The score: Fortville, ten; Freshwater, five.

Dead silence in the bleachers, except that one clear trumpet voice called:

"You, Tommy! Come on, Freshwater!"

The limp relapse from that keyed-up strain weakened our line; it broke as Bowyer kicked for the point; his kick was blocked. As we marched back up the field I heard him muttering an unconscious rhythmic "Oughta-had-that kick. Mustn't-miss-another."

They kicked off again and Joe Ring went tearing through a broken field forty yards before they got him.

"You Joe! Come on, Freshwater!"

But they rallied, those green-clad bruisers, rallied and fought. Again and again we held them for downs; again and again they held us too. That old sickening agony of the first half had to be gone through again; we gasped and stumbled and dragged ourselves to our feet with sobbing groans—but we held on.

Specific pains were blended in one vast dull hurt and gradually, by sheer force of that determination that Beulah had infused in us, we put the agony out of mind. The bruised flesh of our bodies was nothing; we held on, fought on, because we had risen above it. We were pure will.

There and there only we were better men than the enemy, but slowly that prevailed; slowly we felt that they were giving out, though they still fought on. And at last, as we got the ball after an exchange of punts, I felt an inexplicable conviction that the green mastodons were cracking. Subtly we all felt it as we lined up, with eighty yards to go. Eighty yards to go and ten minutes to play. If only Joe Ring, who had run through them and around them, Joe Ring the spearhead of our offensive—if only Joe Ring could hold out!

Joe Ring made twenty-five yards around end on a fake kick and when the referee pulled them off him he writhed and shivered and couldn't get up. No wonder; three hard-cleated feet had kicked him in the belly, one after the other. Yet he had to get up, for we had no more substitutes; we picked him up and carried him about, and at last got him to stand alone, quivering, his stomach wall going in and out like a bellows. You could have knocked him over with a toothpick. He was through. He had done most of the ground gaining and he was through.

Then began the saga of Red Rad Gayda. He went through center and they gathered round him; they downed him, but he had made ten yards. He drove through again and once more they swarmed in, clinging to him like tugs lashed to a liner coming into dock. They downed him, but he had made ten more. Again, and again, like Achilles going through the Trojan line. No science, no trick plays, no end runs; a succession of headlong thrusts through center, a sheer contest in power and courage.

Didn't they try to lay him out? Certainly they tried it. When he found time to go around to the doctor, next day, he learned that he had three ribs broken, among other things. But they didn't lay him out. Once I saw a kick aimed at his head as he went down but even as he fell he lunged forward and the man who had tackled him got the kick, right under the ear. That man went off feet first.

ON the next play a green-clad monster rolled, twisted and held both hands to a mouth that was spitting teeth. They took him off and I heard Shettsline murmuring contentedly: "That was the guy that got Dad." It was no parlor pastime, that game.

Another lunge and we were ten yards from the goal. Gayda got up gasping and sobbing; through their cuts and bruises the green mammoths showed weak and cracking smiles. They thought he was done. But Ellerbe through Shettsline made four yards; and then once more came Red Rad Gayda with those few seconds of rest, tearing forward head down with the ball under his arm, driving through their tottering line like an armor-piercing shell through a lath partition, across the goal. The score: Freshwater, ten, Fortville, ten.

In a universal silence that fairly screamed, we lined up for the kick. We

were sick and pounded and collapsing, but we didn't know it. This time it was the bruisers in green whose faces twisted with agony; they had to block that kick. As we crouched, my own private bruiser leaned on one hand, the other swinging free; as the ball was snapped, he swung for my jaw. I ducked and butted him in the chest and drew clear in time to see the ball coming down behind the goal posts. The score: Freshwater, eleven; Fortville, ten.

Then came the Great Collapse. I didn't comprehend it then, nor indeed till eleven years later, when it was repeated on a grander scale, when the Germans who had had things their own way for four years suddenly caved in and quit. And the Germans, like the Fortville team, caved in—here was the irony—before opponents who had endured an even harder pounding, who were almost at the point of collapse themselves—almost, but not quite.

In both cases it was a moral collapse and it needs a phrase the Germans invented to explain what we did to those Fortville bruisers in the last five minutes. We had broken their will to victory. Till we scored that eleventh point they had been about as good as we were; after that, they were no good at all.

RED RAD GAYDA hit that line again, split it and went forty yards down the field with a long swath of spilled tacklers behind him. Bowyer was calling the signals as we fell into line; Gayda did it again, for twenty yards; Hatfield made fifteen more around the end and Gayda smashed through for the third touchdown.

Another line-up; another kick-off. It went high and askew and came down in Hatfield's arms near the side line. Shettsline took out the two nearest men in green, I spilled another. Hatfield's face was greenish-white under the

smears of crimson and dirt. In the last scrimmage a Fortville man had stamped on his hand and broken three fingers. But Hatfield could hold the ball in his arm and use the other hand to ward off tacklers and he did. Wearily, with dreamlike slowness, they ran at him one by one and missed him. Seventy-five yards for a touchdown from kick-off.

Again we lined up in furious haste. Bowyer took the kick-off and ran fifty yards behind a massed interference. Gayda plunged through center again, but Joe Ring had slipped behind him and had taken the ball. While they fell before Gayda, fell with him at last and dragged him down, Joe Ring was circling the end. The boy was dead on his feet; a touch of a finger and he'd have gone down. But they never got near to touch him with their fingers. Another touchdown!

Beulah told me afterward that our team raged up and down the field in that last five minutes with snarling, coughing growls, like a wolf pack running down its prey. She said we scared her. I don't remember; but I do remember that we scared the mastodons in green. They were on the run. Gayda hit the line again and again; and on the last play, with forty yards to go, the secondary defense didn't even try to stop him; the backs stood and watched him as he trotted slowly across the goal line. The whistle blew just then and Bowyer missed the goal kick, but a point more or less made no difference now. The final score: Freshwater, thirty-four; Fortville, ten.

Ten thousand people filed out of the stands and went cursing home; the big green team dropped in its tracks, exhausted and overmastered, to be dragged off the field like wrecked automobiles. We might have fallen too, but for Beulah. She clambered over the wall and ran to us where we stood in the middle of the field and kissed us,

one after another. Mud-splashed as we were she kissed us all, with real authentic kisses; and I'd have been willing to play that game over again for another reward like that.

CHAPTER XI.

STILL CURIOUS.

BEULAH was right. All that went out to the world about that game was the final score. Fortville couldn't suppress that, however much they might have wanted to; and the first-half score had gone out too. So all the Middle West knew that we had come from behind in the second half and made six touchdowns against a team rated far above us. That put our college back on the map.

The college never really appreciated that. They received the news with pleased surprise and greeted the team, after the short vacation, with a highly gratifying respect. But nobody who wasn't there could know how hard we had worked for victory; nor did this belated victory, to the average student, outweigh the bitter shame of defeat by Wyndham and Belding and Deland. But every sports writer in the State changed his tone, then and thereafter, when he said anything about our team or our college.

That game was the real foundation of all the glorious triumphs that were to come, for we had risen from lower depths than we were ever to know again. No future Freshwater team had to climb so far, or fight so hard to make the grade. We have had our ups and downs, but that particular battle has never had to be fought over. It was won, to stay won. I am not sure that the effect was quite so happy on those of us who won it. Other men had got their letters that year, but we paid little attention to them. We fourteen were the Inner Circle, the Old Guard, The Team. Coulter and Man-

ning graduated, but twelve of us were back next year, the backbone of the team of 1908, and we admired ourselves intensely.

Eventually the rest of our college came to resent that, but it was good for our morale. We were never nervous or fidgety before a big game again. We knew what we could do. We always regarded ourselves as in a special sense the guardians and trustees of our college, or at least of its athletic reputation, and if we were insufferably arrogant at times, the sense of responsibility was good for us.

Somehow we identified the college, or so much of the spirit of the college as had been intrusted to our care, with Beulah. She had led us to victory; she had made us see that well enough was not well enough, that self-respect was not enough, that what counts is the final score. Without her we could never have won and we knew it.

WHATEVER may be the psychology or the chemistry of that reserve of energy that she unleashed, she had certainly unleashed it and nobody else could have done that. So, when in due time the football letters were passed out, we fourteen insisted that Beulah must have her letter too; and thereafter she had the right to wear a big F on a heavy blue sweater, like any man on the team.

We couldn't see so far into the future, of course, as we made our slow way homeward that night. Dad Coulter had hired a special interurban car for the team and Beulah. Four or five of those men ought to have gone straight to the hospital and did go to a hospital the next day. But even those who had been knocked unconscious in the first half and been revived by that glorious triumph, absolutely refused to go to a hospital then, which was just as well. If they'd gone to a hospital in Fortville, that night, some peevish

surgeon might have sawed off a perfectly good leg.

There was agony enough without that. We screamed, all of us, as we were rubbed down after the game. Dad had bought us a sumptuous Thanksgiving dinner at the hotel, but our anguished exhaustion wouldn't let us eat. Torpid, aching, we sat and stared at our food in dull silence, till at last we managed to gulp a little coffee, light cigarettes and struggle out to our waiting interurban car.

Snow was falling through the darkness, a heavy wet snow that clung. Our car got under way slowly, went on slowly, with repeated stops; from ice-sheathed wires, with machine-gun cracklings, flashed long successions of blue-white sparks. It was a three-hour trip, but with snow and ice and short circuits we made it in six. Most of us tumbled into our seats in the car and instantly went to sleep.

I couldn't sleep; I prowled up and down the car and finally went out on the front platform for air and here, presently, I talked to Beulah, who had left Hatfield asleep and come out into the cold freshness, to watch the beam of the searchlight boring through the falling snow. It was the first time she had ever really talked to me, to me alone; the first time she had ever called me "John" in a college where everybody called me "Mac."

When she had gone back into the car and gone to sleep, I, who couldn't sleep, sat down beside the one man who was still awake—Red Rad Gayda—and to my amazement found him reading a textbook on European history.

"How can you read to-night?" I asked. "Aren't you half dead?"

"Oh, I like to read. A lot of things have happened that I never heard about."

"Such as what?"

"There was a guy named Napoleon. You heard of him, huh? He used to go

through them like Eckersall or Heston. I have read about him and lots more things, but I have not yet found out what kind of Slav I am. But my father says we are not Slovaks nor Ruthenes nor Poles nor Czechs, so I will read till I find out. Next term, I will take European history."

"Next term? Why, you're not even registered——"

"Yes, I am going to stay in college—be regular student and graduate and all. I know what you are thinking. How will I pay my way? Well, there is the joke of it. If you had paid me money like other colleges I could not pay my way after football season is over but you gave me jobs instead. I can still get my room rent for firing the furnace and Mr. Lynn will give me six dollars a week now, for I can run the store while he plays euchre at the livery stable."

"Well, three cheers!" I said, for we all liked Gayda. "You'll have a good time. There's a lot to college besides football, you know."

"Sure, I know it. Did we not hear that girl talk, you and I? She told us, and she told us this afternoon, too. That is good girl. If she had been coach, we would have licked Wyndham and Belding and Deland. But we lick 'em next year, huh?"

Next year was an old story, but I believed it, now.

CHAPTER XII.

A BIT OF SWELL-HEADEDNESS.

WHEN we were measurably recovered from our hurts, the team got together to elect a captain. Nineteen letter men came to that meeting and the vote was Ellerbe, one; Gayda, eighteen.

"No, no," he burst out, with the first sign of emotion he had ever betrayed. "I am not fit for it. I am not even student."

"You will be next term," Shettsline snorted.

"Yes, but it is not right that I should be captain now. I do not know enough football. I am big and tough and fast, but I don't know the game; and if next year's coach is as bad as Slater, the captain will have to know a lot. Let us vote again."

Clearly he meant it, so we voted some more and presently Joe Ring was elected. Now Joe Ring, too, was big and tough and fast, but he didn't know the game; but Joe took the honor and by the next day had forgotten that he was second choice. He would have been about my tenth choice.

Shettsline and Ellerbe were the best men we had outside of Gayda, but they were both stiff-necked independent originals. They didn't give a hoot for anybody and frequently said so, which tended to diminish their popularity. I'd have preferred even Hatfield to Joe Ring, but Hatfield was hopelessly unpopular. Also, he had already marked out the perilous honor of the manager-ship for his own.

Hatfield got the job without opposition, Dad Coulter's financial troubles being well known, and began to plan next year's season at once, with an assistant to attend to the routine business while he devoted himself to major problems of policy. None of us asked him any questions about what he was doing, for instinctively we had confidence in Hatfield. Besides, we were all busy with one thing and another and quite a number of us were busy helping Red Rad Gayda get his start as a college student.

When he did once get into it, however, he went with a whoosh. He had the Slav's natural aptitude for modern languages and he worked at history and economics with a terrific concentrated attention that couldn't help carrying him along. Before the year was out, there was no doubt that he was a col-

lege student and a pretty good one at that.

To be sure, he never did find out in his reading what kind of Slav he was; but he found out many other things.

Toward the end of summer Hatfield wrote me that he had hired a coach named Casseltine, who looked good. The name meant nothing to me, but the United States is a large country and there were plenty of good football players in it that I had never heard of. If this unknown Casseltine looked good to Hatfield, he probably was good.

But I didn't think much of Casseltine at first sight, when I came back to college in September. Hatfield had summoned the Old Guard, the twelve of us from Fortville who were coming back, to turn up a few days early and talk things over with the coach. A coach with whom things could be talked over sounded a little too much like Slater and Crab Casseltine was not much of an advertisement for himself.

He was little and freckled and sandy haired and insignificant looking, with pale-blue eyes under almost invisible eyebrows. He shook hands with us all and then stood off with lowered head and glared at us from beneath where his eyebrows ought to have been.

"Well, you guys! I know you're all wondering who I am. My name's Casseltine and I'm Michigan '05, but you never heard of me. I never won my letter; but I played four years on the scrubs and I know all the football Yost knows and some that he hasn't heard of yet.

"You fellows made a good showing in your last game last year and this year you're going to start that way and get better. I know the reputation of this college. It makes a good start and a bad finish. It wins its easy games by big scores and loses its hard games by close scores. I think we're going to stop that.

"The new material looks pretty

good," he went on, "but I've called you guys in early because I want to say just one thing to you twelve men who played at Fortville, before the new material comes in. That was a great game, but it was only one game. You may think it earned you a life membership in the Hall of Fame, but I want to tell you that nobody is going to get his letter this year on the strength of what he did last Thanksgiving. Every man has got to work for it and you twelve have got to work about twice as hard as the rest because you've shown what you can do and you've got to do it again.

"That's all, except this—I'm going to run this team. I weigh one hundred and fifty-two, but I'm going to run this team. If anybody doubts that, let him step out now and I'll take him on, Queensberry rules or rough-and-tumble, whichever he likes. Don't care to? All right. You guys do what I tell you and I think we'll win some games this year."

WE were pretty sore for a while, but when we cooled we realized that he had given us what we needed. I know now that though the voice of command was Casseltine's, the idea was Hatfield's; he knew what the Old Guard needed because he was one of us. And years later Crab Casseltine told me that Hatfield had already offered himself as the first sacrifice on the altar.

Hatfield was the best boxer in college and before he could hire a coach he insisted that the coach put on the gloves and show that he could lick him. Hatfield had knocked out three candidates for the job before Casseltine came along, clouted Hatfield into insensibility in seven fierce rounds, and was hired. We never did appreciate Hatfield.

So the year started, with the usual collegiate excitements and the added excitement of the news that Beulah Macarthur was wearing Captain Joe Ring's fraternity pin and presumably

was engaged to him. That irritated the rest of us Fortville veterans as if a single stockholder had embezzled all the assets of the corporation. Beulah belonged, we thought, to us all. But she didn't think so; so we had to forget our peevishness and plunge headfirst into football. You didn't have time to worry about anything else, when you played football under Crab Casseltine.

The man had one great sore spot in his life, which he exposed to anybody who would listen—he believed that he had failed to make his letter, at Michigan, through the personal malice of Yost. That was nonsense, of course; Casseltine was too light for the kind of football they played at Michigan in his day and he was so sour that he might have demoralized any team, as a player. But we needed a sour coach just then, and Crab Casseltine earned his pay.

We had been used to opening our season with an easy game. It was another of Hatfield's inspirations to open this season of 1908 with a team which had given us an unpleasant surprise the year before—Wisconsin Tech. We did the surprising this time; we beat them forty-one to five and the victory drove our college wild. For the college had never taken our great victory at Fortville seriously and didn't realize that it was the measure of what we could do under competent leadership.

The college came out to the Wisconsin game expecting another of our famous hairbreadth defeats, and when the game was over and the whole student body snake-danced around the field singing "Freshwater Blue," headed by the professors who used to lecture us about the moral blessings of adversity, we knew that the confidence we had gained at Fortville had passed.

WE had an easy game the next Saturday, and won thirty to nothing with the line-up full of substitutes, and then came Deland. By this time the

whole State was talking about our team—alas, that I should say it!—the team lost its head. We were sure we could lick anybody. Fear of Casseltine kept us from perceptible slackness, but our mental attitude was all wrong; and even Casseltine didn't see that till the Deland game was half over.

We went into that game with furious thirst for revenge and made a touchdown in the first three minutes. Bowyer missed the goal, but what was that, with more touchdowns to come? And then the Deland team came out of its astounded daze and began to play for its life. They held us all the rest of the half. Toward the finish, one of their players recovered one of our fumbles. Bowyer dived for him and missed him by an inch. He had about eighty yards to go, but there was nobody between him and the goal but Joe Ring; and Joe was mooning over at the stands where Beulah Macarthur was looking adoringly at him.

Oh, she was worth looking at; and Joe looked at her, while the man with the ball galloped past him. Eventually Joe turned, of course; several hundred people urged him to turn, loudly and profanely. He turned and galloped after the runner, but too late. They kicked the goal and the first half ended Deland, six; Freshwater, five.

We went back to the gym in terrified expectancy. We had heard Crab Casseltine swear magnificently on trivial occasions and we supposed he would simply obliterate us now. But he walked in almost indifferently, with his hands in his pockets, and looked at us in silence as a grocer might look at a lot of green vegetables that had spoiled on his hands.

"It's my fault," he said at last. "I've been treating you like grown men and you're only a bunch of babies. You Fortville men, I'm talking to you. Ten of you played in this half—or stood around the field in this half, rather;

you did all your playing last Thanksgiving. If we lose this game, you ten can turn in your suits and I'll build a team out of the freshmen and the scrubs."

It was a perfectly insane threat, but we knew he meant it; Crab Casseltine didn't make small talk.

"This second half's your last chance," he pursued, "to show whether you're worth carrying on the squad. If you win, you stay. But nine of you have got to work for ten of you. Joe Ring's going to the showers; Wheeler will play right half for the rest of this game. And Heaven help him, or any of the rest of you, if I catch you looking at your girls in the grand stand. Now hop to it if you want your letters this year."

We hopped to it straightway with the old Fortville spirit, Red Rad Gayda plunging through for thirty-five yards on the first play, and the second half was all ours. This Deland team fought all the way through, but the final score was Freshwater, twenty-three; Deland, six; and our college was as crazy as an oil town when a new gusher has just come in. Yet for us of the team, pleased as we were with this triumph over an ancient rival, the celebration was somehow rather insipid and anticlimactic; I began to wonder if we had tasted all the joy of triumph, once and forever, at Fortville; if that peak of emotion could never be attained again.

CHAPTER XIII.

A MAN WORTH WATCHING.

SO, though that glorious season of 1908 made our college simply drunk with victory, it had less effect upon the team. We had discovered, the year before, that there was nothing in the moral blessings of adversity and we were finding now that even the joys of victory could be overdone. For when the college had once got used to the idea

that we could win games, it insisted that we must win every game.

We didn't falter, either. Our next two games after Deland were easy; we took them in our stride and yet won them sixty-two to nothing and seventy-two to nothing. Then came Wyndham, which had got a bad start that season, but as usual was coming back. They simply surpassed themselves when they met us, for they had everything to gain and nothing to lose. We had nothing to gain, but we had something to lose—our pride—and for the sake of that, not for the jealous college that insisted on unbroken victory, we beat them—beat them at their best, eighteen to nothing.

Then we finished the season in a regular aurora borealis of glory, running over Belding, a better team than the one that had beaten us the year before, by the biggest score in history. Long Tom Railing, glorious in defeat, slipped over a place kick from the forty-eight-yard line, but we beat them sixty-four to four.

Red Rad Gayda had been the hero of the season—every sporting editor in the State picked him for full back on the All-State team—but Joe Ring was the hero of the Belding game, crashing through for six touchdowns. And that, too, we owed to Red Rad Gayda, to certain qualities in this big quiet Slav that nobody had suspected he possessed, till he had to use them.

Joe Ring had sulked at being taken out of the Deland game, but he had sense enough not to show it. He knew that if he cut practice or loafed Caseltine would put him on the side lines for the season. Yet there was an indefinable let-down in his play and in everything else he did. He went about mooning absently and coming back with a start when anybody spoke to him, and so did Beulah.

That was the worst of it for us of Fortville—that it was Beulah. We could have understood how another girl

might have slumped and let her sweet-heart slump, but not Beulah. She and Joe were, literally, crazy about each other; so crazy that nothing else counted, not even football which was the concentrated interest of our college. We had read about absorptions of that kind, but it shocked us to think that the thing could happen right there in our midst.

We were bitter and furious, we Fortville veterans. The coach talked to Beulah, and to Joe, in vain. None of the rest of us dared to talk to either of them except Shettsline, who dared anything.

It happened one evening just before the Wyndham game. A crowd of us were in the chapter-house living room as Joe went out for his regular nightly call on Beulah and Shettsline flung some jibe at him. Just what it was I don't remember, except that it was the sort of thing that ordinarily would have called for a fight.

Joe turned white and would have hit him if the crowd hadn't begun to laugh. For ours was an unkind and ribald college; we flung the sharp harpoon unmercifully and allowed no one to have private business. And Joe Ring, who meant well but was no subtle thinker, bowed to the public opinion of his group. If everybody else thought it was funny, it must be funny, so he forced a laugh, too, and went on to see Beulah.

Well, the whole college did think it was funny, but Beulah didn't see the point. She and Joe quarreled, furiously; and whatever she said to him, it got under his skin so that he marched straight down to the railroad station and took a train back home.

The rest of us were inclined to let him go, for he had been next to worthless all season; but Hatfield, as usual, knew better, knew that we would need Joe for Wyndham and Belding. He talked it over one evening with me and

the coach and insisted that we must not only get Joe back, but get him back with his mind on football.

"All right," Casseltine conceded. "But how are you going to do it? He's sore as a boil."

"Beulah could bring him back," said Hatfield.

"Maybe she could, but she's sore too; and I don't blame her much, the way this bunch of cannibals has been kidding her and Joe. This is a great idea, Hatfield, like all your ideas; but who's going to make it work? If you think you can persuade her, go and talk to her——"

"Don't try to be funny, coach," said Hatfield, reddening. "You know I wanted her to put on my pin and she turned me down and picked Joe. I can't talk to her. Let Mac try it. He might work it."

"Me?" I protested. I, too, had aspired to Beulah, though as she had never taken me seriously nobody else knew it.

"Why not? You're a letter man; you know her well enough to talk to her and yet not well enough not to talk to her. You run with her crowd, but you've never had a date with her——"

SO eventually they induced me and I talked to Beulah the next day and tried to persuade her to bring Joe back. But she wouldn't be persuaded. Not only that, but she had grown indifferent to football, to that supreme group interest that makes every college, every autumn, like a nation at war, united on one particular objective.

So I gave it up and came back to the chapter house, sick and sore, to report to Hatfield that it was hopeless. Nobody, I was convinced, could do anything with Beulah; for since that Fortville game she and I had gradually become rather confidential friends, the more intimate because Beulah refused to consider anything more sentimental.

If I couldn't persuade her, it couldn't be done.

It was one of the study hours at the chapter house and for a wonder most people were studying; but Hatfield was in the living room, playing pitch with Red Rad Gayda. Gayda hung around our chapter house a good deal and, though in their home town Hatfield lived on the hill and Gayda lived across the tracks, in college Hatfield couldn't help accepting him, as we did, as a man who wasn't fraternity material, but was a good guy none the less.

"It can't be done," I told them gloomily. "Beulah's sore at the team, sore at the college—and I don't blame her."

"Neither do I," said Hatfield. "I know you guys think I'm foolish about her, but I tell you that girl has got the stuff. What happens to her is more important than what happens to the team."

"That is not so," said Gayda calmly. "What happens to all of us is more important than what happens to any one of us. We knew that at Fortville, when she sent us back to be kicked and slugged in that second half; and she ought to know it now. She is sore and angry and I do not blame her; but she must buck up and get back in the game—she and Joe Ring too."

"Hah!" Hatfield snorted ironically. "Why don't you tell her so?"

"I will tell her," said Gayda.

Hatfield sat up uneasily.

"Look here, I didn't mean that. You—you wouldn't know how to talk to a girl like Beulah——"

"You mean I don't know her socially; I am not fraternity man. That is just why I can talk to her. I am only football; if I talk to her, I talk only for the team. You are in love with her, Mr. Hatfield, and I think you are, too, Mac."

I flushed and squirmed; I thought nobody around our college knew that.

"I am not," went on Gayda, "but maybe she has been too much with peo-

ple who are in love with her. Maybe it would be good to remind her that even if people fall in love, we must play out the schedule."

"I don't like it," Hatfield persisted. "Better let me go with you."

"Better you don't. If somebody must go with me, I will take Mac."

I tried to get out of it, but these mild blue eyes of Gayda's could be stonily hard when his mind was set on something. So the next morning he and I met Beulah walking up the library steps.

"Wait, Beulah," he said. "I want to talk to you."

"Talk about Joe?" she returned listlessly. "No use. You don't understand."

"No, about Joe I don't understand and maybe I don't need to. For after all, though we can use him if he is right, I think we can lick Wyndham and Belding without him. It is you, Beulah. You must come back. You are yell leader; you can make this college go crazy if you try; but you have been laying down on us. You must come back."

"Oh, Red, you don't understand this."

"Maybe not; but maybe you didn't understand that Fortville game, either. You did all you could, but you sat in the bleachers. We had to play it and it was hard; I think it was about as hard as you are feeling now. But we played it for ourselves and each other and the college and for you because you told us to play it—and you were right. Now you must play this for us and for the college, but most of all for yourself."

"I owe no gratitude to you Fortville boys, the way you've treated me this fall."

"Maybe not, but you owe something to yourself and to the college and to the world. You are strong, Beulah, and strong people have no right to break.

What counts is the final score and you have not finished the first half yet."

SHE pondered and I could see the color coming back into her cheeks and the fire into her eye. She held out her hand.

"I'll play it out, Red," she promised. "You'll have a real yell practice this afternoon, anyway. And I'll try to bring Joe back."

Three days later Joe Ring was back with his mind on football, working for the glorious triumph that was eventually to be his in the Belding game. Most of us were so happy because he had come back, and Beulah had come back, that we forgave everybody and forgot everything; but one or two of us couldn't forget that Beulah had been deaf to us and had responded to Gayda. Hatfield felt that way and so did I.

"You seem to think a lot of Gayda," I said rather bitterly, the next time I saw her.

"Who wouldn't?"

"Hatfield and I told you about what he did, but you laughed at us; and you let him bring you back."

"But you didn't tell me the same thing!" she protested. "You and Rupert tried to be sorry for me, but you couldn't help letting me see that you were sore—sore because I was laying down, sore because I'd turned you down and preferred Joe. And even when you were sorry for me—well, I don't want people to be sorry for me. I'd come to hate the college that laughed at me and Joe, and the team that had spoiled us. You Fortville boys had pampered me and made me think I was somebody, had given me pride; and then when I fell for Joe, you all tried to put me down, to trample on my pride."

"But Gayda knew enough to make me live up to my pride," she went on. "That boy's clever, John. He knows what has to be done and he not only does it himself, but makes other people

do it, whether they like it or not. That quality won't wear itself out in college; it endures. We've been thinking Gayda's only a good football player, but he's more than that. You watch him."

CHAPTER XIV.

SUCH A COMPLEX QUESTION.

AFTER all, this led only to an absurd anticlimax. For Joe's anger at Shettsline had lingered and after the football season he insisted that they fight it out. If they had fought when Shettsline flung that unthinking insult at him, they would have forgotten it; but Joe had brooded over his grudge and let it rankle.

They met like a couple of carnivorous dinosaurs fighting in the primeval slime; Shettsline was terribly hammered up, but Joe Ring got the licking of his life; and after the fight he went home again and never did come back. How hard Beulah tried to get him back I don't know, but he never came; so Red Rad Gayda was unanimously elected captain for next season and this time he took the job.

Joe's departure rather beclouded the memory of that season of 1908, when he had won the undisputed championship of the small colleges of the State and ranked second only to the university; but presently term-end examinations and the Christmas holidays distracted us. Beulah, after Joe's desertion, needed more distraction than that; and when we came back after Christmas, she wasn't there. The rich aunt from Chicago had taken her to Europe and I must say our college breathed easier with Beulah gone.

She sent picture post cards to Hatfield and some of the girls, but she wrote only to me and that scantily enough. In April, however, I got a longer letter from the Grand Hotel Hungaria in Budapest. Her letter read:

"Tell Gayda I've met his count. At least I think it's the same one—Count Arpad Radolffy—they have the most *terrible* names here—and he lives at the castle of Vereszvar when he isn't in Budapest or Paris or Monte Carlo. I'm simply crazy about him. He drives a racing car and rides in steeplechases and fights duels and everything and he's even better looking than Rupert.

"They don't think much of Slavs here. They put a lot of them in jail on account of some war they were going to have with Servia. The war was called off, but the Slavs are still in jail. I asked Count Radolffy about his Slavs around Vereszvar and he said they didn't amount to much. I told him we had one out at Campusville who amounted to quite a lot.

"He just laughed when I told him about Gayda—the count went to Oxford and his idea is that only gentleman can play on a football team and no Slav can be a gentleman, except Poles and a few Russians. I suppose I ought to have told him about our American idea of a gentleman, but the truth is, John, I'm afraid of these people. They have so awfully much class.

"Anyway I asked the count what kind of Slavs they were around Vereszvar—I remember Gayda was always worried about that—and he said how should he know, he supposed they were just Slavs.

"Tell the crowd I'll be back for the fall term. Always, BEULAH."

Thinking that Gayda might be interested in this news from the old home town, I showed him the letter. I'd forgotten the passage about no Slav being a gentleman, but he didn't mind that.

"That is all right," he said placidly. "I am not gentleman any more than I am brunette. I am sorry, but I cannot help it, so why should I worry?"

"But this is all bunk——" I began.

"You do not understand, in America," he interrupted. "I know, for I have talked to my father and our people. Mr. Hatfield is gentleman; Bowyer is gentleman; Tom Ellerbe is gentleman. He is tough and rough, but he is gentleman. But you are not and I am not."

"Where do you get that stuff?" I demanded with some heat, for I considered myself quite as gentle as Edward VII. "What is a gentleman, then?"

His face contorted; he was thinking hard.

"A gentleman owns land," he announced finally, "or comes from a family of landowners. But not everybody who owns land is gentleman. I can't explain it, but I know who is and who is not. I am not."

All of which bore on a delicate question which was just then being debated. Red Rad Gayda might not be a gentleman, but he had become a regular college man. On somebody's discreet advice—I know now that it was Beulah's—he had replaced the gold teeth with more seemly porcelain; his clothes were no more eccentric than ours; he had learned to dance and roller skate pretty well.

He was studying hard and standing high in his classes and the girls liked him—even, or especially, sorority girls. He had polished off the rough edges and he was the football captain, in fact if not in theory the highest-ranking member of the student body. In other words, he was now fraternity material.

Even before the season was over, Tom Ellerbe had proposed him for membership in our chapter. Half a dozen votes were cast against him and one would have kept him out, but each of us, who had thought that he alone was for him, was surprised to find that three fourths of the chapter wanted Gayda. The question came up again after Christmas and the effective opposition had been reduced to only Hatfield.

I see his point of view, of course. In their home town he was the count and Gayda was the vassal and equality at the college must end inequality at home. And what, he argued furiously, would their home town think of a college, and a fraternity, in which Radomir Gayda could become a fraternity man?

Whereupon we played a rather low trick on Hatfield. We sent Shettsline and Ellerbe to his home town, osten-

sibly to look for high-school football stars. They came back and reported that not only the schoolboys, but everybody else was proud of that town chiefly because it was the home of Red Rad Gayda, the All-State full back.

THAT report settled it, for while Hatfield was against Gayda, it was for reasons he was ashamed to avow. Simply, he was jealous—not only of Gayda's unsentimental but apparently strong friendship with Beulah, which must grow stronger if Gayda became a fraternity man; but jealous of the unknown bohunk from his father's coal mine, who was getting to be a greater man than Hatfield in Hatfield's own college.

If he was human enough to be jealous, however, he was decent enough to be ashamed of it; so he told us wearily to have our way and Tom Ellerbe and I were appointed to approach Gayda. We got to him late at night, when he was washing glasses behind the soda fountain. He was agitated and genuinely surprised; and he refused.

"What for?" Ellerbe growled. "We all want you."

"Mr. Hatfield does not want me."

"But he voted for you," we told him. "It has to be unanimous before a man can be asked."

"Still he does not want me. Phi Chi is best fraternity here; I would not belong to any other; but it is not right that I should belong to the same chapter with Mr. Hatfield."

"Aw, forget that," Ellerbe growled. "Suppose you don't like him. Neither do we. This brotherhood business about a fraternity is all blah! We hate lots of our brothers. Don't let that keep you out."

"I do not hate him. I like him more than you do. But he is gentleman and I am not."

"But you say I'm not a gentleman," I protested, "and I belong."

"That is different. You do not know you are not gentleman."

"Look here!" I told him angrily. "You're an American citizen. You've found out for yourself that this is the land of freedom and opportunity. But you act as if you still lived back there in Hungary. America means——"

I paused, trying for the first time in my life to decide just what America did mean. It was a complex question, I perceived, hardly to be gone into now.

"It means," I compromised, "that you're as good as Hatfield—or the count."

Gayda laughed.

"Anyway," I growled, "you're as good as I am. Why, look here! Beulah said the count told her that in the old country you couldn't even play football. Don't you see that America is different?"

"That is so," he admitted. "I wish I knew what she would say."

"She'd tell you to join."

"If she said that I would join. When she comes back, I will ask her."

"But she's not coming back till fall," Tom protested. "Don't they have cables to Europe? Ask her now."

So we went around to the telegraph office and wrote out a cable and skeletonized it crudely when we found how much it would cost. Then we waited. And the next day, at supper time, Gayda came up to the chapter house with a wide amiable grin.

"She says it is all right," he announced. "So I will join."

Whereupon with a roar we pinned our colors on his lapel and after supper a brother took him on the rounds of the sorority houses to encounter universal congratulation. Every one of us would have volunteered for that job but Hatfield volunteered first and we let him have it. For, whatever you might say against him, he was a gentleman.

CHAPTER XV.

UP AGAINST THE BEST.

THOUGH Crab Casseltine lived in Louisville and was supposed to have no connection with our college between football seasons—he practiced life insurance for a livelihood—he was around a good deal. In those days, next year's schedule wasn't in the making before this season was over; it was compiled in a leisurely manner along in the spring. Hatfield had been re-elected manager and, on one of Casseltine's visits, when a group of us were talking football at the chapter house, he produced a tentative list of games.

"We start with Wiskinskie again," Hatfield announced. "They're the only team we take on from outside the State. We've had four or five offers, but the business of this college is to beat Wyndham and Belding and Deland. With them, and a few easy games in between, we've got our schedule. Except that I wanted the State University. I tried them for the first Saturday in October—their conference games keep them busy after that—but Belding had beat me to it. It's a shame, I believe we could have licked those fellows and they'll run over Belding. I suppose that's why Belding got the date and we didn't."

"Never mind," said Casseltine. "I want that date for Michigan."

"Michigan? Why not the German army? We'd have about as much chance to schedule them and they wouldn't beat us any worse."

Crab Casseltine grinned at us.

"We can get a game with Michigan on that date. I've got friends still, in Ann Arbor—I know we can get them this year and never again. Since Michigan quit the Western Conference, four years ago, they've had a hard time getting a decent schedule. They play Penn and Cornell and Syracuse, but they have to fill in with little colleges.

They're getting tired of that. I believe in a year or two they'll go back into the conference. They've already scheduled Minnesota for the last game this fall. This year's my last chance to show Yost I know football and I don't want to miss it."

"But they'd want a lot of money—five thousand or so. My father will stand for a good deal, but he won't stand for that."

"It's an investment. You'd get it back at the gate."

"You're crazy," said Hatfield. "Campusville's a small town. Michigan would draw fans from all over the State, but even so we wouldn't have three thousand people and no place to put them if we did."

"Play them in the city. Everybody could go up from here—it's near enough. Play in the league ball park and you'd draw fifteen thousand."

"Huh!" said Hatfield. "I believe we would. But what good would it do us to play Michigan and get knocked around and get beaten forty to nothing?"

"We wouldn't."

"Well!" said Hatfield with a grin. "We're pretty good, but——"

"Here's the lay," interrupted Casseltine eagerly. "If we played the eleven men that Michigan will start against Minnesota or Cornell, we probably would get beat about forty to nothing, though I'd back Gayda and Ellerbe to bust through with a touchdown somehow. But that Saturday Minnesota plays Chicago. Chicago's held the conference championship three years out of the last four and Minnesota will turn loose all it's got that day. That means that Yost and his big stars will be off scouting Minnesota and they'll play mostly second string against our little college."

"You're not so crazy as I thought," Hatfield admitted. "But even their second string will outweigh us twenty pounds——"

"Let 'em!" said Casseltine, smiling. "Look here. When a small college plays a big university it always gets licked. Why? Because the big fellows have more men to pick from and they get the beef. They don't need brains against the little colleges; beef is enough, or always has been. But that day is over. I think football has come to the turn of the tide."

"For years the rules committee has been trying to open the game up," he went on. "They've done this and that and lately they've allowed a forward pass, but everybody seems afraid to try it. I'm not. I've got a hunch things can be done with a forward pass. Bowyer graduates this year, but young Sandon's going to be as good a quarter back as Bowyer ever was. If he can learn to throw a football thirty yards, and you and Masters can learn to catch it, beef won't be worth a hoot!"

SO Hatfield scheduled his game with Michigan and then began to figure how to finance it. When Pertinax wrote in the *Echo de Paris*, ten years later, that Rupert Hatfield was the only man in the world who understood the reparations chapters of the Treaty of Versailles, Hatfield told me with a laugh that he owed that mastery to the intensive financial training he got as manager of our football team.

But if he had to finance it, the rest of us had to play it and Casseltine warned us before commencement that a team which was going to take on Michigan at the beginning of October must report in good condition. So I worked in a stone quarry that summer. All of us, in fact, went in for manual labor except Hatfield, whose industrious water sports at a lake resort could be counted on to keep him in shape, and Gayda, who had gone on the road selling soda fountains, thanks to a connection he had made while working in Hod Lynn's drug store.

Crab Casseltine objected to this, but Gayda's insistence, though good-humored, was adamant.

"I have worked with my hands for ten years," he said. "I am tough already. The rest of you can work with your hands all summer and, when you come back in the fall, any man who is tough enough to lick me can have my job as captain and I will sit on the side lines."

We all came back hard and keen, but nobody cared to try it.

So began my senior year—mine and Hatfield's and Beulah's and, to our surprise, Gayda's, too. He had been studying hard of nights during the summer to make up extra credits; by carrying extra work all year he could graduate with the rest of us. That was no particular feat; then, and even now, any person of moderate intelligence and industry can complete a four-year course in three at almost any college in the country. Still we didn't see why Gayda should want to do it and I asked him.

"I started late," he explained. "Next June I will be twenty-three."

"But you've got another year of football left; you'll be captain again; the team needs you."

"The team can get along without me. You have seen the new material this year; now that we have a reputation, we are getting players. After this I think the alumni will support the team as they do at other colleges. There are seven of us Fortville men left, but we all graduate this year. It is time; let the rest of them do the work now. Football is not so important, anyway."

"Not so important as what?" I demanded.

"I do not know what is important," Gayda admitted with a grin, "but maybe I will find out. And the chance to find out I owe to this college and to football. You do not know how thin and dull was that life I led in Hunkietown across the tracks, before I came to col-

lege. Our people had cut loose from the old country and have not yet found their place in the new country. But I have had a chance to lift up my head and look around, because I went to college; so now I will try to help my own people, try to help them make themselves at home in America. It was easy for me because I can play football, but now I must help the others."

"What do you mean to do?" I asked—a question that was bothering all of us in our last year of college.

"Well, first I must make some money. I have had good offers from three or four big universities to play football, but I will not play football anywhere but here. I made money on the road this summer selling soda fountains and I have an idea for an improved faucet that will make me more money. All that I owe to Mr. Hatfield; if he had not brought me here to play football I would still be swinging a pick in the mine. It is good college. I am glad I came."

"You've done more than anybody else to make it a good college."

"Well, if I have helped I am glad. Now I will make money and then I will go back to the old country and find out what kind of Slav I am. I have gone to meetings of Slavic societies this summer—Hungarian Slavs, Slovaks and Ruthenes and Croats—but they are not my people. So I will go back to Vereszvar and look the place over and then I will come back and try to help my people. I would like to show Count Radolffy he was wrong when he said 'Slavs are no good.'"

WE opened the season with Wisconsin, tried a dozen substitutes, made no use of the forward passes we had been diligently practicing, and still beat them thirty-six to nothing. But our triumph wasn't the big news of that Saturday. Belding had met Deland, a veteran team which had tied them the

year before, and had come through with an overwhelming victory.

We read about that game in the Sunday papers with deepening astonishment. In the Belding line-up Long Tom Railing was the only man we knew; not one of their players could be recognized even as a high-school star of last season. Where had they come from? Belding had a new coach, one Yingling, from somewhere in Pennsylvania; he might reasonably have brought two or three men with him, but not a whole team.

However, the Belding game was far away and the Michigan game was the next Saturday. We worked hard that week behind locked gates; Beulah held daily pep rallies, but not in the stands. It was absurd to suppose that Michigan could be scouting Freshwater, but we were practicing the forward pass and Casseltine took no chances.

It was a relief when the grind was over and the great day had come—at least for us veterans. The new men would have been terribly afraid of Michigan, but we of Fortville steadied them. On that memorable afternoon we had licked old Giant Despair forever; we didn't expect to beat Michigan, but we couldn't be scared by anybody.

We weren't scared, even, by the crowd that our game had assembled in the city ball park—nineteen thousand two hundred by turnstile count. In that mass our cheering section of a few hundred students, even reinforced by alumni, was almost lost; they were actually outnumbered by the compact block of Michigan graduates that faced them in the center of the opposite stands, limbering up stiff lungs with the old yells.

Our rooters, however, made a visible blot of blue ribbons that heartened us as we trotted out on the field. In an instant Beulah had the crowd roaring out the Long F and then swinging into

"Freshwater Blue," so there was no time for stage fright. The big boys might lick us, but they would know they had been playing football.

Yost wasn't there. As Casseltine had expected, he had gone to Chicago to scout the Minnesota team and had taken no less than six of his stars with him. What was left, of course, was a pretty tough aggregation; but we held them. They were no bigger than that Fortville team and they played more respectably.

They gained, but three times in the first half we held them inside the fifteen-yard line. The third time they abandoned the drive for a touchdown and tried for a field goal, but Gayda broke through the line and blocked it. The ball bounced off his chest and he ran on and scooped it up; if he hadn't stumbled, we'd have had a touchdown right there.

As it was, they overtook him and pulled him down with seventy yards to go. And that big fellow plowed right through their line for twenty-five yards on the first play. Again, and again—six times in succession he carried the ball—through center, off tackle, once around the end on a trick play when their whole team chased Wheeler; and in six plays he made five first downs.

They stiffened, too, as we drew near the goal; they had nothing to win in this game, but now they had something to lose. Nineteen thousand people were on their feet in the stands and all of them but the Michigan alumni were howling for a touchdown, but even Gayda had been exhausted by that terrific drive. He smashed at the line again and they stopped him.

THE half was almost over; so Sandon—wisely, it seemed—dropped back, and with our line holding like the Spartans at Thermopylæ, he kicked a field goal. Another change in the rules had cut the value of that, but the first half

ended Freshwater, three; Michigan, nothing.

Yost got that by telegraph between the halves in Chicago. What he telegraphed back I don't know, but when the Michigan team came out for the second half it was a different organization altogether. For ten minutes they played us off our feet. They swept through to a touchdown—that made it six to three—and were well on their way to another before we knew what was happening.

Then, in a pause while somebody was lacing up his shoe, Beulah stood up on the bleachers and called to us through her megaphone:

"Get into it, you Fortville gang! You've licked Michigan men before."

So we had; there had been three or four Michigan letter men on the Fortville team. Just as Gayda had brought Beulah back by making her live up to her pride, so now she brought us back. For our little college, with its tradition of victory still new and insecure, it would be enough, we had thought, to hold Michigan to two touchdowns, or three. But we Fortville veterans had learned on that awful day that well enough is not well enough. We braced ourselves grimly and got the ball on downs.

After that it was a futile seesaw till the last five minutes. Then, with only a three-point margin, Michigan began turning loose trick plays that were to have been saved for Minnesota and Penn. They went through us and around us, while nineteen thousand people roared for the winner. They drove us down to the thirty-yard line and then Red Rad Gayda pulled a guard back and went into the line.

Three times in succession he broke through and stopped those tricky runs before they had started. On the fourth down they tried another field goal that hit him flat in the face as he drove through the line and bounded toward

the kicker. It bounced upward, over us, and came down in Wheeler's arms. They downed him in his tracks, but we had the ball.

Gayda told us later that the smart impact of that ball on his face hurt him more than anything else in his years of football, but he came back. He came back and drove through the line. Behind Ellerbe, he tore through one tackle; behind Shettsline, he ripped through the other. He got the ball down to their thirty-yard line and then once more they rallied.

He had displayed the greatest one-man offensive, following the greatest one-man defensive, our State had ever seen; but even he was exhausted now. He hit the line twice and stopped in his tracks. He had done all he could; now it was the turn of Crab Casseltine—Crab Casseltine who stalked up and down the side lines chewing a cigar and nourishing his unquenchable hatred of Yost.

Casseltine waved a hand and Sandon dropped back! Wheeler knelt down before him to hold the ball for the kick, with Gayda at hand to stem the rush of the Michigan team. From our little cheering section came an angry snarl of disappointment; a field goal could only tie the score. Over the snarl we heard one bitter yell:

"Quitters!"

TWO years before, our college had burned bonfires, rung the chapel bell when we beat the State Normal; now they called us quitters for playing for a tie with Michigan. We laughed at that, four or five of us, even as the ball was snapped. Wheeler caught it and thumped it on the ground and gave it to Sandon; Sandon started around right end. They drove for him without opposition from Hatfield, who was dodging the enemy in a most unnatural fashion; but before they reached him Gayda had slipped behind him and

taken the ball and was tearing around left end.

An excited roar from the stands, instantly shut off; we had fooled them, but the field was broken and Gayda was running back, farther back than seemed needful or safe. Our cheering section groaned; this wasn't like Gayda. He ran back, clear of them all, and threw the ball far forward in a high, arching curve.

It was the first forward pass our State had ever seen—almost the first that Michigan team had ever seen. It soared over our heads and we stood and looked up at it as open-mouthed incredulous gazers used to stare in those days at the first airplanes. It soared and came down far toward the side line, far toward the goal—came down in the arms of Hatfield, who was waiting for it with not a man within fifteen yards of him. He crossed the goal line in a single sprint.

To-day, of course, a pass like that would be smothered at both ends, but this was back in 1909. The stands came out of their stupefied silence and broke into a roar; but Crab Casseltine was laughing, we were all laughing, with tears running down our cheeks.

Sandon was so excited that when Morrow passed the ball to him for the goal kick he booted it straight back at Morrow; but we didn't need the point. The whistle blew as we trotted back for the next kick-off; the final score was Freshwater, eight; Michigan, six.

Eheu fugaces labuntur anni—and all the rest of it. I could be elected president now, or czar, or caliph, without the thrill I got that night out of being one of the least distinguished members of that team. We stood under the goal posts and watched our student body as it snake-danced around the field with Beulah in the lead, singing "Freshwater Blue."

We went downtown to a hotel where Hatfield's father, cheered by the fat

profit on the season insured by that day's gate receipts, bought us the best dinner the State could serve. After that, some of us went to the office of the *Herald* and talked to the sporting editor and he told us solemnly that any All-Time, All-American team that didn't include Red Rad Gayda was doomed to hopeless defeat by a team consisting of ten one-legged cripples plus Red Rad Gayda.

Crab Casseltine grinned contentedly. "He's a great player, eh, Sam? We certainly made history to-day. Maybe Yost will admit, now, that I know something about football."

"You're not the only ones that made history," said the sporting editor, as he tossed an Associated Press bulletin across his desk.

We read it over Casseltine's shoulder:

Chicago, Illinois.—Final Minnesota 20, Chicago 6.

"That settles this year's conference championship," the sporting editor observed. "None of the rest of them can stop Minnesota."

"Michigan can stop Minnesota," said Casseltine, the loyal alumnus once more. "And if Michigan does that, Freshwater is champion of the West."

The sporting editor laughed. "Wait till you've finished your season, Crab. Belding's got a whale of a team this year. They beat State University to-day, fifteen to nothing."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CIRCUS TEAM.

CERTAINLY history was being made. A new era was beginning, the age of brains, not beef, when the small colleges had a chance. The rest of that season, in our State, was a race between Freshwater and Belding, two teams that swept through all opposition till they were to meet for the State title

in the last game of the year. We made that race under an awful handicap. For when we beat Michigan the whole country stared at us in respectful admiration; and unfortunately we stared in respectful admiration at ourselves.

Monday morning brought a letter from a Chicago clipping bureau to every man on the team; every man subscribed to its service and from that time on our main interest was comparison of what had been said about us in the papers of Chicago and St. Louis and Cincinnati and Detroit.

A traveling fraternity jeweler, a Phi Chi from the University of Pennsylvania, happened to be staying with us on his regular visit. He had been at Belding the week before and somebody asked him what he thought of the Belding team.

"Oh, they're good," he told us. "They ought to be good—this is about their tenth year of college football."

"What's that?" we all shouted. He looked uneasy, evidently wishing he had kept a bridle on his tongue; but a salesman has to cultivate the good will of his customers and he couldn't refuse to answer.

"Why," he explained, "we used to call them Yingling's Traveling Circus. Yingling came from a little college in eastern Pennsylvania that you fellows never heard of. The alumni raised some money and sent him out to get a team and he got a good one. They scored on Princeton, held Penn to a field goal, beat the Navy and simply ran over everything in their class. But we've got the three-year rule back there, so after three years they were through.

"Well, they'd learned they could win games and get paid for winning games," he went on, "so the whole outfit moved across the mountains and played three years more in western Pennsylvania. They cleaned up there too. Then they went off to the Southwest and won some sort of a championship there; and

now they're at Belding. Yingling drags them around like an impresario with a lot of opera stars. Good? Of course they're good! Football is their life work."

"So that's why——" somebody began.

"Now don't you say I said it," the salesman broke in hastily. "I'm neutral, in this State; I sell jewelry at Belding too. I won't be a witness before any intercollegiate association."

"Oh, what does it matter?" said Shettsline. "We can lick them anyway."

THIS seemed to be the general sentiment, but Hatfield protested.

"I don't like to see Belding get away with it. We ought to do something about——"

"I think not," said Gayda. "I am not so sure we can lick them anyway, for there is no doubt they are good. But they stand between us and the State championship so we have got to lick them. Suppose we get the intercollegiate association to disqualify them all? We would play Long Tom Railing and the Belding scrubs and we would beat them fifty to nothing. But would that give us the State championship? It is this team, not the Belding scrubs, that licked the university; it is not Belding we must beat, but this team. We have got to win the championship on the field, not in a committee room. I bet you Casseltine will say so too."

Casseltine did, so we buried our guilty secret and set to work, as hard as our interest in clippings would let us. Then, on Wednesday, came the news that State University had called a special meeting of the intercollegiate association and demanded the disqualification of all the Belding regulars but Long Tom Railing.

We were furious. Gayda had converted us to the view that it was not

Belding College, but this particular team that had to be beaten as a point of honor. But, to our horror, the college couldn't see that at all. It hoped the ringers would all be disqualified.

The college saw more glory in running up a big score on the scrubs than in a hard-won victory over the Traveling Circus; but above all, we perceived with frenzied rage, our college was afraid of the circus. It wasn't sure that we who had beaten Michigan could beat Belding; we had converted the whole country to belief in our merit and now we had to convert our own college.

This, at last, drove us to work.

Crab Casseltine, who represented us in the intercollegiate association, announced promptly that he would support Belding against all the rest of the State, against all the rest of the college, even. But on Thursday night the college president had a long talk with Casseltine and then called the team into his office and told us that he had ordered Casseltine to support the protest.

"Why is that?" demanded Hatfield, who by common consent was the spokesman of us all in this matter of high diplomacy.

"Well," said our president, who was a man of understanding whenever his job permitted, "I can see how you fellows feel. It is a point of honor with you to beat this team. But I want to beat Belding. You know that football is the best advertisement for a college. There are men in this State who will leave us money if we win and will leave Belding money if they win. There are students whose choice of a college will be determined by the outcome of this game.

"They don't care," he went on, "whether you beat this gang of mercenaries wearing Belding jerseys. Your honor means nothing to them. But if we win an overwhelming victory in a fair fight between Freshwater students

and Belding students, it does mean something. As you gentlemen were once told, what counts is the final score. That is why I have instructed Casseltine to support the protests."

"Instructed him?" Hatfield broke in. "How can you give him orders? This college has never given a nickel for athletics. The team hires the coach. He speaks for us, for the men who have carried the name of this college to millions of people who never heard of it till we beat Michigan. He speaks for me, if you come down to that; I hire him and I pay him."

"That's a bad system," said our president, "and it's about over. The board of trustees has decided to take over the financial support and the management of athletics after this term. Of course we'll keep Casseltine——"

"Yes," Hatfield interrupted, "now that we win games and make money, the college takes it over. When football was a shame and a disgrace we had to pay for it and take the blame." He pointed a thrusting finger at the president of our college. "You can't do it! Next term if you like, but not this term. Casseltine works for us, for the men that saved this college at Fortville. Your enrollment's almost doubled in the last two years; you've had half a dozen unexpected legacies—all because we won that game and have kept on winning. We pulled this college off the rocks and got no thanks for it and now we're going to play this game for our own satisfaction and you can't stop us!"

"Perhaps I can't stop you," our president conceded, "but I can expel you from college, Mr. Hatfield, for insolence and insubordination—and if you say another word I will expel you, even if your father is chairman of the board of trustees. I see how you fellows feel about it, but you see how I feel about it; and it's the way I feel about it that counts."

So Crab Casseltine, with a wry face, went up to the intercollegiate association meeting to support the protest. That must have been a great fight. James F. Bowman, chairman of the board of trustees of Belding College—James F. Bowman, who owned a couple of railroads, and in those unregenerate days pretty nearly owned the State government too—stood up against them all and saw every one of his regulars disqualified but Long Tom Railing. State University had set detectives on their trail and had all the evidence. They were all disqualified—and Crab Casseltine's enforced change of front convinced Bowman that we were behind it.

"We'll play you!" he yelled at Casseltine, when the meeting broke up. "These other teams at least took their lickings before they squawked. Bring up your team to-morrow and we'll play you."

THERE was no glory in that, we reflected, but we had to play out the schedule. So we went up to Belding the next day and the whole college went with us, thirsting for gore. The game had drawn a big crowd, for every football fan in the State wanted to see the last appearance of those famous heroes, Long Tom Railing and Red Rad Gayda. Besides, there was a mysterious rumor that the circus was going to play after all. We didn't see how that could be, till we got out of our bus at the grounds, just before the game, and a flock of hard-looking persons came up and thrust papers at us. We read them.

They were injunctions. Yes, injunctions that James F. Bowman had got from a competent court that morning. The judge who granted them had played football at Belding fifteen years before and perhaps that influenced his action; but at any rate he had issued orders with the whole power of the State behind them, orders on the president of our college and Crab Casseltine and on

every man of us individually, forbidding us to refuse to play football against a team coached by one Ezra Yingling and consisting of the following persons, to wit.

Of course these were only temporary injunctions; we had to appear in court Monday morning to show cause why they shouldn't be made permanent, but we could show cause enough. Only, we couldn't show it until Monday morning. This was Saturday afternoon.

As we read them the members of the circus were walking out to the field, in uniform, grinning at us as they passed. Somebody jeered; we all leaped forward with a chorus of fierce snarls—but Gayda held us back.

"Well, this is only what we wanted. Now we can go out and lick them."

CHAPTER XVII.

HIS ONLY BLUNDER.

IN that spirit we went out to the last game of the season, for us Fortville veterans the last game of our lives; and in that spirit we played through the first half. These were big bruisers, like the Fortville team—even our heavy line was outweighed twenty pounds to the man—and like Fortville they had no inhibitions. But they were old, too old to train hard; we were in perfect form and we were angry. We ripped them up for three touchdowns and the score at the end of the first half was Freshwater, seventeen; Belding, nothing.

We gathered under one of the goals between the halves—the Belding team under the other—and for the first time in history Crab Casseltine had no harsh words for us.

"Keep it up, guys, keep it up. They're tired out already; keep at them and you might make it fifty to nothing after all. Only look out for forward passes in this half."

"They have got no forward passes, I think," said Gayda. "If they had,

they would have used them already. This team is old. It started playing college football about 1899. They and their coach learned the game when it was all mass play and they are too old to learn it over again."

"Look!" said Tom Ellerbe.

A tall gray-mustached man was striding across the field to the huddled mass of the Belding team.

"That's Bowman," Ellerbe went on, "ain't it? I'll bet he gives them an earful."

"I hope they give him one," said Casseltine. "We owe a lot to James F. Bowman. Yingling's team hasn't lost a game in seven years and it's about ready to die of old age. They'll probably never play again and in their last game they're getting the showing up of their lives. If Bowman hadn't got his injunction, they'd still have their record and our State championship would always be under a cloud. I'd give a lot to hear what he's telling them and what they're telling him."

A boy in knickerbockers got up from behind him and slipped away down the field behind the bleachers. It was Tom Ellerbe's kid brother, one of those bright twelve year olds who see everything and hear everything and know everything. If I ever run a detective bureau, I'll want a few boys like that on my staff. He went away and five minutes later he came back as James F. Bowman slowly walked across the field, back to the bleachers.

"I heard him," the boy announced excitedly. "I sneaked up the other side of the fence and listened through a knot hole."

"Yes?" said Casseltine. "Take your time, kid, and tell us about it."

"He says to 'em, this old guy, that he's paid their expenses liberally all season, but they want to remember they ain't got their money yet. And if they don't win this game, they won't get it. One of them says, 'What about the con-

tract? It says in that contract you got to pay us two hundred dollars apiece and our expenses back to Philadelphia; it don't say we got to win all our games, but it says you got to pay us.' And the old guy laughs kind of mean and says: 'Try and get it. You got to fight that contract out in the courts of this State and they'll void it as bein' contrary to public policy,' he says. 'I got the courts of this State sewed up,' he says. 'So you win this game or else you walk back to Philadelphia.'"

Casseltine whistled.

"Well, I guess they'll have to walk—eh, gang?"

"But they will be better this half," said Gayda. "They will come back."

And they did. Oh, how they came back! These men were old, as football players go, old and battered, poorly trained and growing fat. They had played as hard as they could in the first half—as hard as they could, then. But faced with the prospect of walking back to Philadelphia, they gave more because they had more to give. That threat called out their reserves of resolution, broke up the fountains of the great deep.

They were professionals, certainly—money players. They came back because they had to and they outplayed us. We were fired by every praiseworthy ambition possible to amateurs—personal pride, collective pride, the esprit de corps of our famous company, the inspiring presence of the girls we admired, the thirst for vengeance on the traditional enemy, the honor of our college and the interest of our college. We had all that and still they outplayed us; for they were playing for their meat.

They made a touchdown in six plays from the kick-off; Railing kicked the goal and they were off again, more slowly this time, but just as sure. They had no forward passes and few end runs, but they smashed steadily through

our famous line, Shettsline and Ellerbe stood firm as ever, but the rest of us fell where we stood like the Old Guard at Waterloo. They smashed through the line and Gayda stopped them; always he stopped them, but always they had gained.

Presently they had another touchdown and goal; the score was seventeen to twelve. Through the frantic howling of the Belding stands, the gallant but uneasy cheering of our own, the same thought came to us all at once—that one goal from touchdown that Sandon had missed in the first half. Long Tom Railing had never missed a goal after touchdown in his life. If they made another touchdown, he would kick the goal and we would be licked, eighteen to seventeen.

THE stands were silent as we lined up for the kick-off. Beulah turned back on the cheering section and leaned over the wire fence around the field. Again came the clear voice that roused us at Fortville; but this time it was agonized and reproachful.

"What's the matter? Why can't you stop them?"

We all heard her and we all jumped as if our own consciences had spoken. Hatfield was nearest her and he answered, perhaps unconsciously.

"I don't know," he groaned. "I know we're a better team."

"But they don't know it," said Beulah. "Better show them your clip-pings."

Every man heard that and so did the crowd in the stands. The roar of laughter from the Belding bleachers whipped us up; we held them; they held us; punts were exchanged— Then, as somebody took time out and we grasped at a moment's breathing space, James F. Bowman stood up in the bleachers and bellowed through a megaphone, in a great voice that carried all over the field:

"Final score at Minneapolis—Michigan, fifteen; Minnesota, six."

The stands buzzed, then hummed, then roared. Michigan had beaten the conference champions; we had beaten Michigan. The Western championship was being fought out here, between two little colleges that a year before had never been heard of outside the State. And that was the sole blunder of James F. Bowman. The championship meant little to the mercenaries, playing their hardest already, playing for their meat. But it meant something to us; we held them; Railing punted again. So at last the hope of Belding came to rest once more on Long Tom Railing and his toe.

We seesawed up and down, but presently Long Tom got away with a forty-yard drop kick that made it seventeen to fifteen. One more of those would beat us. We struggled on, playing against time, till Sandon, in a hurry, sent a punt almost straight up. They had the ball with forty-five yards to go and one minute to play.

Long Tom might have kicked the goal from there, but the angle was bad and they played for position.

They drove at Ellerbe and he stopped them. They drove at center and Gayda stopped them. Then they drove at me. The man opposite had been outplaying me all day, but this time he took no chances; he swung his fist to the point of my jaw.

I went down and they went over me and, when I came to, I was being carried off the field with a broken leg. But I made them set me down on the side line to see that last play, for though they had run over me, Gayda had stopped them after a three-yard gain. It was now or never; forty yards from the goal.

Gayda took my place in line as Long Tom backed off for that final kick. The ball went back and Gayda went forward. The guard had swung for his jaw too, but he caught the blow on his

elbow, knocked his man down, took two long steps forward and leaped. Long Tom Railing's last kick struck Gayda's upflung hands and bounded off toward the side lines.

That was enough; that saved us; but it wasn't enough for Gayda. Everybody ran for the ball, but he outstripped them all, picked it up, dodged Railing's diving tackle and started for the goal. The exhausted mercenaries couldn't follow him; he ran the last fifty yards without pursuit. The final score: Freshwater, twenty-three; Belding, fifteen.

So we who had fought at Fortville finished our career as we had begun it on that chill gray Thanksgiving, two years before, by beating a famous company of mercenaries. We had beaten Michigan in one of Michigan's best years; we had written a glorious chapter in amateur sport; but the real measure of our achievement was the beating of two great teams of professionals, money players, at their own game. We had proved ourselves by the unanswerable argument of the final score.

Not that the argument answered every question, as we presently discovered when we learned that up at Ann Arbor they were claiming the Western championship anyway, on the ground that their game with us was only a practice game that didn't count. The question was much debated that winter, but I am afraid the majority vote favored Michigan.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE HARDEST GAME.

OF the fifty-odd men and women in our class of 1910 I think Gayda was perhaps the only one who wasn't sorry to get out. He had set his own objective for the future and was grimly concentrated on it; he had got all he wanted out of college and it was time to get on to the next thing.

But the rest of us were not so single-

minded. For most of us, college had been our life ever since we had felt our faint beginning of adult thought and emotion; we were as helpless as orphans whose asylum has burned over their heads. Hatfield, with years of Europe ahead of him, might have been expected to be happy; but he wasn't. He wanted to marry Beulah and take her with him; and though Beulah wanted to see Europe, though she must have been human enough to want Hatfield's money, she didn't want him.

This, it now appeared, was final; and it embittered him. Other things had embittered him too. I knew him rather better than any one else and he confided in me that he had always wanted to be football captain. He would have made a good one, but he could never have got anybody's vote but mine; and not even mine after Gayda had joined us. He wanted, too, to be president of the senior class. Everybody admitted that he was the ablest man in it, that he would go farther than any of the rest of us; but he was so unpopular that not a vote was cast for him. Gayda walked away with that too.

In his bitterness at losing Beulah, Hatfield's conviction settled on her friendship with Gayda—which, after all, was no closer than her friendship with me, or with Hatfield himself for that matter—as the reason why she wouldn't have him. There was never anything sentimental between her and Gayda, but Hatfield couldn't admit that she simply didn't want him; he had to believe that she wanted somebody else.

Gayda knew how Hatfield felt, but he didn't know him well enough to get him out of the idea; and this tension between them was the one thing that reconciled me, and some of the rest of us, to the ending of the college friendships that had made up our lives.

We graduated and dispersed, and I felt that life was over, that existence was meaningless without the goodly

comrades who had made up my world for the last four years. But by the time I saw Gayda again, more than two years later—in the autumn of 1912—I had had so many new things to think about that college seemed ten times as remote, then, as it does now.

CHANCE had taken me to New York; chance had got me a job as reporter on the *Morning Record*; and after a year of that I was sent abroad as assistant to the Paris correspondent. Here I got interested in the things that interested Paris in those days—Morocco and the Bagdad Railway and the growing German army and the danger of war.

I read about Beulah now and then—she was making suffrage speeches in New York, with riot squads of police attending her wherever she went, for suffrage was a riotous business in those days. But even that ceased when Beulah got married to a man none of us knew. The old days in college passed out of my mind till one afternoon Red Rad Gayda walked into our office.

"Well, where did you come from?" I demanded.

"From Hungary. From Vereszvar. Yes, I got back at last. It is quite a town now."

"And did you find out what kind of Slav you are?"

"I am Carpatho-Slovene," he said proudly, and then grinned. "That is a trade-mark I am trying to popularize. I invented and patented that name, I guess, just as last year I patented the Gayda Neverdrip Faucet for soda fountains. My people call themselves just Sloveni—Slavs—but they are not the same as Slovenes or Slovaks or any other Slavs. So, since they live in the Carpathian Mountains, I told them they were Carpatho-Slovenes and not to forget it. I think there will be hell to pay in Austria-Hungary before long and names will count."

"Well, will they stand for being named by a man from America?"

"Oh, they are a very simple people. The Magyars run that country and they have the people bluffed. They must vote as Magyar politicians tell them; they cannot learn their own language at school, cannot hold office unless they speak Magyar and work for Magyars and against the Slavs. It is not right.

"Magyars treat us as if we were dogs. We must have our rights and we can get them only if we are a people, a self-conscious people. They do not all see that back home," he added, "but we in America see it. Yes, there are many thousands of us in America. We have not been organized, but we are going to be organized to fight for our rights. From now on we are an independent people—the Carpatho-Slovene people."

"Fine!" I said. "Now that you've got it, what are you going to do with it?"

"Oh, all the Slavs in Austria and Hungary are organizing. In a few years we will make the Germans and Magyars treat us fairly."

My memory leaped back to an afternoon in the college gymnasium.

"You said once the Russians would free all the Slavs," I reminded him.

"Yes, that was what we were taught, but I do not think so. I have been in Russia too and I do not think they are much good. They only talk. No, we Slavs of Austria-Hungary must do it for ourselves."

"A revolution?"

"I don't think it will come to that—not a fighting revolution, anyway. Organization will do it. There is a man named Masaryk—a professor. I met him in Prague. He is best man the Slavs have got. He is best man I ever met." He paused. "Yes, by gosh, he is better man than Crab Caseltine. I think he can get us our rights if we organize."

"We?" I said. "But you're an American."

"Yes, and just because we in America have more money and more education and more freedom, we must help the people back home. I am going back to America to organize a Carpatho-Slovene National Alliance. I am making a lot of money now out of the Gayda Never-drip Faucet and I will spend it for our people."

"In short," I said, "you have to organize them and pay all the expenses, just the way Dad Coulter did for the football team?"

"Just about. I will even have to make out their schedule for them; they know what they want, but they don't know how to get it. They grumble about the rent collector and the forester and the gendarme and the money lender, but they don't know how to get what they want. I will show them."

"You're getting in pretty deep," I suggested. "This is high politics. What does the count think about your starting this movement under his nose?"

"Oh, he is in Paris. He is always in Paris. The Magyar police did not like it, but they were afraid to touch an American citizen. I know what my people want. They want to live their own way and they must be free to do that. My father taught me the Russians would do it—that was the old Pan-Slav idea. But I know we must do it ourselves and we who live in America must take the lead. America is the land of freedom and opportunity and what the hell is the use of having it unless you can help the people in the old country?"

"These Magyars are likely to string you up if they catch you," I told him, "or at any rate set you pounding rock for ten years. They won't like it."

"That makes no difference," he said grimly. "It has got to be done and for us Carpatho-Slovenes there seems to be nobody but me to do it."

I KNEW Gayda well enough to know that there was no arguing with him, when he felt like that.

So he went on his way—back to Cleveland, where he had settled—and though he wrote to me occasionally, at longer and longer intervals, it was four years before I saw him again—four years after this meeting and two years after his last letter, in the spring of 1916.

In that interval, of course, a great many other things had happened. In 1913 I had been called back to the New York office to edit the foreign cable news. When the outbreak of the war suddenly multiplied the volume of foreign cables to twenty times what we had before, I was made war editor, which meant that I supervised a dozen men who read the foreign cables. I worked from six in the evening to four in the morning.

Beulah's unhappy marriage had ended in a divorce and she had gone abroad as feature writer for a news syndicate—a war correspondent. To me as a newspaper man that was a joke; Beulah didn't know what the war was about any more than she had known, in the old days, the science of football. But she always knew how to get herself over, and she was still doing that.

As for Hatfield, when the war broke out he had pulled wires and got himself transferred to the Paris embassy. He wrote to me occasionally, but I had heard no more from Gayda and concluded that the war and the defeat of the Russians had cooked the Carpatho-Slovene national movement.

Then, one evening, an office boy whispered in my ear that Mr. Gayda was outside and would like to see me. I took off my eye shade and started for the door, but he was already inside and limping toward me, tall and gaunt and shrunken.

"Why, Red, what's the matter? Did a taxi hit you?"

"No," he grunted, sitting down heavily, "but some machine-gun bullets hit me and a couple of shell fragments. I have been in the Foreign Legion."

"Why, what awful luck——" I began, when he cut me off.

"I have had good luck. People who enlisted when I did are mostly dead. The rest of them are in the trenches and will soon be dead. But I am disabled and discharged and still alive. That is good luck, in these days."

I LOOKED at him with uneasy concern. He had been in "It," this war that most Americans, in those days, read about with the conviction that they would never see it, as we Middle Westerners used to read about the Harvard-Yale football games.

"It's pretty bad?" I ventured.

"It is ten thousand times harder than that Fortville game. I didn't mind it so much, for there it was and I couldn't help it; but it is hard on nervous people."

"Who's going to win?"

"Oh, I do not know. I do not know. But somebody will win. Mr. Hatfield thinks not; I saw him in Paris after I was discharged. He thinks they will fight to a standstill and then diplomats will come in and settle it. But that is because he is diplomat. I have been in trenches and I know if diplomat gave away what I got shot up for, I would hunt him up and kill him. I bet you there are plenty of Germans who feel that way too.

"No, this war must be fought out; maybe nobody will win it, but somebody is sure to lose it," he went on. "What counts is the final score. If you lose, it makes no difference how brave you were. You will have to pay for the war and your children and grandchildren will still be paying. It is not just for sport and exercise, this war. They mean it."

"I suppose your Carpatho-Slovene

national movement has gone on the rocks?" I suggested.

"I let it go on the rocks when I got excited and enlisted in 1914, but I am going to salvage it now."

"Why, do you Slavs still think——"

"I do not know if Allies will win the war," he interrupted, "nor if they will do anything for us if they should win. But I tell you we are going to get what we want. Masaryk has escaped to London. I met him there. He is organizing the Czechs. Other people are organizing the other Slavs. So I will start again to organize the Carpatho-Slovenes. I am still making lots of money out of my faucet; soda-fountain business is good, now that so many States are going dry. I do not have to work for a living so I can give all my time to my people.

"For I tell you, John McCoy," he continued, "we must get something out of this war. It is a mean war and it must not be fought for nothing. Everybody is being brave, but it is not enough to be brave. We learned at Fortville that well enough is not enough, you must get something out of it. We Carpatho-Slovenes are a new nation, but I think before this war is over you will see our name on the score card."

"Let me put it there," I suggested.

"How?"

"Why, anybody who has fought in the Foreign Legion is good for a column interview these days and if you'll let me ring in the name of the Carpatho-Slovenes, the publicity will do you no harm."

"By gosh, that is so! I have got to popularize my trade-mark. Well, you come and have lunch with me to-morrow and you can interview me all you like."

So a couple of days later our paper carried an interview with Radomir Gayda, leader of the Carpatho-Slovene national movement. Within a week after that I had calls from Slavs of

about twenty varieties who wanted equal publicity for their own national movements. I couldn't promise it, but I did what I could, and so before I knew it I had become a Slavophile, the mouthpiece for every oppressed nationality that was struggling for liberation.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHAT THEY ALL SAY.

WHEN the Germans wanted to talk peace at the end of 1916, the Allied reply, you may remember, declared that the Allies were fighting for the freedom of all the oppressed Slavs. It was the first time anybody had said so and I expected Gayda to be quite cheerful when I next saw him. But he wasn't.

The Germans didn't make peace and Wilson didn't make peace, even though he had the personal assistance of Hatfield, who had been called back to a desk in the state department; and then, presently, America, too, was in the war.

I wasn't there. I was still on the desk, wearing a green eye shade and overseeing my copy readers. What had been done to me in that last Belding game had made me look impossible even to a draft board. So I stayed on the desk and did what I could to help my Slavs, who were organizing and scheming and starting mutinies in the Austrian army and doing all they could to get on the score card and persuade the great powers that it was their war too. I wrote a good deal about them in my spare moments and at the end of 1917 Hatfield came up from Washington to see me.

"Let your Slavs rest a while," he advised. "You're fooling with dynamite, Mac. The terms of peace are the business of governments. Why do you want to get everybody excited about these oppressed nationalities?"

"Don't go getting diplomatic with

me," I told him. "What are you driving at?"

"If the president favors me with his confidence," he said stiffly, "you can hardly expect me to betray it. But if we're going to get Austria out of the war——"

"You can't," I interrupted, and told him why at considerable length.

"You talk like Gayda," said Hatfield wearily.

"Why not? I think he's right. We haven't won this war unless the Slavs get what they want——"

"So Gayda says. Oh, yes, he's been in Washington, talking to me and anybody else he can get hold of. And I tell you, Mac, it makes me sore. You know how bitter I used to be at Gayda——on account of Beulah. That's worn off. I don't think he ever did want her and I'm not sure she ever wanted him.

"Anyway," he went on, "she married somebody else and divorced him and I don't suppose she's seen Red for years; so that's over. I honestly don't believe I hold that old grudge against him any more. But just the same I hold a grudge, not so much against him as against the rest of you that took him into the fraternity. He isn't one of us. He's a foreigner, a hyphenate."

"All right," I said. "If you're going to read him out of the country, you'll have to read me out, too. This is a big country, Hatfield, and there are a lot of Americans of all sorts. You may not know it, but I know that whatever Americanism is—and I won't argue with you about definitions—it's bitten into Gayda about as deep as anything can bite into anybody. It's true that he was boosting his Carpatho-Slovenes before America got into the war; but it's equally true that we can't win unless we break up Austria and free the Slavs. And we don't want to play for a tie."

"Maybe not," he agreed with a saturnine smile. "But if we don't stop the

war now there's going to be fighting, in the spring, that will make everything that's gone before it look like a Sunday-school picnic. Fight it out to the bitter end—don't play for a tie—that sounds well! But you and I aren't the ones to say it.

"If the war isn't stopped now, a lot of men are going to be killed—but not you and I. It's hardly our business to sit back here in New York and Washington and tell the men in the trenches that Ludendorff can't intimidate us. To hell with integral victory! Let's take what we can get."

THERE was something in that, and I had been getting this argument in the letters that came to me occasionally from Beulah. She was in Paris now—when America got into the war she had thrown up a job at two hundred a week to scrub floors for the Red Cross—and she saw the war chiefly as something that killed off men she liked, or men other women liked.

So it seemed to me, till Gayda was next in New York. I told him what Hatfield had said and showed him Beulah's letters and his big red moon face took on the angry glow that I remembered.

"There is something in that," he admitted. "There is something in everything. But just the same they are wrong. Mr. Hatfield is not a Slavophile. I think he is like Count Radolffy—he thinks no Slav can be a gentleman, except Paderewski and a few more Poles. And he does not like me. He never did. Maybe his reason for not liking me was foolish, but it is in him and we cannot get it out. Besides, he is diplomat; he would think that way. Wilson thinks that way and he must think as Wilson thinks; if Wilson changes his mind, Mr. Hatfield will change his mind too.

"But I am ashamed of Beulah," he continued. "I know that we must fight

to a finish and I would say that just as quick if I were going back to the trenches to-morrow."

I wouldn't have believed that, from most men; but I knew it was true when Gayda said it.

"They think we Slavs are a nuisance," he went on. "The generals say our propaganda is unfair—that you must beat the enemy on the field, not persuade his army to quit fighting. But that is stupid, as stupid as we were in that last Belding game when we didn't want to disqualify the ringers. Old 'doc' was right that night and I was wrong; I see that now. I wanted to beat that hired team for honor, but he wanted to beat Belding any way he could; and he was right. So it is in this war. Even if you do not like Slavs, you have got to win any way you can and we Slavs can help.

"I am American citizen; I have played football; I belong here, but I tell you if it came to that I would go back to the old country, lame as I am, and fight too. And I would do it not only as a Slav, but as an American. Well enough is not well enough. What counts is the final score. I learned that from Beulah and now, by gosh, I must teach it back to her! I am ashamed of her. I will write her a letter and remind her, just as I reminded her when she was crazy about Joe Ring, that strong people have no right to break."

"That old college stuff sticks in your mind, doesn't it?" I chuckled.

"And why not? I would still be swinging a pick in the mine if I had not gone to college and played football, unless maybe by now I would be in some training camp with a draft division. That game at Fortville was where everything began. All over the country I have met people who know about Freshwater College; but if we had not won that game I bet they would have closed the place up before now.

"That game was hard, but we hung

on and we won it. The weak will always quit when it is too hard, but the strong men do not quit. And this war will be won not by the side with the most men, but by the side with the most strong men. They will see that in Washington pretty soon."

In course of time they did see it in Washington, especially after Masaryk came and converted Wilson to the cause of the Slavs. Gayda had been right; when Wilson was converted Hatfield was converted too. So by the middle of the summer of 1918 the oppressed nationalities were in the line-up; it was by no means certain that the Allies would win the war, but if they did, the Slavs would win it too.

It used to worry me, in those days, that he gave so much of his time and energy to the combined cause of all the Slavs and so little to his own people. But when I finally spoke to him about it, I saw that he had some deep-seated reason.

"Mac, we are a small nation, tucked away in a corner of the Carpathian Mountains, between the Slovaks and the Magyars and the Ruthenes and the Rumanians. Any one of them could swallow us up. And now that it looks as if we are going to win the war, all the new nations are quarreling with each other about frontiers. I cannot afford that; my nation is too small. My only chance is to stay on the good side of everybody."

THEN all at once the war was over and everybody was getting ready for the peace conference. Wilson was going; Lansing was going; Hatfield was going, in charge of a whole regiment of savants and experts he had assembled to serve up information about Europe whenever the peace conference needed it.

Beulah was in Paris already—the Red Cross had promoted her from scrubbing floors to teaching public

health to any one who might seem to require it, and I thought, for a while, we were going to have a little class reunion. But, when I asked the managing editor of the *Record*, it appeared that I couldn't go; I was needed on the desk.

I was still sore about that when Gayda came in to see me, a few nights after the armistice—Red Rad Gayda, whose people had justified him at last. For two days earlier a brief cable from Rome had told of another revolution in central Europe—they came thick and fast in those days—and the proclamation of the Carpatho-Slovene Republic at Vereszvar. Gayda had triumphed, and when I remembered how hopeless his task had looked for years, and how grimly he had stuck to it, I didn't wonder that the man looked so terribly tired.

"Well," I said, "it's all over at last."

"I think this is only the end of the first half," he said moodily. "The big war is over, yes; that is so much to the good. But now we have got to go to work on what comes next."

"What comes next for you is a long rest. You're worn out."

"I am pretty tired," he admitted. "I would like to go back home to Cleveland and take things easy and maybe run down for a visit to Campusville this winter. But I can't. I am sailing tomorrow."

"Going to the peace conference?"

"Going back to the old country—to Vereszvar."

"What are you doing that for? They've had their revolution. Your work is done."

"It is only half done. I am going over as commissioner of the Carpatho-Slovene National Council of America, to set them on their feet."

"What do they need? Food?"

"Oh, they need everything. Magyars had always run that country. Now they have had a revolution, a very

peaceful revolution. Nobody was killed. But Magyars were afraid to stay; Jews who helped Magyars would not stay; Slavs who had been Magyarized and helped Magyars would not stay. They all got afraid and ran off to Budapest. That means that all educated men, all experienced men who know how to keep things going, have left the country. Our people cannot run themselves because Magyars never let them. I must go over and show them how. Also I must get food and coal and munitions——”

“What do you need munitions for?”

“Magyars are good fighters. If things go badly in the new countries, maybe they will try to come back. Also we have oil fields near Vereszvar and everybody wants oil fields. Czechoslovaks would like to have my country and Ruthenes would like to have it; and if Poles gobble up Ruthenes, they will want it too. Also the Rumanians, and the Magyars—— Yes I think we will need munitions.

“Peace conference has not met yet. It is a long way from Vereszvar, anyhow. Whoever has my country when peace conference gets around to it will keep it, I think, unless somebody runs him out. So I will get there first and they will not run me out.”

“You’ve done enough for that people, Red. You’ve made them and nursed——”

“Yes, I have made them. Before I was there in 1912 they always grumbled, grumbled in the cafés, but they did nothing because they didn’t know how. I showed them how. I organized them; I planned their revolution; I paid for it with my own money that I slipped in through Switzerland. I have made this people and I can’t run out on it now.”

“Well, I wish you luck!” I told him. “If you see Beulah on your way through Paris, give her my best.”

“We have all given her our best,

always. That is what she is there for, maybe, to bring it out. I got her out of that slump of defeatism last winter and her letters have cheered me up since when I was tired and wanted to quit. We have always played our best when she was in the bleachers. I wish I could take her with me to Vereszvar.”

CHAPTER XX.

AT THE PEACE CONFERENCE.

I MIGHT have thought that meant that Gayda was in love with Beulah, if I too hadn’t played at Fortville. Most of us had been in love with Beulah at one time or another; with Hatfield it was chronic, till her good-humored rejections of his insistent proposals had finally settled him into confirmed bachelorhood.

I was too busy to worry about the private affairs of my friends that winter, however, what with editing pages and pages of news about the peace conference. At last, in March, when I had given up hope and even desire of seeing the thing for myself, I was suddenly sent over after all. Two members of the *Record’s* staff that was covering the peace conference had suddenly taken sick and the rest of them needed help.

Yet if there were devils, there were also angels, and but a little lower than the angels was Rupert Hatfield, occupying a whole suite in the Crillon and buzzing about in a limousine as imposing as Wilson’s. Every evening he dined out with prime ministers; every midday he gave a lunch for ambassadors and oil magnates and men who would be kings. “Lucifer, Star of the Morning,” the newspaper men called him; it was said that journalists from the remoter parts of the world, when they mentioned him in their dispatches, spelled his name “Thatdamhatfield” because that was the way they always heard it pronounced.

When at last he had time to see me, I found he wasn't happy. Whenever the supreme council took up a new problem, Hatfield was summoned to the session, with a battalion of his experts and a truckload of information about the topic at issue; and the chief business of that session was the kicking of him, and them, and it, downstairs. Clémenceau hated him; Lloyd George hated him; Orlando hated him; and even Wilson doubted his loyalty to Wilsonian ideals.

"You've gotten farther than anybody else from our crowd in college," I reminded him. "And you got pretty far out there, for that matter. You did more to make that great football team than anybody else but Casseltine and Gayda."

"Yes, but who cared? I was the most unpopular man in college, without any exception, for four straight years. And it's the same thing that upsets me here. This temper of mine—I can't keep my patience in the presence of bores and fools, especially bores and fools in high place. I tell them the truth and then the damage is done. Beulah could have cured me of that, I think, if she'd married me. But that's ancient history. All the same, I'd like to put just one thing over——"

"What?" I asked.

"Anything," he answered sourly. "I've always been threatening to do something big, but I never could quite get there. I worked hard to try to make peace a year ago last winter. I don't like these new nations; I didn't like the idea of smashing up Europe and making it over again; and now that the new nations are beginning to quarrel with each other, I begin to think I was right. I conducted a lot of secret negotiations that you people never heard of; more than once I thought we had Austria out of the war. But I lost, as usual—and Gayda won as usual."

"Are you still nursing that old grievance?" I demanded.

"Oh, not much—I know it's foolish to worry about it at all. But he always wins, and I always lose—— If I could only put over one job—one piece of work that would stand as my contribution to the universe to pay for the food I've eaten and the air I've breathed——"

CASTING about for some way to get him out of this temper, I thought of Beulah and asked him if she were still in Paris.

"I have an old address of hers," I added, "but I've been too busy to look her up."

"Oh, she's gone, anyway. Gone off to Prague, to teach the Czecho-Slovaks public health. I understand there were two universities in Prague with pretty good medical faculties before Beulah got there, and yet the joke of it is that she may teach them something about public health at that. She doesn't know much, but she knows how to get it over. She always did."

"How is she?"

"Oh, as usual—lively and beautiful and dissatisfied. I saw a good deal of her before she left. She's bored, now that the war's over; she wants to go out where anything might happen at any moment. She asked for this job in Prague. Damn it, she worries me. I wish she'd marry some one and settle down."

"She did, once," I reminded him.

"Anybody's entitled to one unsuccessful marriage, these days. I wish she'd try it again. I know she won't marry me, but she ought to marry somebody like me—somebody who can give her the sort of career where her talents would be useful. A prime minister, for example."

"Maybe she doesn't know any prime ministers," I suggested.

"Maybe not. But——" He grinned

with sudden ironic amusement. "But she knows a dictator, anyway."

"Who's that?" I asked.

"Gayda."

"Gayda? How does he come to be a dictator? He told me he was only going over to help out."

"I don't care what he went over for; he's provisional president of the Carpatho-Slovene Republic, with the powers of a dictator. I've seen passports that he signed."

"She wouldn't marry him," I insisted.

"At least she never has," said Hatfield, "or, to be more exact, he's never married her. He's always been too busy to put that one last thing over on me."

"Snap out of it," I advised him. "You're off again."

"Yes, it's getting to be a monomania," he admitted. "Here I am in Paris, falling down on my job, and there he is in Vereszvar, getting away with his—— But he may not get away with it forever, at that. Without giving away any state secrets, I can tell you he's going to have a hell of a time when the peace conference gets around to Carpatho-Slovenia. Everybody wants those oil fields."

"Look here!" I said fiercely. "I'm a Slavophile and you're not, but if you try to knife Gayda when he comes to the peace conference——"

He grinned at me.

"Thanks, Mac, for this reminder of the esteem in which I am held among my old friends. I don't like Gayda, I feel that he's always won when I've always lost. But I played with him at Fortville, and I remember that old all-for-one-and-one-for-all emotion, after twelve years. When the peace conference gets around to Carpatho-Slovenia, I won't knife him. I don't like him, but he's a great man. I'll do what I can for him when that time comes—if I've got any influence left in this peace conference!"

CHAPTER XXI.

TRICK OF A STATESMAN.

I BELIEVED Hatfield, but his premonition was right. Before Gayda came to Paris, Hatfield had left. He had some sort of quarrel with Clémenceau, a quarrel so serious that Wilson had to get him out of the way to keep such peace as could still be kept in the supreme council.

So Hatfield was sent off, as Wilson's personal representative, to observe the situation on the Danube. That was advertised as a great honor, but everybody knew it meant that Lucifer had fallen.

There was plenty to observe on the Danube, at that. Hungary had gone bolshevik and seemed likely at any moment to go wild and start biting the neighbors. Every country in central Europe was nervous, suspicious, armed to the teeth and ready to start shooting. It was in this pleasant atmosphere that the peace conference got around at last to the Carpatho-Slovene question and invited President Gayda to come to Paris and show cause why his republic shouldn't be sold down the river to one of its more powerful neighbors, who would be more reasonable than he was about the oil fields.

One raw, rainy morning I went down to the station to meet him and found the platform already crowded with men in silk hats and morning coats, not to speak of a military guard of honor drawn up outside. It reminded me of the old days when we met trains at Campusville just before college opened—when all the fraternities were looking for coveted freshmen.

The French foreign office had sent a deputation to receive Gayda with the honors due a provisional president. There was also a Polish deputation and a Czecho-Slovak deputation and a Rumanian deputation, each hoping to carry him off and persuade him that the

manifest destiny of his country lay in union with Poland or Czecho-Slovakia or Rumania, as the case might be.

The platform was so crowded that a plain citizen like myself had no chance to get anywhere near the first-class coaches, but knowing Gayda I didn't try. I dodged past the crowd, down to the second-class coaches, and there he was, swinging down from the step with a suit case in his hand. His face beamed under a fur cap—it was still cold in the Carpathians—and when I reached out to take his suit case, he jerked it out of my hand, as he had done at the Campusville station so many years ago.

"I will carry it myself," he said. "I think they have sent somebody from the ministry of foreign affairs to carry it, but this conference would get on faster if everybody carried his own baggage."

"But, Red, you don't want to get in wrong with the Quai d'Orsay——"

"Damn the Quai d'Orsay! I know already they will not help me, so why should I waste time on them? Let's dodge across the track before that mob sees me. Can you put me up at your hotel? They have reserved a suite for me at the Meurice, but I don't want a suite at the Meurice."

"My hotel is small and obscure——"

"That's what I want."

"There wouldn't be room for your delegation——"

"I am the delegation. Do you think I need forty-seven experts and twenty-four stenographers to tell this peace conference what my country needs? I will tell them and then go back home, for it needs me more than anything else."

So we cut across the tracks, while the silk-hatted dignitaries were searching the first-class carriages, eluded the military guard of honor, and got a taxi.

"So you're a dictator, now, Red. How are things going?"

"Oh, Mac," he went on, "you have no idea what I have had to do for that people. They had nothing and they could do nothing. They did not even have any national songs. I thought our army would fight better if it had some national anthems so I ordered a couple from a poet—oh, yes, we are a regular nation, with poets and everything—but we had no good marching music. So I taught them 'Onward, Christian Soldiers' and 'Freshwater Blue' and had the poet write his songs to fit the airs."

"I have had to do everything, but I cannot make machine guns. That is what I want most—that and some French officers to train my army. If I can get them, I don't care much what the peace conference says. For bolsheviks have Hungary now and pretty soon they will reach out after us."

"They'll have trouble enough at home, won't they?"

"That is just why," he replied. "It is hard enough to make any government work now when Europe is so upset; bolshevik government will not work at all. Magyars went bolshevik because the bolsheviks promised everything. Pretty soon Magyars will find out they can't deliver. Then the bolsheviks will say—they are saying already—all right, we will go and get back the lost provinces—Croatia and Slovakia, Transylvania and Carpatho-Slovenia. And then the Magyars will say, that is fine, let's all go and get them. They are good fighters, these Magyars."

"You look well," I observed. "You seem to be standing the strain."

"Yes, I have been working hard and I feel fine. There is not much to eat, but probably I used to eat too much anyway. Only one thing I miss—there is no good coffee for breakfast. Not much coffee at all and what there is is made of barley. So when we get to your hotel I will have a big cup of coffee before I start work. Even French coffee is better than no coffee at all."

He finished his coffee.

"Well, I must go to work. I see the supreme council this afternoon and then to-morrow I speak at a plenary session of the conference."

"You needn't expect much from the plenary session," I warned him. "They have them now and then so the little fellows can't say they're crowded out, but a plenary session can't do anything. Talk to them if you like, but you might as well make a Liberty Loan speech in a poorhouse."

"Maybe. But I have an idea I can do something."

That afternoon he made his plea before the supreme council and I heard it was a good one. But after him came a Pole and then a Czecho-Slovak and then a Rumanian with their several views of the Carpatho-Slovene question; after which it was announced that the council had taken the matter under advisement.

I HEARD Gayda's speech before the plenary session and came home sick, disappointed. It had been a marvelous piece of fiery oratory, the best speech he ever made. Gayda was grim and austere by nature; I had expected him to come straight to the point. Instead he flamed out in a riot of eloquence, such as most leaders of small nations turned loose on their one and only occasion. And there was no chance on earth that eloquence would do him any good.

I went away sorrowing, for though I cared little about the Carpatho-Slovenes, I had wanted to see Gayda get away with it. But he was not at all sorrowful when he came to my hotel late that night.

"I am taking a midnight train," he announced. "At any rate I have got the promise of some machine guns and a French military mission to organize my army. And the supreme council

has put off its decision. We are not flunked yet, only conditioned. My speech did that."

"It was a good-enough speech, as a speech—" I began.

He grinned.

"So you didn't see what I was doing? I was talking to one man—Wilson. Why should I tell them facts about my country? They know more facts already than they want to know. I was talking to Wilson only. I learned when I was a traveling salesman that to sell a customer you must find out what he likes and give him back his own stuff.

"Wilson has not heard anybody say a good word for self-determination for months. He begins to think he is only man in the world who still believes in Wilsonian principles. Did you see how happy he looked when I began quoting his own stuff back at him? Here, he thinks, is a man who knows what is what!

"I didn't try to convert Clémenceau; I couldn't," he went on. "I didn't try to convert Lloyd George. But I have converted Wilson and, so long as he is for us, supreme council can't give us to Poland. That will give me time to turn around."

CHAPTER XXII.

"WELL ENOUGH IS NOT ENOUGH."

THIS, I perceived, was statesmanship—big-league statesmanship. But I had talked to other people about Carpatho-Slovenia.

"Red," I asked, "how many people are there in your country?"

"Maybe a million. We are too busy to take a census."

"Can you be independent—really independent—when you are so few?"

"I do not know," he said at last. "It was possible, when it was just a question of yelling in the streets and run-

ning the Magyars out of town and fighting. And yet they used to complain, complain, complain, before the war, and now all they remember is that before the war they had enough to eat. I tell them nobody in Europe has enough to eat now, but they have never been away from home, so how do they know? All they say is: 'Give us enough to eat.'

"Red," I said savagely, "I've suspected this for years and now I know it. You are the only real Carpatho-Slovene in the world. You organized the emigrants in America, paid the expenses of the national council, told them they weren't Slovaks or Ruthenes—and I'll bet you've done the same thing for the people at home. Who was running the country when you arrived?"

"Nobody," he admitted. "When everybody had revolutions last November, they said: 'Fine! Let us have a revolution too.' So they got out in the streets and yelled a little bit and the postmaster and the gendarme and the forester and the money lender—all the Magyar crowd everywhere—got afraid and ran away. Those were the people who had always run the country so nobody was running it when I got there."

"How did they come to elect you president?"

"Well, they all knew me, so I got the leading men together and asked them what they wanted to do and they said well, maybe I knew what ought to be done better than they did.

"I said: 'Well, everybody has a constitution.'

"They said: 'All right, you go ahead and write it.'

"Then I got them together and said: 'Look here, we can't have election now when the bridges are broken and the roads torn up. You are the leading men, the constituent assembly; you elect a provisional president.'

"So they said: 'Well, you seem to know how, so you be our president.'

"But I said, 'I am only a commissioner from America; I am American citizen.' 'That is all right,' they said: 'you be president anyway.' So I am."

"Then if you hadn't gone over there in——" I began.

"I know!" he went on. "You think I ought to have let them alone. But I saw those people before the war and they were not happy. Magyars were not treating them right and they didn't know how to get what they wanted. Of course somebody had to show them. Of course it is hard for them to learn. But they will learn and then they will be happier; and even if they were not, they have a right to do things in their own way."

"Oh, they don't know what they want; but they know there is not enough to eat and business is dead and there is only paper money that nobody wants; so they come to me and say: 'It is all your fault!' God knows I would like to be back home in Cleveland, drinking a seidel of beer and seeing a good cabaret show; or down in Campusville now that it is the spring term and the fellows bring their girls into the soda fountain when the movie theater is out in the evening. But I have started this thing and I can't quit."

"It's bum luck for you, just the same," I told him.

"No," he said with regained serenity, "it is all right. My people are slowly learning to think and do things for themselves. That is hard, but good. And some day there will be enough to eat and they can sell to Prague and Lemberg as well as Budapest and they won't be cheated by the money lenders or bulldozed by the gendarmes; and then they will say: 'Radomir Gayda was great man!'"

"So they don't say that now?"

"No, now they say: 'Radomir Gayda'

is nuisance; why don't he let us alone?' They don't say it out loud, but I know they say it when they get together in the cafés in the evening. But I tell you, John McCoy, they are wrong and I am right. This is the proof, the working, of all those things you and I believe in. They are like children who grow up suddenly. That is hard and not every one can stand it. The work must be done by those who can do it and they must expect no thanks."

"It's hard on you, Red——"

"I can stand it. And do you know where I learned to stand it? Back in college, that first year when I was ringer and we lost so many games. It was not fun for us few who played football to work hard every afternoon and get licked every Saturday. But we gave our best to the college and when we got licked the college said: 'What a bum team!'"

"They didn't do the work, those other fellows. They wouldn't even come out and yell for us if it rained. We had to do all the work and take all the blame. It was harder for me than for the rest of you because I was only ringer, only good for football. I used to think, 'Why should I get myself pounded around for this college that will not help, that blames us for getting licked, that lets Dad Coulter spend all his money for football equipment, just as I spent the last of my money to-day for French machine guns? That was hard."

"But I stuck to it because Beulah had talked to you and me that night and had shown us what a college could be!" he continued. "Even then, I knew that was an ideal college she talked about—the good college as it is in the minds of its good students who work for it and give it their best. Freshwater was not that kind of college then, but I knew it could be if we all worked for it—and if we won."

"We worked and won, and because

we won, Freshwater is bigger and better college, with more money and more students and better professors; and the teams are better too. Even if they lose now, they can stand it because they generally win; nobody ever feels any more the way we felt when we lost those games that first year. We who went to Fortville did that and now they say we were great men.

"But that day only Beulah would help us; the rest only said we were a lot of fools. I learned that day that it does not matter what they say about you, that the men who can do the work must do it. And that you must win. Well enough is not enough. You must win!"

THERE was a pause.

"Well, Red," I said shakily, "I guess you haven't any doubts about the value of a college education."

"I got an education in college," he admitted. "Not everybody does. But I tell you I would give anything to have Crab Casseltine and Shettsline and old Tom Ellerbe in Vereszvar to help me. They would not quit and I can't say so much for some of those fellows who are in my government."

He rose.

"Well, I must catch my train. It has helped a lot to talk to you. And to Beulah—I saw her in Prague when I came through. I wish you could all come to Vereszvar and see me. It is a beautiful country and Count Radolffy had bathrooms put in the castle—before the war."

"I go where the news is," I told him, "and what's happening in Vereszvar isn't news just now."

"Well," said Gayda, "I guess that is something to be thankful for."

So he went home and for ten days the Carpatho-Slovene question dropped out of the news. Then one night the head of our newspaper's Paris staff came hastily in on me.

"Mac, you're the central European expert. How do you get to Vereszvar?"

"Why," I said, "I believe you go by train to a place called Kaschau, and then you walk, unless you've got enough gold coin in your pocket to buy a flivver; and if you aren't shot by a frontier patrol, eventually you get there."

"All right. I'll get you the gold and a diplomatic passport that ought to satisfy frontier patrols. Hop out as quick as you can. Hell's broken loose."

"What kind?"

"The Hungarian bolsheviks have invaded all the lost provinces, especially Carpatho-Slovenia. President Gayda's sent a wireless call for help to the supreme council and the Poles have started a column down into the country to head off the bolsheviks. Everybody wants those oil fields. The Carpatho-Slovene Republic will be done for by the time you get there, but you ought to see a beautiful fight."

"Why will it be done for?" I asked, as I reached for my hat.

"Why not? No war materials, not much of an army——"

"I used to play football with the president of that republic," I told him. "That big boy takes a lot of licking."

CHAPTER XXIII.

TOWARD THE WAR ZONE.

TRAVEL was not very rapid, or very comfortable, in central Europe in the spring of 1919. From Zurich eastward I rode in dilapidated coaches, with no glass in the windows. I was glad I'd worn a fur coat, for the April nights were cold. They had wanted to fit me out with some sort of uniform when I left Paris, but I insisted on looking ostentatiously civilian; and because of that I got through, though sharp bayonets tickled my chest at every frontier and brisk young lieutenants looked me over whenever the train stopped.

It helped, no doubt, that I had the passport of an American diplomatic courier. Also, along with my bag and my portable typewriter, I carried a heavily wrapped package all spotted over with heavy red wax impressed with the seal of the United States; but it was my clothes that got me through. I looked like an emissary of Morgan or Stinnes or Zaharoff and no frontier guard wanted to stop somebody who might be bringing hard money into the country. So I got on, slowly and uncomfortably, eating when I could and what there was, and gathering information from traveling companions whom chance threw into my compartment. And the farther east I went, the more I heard about a new superman, one Hatfield.

Here my diplomatic passport helped immeasurably, for Americans were still—and are still, for that matter—popular in Czecho-Slovakia. Presently a penciled notice was pasted on the door of the compartment where I rode alone, warning all persons who could read the Czecho-Slovak language that he who sat inside was too lofty to admit of companionship. This was flattering, but lonesome and I was grateful when, near the end of our trip, a tall figure halted in the corridor outside, read the notice on the door and then walked in.

"You'll excuse me, I hope," he drawled in the English of Eton and Oxford. "I saw that these chaps weren't disturbing you and, as they happen to take particular pleasure in disturbing me, I thought I might throw myself on your mercy. Can you give me a seat?"

"A seat and a cigarette," I told him.

He accepted both and smoked with evident satisfaction.

"An American cigarette," he observed. "I didn't like them, before the war; but your Y. M. C. A. gave me the habit when I was a prisoner. Do you go on to Kassa—Kaschau?"

"On to Vereszvar—if I can."

"M'm! So do I. I think we shall be very lucky to get there—or perhaps very unlucky."

HIS dead-white face was seamed with a long scar; close-cropped mustache and close-cropped hair were dead black against the pallor. The eyes were black too—a restless fiery black. Add to their evidence his assured confident reserve, his cool unassailable distinction, and there was no doubt what he was. I knew a Magyar gentleman when I saw one. And what was a Magyar gentleman, exiled from Budapest by the bolshevik revolution, doing on the road to Vereszvar where all Magyars were enemies?

"Yes," I said, "I imagine it's rather hard to get into Carpatho-Slovenia now. Especially for Magyars."

He laughed.

"But I am now of Carpatho-Slovene nationality, unless your peace conference has decided since day before yesterday that I am a Pole or a Czecho-Slovak. I travel under a Carpatho-Slovene passport. Why should I not go to Vereszvar? It was my home."

"Ah! You're Count Radolffy?"

"Count Arpad Radolffy. My cousin in Transylvania is head of the family."

"I don't like to be impertinent," I said, "but I can't help wondering why you should go back there, now?"

"Why not? I have a passport signed by President Gayda, whose father used to be one of my tenants. That is amusing and there is not much that amuses me any more. They have confiscated my castle—contrary to their own laws, by the way; but I can live at the hotel. And where else can I live? My town house in Budapest has been sacked by the bolsheviks. If I had stayed there, they would have shot me. Besides, I may be useful at home. I must work for a living, now that my

property has all been taken away. I thought I would hire myself out as a farm manager."

"A farm manager?" I snorted.

"Why not a farm manager?" he asked. "I supervised my estate before the war and did it rather well. Now my estates have been divided up among the tenants, but I know that a thousand stupid peasants can't manage their farms as well as I could manage them all together. So I thought I would organize a coöperative society and get myself elected manager, on a salary. One must live."

There could be no better cover than a farmers' coöperative society, I reflected, for the organization of a revolutionary conspiracy.

"I know what you are thinking," he broke in, "but you are quite wrong. I have no political ambitions. I should have—all my family for generations has been in politics. But as for me, I do not give a damn. All I want is to be allowed to earn my living. Surely this President Gayda will let me do that."

"But the Magyars are fighting him at——"

"Magyars? Those bolsheviks? Bah! They are foreigners—the scum of Budapest. Between them and the Slavs, I am neutral. Let me cultivate my garden and help others cultivate their gardens—that is all I ask."

"Then I'm for you!" I told him. "That's what Europe needs—that people who have been licked should accept the result of the war and settle down to work—get reconstructed."

"In other words," he observed, "to get rid of human nature. For it is not in human nature to accept defeat so soon. This wonderful New World of yours is not so wonderful after all, if it can be managed only with human nature left out. Even our Old World would not have been so bad, if we had got rid of human nature."

"But it is none of my business; I haven't very much human nature, I am afraid," he went on. "To laugh a little and be bored a great deal, that is life in the Kingdom of Hungary as well as in the Carpatho-Slovene Republic. And there is a good deal in the Carpatho-Slovene Republic that I can laugh at. This President Gayda from America, for instance——"

"You'd better not laugh at President Gayda," I warned him.

At this point the train stopped with considerable suddenness. It had been doing that all day, but this time the halt was prolonged. Presently footsteps thumped in the corridor and a young officer appeared at the door of our compartment. He looked at us, then said something in his own language.

"Radolffy Arpad," said my companion with indifference.

The officer's eyes blazed.

"Arpad Radolffy!" he snarled.

Here in miniature was the whole problem of central Europe—the Magyar insisted on giving his family name first in Magyar style, the Slovak insisted that a man who was no longer Magyar must learn new ways. Then the officer turned to me with an unintelligible question; I tried him in English, then French, then German, while Radolffy grinned.

"You will find many in this country who are bilingual," he observed, "but not in the languages of western Europe. I will try him in Magyar."

The Slovak bristled at the sound of the language of his recent masters; for he knew that Radolffy could speak Slovak if he wanted to and only insisted on Magyar as a gesture of contempt. They barked at each other, however, and presently Radolffy turned to me with a shrug.

"Well, it seems we can go no farther. Beyond this small town which I never heard of, there is only military traffic.

We must stay here till the war is over, I suppose."

"I'm a newspaper man," I told him. "I've got to get on to Vereszvar. Do you mind translating this passport to our friend?"

Radolffy translated it and then had to show his own passport. There was argument; the officer grew angrier and angrier, Radolffy subsided into a series of weary shrugs. At last the officer told us in German to get out.

WE followed him, with soldiers with bayonets slouching alongside, to a flat-gray station beside a flat-gray graveled platform down the track. Half a mile ahead, a baroque spire lifted over a flat-gray town.

"Frightfully sorry," said Radolffy, though I doubted if he was. "I seem to have got you into trouble. If you'd been alone I don't think they'd have disturbed you, with your American diplomatic passport. But they know me and the silly asses seem to think I'm your courier, or something of the sort. And they distrust any man who will go to Vereszvar with me as his guide. Never mind. We'll find some one who speaks French and you can tell him your own story."

At that moment an officer pulled something out of my overcoat pocket and held it high, with a shout. Four or five others read it over his shoulders and the colonel beckoned to me. Encouraged by a sharp bayonet I went to him, saw a sheet of note paper in his hand, wondered how incriminating it might be—and almost sobbed with relief when I recognized a month-old note from Hatfield asking me to dinner—and to dinner, amazing and incredible luck, with Benesh, the Czech-Slovak minister of foreign affairs. I was saved. In my best French I assailed the colonel.

"You see? I am a friend of Monsieur Benesh——"

He waved that aside.

"Khatfield?" he said eagerly. "So you are a friend of Monsieur Khatfield?"

"Yes, indeed; and of Monsieur Benesh——"

"Khatfield!" he repeated reverently, and apologized to me again and again, in three languages. Truly, the morning star was risen.

CHAPTER XXIV.

WHEN OLD FRIENDS MEET.

SO the magic name of Hatfield gave me the privilege of going on to Vereszvar—if I could. The army had seized all the automobiles that would go; but if I could find anything workable among the discard, the colonel told me I might have it.

And Radolffy? Well, Radolffy, traveling with an American diplomatic courier who was a friend of Hatfield, was immune from arrest; but he could go no farther; he must take the next train back. When did that leave? A shrug; a whole volley of shrugs.

"And if I stay long around this town," said Radolffy to me, "some lieutenant will have me shot on suspicion. You go to look for a motor car? I hope you don't mind my coming with you; you give me a certain respectability.

"Besides," he added, "I am a bit of an expert on motor cars. Perhaps I can help you."

We searched that little town and presently found a man who had owned a flivver till a few minutes before; but now it had been sold to the American Red Cross.

"Ask him where it is," I told Radolffy. "No Red Cross civilian colonel is going to get the only automobile in this town, while the *New York Record* needs it. I'm a friend of Hatfield and I'll seize that car by eminent domain. Where is it?"

Its late owner admitted that it had started for Vereszvar; but he added, with a grin, that we'd probably find it just around the corner. And we did. A wrecked and ruined flivver that looked as if its military service had begun in the Crimean War; with a tiny American flag fluttering from the battered hood.

It stood in the middle of the muddy street, with a pair of Slovak legs protruding from beneath it. From the back seat came a staccato stream of mingled French and German that ended in a despairing burst of English.

"Can't you even start the thing? Oh, if there was ever a clumsy butter-fingered fool——"

"I know that voice," said Radolffy, his head lifting quickly. "Now where do——"

I knew it too. I had heard it at Fortville.

"Beulah!" I shouted.

She jumped out of the car, bare-headed, her bobbed hair tossed in the sharp wind; even in her sleazy ill-fitting Red Cross uniform she was the most agreeable sight I had encountered in central Europe.

"Well, John McCoy! What are you doing here?"

"Chasing the news. How about you? Why aren't you in Prague?"

"Oh, I'm going up to Vereszvar to see the excitement."

Radolffy was bowing to her.

"Oh!" she said. "Of course. It's Count Radolffy, isn't it? We met in Budapest—ten years ago."

"Impossible. Ten years ago you were in the nursery."

"You can't get away with that in front of John McCoy. He knows I'm thirty." But I could see she liked it. "You've forgotten my name, of course—Beulah Macarthur."

"How could I forget it—or you? Besides, I have read your articles in American newspapers, while I was a

prisoner of war. Do you go to Vereszvar as a journalist?"

"Not a bit. I go as a public health expert and an old friend of President Gayda, just in order to see if I can help him out."

"You will be worth at least three divisions of infantry," Radolffy assured her. "You go in this car?"

"Well, I thought I was going in this car. I paid three hundred dollars in gold for the miserable piece of junk and my chauffeur can't even make it run to the edge of town."

"Ah!" said Radolffy. "Perhaps I can do something with it, if our friend underneath will permit."

He said something abrupt and the man under the car got out hurriedly. Liberty was still new in those regions; the natives hadn't got out of the habit of jumping when a count spoke to them. So Radolffy got down in the mud and I glared at Beulah.

"Beulah, I know Red thinks more of you than of any woman in the world. I don't know whether he's in love with you—but if he is, or if you're in love with him, the best thing you can do for his peace of mind is to go back to Prague where you'll be safe."

"Oh, don't be an idiot. Of course I'm not in love with him. But all you boys always played your best when I was in the bleachers and I'm going up there to cheer him up, just as I'd do for you or Shettsline or Ellerbe or Rupert—if Rupert ever needed anybody but himself to cheer him up.

"I don't care if it is risky," she flung at me. "John, what was the high point of your life—the big emotional moment?"

I thought back over thirty years that had contained their fair share of big emotional moments.

"That game at Fortville," I told her. "I was only one of the gang, but I was better that day than I've ever been since."

"So were we all," said Beulah. "We were all carried out of ourselves to an absolute pitch of self-forgetfulness. We were working for something impersonal that was bigger than we were. And then after the game was over, we all slumped back into our petty interests and got just plain human and mean again.

"Well—at the end of the war everybody in the world—everybody that counted, that is—was just as unselfish and devoted and hard working as we were at Fortville, working for a big impersonal ideal, for the building up of something better and more beautiful. The war was terrible, but it brought out a lot of heroism in people who'd never been heroic before and haven't been since. For since the armistice the whole world has slumped; we're all getting lazy and greedy and selfish.

"Well—Gayda hasn't slumped," she went on. "He's tired, like everybody else; but he won't let himself slump. He's still working for something outside himself. He's still—oh, it's an awful word, but it's the only one that fits—he's still being heroic. And I got so tired of the human race that I wanted to go up to Vereszvar and watch somebody go on being decent and trying to work to make things better. Can you understand that?"

"Of course I can understand it! But I doubt if your friend Radolffy understands it. How well did you know him?"

"Oh, we flirted a bit in Budapest, ten years ago."

AND at that moment Radolffy emerged from beneath the car, looked at the mud on his clothes, got in and started the engine.

"There!" he told her, quite pleased. "It will go. I can't promise you how long it will go, but at least it will start."

"Oh, dear!" said Beulah. "But suppose it stops again? I can't do any-

thing with a piece of wreckage like that. Have you a car, John?"

"You got the last one," I told her. "I was hoping you'd give me a lift."

"Oh, of course, I'll give you a lift; but can you make the thing go?"

"I'm no expert," I confessed. "Count Radolffy, perhaps——"

"Ah, yes," said Beulah. "Count Radolffy! You going to Vereszvar?"

"I wanted to go, but the colonel in command of the town has said that he would shoot me if I tried it."

"But if you went as my guest, he wouldn't dare touch you."

"This is a war zone, mademoiselle. You are safe, but not your guests. Besides, Mr. McCoy can tell you that I am a dangerous traveling companion."

"I'm not afraid of suspicion," said Beulah cheerfully. "They wouldn't dare stop the American Red Cross."

"And they wouldn't touch my chauffeur," added Beulah. "Count Radolffy, will you go to Vereszvar as my chauffeur?"

He smiled.

"But certainly. Anything to oblige a so charming lady—and besides, I want to go to Vereszvar."

So we climbed into the rickety flivver, Beulah on the front seat beside Radolffy, I in the back with my feet on the baggage. The car started and Radolffy laughed.

"I was just thinking," said Radolffy, "that I did not expect to come home as chauffeur for the American Red Cross when I went out to the war in 1914. This New World of yours is most extraordinary."

CHAPTER XXV.

STILL HOLDING OUT.

IT was some two hundred miles to Vereszvar and we got there, on the evening of the third day, solely by virtue of the amazing mechanical skill of Arpad Radolffy. Three times he vir-

tually rebuilt that flivver in the mud of the mountain roads, and even with my native Middle Western distrust of European aristocracy I couldn't help admiring a count who was not only a soldier and a duelist and a steeplechase rider, but an expert farm manager and a brilliant automobile mechanic as well.

The same old Beulah! I had seen her plying the arts of the charmer in college, had felt her plying them on me, at one time or another; and I had to admit that she improved with experience. What her real interest in Radolffy might be, I couldn't tell, nor if she had any; but he was both an old acquaintance and a new one and a man of much charm besides.

They talked and laughed on the front seat while I watched them morosely from the back seat. Beulah was tired of laziness and selfishness and greed, attracted by Gayda's grim unselfish doggedness; but she couldn't resist the perverse attraction of Radolffy's complete disillusion. He frankly despised the New World of new nations with new ideals, but it appeared he despised the Old World and its ideals just as much. He had no more use for Ludendorff and Tisza than for Wilson and Clémenteau. They were all, he assured us, silly asses.

Now Arpad Radolffy was coming back and the peasantry wondered if the good old times were coming back too. He was coming back, they supposed, to reclaim his own; and God help those who in his absence had trifled with his sacred privileges and his sacred domain. As for Beulah and me, with all our Red Cross uniforms and our diplomatic passports, we seemed to those people nothing but the retinue of the old master.

Perhaps I thought too much of these things, sitting alone on the back seat with nothing to do but think. What Radolffy said to these people when he talked to them in their own tongue, I

couldn't know, but when he talked to Beulah and me, he was inclined to laugh at them.

"When the cat is away the mice will play," he told us. "They have played hard and licked up all the cat's cream; and now the cat is coming home and they do not know he is a quiet peaceful cat, with no political ambitions. Bah! My ancestors would be ashamed of me. I know what they would have done in my place. But I have been fighting for years and I am tired of it. Why should I make a revolution which would mean more fighting? And suppose I made a revolution and won it. I would have to govern the country and I should not find that amusing."

"You might not win a revolution even if you started it," I reminded him.

He shrugged assent.

"Quite true. Yet I have talked to these people in their own language and I do not find them very enthusiastic for President Gayda."

"They'd better be," I said glumly. "And you, too, if you want to stay in Vereszvar."

Then Beulah cut in, taking Radolffy's side.

"Oh, quit riding him, John! You act as if you thought he was going back to make trouble. Don't you believe him? Can't you understand that a man who's been fighting since 1914 might be tired of it? I know just how Count Radolffy feels; I feel that way myself, a good deal of the time."

Late of the third day, we topped a ridge and Radolffy jerked his head at the prospect before us.

"There! That is what you call the old homestead."

A FLUTTER of color topped it; Beulah unslung her binoculars, peered, and cried:

"Orange, blue and gold! Then Red's still holding out—the bolsheviks haven't got Vereszvar."

"And we can have a decent dinner to-night," said Radolffy. "The Hotel Magyar Kiraly was not so bad, before the war. Let us hurry."

But we couldn't hurry very fast. At the edge of town an outpost stopped us. The officer in command spoke French and was greatly excited at finding an American diplomatic courier, with a large red-sealed package for President Gayda. Word of this must be sent to the castle at once, he assured me; I could go to the hotel, but must hold myself in readiness to be summoned to meet the president.

A lady from the American Red Cross? She too was welcome to Vereszvar. But her chauffeur—Count Radolffy—The officer bristled; Count Radolffy must be taken to the commander of the garrison at once. The passport? Pooh, not to say bah!

"You see," said Radolffy with resignation, "this new republic is so great and powerful it does not respect its own passports. I suppose I must spend the night in jail."

"You will not!" said Beulah, and burst into a Niagara of French. Was a chauffeur of the American Red Cross to be arrested? Why had Wilson preached self-determination? Why had Pershing come to Europe? Why had President Gayda crossed the sea to liberate an ungrateful nation which wouldn't respect his name on a passport?

Before she had paused for breath the lieutenant was apologizing to Beulah and Wilson, and Pershing and the Red Cross and the Y. M. C. A. and J. P. Morgan & Co. and all the other American institutions he had ever heard of. But certainly Count Radolffy could go on, though a report must be made; one had become exacting, with the enemy so near.

"No change here," said Radolffy. "Here is still the same porter, even though he has lost an arm and gained

a row of ribbons in exchange for it. Ho, Lajos!"

The porter jumped and stared and saluted; from that moment Beulah and I were in effect the guests of her chauffeur.

For this hotel, before the war, had been the headquarters of visiting Magyar politicians and German business men; the old management had stayed on and the old staff, barring some few war casualties, had been reemployed. To all these people, attached by interest to the old order, Count Radolffy was still the Lord's anointed.

At his command they gave Beulah the one suite with private bath, turning out an angry, sputtering French oil man; and while I waited my turn at the one public bath—Radolffy and I had tossed for it and he had won—maids and valets told me that it was quite like the good old days to see the Herr Graf back again. A pity they had taken away his castle, but the Hotel Magyar Kiraly was his to command.

I wondered how many people felt like that.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"MOST EXTRAORDINARY!"

I CAME down to the lobby to find a young officer waiting; he saluted me, to the amused grins of Radolffy and Beulah, with the bravado of a musical-comedy baritone.

"His excellency the president of the republic will receive the American diplomatic courier at once. An automobile is waiting."

"You must give Mr. McCoy time to change his clothes," Radolffy told the lieutenant severely. "You have evening dress, yes?"

"I travel light," I told him. "With a typewriter and a diplomatic package, I didn't have a chance to bring many clothes along. Besides, Gayda and I are old college friends; I don't have to dress up for him."

"My dear fellow, this is not your American college town. This is central Europe. One must dress properly when one calls upon a president—even so new a president as this President Gayda. I can borrow the hotel manager's clothes——"

"Gayda will be glad to see me in any clothes," I told him. "I—I suppose he may ask me about you, Count Radolffy, and——"

"Oh, no; I am to speak for myself. Miss Macarthur and I have been invited to dinner at the castle, after this diplomatic audience is ended. That will be rather a lark, to be a guest in my own house. So I will borrow the hotel manager's clothes, if you don't want them. If I travel under a Carpatho-Slovene passport, I suppose I have recognized the republic as a de-facto government, and even for a de-facto president one must dress."

He said it with all solemnity and it was so accepted by the officer who was to escort me. But I had my doubts about this Radolffy, and it annoyed me to find that Beulah seemed to take him seriously as well. He'd stand a good deal of watching, I reflected, and it would be well to put Gayda on his guard.

So my lieutenant took me off to a waiting flivver and we bumped through the falling darkness along the dilapidated half-lit streets of Vereszvar, gave the password to a picket at the barbed-wire barrier outside of town, and slowly chugged up the long winding road toward the castle. It towered above us, a black mass broken by a few tiny blocks of yellow light—the castle I had first seen pictured in a textbook on the history of European art twelve years ago.

ANOTHER challenge; then we rolled under a high-arched gateway, the light of a lamp hung high above, glinted on bare bayonets and machine guns mounted behind sand bags. We bumped

across a cobblestone courtyard, faint light streaming from windows high up in the black walls, and stopped in front of an arched door.

A man in sheepskin and scarlet received me with some obscure but apparently hospitable observations in the Slavic language and took me up a spiral stone staircase, across a great dim-lit hall as big as the chapel of Freshwater College, and into the sudden soft brilliance of a pink-and-white Louis Quinze salon.

He went out and left me in a room with no doors. We had come in; he had gone out, but there were no doors. I was working up to a shiver when a section of the wall opened inward and Red Rad Gayda walked through it, in evening dress lighted up with as many decorations as if he had been chairman of a war-relief society. The stars and crosses on his coat reminded me that he was a chief of state, not Red Rad Gayda, but his excellency the president of the republic. I stiffened and bowed to him.

"Your excellency——" I began.

His excellency emitted one of those Anglo-Saxon monosyllables that seem to be more expressive than anything in the Slavic languages.

"Don't be a fool, Mac. Where is this diplomatic package? What is it? From Wilson?"

"Red, it never occurred to me you'd take this seriously! I—I didn't understand. It isn't from Wilson. It's nothing much—I got the diplomatic passport to get me through——"

"But you have a package. What is it?"

"Why, Red, you know explorers in savage countries always take along a present for the native chiefs; so I've brought you five pounds of American coffee."

"By gosh, I guess that will do me more good than anything Wilson could have sent me. Wilson is a long way

off, but the coffee is here. We will have some after dinner."

"We will not. I brought that coffee for you—for the presidential breakfast table. You'll need every spoonful."

"We will have some after dinner, I tell you. Who the hell do you think is president around here, anyway? Now tell me the news."

"I don't know any news; I've been traveling. How's your war?"

"Not so bad. The French military mission is running my army now and I don't think these bolsheviks will go any farther. We have only about eight thousand men at the front, but they are all my men—all loyal to the republic. And I am concentrating a reserve here in town for a counteroffensive. I am not afraid of the bolsheviks, but if I have to use this reserve to stop the Poles I don't know where we will come out. They say they are coming to save us from the bolsheviks, but they are coming to save us for themselves, not for ourselves. And now comes Radolffy. What is he up to?"

"He says he's coming back to be a farm manager. Going to work for a living."

"Well, we can use him if he really means it. But there are many people here who hate the republic, especially now that it has got them into a new war. They will all rally round Radolffy if he will let them."

"Then why did you let him come back?"

"It is his home," replied Gayda simply. "I don't think it is any way to run a country, to keep out all the citizens you don't like. If you run out everybody who doesn't agree with you and then say, 'See what a fine nation we are! What a happy family!' you are a fool. If your nation is any good, all kinds must have their say."

"Well, this is your country, Red," I said gloomily.

"Yes, it is now. I don't know whose

it will be next week. And Beulah? What does she want?"

"What does she ever want?" I growled. "She wants to see the excitement——"

"She will see plenty down there in town. There might be a riot there any day. I think she had better come up here and live in the castle."

"Don't tell her you want to get her out of danger or she won't come."

"No, I suppose not. I tell you—you and she must both come and live in the castle. There is plenty of room and it is good and comfortable; and, besides, you will be company for me. I don't like this fine house where you walk through the walls instead of having regular doors. It gets on my nerves, but it goes with the job. Radolffy, now, is more at home here—— I wonder?"

THERE were no fireworks because Radolffy was a gentleman—so was Gayda, though neither he nor Radolffy would have admitted it. Radolffy saluted him with exactly the correct politeness that he would have displayed toward President Wilson or President Poincaré and Gayda greeted Radolffy as any president might greet the most influential private citizen of his country.

But there was another sort of constraint that grew throughout the dinner. Beulah and Gayda had greeted each other with the easy informal comradeship of old college friends; she was as thoroughly at home with him as she was with me, and Radolffy couldn't understand that. That kind of intimacy between a man and a woman was beyond his experience or understanding; and though it was hard to guess what feelings were hidden by his politely smiling mask, I felt a growing suspicion throughout the dinner that the man was jealous—jealous of Gayda.

He'd better take Gayda seriously, I reflected.

As for the dinner, it was not so good; we could have got a better one at the hotel. Roast chicken, potatoes, sauerkraut, black bread and honey—no butter, no sugar, but some passable native wines. Its scantiness presently moved Gayda to apology.

"I am afraid you are disappointed, Count Radolffy. This is not like old times in the castle. But the president cannot deal with food speculators; he must eat what every one eats."

"Since your excellency mentions it," said Radolffy blandly, "it is not quite like old times. I suppose my wine cellar has been sacrificed to the cause of liberty."

"I have not touched it," said Gayda with a snap. "It is sealed up."

"But isn't that inconsistent? You have taken my house——"

"Your house is temporarily occupied. You will be paid."

"In your paper money?"

"It is as good as Hungarian crowns. When the emergency is over, we will build a capitol and a presidential palace. Then you will get your castle back and your wine cellar with it."

"So it is still my wine cellar?" Radolffy inquired.

"Certainly."

"In that case your excellency may let me offer such small hospitality as is at my command. Suppose you tell your major-domo to break the seals and bring up a bottle or two or the Clos Vougeot '74. After dinner we might have some cordials, too; the Grand Fine Napoleon 1813 has been much admired by persons of judgment."

"You are living at the hotel, Count Radolffy?"

"Where else can I live?"

"True," said Gayda. "We have taken your house for government use—but we do not need all of it. There are—how many? Ninety rooms?"

"Ninety-four, I believe."

"I live here and Markovitch, the

prime minister, and the government offices are here. Still we do not use more than forty rooms. There is no need for you to live at the hotel. If you like, I will have your baggage brought up and you may occupy your old personal suite from now on."

"So," said Radolffy, his lips tightening even while they tried to smile, "so I am a prisoner."

"No," Gayda explained patiently, "you are not a prisoner. I have asked my college friends here to stay with me as my guests. Beulah, you shall have the queen's suite, where Maria Theresa lived when she visited the Radolffys in the old times; you have had a bathroom put in, I believe, Count Radolffy? Yes. They will stay here. But you are not even my guest. The government needs part of your house, but the rest is yours."

"The rest of the house is mine?" Radolffy inquired. "But the servants are yours; the sentries are yours. If you mean to keep me in jail, why not say so?"

"You are not in jail," Gayda insisted. "Your old servants are down in the town; hire them and bring them back, if you like. I will give you a pass so that the sentries cannot stop you. You are not a prisoner. This is your house and you may live here if you like. If you don't like it, you may stay at the hotel."

Radolffy's black eyes bored into Gayda's blue ones.

"I do not understand this," he confessed presently.

"No, I suppose not. It is too simple. That is why your old Kingdom of Hungary went to pieces, because your class did not understand. You think there is some trick about it. But I tell you there is not. Live at the hotel if you like—come here to your own house if you like. Plenty of people said I should not give you a passport, but I said I had no right to keep out a citi-

zen who had done nothing against the government.

"I don't expect you to like this government," Gayda went on. "If you plot against it and I find it out, you will go to jail, and plenty of people will ask you to plot against it. But so long as you behave yourself, you will not be bothered. And I do not ask you to promise even to behave yourself. I will take a chance."

"My dear sir, you have most curious ideas of government! I suppose I am subject to conscription for your national army."

"No, our army is volunteer. I would rather have a small army I can trust than a big army that might change sides on me. You may volunteer, if you will take oath of loyalty to constitution. If you don't want to fight Magyars maybe you can fight Poles. But you won't be drafted."

"M'm!" said Radolffy. "I have had enough fighting for a while. With your excellency's permission I shall become a farm manager."

"Suit yourself," said Gayda.

RADOLFFY laughed. What kind of government must it be, I suppose he wondered, that could tell its most dangerous enemy to suit himself?

"I will think it over," he said. "Have I your excellency's permission to withdraw?"

"If you must be going. Shall I send for your baggage—or do you stay in the hotel?"

"Oh, don't stay in the hotel," Beulah put in. "All the rest of us are going to stay in the castle—come along and keep us company."

His black eyes rested speculatively on hers.

"Very well," he said presently. "I will stay in the castle—at least for a while."

He left us and presently Gayda left us, too, called away by dispatches from

the front. Servants in sheepskin and scarlet waited for Beulah and me, to show us to our apartments, but I halted her.

"What's the idea?" I demanded wrathfully. "Why do you want Radolffy in the castle?"

"Why not? I like him, like to talk to him—and I'm not sure my attraction's strong enough to bring him up the hill every day, if he stayed in town."

"But if he stays here," I objected, "he can see everything that's going on. If he really is against Gayda's government, he's in a perfect position for spying——"

"A man like Radolffy doesn't spy. Besides, I know him better than you do, John. I believe the best way to handle him is just the way Red has chosen—put him on his honor—well, not even that. Take him on trust. Radolffy can't understand it, but he can understand that Gayda isn't afraid of him, that he can do whatever he likes. If I know Radolffy, that's the best way to keep him out of trouble."

"Well, it's a hell of a way to run a country," I growled.

"Whose country is it? Gayda made it and he certainly has a right to run it in his own way."

"I suppose he has," I conceded. "But I'd like to know one thing, Beulah. Radolffy's fallen for you hard. Are you for him or for Gayda?"

"I'm for them both."

"Suppose the time comes when you can't be for them both? Suppose Radolffy gets tangled up in a revolutionary plot—or suppose he fails to see that you and Gayda are merely old friends; suppose he gets jealous and begins to——"

"Oh, John, you are an idiot! Why should he be jealous? I like Red and I like Radolffy and I don't see why I can't bring them together. No reason why the four of us shouldn't settle

down to a friendly bridge game every evening."

"Uh!" I growled. "As if anybody ever settled down while you were around."

CHAPTER XXVII.

MENACE OF WAR.

I SLEPT that night in a magnificent seventeenth-century four-poster bed and had coffee and rolls brought to me in the morning by an old servant who spoke some German. I couldn't get much out of him about politics, but I did get the impression that he was scared, that everybody was scared. With a war on two fronts and talk of rebellion in the air, there was reason to be scared.

His excellency the president, I learned, had motored off to the front to inspect the troops and Beulah had gone with him. Radolffy had gone downtown, so I called on the prime minister, Mr. Markovitch, who had been a lawyer downtown before the revolution and obviously wished that he were one again.

He wasn't much worried by the war with the Magyar bolsheviks, but he cursed the approaching Poles with passionate bitterness. One way or another it looked like the end of the Carpatho-Slovene Republic.

After lunch I went downtown too, and found Vereszvar full of rumors, as might have been expected in a capital forty miles behind the front and served by a single censored newspaper. The bolsheviks were coming; the Poles were coming; a bolshevik embassy was coming from Moscow to make peace; the supreme council would make peace; Gayda was about to abdicate——

Considerably disquieted, I came back to the castle at evening and found that the president had returned. I called on him promptly and told him what I had heard in the town.

"Yes, I know how they feel," he ad-

mitted. "And it is true that an embassy from Moscow has crossed the eastern frontier under flag of truce. They will be here to-night."

"What have they got to say?"

"I don't know, but they can make trouble. Always when a bolshevik embassy goes anywhere there is a man at the head to talk to the government and other men to make revolutionary propaganda and pass out gold. I am going to have those fellows watched like shoplifters in a department store, but still they can make trouble and they will surely try to.

"Here is what is wrong. Downtown they are not for bolsheviks, but this Magyar army is more Magyar than bolshevik and they are for Magyars. Peasants do not like bolsheviks either, but they are strong for the Russians. They hate Magyar bolsheviks, but Russian bolsheviks might get them. There is a lot of that old Pan-Slavism left in these mountains. If Russians say, 'We are your old friends come to save you from Magyars,' a lot of these hicks would believe them. So I will listen to these fellows and then hustle them out quick. I will send for you when they get here; I think you will see some fun."

But as for me, I couldn't see much prospect of any fun in Vereszvar. I wrote a long dispatch that night and filed it at the government wireless station in the castle, but without much hope that it would ever get to New York. For the station wasn't powerful enough to reach more than halfway to Paris.

Beulah, who had visited the front with Gayda, had come back and stayed in town, I learned, to dine with Radolffy. Gayda didn't seem worried by that, but I was worried. Beulah meant no harm, of course, but I wasn't at all sure that she was able to keep up with this atmosphere of central European intrigue.

I THOUGHT it over during a solitary dinner and over a cigar afterward. And when I had meditated for two or three hours to no purpose, I had about made up my mind to talk to Gayda about Beulah when a messenger summoned me to the presidential study. The Russian embassy had arrived.

"These bolsheviks are so smart they are not smart at all," Gayda chuckled. "I am receiving only one man—the head of the embassy—an American."

"An American?"

"His name is Greenberg; he comes from Hester Street in New York. I told you these Russians could undermine me if they played on that old Pan-Slavism that is still strong in my people, but they have not sent Russians. They have sent a Ukrainian and a renegade Pole and an East Side Jew. They had me worried, but I am not afraid of them now. If only the supreme council doesn't let me down——"

"What's the supreme council doing?"

"Oh, there is some monkey business with the Poles. I am afraid they will give this country to Poland and then I will have my hands full."

It was this loose end of the political situation that was taken hold of by the astute Mr. Greenberg. Little and beady-eyed and unshaven, he greeted Gayda with impudent assurance, though he was like a letter from home to me, homesick for Manhattan. He looked at me uncertainly.

"My friend Mr. McCoy," said Gayda. "He is in on this."

"Oh! Well, then I guess I bring in my stenographer. Miss Levine! There, now, we are all Americans together."

MISS LEVINE, too, was home-town stuff. Chubby and round-shouldered, with lank black bobbed hair and shell-rimmed spectacles on gold frames, she was of the type that you see by thousands packed in the Bronx Park express. Mr. Greenburg told us that

she had studied at the Columbia School of Journalism; she looked it. But she retired into the background and so did I and Mr. Greenberg began to talk about the Polish menace.

"You got only one chance in the world, Mr. Gayda. Maybe you could lick the Magyars or the Poles, but you can't lick them both. Join us, turn Communist, and the Soviet Republic of Hungary ends its war with the Soviet Republic of Carpatho-Slovenia. Instead of a war, you got an alliance. Then you can lick the Poles and Soviet Russia will help you."

"But we have no Communists here."

Mr. Greenberg grinned.

"I guess these people would be Communists if you told them to. You and I ain't Christian, Mr. Gayda, but we are college men—I was Columbia '15—and we know how Christianity was spread. They didn't convert the people; they converted the kings and the kings told the people they were Christians now. You're just the same as a king here and you'll go on just the same way even if you got a Soviet republic. You would still be chief commissar——"

"You would send in your own gang," said Gayda. "Bela Kun and the Magyar army——"

"Listen. Bela Kun has got to pretend he wants to get back the lost provinces of Hungary so as to keep the Magyars working for him. But if Carpatho-Slovenia goes Communist, that suits Bela Kun. He'll call off his army and send it against the Czecho-Slovaks or the Rumanians.

"We know you got no class-conscious proletariat here," he went on. "We know you got to keep on running the country yourself, Mr. Gayda. This is the only way you can have peace, the only way you can go on being dictator. The Magyars will let you alone and you can lick the Poles. We will help you. We want your passes, the gate-

way through the mountains. Give us that and Poland goes smash."

"You would send in a Russian army if——"

"We don't need to," Mr. Greenberg explained. "Vienna is ready to go Red. So is Czecho-Slovakia, with a little money and a little propaganda. The world revolution is marching on, Mr. Gayda. Central Europe has not got enough to eat and it is buried in war debts. Capitalism can't put Europe together. We will win, this year or next—but if you open the passes to us, we get Poland out of the way and win this year and we will see that you are taken care of. We will get Germany——"

"Your world revolution is still not much without France and England and America."

"Listen, Mr. Gayda. We're both Americans, ain't we? But you been cut off, buried here in the mountains for months; we get reports every day from America, in Moscow. The revolution is coming there too. The class-conscious workers are organizing——"

"I do not believe you," said Gayda. "And there is a lot of America besides the——"

"You mean the peasants. Of course, you come from the Middle West. We get reports from there, too, and the peasants are with us. The capitalist White Guards broke up the I. W. W. in 1917, but we are organizing. I tell you I know what is going on in America——"

"And I tell you you are crazy," Gayda snorted, getting up and standing over Greenberg, massive and red and terrible. "You do not know anything but Hester Street and you don't know so damn much about that. I have been on Hester Street myself. Plenty of people there know more about America than you do——"

"Well, there are always slaves too stupid to feel their chains——"

"I have seen your Hester Street

slaves. Pretty soon they are in Harlem and then they are on Riverside Drive. There will be no Riverside Drives, I think, in your Soviet republics, only one big Hester Street. America is the land of opportunity——”

Mr. Greenberg's disgust was all but hidden by his knowing smile.

“You fell for that capitalist bunk?” he demanded. “I have worked in America——”

“Yes, and so have I. I still pay my dues in the United Mine Workers. And I have gone to college with these peasants you talk about and I have played football. You never played football, did you?”

“What do you take me for?”

“For a fool,” said Gayda. “You do not even know Hester Street and yet you talk to me about the Middle West and the peasants. You go talk to one of those peasants and he would kick you clear back to Moscow. You try to get up a revolutionary mass meeting there and you would not get five hundred people, but you go out there next fall and you will see fifty thousand of these peasants come together to see a football game and paying their own money for it, more than a trainload of your bolshevik rubles.”

HE paused for breath; I saw Miss Levine's black eyes staring at him, eager and rapt.

“You worked, maybe, and you went to college, maybe, and you think you learned something, maybe. You would have learned more if you had played football. You do not know America unless you know football. Maybe it is not important, but it is important to those people and any man who wants to work on them is a fool unless he sees it. You think you know so much about America that I believe you don't know anything about central Europe either. Get out!”

“All right, I'll get out and see what

happens to you. Come on, Miss Levine.”

Miss Levine rose with a hissing breath.

“He was right,” she said. “I know what he means. I have gone to football games too. I have cheered for Columbia——”

“Eh?” said Gayda. “By gosh, that Americanizes them. You know.”

“Yes, I know. Izzy, you are a fool. I have tried to believe in this world revolution, but I can't now. You are a fool, I tell you——”

“You tell me?” said Greenberg. “Well, I'll tell you when we get over the border.”

She cowered away from him; she looked appealingly at Gayda.

“He will kill me,” she said dully. “But I don't care——”

“He won't kill you this side of the frontier,” said Gayda. “You can stay here in Carpatho-Slovenia if you like and——”

“You would detain a member of a diplomatic mission?” asked Greenberg excitedly.

“If she wants to stay, she can stay. She does not have to, but she can if she wants to. I told you you did not even know Hester Street. Now get out.”

So ended the reception of the embassy from Moscow by the provisional president of the Carpatho-Slovene Republic.

“Well!” said Gayda with a grin, when we were alone. “I made one convert anyway.”

“Are you sure of it, Red? Maybe it was a trick—maybe she's left here as a spy, as a propagandist——”

“Mac, you are too suspicious. I bet if you had been president you would have kept Radolffy out too. That girl is one of these bright pushing Jews that bite off more education than they can chew. But if you give them time to digest it, they are good people. I have seen them. I think maybe she will

be good citizen in America, or in Carpatho-Slovenia, when she thinks things over.

"That is what we must learn to do," he went on, "if the world is to be kept going—not run out the bad citizens, but make them good citizens. I will have them make sure she has not got enough money to do any propaganda and then she could do us no harm. That pants presser made me sore, talking as if he knew about America. Why am I not still swinging a pick in the mine? Because there is opportunity in America—if you have the makings of a full back.

"There is opportunity if you have got the stuff and I do not think any government can do much for those who have not got the stuff. Yet this Greenberg could have helped us stop the Poles and, unless we stop them, I do not know what is going to happen. Well, to-morrow is another day."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SOLDIERS FROM THE FRONT.

TO-MORROW, certainly, was another day—with the first faint warmth and freshness of spring. The air that blew in my window when I woke in the morning was enough to enliven anybody and the old man who brought me my breakfast was quite cheerful.

"All is over," he said in German. "There will be an armistice."

"How's that?" I demanded. "Who did it? What are the terms?"

He shook his head. These matters of state were too lofty for him. All he knew was that there was an armistice and his son at the front was safe. So I set forth to find out what had happened and presently got an audience with his excellency the president.

"I do not know what is up," Gayda admitted. "On the front, Magyars shout that war is over. I think it is

some trick. But Poles are in the northern counties and running up the Polish flag as they go and they say supreme council has given them the country. I have sent wireless messages to supreme council, but I get no answer. I think there is some dirty work in Paris; they are censoring dispatches. My wireless will reach only to Prague and Breslau and French can hold up messages. I wish I knew what was up."

"I'll send a query to the Paris office of my paper," I suggested. "Not that I suppose they'll let it go through, but it might help. Have you seen Beulah?"

"Yes, she asked me in to have breakfast with her this morning. I tell you it always makes me feel better when she is in the bleachers."

"Did she tell you anything about Radolffy?"

"I did not ask her."

"You'd better. He can make a lot of trouble for you, if he wants to."

"Mac, I tell you you are too suspicious! He could make a lot of trouble, but I don't think he wants to. Beulah would not be with him if he was going to make trouble."

"The man's in love with her," I observed. "She likes him—she may be in love with him." And if she is, she's for him no matter who's against him. You know Beulah. That time she was crazy about Joe Ring she let the football season go to the devil—laid down as cheer leader, let Joe slump——"

"Yes, I know she did that. But we brought her back."

"You brought her back—not we. If you want to bring her back now, better speak up before it's too late."

"I have got too much else to think about now. Let us see what we hear from Paris."

But we didn't hear from Paris till after lunch. Then I got a wireless message and when I read it I took it straight to Gayda.

"Look at that, Red. Evidently they

let a little of my query through, but not much."

The message read:

Your query not understood. Supreme Council has made no decision Carpatho-Slovene question, but has arranged armistice between Poles and Magyars on basis present fighting lines. Your dispatches unarrived. Do Poles or Magyars hold Vereszvar and what has become of Gayda.

He swore with great enthusiasm.

"They let that come through, Mac, not for you, but for me. Do you see the dirty work? They will not give this country to Poles because Wilson would object, so they suppress dispatches and pretend Poles have got it already and then they make an armistice between Poles and Magyars. Well, I will fix that. I will just write a dispatch to Paris, and I will put it in English; they know what it means."

He wrote:

French Foreign Ministry, Paris: You know I am still holding on. To hell with your armistice.

GAYDA.

"Now," he said grimly, "I will send word to the front to lay down a barrage and show those Magyars we are still on the map. I have got my reserves in town and to-night we move forward and start a counter offensive. We are going to win this game on the field, not in the committee room."

SO, this matter of high politics being settled, I went down into Vereszvar and found the whole town buzzing with peace talk. The streets were crowded, the café of the Hotel Magyar Kiraly was crowded, and at a big table, set off from the rest, was Radolffy with a little court already gathered round him. All the big men of the town were there, the business men who liked the old order and wanted peace at any price; they were playing up to him, courting him, and he sat there with his thin smile and nodded and shrugged and said little and listened much.

Beulah was there too, sitting beside him, and she too was smiling and nodding and apparently striving as hard to please as the wife of the new preacher. It angered me and I suppose my anger showed in my face as I looked at her across the room, for she said something to Radolffy, then joined me.

"Hello, John! Looking for news? I know it all. Come take a walk with me and I'll tell you all about it."

"Have you gone over to the enemy?"

"Me? My dear! I'm just buzzing around and picking up the scandal. Remember I used to be a newspaper man myself. Besides, Radolffy isn't the enemy—not yet."

"So Radolffy isn't the enemy?"

"Not mine," said Beulah. "He wants me to marry him and while I haven't told him I will, I haven't told him I won't. Got to wait till this cruel war is over, John. I wouldn't marry anybody while all the excitement is going on."

"What does Radolffy think about that?"

"Oh, that's just the trouble. He—you were right, you know. He doesn't understand this bond-of-old-friendship theory that we picked up at a coeducational college; and of course he doesn't understand the feeling that we all brought away from Fortville. I tell him Red's only a friend of mine and he says it's nonsense to talk about just plain friendship between a man and a woman. He says there must be more."

"He's a fool," I observed.

"I'm not so sure of it. All you boys that played at Fortville have pretended to worship me ever since as a sort of little tin goddess—just somebody that inspired you and cheered you up, somebody that you liked to have in the bleachers because she made you play better. That was fine for you, but what did I get out of it? Perhaps that was why I got crazy about Joe Ring—because he saw I didn't want that."

"You seemed to like it," I observed.

"Oh, I liked it for a while, but I got tired of it. And so did you. Joe Ring fell in love with me; Rupert fell in love with me; you thought you were in love with me, once—and so did three or four others of the Fortville gang. What it came down to was that every one of you wanted me to be in love with him and still be the little tin goddess for all the rest."

"We fell in and out," I observed bitterly. "I was in love with you once, but I wouldn't live with you now for a million dollars. Besides—Gayda never fell in love with you."

"Gayda never fell in love with anybody. When he left college, he had this obsession about finding out what kind of Slav he was. That's Gayda's strength, John—the single-track mind. He stuck to that till he found out and then he had to organize his people, make them a nation—and that's kept him busy ever since.

"I suppose he's come nearer being in love with me than he ever was with anybody. at that," she went on. "I—I rather thought he was, when he stopped to see me in Prague on his way to Paris. I wasn't in love with him, exactly, but it looked as if something might perhaps have started to happen. So one reason I came up to Vereszvar was to see if anything really would happen. Oh, your worst suspicions were justified, John; and Radolffy's too."

"Well?" I asked. "Why all this personal history?"

"Why, because nothing did happen. Gayda just said hello and asked me to dinner and then forgot about me and went ahead running the government. It was funny. His mind's still on the same track."

"Well?" I repeated. "What of it?"

"What of it? Why, only that Radolffy can't believe it. He knew it took something more than old friendship to bring me up here; and he won't believe

that when I saw how Red really felt, I started laughing at myself and have been laughing at myself ever since. He—he's jealous."

"I believe I predicted something of the sort," I said dryly.

"Oh, I knew you'd come in with an 'I told you so.' And so, because I was sore at myself for getting silly and romantic when Red really didn't think any more of my coming than he did of your coming; and because I do want to help him out, if I can; and because I really like Radolffy a lot—why, I'm trying to do some good up here after all, by keeping Radolffy out of mischief."

"Are you in love with Gayda?"

NO. I might have been if he'd given me any encouragement, but I don't fall in love so easily as I used to. After thirty, one has to be helped."

"With Radolffy, then?"

"I'm not in love with anybody!" she exploded. "I wish I could make a few of you idiots—you and Radolffy, if I must name names—see that. I'm thirty years old and I've been married and divorced and I've knocked around all over and just because excitable men get excited about me is no reason why I should get excited too. Remember, Red told me once—when I'd gone crazy about Joe Ring—that even if people fall in love you have to play out the schedule? Well, I'm trying to help Red do that—and Radolffy too."

"What's Radolffy up to? Or can you tell me that?"

"I know all he's up to—or, rather, all he isn't up to. And I can tell you— Oh, I suppose you think if I'm not for Radolffy I must be spying on him; just as some of his supporters here wonder if I'm for Gayda, or spying on Gayda. I don't see why you all have to be such idiots. I like Radolffy and I like Gayda and I'm trying to bring them both together. I'll do it, too, if I get a little time to work at it."

"Who's to interfere with you?"

"Silly fools that think I must be in love with a man because I like to talk to him. And also the people in town. They're about ripe for a revolution and they want Radolffy to lead them. They think Red won't make peace."

"They're right about that," I observed, and told her what had happened.

"Good for Red! They'll never run him out. But he doesn't know how badly things are going in town. They're all excited——"

"But the town's full of troops."

"They're no better than the rest. The army at the front may be all right, but these reserves are shaky. A good many of them would turn on Gayda if Radolffy gave the word."

"Then we'd better tell Red to stick Radolffy in jail."

"Not yet. He hasn't given the word, and I don't believe he will."

"Is that your doing?"

"Partly. And partly it's because he really isn't interested. He listens to all they say and just laughs and yawns and shrugs and says they're all silly asses, or Magyar words to that effect. I suppose if I said I'd marry him he'd never go in with the plotters, but somehow I can't quite see myself making such a frankly political match. Red's first rate and Radolffy's first rate and if I can bring them together I'll have done the best job of my life. That's as far ahead as I care to look just now."

"Yes," I admitted, "they're both first rate. But they are also human, Radolffy at least. And if he's jealous you'll never get him to work with Gayda. You'd better kill off his jealousy by saying you'll marry him, or else tell him you won't marry him and let Gayda stick him in jail."

"But that's so silly——"

"Maybe. Most men you know are silly, when you're around. Perhaps you don't like it, perhaps you don't try to

make them silly; but you might as well recognize it as a scientific fact that can't be left out of your calculations. If you want to bring Gayda and Radolffy together—over that awful gap that lies between the count and the peasant in this country—you'd better——"

My voice was drowned by a terrific clamor of automobile horns down the road. I started and looked blankly at a rushing honking column of motor cars that bore down upon us, flags fluttering from their hoods. I didn't understand; I stared at them till Beulah seized my arm and jerked me out of the way; they whizzed past us, flinging clots of mud. Every car was filled with uniforms in horizon blue. The French military mission was leaving the front.

"Now what does that mean?"

"I don't know what it means," I told her, "but I don't believe it's peace. These officers wouldn't leave the army the minute fighting stopped. No, somebody in Paris is trying to double cross Gayda, I think, and give this country to Poland. Perhaps——"

"Then let's get back to town," she interrupted. "Hurry!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

ROAR OF THE CROWD.

BEULAH and I hurried as fast as we could through the half-dried mud, but it was slow going. By the time we got back into town, Vereszvar was swarming like an overturned beehive. Every one had seen that long line of cars passing through and every one knew it meant something. Just what it meant was another matter; but whether the occasion called for celebration or headlong flight one thing was sure, that it was time for all citizens to come out in the street.

There was a stronger cordon of troops in front of the city hall across the square and behind them waited the French automobiles. The crowd

swarmed around them, held back by that line of bayonets; so the mission, then, was in the city hall and as a newspaper man I would find the news there.

But first we must pass the hotel, Beulah clinging to my arm, and there in the doorway was Radolffy, his supporters grouped about him like a general's staff.

"Where are you going?" he called to Beulah. "There is danger."

"What kind of danger? Where's Gayda? What's happened?"

"Who am I, to share secrets of state? I know only what is said, and it is said that the supreme council has abandoned President Gayda—thrown him to the wolves. He will not have their armistice so they withdraw the military mission, and without the French officers I do not think his army can stop the bolsheviks."

"And are you one of the wolves?"

"I am a nonpolitical person with no ambitions."

I wondered what that compact group of henchmen around him would have said to that, but none of them understood English. Then Beulah tugged my arm.

"Come on, John. Let's go up to the castle and find out what's happened."

"You don't need to," said Radolffy. "You will see his excellency at the city hall in a moment. Moses at last is coming down from the mountain."

"And when he does," I observed, "Heaven help the worshipers of the golden calf."

Radolffy still smiled lazily.

"Then come along," said Beulah. "We've got to get over to the city hall."

"Through that crowd?" Radolffy cried with sudden and amazing excitement. "No, no. It is not safe. What — Why —"

He came down to us, his eyes blazing.

"Beulah, you would go to this President Gayda?"

Her eyes blazed back at him, but with excitement, not with anger.

"Why not? He's an old friend. Besides, John has to find him to get the news; and I used to be a newspaper man myself. I've caught the old thrill. I want to see what's doing."

But it was too thick, too excited, too far gone in crowding, shoving excitement, for us to fight our way through it.

I drew Beulah back, out of the packed throng, and we dodged in a long circuit down the side streets. As we left the square, we almost fell over Miss Levine, standing on tiptoe on the curb, her arms folded under her loose sweater, the fire of fanaticism burning in her eyes.

"Red's got one friend left, anyway," said Beulah. "That girl's crazy about him. She hangs around him as if he were a miracle-working saint. But this mob's turned against him, hasn't it?"

There was no doubt of that. I knew that subdued snarling roar that was blended of five thousand disconnected individual snarls of dissatisfaction.

"Anyway, you're for him."

"Idiot! I've always been for him—and Radolffy too. Now, now, don't talk politics. I think we can make it—down this alley."

THE crowd milled aimlessly. On the graveled plaza before the city hall we found ourselves pushed up against a battered granite pedestal, on which a statue of some Magyar worthy had stood until the first frenzy of the revolution had pulled it down. We halted there, panting, and I saw a dead-white face looming above the crowd. Radolffy was coming toward us; the people parted before him instinctively; those who didn't give way were flung aside by his partisans.

"Beulah, you must get away. There will be trouble."

"You wouldn't make trouble," she told him in a laughing gasp.

"It is not for me to make it or unmake it. The trouble is made. And at any moment President Gayda may turn his machine guns on the crowd."

Beulah slipped behind the pedestal.

"All right. We're safe here."

Radolffy looked at the pedestal.

"This was the statue of my ancestor, Radolffy Gabor. He fought against the Turks, under Eugene of Savoy. In his day he was a great man in Hungary. I do not think he would be proud of a descendant who hid behind him to get out of the way of bullets."

"Gayda wouldn't fire on the crowd."

"He will have to. The golden calf has many worshipers and the old order has its worshipers too. Beulah, the Carpatho-Slovene Republic is dead. It died when the French officers went away. The only question is, who will follow President Gayda. I know what Radolffy Gabor would have done in my place. But Radolffy Arpad—I do not know."

"Gayda isn't done for yet," said Beulah. "If you care anything for this people, you'd better stand by him."

"Of course I care for this people. My family has taken care of them for a thousand years. But I am a subject of the King of Hungary whom these people have denied. Between them and the bolsheviks I am neutral; but if the reign of Dictator Gayda is over——"

"It isn't," said Beulah. "Now's the time for his friends to stand by him. Come, John! We can get over to the city hall, I think."

Radolffy reached out for her, but she eluded his grasping hand.

"Beulah!" he called, but she plunged on.

THEN we had reached the cordon of troops.

"American Red Cross!" Beulah called boldly.

"American diplomatic courier!" I echoed. "Wilson! Fershing!"

What these magic words might have availed I don't know, for just then an officer of the castle garrison saw us and at his word they let us pass. We ran across the sidewalk, up the steps to where Gayda, in military uniform, stood looking out at the crowd.

"Red!" she cried. "What are you going to do?"

His face hardened.

"I am going to play out the schedule. To hell with the supreme council. It is like that time Belding got an injunction against us; we played them and beat them anyway. I will take command of the army myself. I was only sous lieutenant in the Legion, but there is nobody else to do it. The war goes on."

"Are you going to tell this crowd that the war goes on?"

"Certainly I am going to tell them!"

"Don't, Red. Even your army's weakening—these reserves in town. They're all ready to turn against you at the first break—or before."

"I can't help that. I can't quit now and lose everything we have fought for. Well enough is not enough; you have got to win."

"Then send a platoon down there to that statue to arrest Radolffy. They all look to him."

"But he does not look to them," said Gayda. "He is not ambitious man. He doesn't give a damn."

"Not about power, maybe, but about some things. I—I'm afraid I've given him a cause for war, Red. He thought, when I came over here——"

"I do not care what he thought. I am glad you are here where you will be safe, Beulah, but—— Now I will tell this people."

"Don't Red. They aren't worth it."

"Not now, maybe, but they will be some day. They are only children. Our college was not worth it, when we played so hard at Fortville; but we went on and won and it is worth it now. I

will tell these people and then maybe we can catch the Magyars off their balance and chase them out. The Czecho-Slovaks have driven them back, farther west; we have a good chance now. Then maybe I will have time to turn on the Poles——”

I groaned aloud.

“Yes, I know,” he said impatiently. “It is a long chance. But it is the only way out. I will—— What is that?”

Down a side street sounded a lordly and authoritative automobile horn. It continued, grew louder. A car came out in the square—a big khaki-colored closed car with U. S. A. painted on the side and an American flag on the hood. In the interior a man in silk hat and cutaway sat very straight, hands folded over the head of his stick. The crowd parted before him; they shouted.

“Khatfield!”

CHAPTER XXX.

CRISIS OF HIS CAREER.

NOW where does Hatfield come in?” Gayda muttered.

“He’s been getting up some sort of diplomatic combination——” Beulah began uncertainly; then she broke off and looked at me.

“Diplomatic combination?” Gayda snorted. “This is no time for diplomatic combination. We are going to win this game on the field, not in the committee room.”

The car drew up before the steps and Hatfield got out, as correct as if he were going to an embassy tea. No other man on earth could have brought a silk hat and cutaway in presentable condition through that long, rough automobile trip; but Hatfield had done it. He bowed to Gayda and saluted him most properly in the French language, like any other president. Gayda responded, as if he were giving the ritual answer in fraternity meeting; then added in English:

“Well? Do you come from the supreme council?”

“Not officially,” said Hatfield. “I’m afraid I’m acting in my own right and of my own proper authority. But I’ve got a plan that I think the supreme council will back up—if you will.”

“All right. Come inside and give me the dope.”

Hatfield started up the steps; then he saw me and Beulah. He grinned.

“Hello, Beulah! They’ve been dragging the river for you to Prague; I’ve even been suspected of abducting you. I told them they flattered me. And here’s Mac, too—running after the news as usual. This is quite a class reunion, isn’t it?”

Gayda faced about.

“If you have come on official business, it is not a class reunion yet,” he said grimly. “Come inside. Yes, Beulah, you and Mac, too. The rest of them can stay out.”

So we locked ourselves in an office in the city hall, we four from Freshwater College, while the sentries took their stand beneath the windows to prevent the populace of Vereszvar from finding out what was to be done with their lives and destinies. Hatfield laid his silk hat on a desk, passed his cigarette case around and leaned back easily.

“Well, Red, I’ve had another idea.”

“Sometimes they work,” Gayda admitted. “What is this one?”

“You’re in a jam,” said Hatfield. “I passed the French military mission down the road. But the supreme council hadn’t given this country to the Poles. It’s merely given the Poles a chance to take it. I can get the Poles off your back, if you’ll listen to reason.”

“I will listen,” said Gayda. “But it has got to be reason——”

“It is,” Hatfield promised. “I’ve been talking to Masaryk in Prague. The Czecho-Slovak Republic offers you an alliance—military and diplomatic,

commercial treaty, customs union, railroad agreement——”

“But we must give up our independence?” Gayda interrupted. “That I will not do.”

“Listen, Red. This combination is not only for war, but for peace. Even after all the wars are over, your people have got to eat. Some day you can trade with Germany and Austria, but not yet. But you can trade with the Czechs under this arrangement and keep alive. And they won’t break the terms of the bargain. You can trust Masaryk.”

“I would trust Masaryk sooner than any man on earth; but we must stand alone.”

“How can you stand alone—fight a war on two fronts and live without trade after the war? If you sign this alliance, Czecho-Slovak troops will help you clear out the bolsheviks——”

“But they would not fight the Poles.”

“The Poles will be squared by cessions of territory farther east. I’ve telephoned to Paris about that; I’ve got Dmowski’s promise, for Poland, and Wilson will back me up.”

“But we must give up our independence——”

“No more than Canada has given up its independence to England. You have all local home rule—elect your own congress and your own governor general—which would be you, of course. The Czechs handle your foreign relations—which I think is only fair.”

“Yes,” said Gayda after a long pause, “it is fair. I apologize, Mr. Hatfield, for not having trusted you. It is fair. But I can’t take it.”

“Why not?” we all cried in unison.

“I tell you we have got to stand alone,” he said stubbornly. “I must teach this people absolute self-reliance or——”

“Self-reliance?” Hatfield repeated with a shrug. “Why, Red, you’ve spoon-fed them for seven years——”

“That is why I cannot leave them. I would not turn over a child of mine to an orphan asylum.”

“You wouldn’t have to. You’d stay on as governor general, if that’s what you’re thinking of——”

“That is not what I’m thinking of,” said Gayda. “I’m tired of being president! I would like to leave this government to Markovitch and go back to Cleveland and watch Tris Speaker play ball. I will make a lot of money now, too, for they have got prohibition at home and every blind tiger will have to have a soda fountain. But I must stay here and carry this people through. Not leaning on Masaryk and the Czechs; they must learn to do it themselves. I know it is hard,” he went on. “I know if you went out on those steps and offered those people a choice between this alliance and full independence, independence would not get a dozen votes. But I know what is good for them and I say we cannot take it. We will not be put on our feet by any diplomatic combination. We must do it ourselves.”

His teeth closed with a snap.

Beulah stirred uneasily.

“Red, this is the first time I ever knew you to play for clippings.”

“Clippings?” he repeated. “But, Beulah, we must play to win. You taught me that.”

YES, I taught you that. For twelve years all of us have lived by the religion we learned that day at Fortville. It’s been good for us—but there’s a limit. The final score isn’t the answer to every question. We taught Freshwater how to win, but they’re content to beat Wyndham and Belding and Deland; they don’t try to clean up on Harvard and Notre Dame, too. Rupert’s deal with the Czechs will get you everything your people really need, Red. It means that you’ve won, that you’ve done what you wanted, even if you

can't keep your nation absolutely independent, standing up all by itself. None of us can get all we want; there isn't that much.

"And now, when you can get the substance of freedom for your people, are you going to keep on fighting just for a form, a fiction? Going to risk everything you've won, get these people killed off and ruined, just so that history won't have to say that Radomir Gayda ever gave in? You're a hero, Red, so far, but if you turn down this offer you're just bullheaded and stubborn. You've stuck to this one idea all your life and you're about ninety-five per cent successful. But if you hold out for a hundred per cent success just so that history can say you never yielded an inch—why, you're playing for clippings.

"Perhaps I know what's the matter," she went on. "It's this silly jealousy between you and Rupert. That's Rupert's fault, mainly—and my fault. But Rupert's made amends now and it's your fault, Red, if it goes any farther. You've always disagreed, you two. Rupert didn't want to go to Fortville; you did. You were right. Rupert wanted to make peace with Austria-Hungary; you didn't. Again you were right. But now Rupert offers you all the substance of victory, and if you hold out for a silly form you're wrong—wrong—all wrong.

"You've got to listen to me, both of you, because I'm partly to blame for your jealousy," she continued. "I know you've never been in love with me, Red, or at least if you ever were you didn't know it. But too many people have been in love with me. It makes them all crazy, mean, suspicious. God knows I don't want it. I never loved anybody but Joe Ring—not even the man I married—and you all know what a disaster Joe Ring turned out to be."

Gayda slapped his knee.

"By gosh, Beulah, you are right. I

think you are always right. Mr. Hatfield, I will sign your alliance and come in with you—after I have licked the bolsheviks."

BEULAH flung out her arms in a desperate gesture.

"Afterward? Why not now?"

"Yes," said Hatfield, "why not now? If you sign up now, Czecho-Slovak troops will come and help you——"

"You remember my first season of football?" Gayda interrupted. "We counted on Gog and Magog to do all the work, and we learned at last that you must do your own work. I think Czecho-Slovak army would do better than Gog and Magog, but these people must do this one job themselves.

"When Crab Casseltine first came to us, we won games because we were more afraid of him than we were of the teams we played against, but the time came when we were not afraid of Crab Casseltine, when we won because we knew how to win. I have got to bluff my people now, bluff them so hard that the Magyars will not have them bluffed any more. And when they have learned to win, then I will sign that alliance and step out; anybody can run the country after that."

"Now I will go out and talk to the crowd——"

"Wait a minute," said Hatfield. "Look over this memorandum of terms for the alliance, will you——"

Beulah beckoned to me.

"These affairs of state are too much for us, John. Let's get out."

We turned to one of the sliding doors that inclosed the room, passed through it and found ourselves in another office, empty, furnished very much like the one we had just left.

"I thought this was the way out," she said. "But never mind." She dropped into a swivel chair. "Let's rest a bit. My nerves are about as tired as Gayda's."

She nodded wearily.

"Yes, we had to get him out of it. But what next? He's been a one-idea man all his life. He won't stay on here, now that his work is done. He'll go home—and what will he do? This work has been his whole life—his work and his pleasure and his religion. Where does he go from here? I think we'll all have to be good to him, John—very good to him. He deserves it."

"Uh!" I observed uncharitably. "I suppose that means you'll marry him, then."

"I rather expected to, when I came up here. It seemed—oh, suitable——"

"Yes," I admitted, "it's suitable. You're both first rate. It seems suitable to me, too."

"It seemed suitable to everybody but Red," she observed. "Lucky I could laugh at myself, isn't it?"

"You could make him ask you if you wanted to," I suggested. "Surely you know enough—er—technique——"

"Thank you, John." Her voice had a dry sharpness that set me on edge. "I do, as it happens. But I don't care to use it. If he won't have me, I won't have him. Thank goodness I've got over that silly fancy."

"Ah!" I observed. "So it's Radolffy!"

"Idiot! Oh, I don't blame you. I've bungled everything. I thought I could bring Red and Radolffy together and I've only pushed them apart. Radolffy might have worked with Red if he hadn't got jealous. Silly! If I could only have had ten minutes to talk to him this afternoon. But as it is I've only spoiled things—as usual."

"Beulah! You never spoiled——"

"I spoiled Joe Ring and Rupert—I spoiled my marriage—at least I was half to blame—and now this——"

"Beulah!" I found myself holding her hand; her eyes glinted up at me in a sardonic little smile.

"Now, John! You haven't tried to

make love to me for ten years. Don't begin it again just because you're sorry for me."

"But you mustn't be depressed," I told her desperately. "You—you haven't done anything wrong, yet you're all discouraged——"

"Am I?" she asked. "Maybe that was only technique."

I let go of her hands, so that she should not feel how mine were trembling.

"Beulah! It's been ten years since you used any technique on me."

"True," she admitted. "Besides, I'd forgotten. You said you wouldn't live with me for a million dollars."

"Well," I explained unsteadily, "that was only a figure of speech. But you said just now that you didn't want love—didn't like it—you'd had enough of it. What you wanted was loyalty and friendship——"

"Well," she mused, "we've always given each other that——"

"Beulah Macarthur, if you're asking me to marry you——"

"Suppose I am?"

"Well—you said you didn't want love—it made you tired—— I've always been in love with you, but you don't want it——"

"Did I say that? Well, that was only another figure of speech."

AND just at that moment the doors that led to the office were flung open and we looked up irritably at Hatfield.

"Time to break up the class reunion," he observed—I suppose I must have been letting go of Beulah, perhaps; at any rate he managed to grin at us even as he added: "Hell seems to be popping. Can't you hear it?"

"What's that?" I asked.

"That?" said Hatfield with a shrug. "Why, the roaring mob outside is the free citizenry of the Carpatho-Slovene Republic, dancing around the golden

calf; demanding that their liberator from across the seas turn them into Magyars or Poles or Czecho-Slovaks, or anything else that will save their skins; demanding that, and threatening to rise up and lynch him if they don't get it.

He paused; his voice changed.

"And the large red-headed person in the gray uniform, who is telling the cabinet where it gets off—why, that's only a second-rate ringer, a poor bo-hunk from one of father's coal mines, whom I brought to Freshwater College twelve years ago to see if he could learn to play football. By God! I may be as rotten a statesman as the Paris papers say, but I've done one good job in my life, at any rate, even if these Carpatho-Slovenes haven't brains enough to see it."

The swarm around Gayda dissolved.

Beulah ran across the room and caught his arm.

"Red! What are you going to do?"

"I am going to tell this people a few things," he said cheerfully.

"All right. We'll come with you."

"You will stay here," he said. "There may be a riot—shooting—"

"Oh, splish," said Beulah.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE THING TO DO.

SO we went out together, arm in arm, and squeezed through the cordon of soldiers who had made a tiny ring around the empty pedestal. Gayda climbed up on it, from a soldier's shoulders; he stood there a moment drawing in a deep breath, and there was not a sound from the thousands of people packed in the square. They crowded in on the thin line of troops.

I saw Miss Levine in the front rank, her arms folded under her open sweater, the fire of exaltation in her eye. I saw Radolffy in the center of his group, Radolffy to whom this crowd

would turn at a word. But evidently the word had not yet been given. Radolffy stood there, faintly smiling, the smoke of a cigarette curling up about his face. His glance wandered toward our group; he stared at Beulah rather quizzically, but what his look meant was beyond me.

Then Gayda began to talk.

What did he say? Well, the officer beside me spoke a little German and tried to interpret for us, but not very successfully. After a long rapid paragraph Gayda paused for breath, and the officer stammered: "He says we must fight for fatherland." Another long harangue and the officer told us: "We do not need French officers; our brave army will drive out the enemy." And so on.

Even Radolffy was laughing, as much at himself and the crowd, I suppose, as at the joke. Then Gayda finished quickly with a volley of thumping exhortations and the mob cheered. Pro-Magyar, pro-peace as it might have been ten minutes ago, it was pro-Gayda now. It broke into an echoing roar:

"Zhivio Gayda! Long live Gayda!"

They roared, a forest of waving arms; even Beulah and Hatfield and I waved our arms. Miss Levine's arms, too, came out from beneath her open sweater; there was something black in her hand; I saw a flash, heard a pop and—

Gayda, erect and motionless on his pedestal, started and swayed; a look of amazement came over his wide face, I saw a little black spot in the middle of the broad red forehead; and then he fell, swaying and tumbling with a crash.

In that one instant of stunned silence I saw the soldier nearest Miss Levine galvanized into action; the butt of a rifle went up and a flashing bayonet went down—too late, I heard later. She shot herself before he touched her. I didn't have time to look at her then.

For in the next second the crowd had exploded in a tumult of shouts and groans and shrieks; it was milling again, there were a dozen fights, soldiers were pressing forward to clear the square. A thousand voices cried "Treason!" Every man who had meditated treason himself ten minutes before was eager to wreak vengeance on his traitorous neighbor. This was no place for Beulah. Hatfield and I dragged her back toward the city hall, fighting our way with fists and shoulders; his silk hat was gone; his cutaway was torn; we struggled like men carrying the ball through the line—but we made it.

WE pulled her up on the steps and looked at the square, swirling around a dozen vortices; at the gray lines of soldiers slowly clearing it, at gleaming bayonets— We led her inside, back to the room where we four had talked an hour ago. Markovitch was there; the whole cabinet was there, wringing its collective hands. The door burst open and four soldiers came slowly in, carrying Gayda; they laid him down on the floor; a doctor bent over him.

"Dead?" whispered Markovitch. The doctor nodded.

Markovitch shivered.

"Close the door and post sentries. Let no one in."

Markovitch was scared blue; the cabinet was scared even bluer. They wrung their hands and groaned and shivered. Who would command the army? Who would head the government? Who would hold off the Magyars and the Poles and then conclude the treaty that President Gayda had mentioned? Who would do anything? Who could? Not they. Let the automobiles be brought to the back door; the frontier was not so far—

Then the door was flung open, sentries or no sentries, and Arpad Ra-

dolffy walked in, his eyes burning black in the pallor of his face. He looked down at Gayda, then up at Beulah and Hatfield and me.

"This was a very great man," he said in English. He turned to the cabinet and began to talk—to talk in Slavic; and every sentence he translated into English for us three, for he seemed to regard us as the trustees of Gayda's ambitions, the legatees of his duty.

"What are you going to do?" Radolffy asked.

"What can we do? Who can do anything?"

"Who will command your army?"

"There is no one to command it."

"All right," said Radolffy. "I will command it." He turned to us apologetically. "I was a colonel in the Imperial and Royal Austro-Hungarian army; I am technically competent. And these people will follow me."

"Would you fight the Magyars?"

"Bah, those are not Magyars. They are bolsheviks. If any honest men are among them, they must pay the price of being found in bad company."

"But you don't believe in the republic, do—"

"I do not believe in anything."

"Then why are you doing this? You wouldn't double cross—"

"Double cross?" He was puzzled. "I would not betray the republic, if that is what you mean. I will finish what this man has begun."

"Then you do believe in him!"

Radolffy shrugged.

"My dear lady, do not try to make me out a sentimentalist. I tell you I do not believe in anything. But when I go to the theater, if the play is good, I don't like to leave before the last act. What I do, I do on impulse, perhaps—but an artistic impulse, the impulse that has led so many writers to try to finish 'Edwin Drood.' I should like to see that the play goes on to the last curtain."

"And afterward?" Beulah asked.

"We may leave that to Messieurs les Diplomates, may we not, Mr. Hatfield? And now I must take the oath of loyalty to the republic—Gayda said I must do that to serve in the army, I remember. I am still bound by my oath to the King of Hungary, but he is in exile and I can fight these bolsheviks with a clean conscience."

HE turned to the cabinet; there was an exchange of query and reply, then he glanced back at us, smiling.

"Well, it seems that the cabinet does not remember the form of the oath of loyalty to the republic nor is there any copy of the constitution hereabouts. President Gayda attended to all that, it seems. Most extraordinary, this New World of yours. Very well, if I can take no oath I will give my promise to you, Beulah. I promise that I will do what Gayda would have done."

She bowed.

"I believe you—and I do thank you—so much."

"Oh, don't thank me," Radolffy protested. "This amuses me, and it is so hard to amuse oneself, now. Well, Mr. McCoy, as a journalist, will you follow our counteroffensive?"

"Coming right along," I told him, when I heard Beulah gasp.

"John! You're not going down to the front?"

"It's what they pay me for," I told her. "Why—do you—do you mean what you said a while ago?"

"I hate men who insist on being literal!" she flared. "But I—I don't want you to take any chances——"

"Beulah Macarthur," I demanded, "at your age do you think people can live without taking chances?"

"I've taken enough chances," she whispered, "and so have you. I—things mean more now, don't they?"

They certainly did! "I know you have to go and cover this war," she

went on, "but if you come back this time don't ever leave me again."

So at last Beulah had brought Gayda and Radolffy together, as she had brought Gayda and Hatfield together. And at last Hatfield had the satisfaction of doing one thing, making one great diplomatic combination, that he could call his own. I think that combination contributed a good deal to the quieting down of central Europe, but Hatfield would be the first to admit that it wouldn't have worked if Radolffy hadn't driven the bolsheviks out of Carpatho-Slovenia, or if the Rumanians, six months later, hadn't beaten them utterly. He knows that what counts is the final score.

His own class is back in power in Hungary, bitter and yengeful, longing for the recovery of the lost provinces, and here is one of the lost provinces in the hands of Arped Radolffy, who refuses to give it back. All his old friends call him a traitor. He finds it amusing to be a traitor.

CERTAINLY Gayda was lucky. If he lived, he must have had constant friction with the Poles, the Czechs, the Rumanians. But Gayda died at the peak of his career, all that he fought for has been accomplished; now that he is dead, he is a Pan-Slav hero.

Beulah and I—— Well, I've had better luck than any of them. As to Beulah, I don't know. She'd have made an excellent governor general's wife and I think Radolffy was more nearly up to her than I am, but she says she's satisfied and that is enough for me. She likes me and she likes our children. Our eldest, Radomir Gayda McCoy, is only five; it's too early to be sure he'll do all the great things his mother expects of him. But he does look as if he might be a great plunging full back about 1940, and that means something to Beulah and me, who were at Fortville on the day this all began.



Moccasins of the Man-god

By Kenneth Gilbert

Author of "The Triumph of Ahmeek," "Cougar Code," Etc.

In the primitive North country, a dog is more than man's best friend—he is often his savior.

THEY were pacs made of the pelt of the hair seal; poreless, water-resistant, and they were the work of some artist of the Thlinget tribe who had embroidered them with wonderful totem symbols done in colored beads. The Tye Mowitsch had given them to Winthrop, whom the old Indian loved like a son, for the deputy marshal, a tall silent man whose fairness and justice men swore by in the Northland, had once done the chief an unforgettable service.

Mere footgear they were, yet to Kamooks, Winthrop's great dog, in whose veins ran the blood of sturdy, strong-legged Siberian ancestors and big-boned Danes, they were sacred. For they belonged to the "man-god" on whom Kamooks lavished affection that poured from a heart given to but one human

in a lifetime. About the cabin, the man-god wore boots, but when he pulled on the moccasins, Kamooks knew that adventure hovered near. Days on the trail, with the white wastes empty and glittering, or nights at some snug camp in the depths of a spruce jungle with a blizzard roaring in impotent rage about the hurriedly built yet stout lean-to of fragrant boughs. Or clear, cold nights when the silence of desolation seemed to bear down smotheringly; unbroken save for the occasional weird, eerie howl of a distant wolf; nights when the stars were large and bright and vitreous-hard with chill clarity. These things Kamooks felt rather than understood, felt them keenly.

At this moment the moccasins stood at one side of the rough, stone fireplace. Between naps Kamooks rested

his eyes on them, but it seemed certain that they were not to be donned this night. The man-god sat at a table smoking many pipes of a fragrant blend of tobacco and kinnikinnick—a trick he had learned from the Indians, who once held to the belief that all tobacco is poisonous unless mixed with the inner bark of the red willow. Now and then he wrote on the papers before him.

ON an old coat in a corner slept Chena, young son of the bulky Kamooks; a lubberly puppy, all legs and awkwardness, and cursed with an ever-present desire to chew and shred anything in which he could fasten his milk teeth.

By and by Chena, startled into wakefulness by nightmare, got up and wobbled toward the fireplace, where sappy birch logs crackled and flamed. Chena nuzzled his big father's head with fearless confidence; even tugged at an ear, but Kamooks ignored him by pretending to be asleep. Then the pup, eyes shining with sudden interest, moved toward the moccasins. Here was something worth while to worry and maul. One of Kamooks' eyes opened slightly.

At the hair-seal taint which still lingered about the moccasins, the pup growled in vast anger and seized the offending object, shaking it violently. Suddenly he dropped it and spun about, cowering.

For, looming over him, a menacing, terrifying figure, was Kamooks, and in the giant's throat rumbled deep warning. Not for worlds would Kamooks have harmed his son, but this youngster must understand that what belonged to the man-god must not be defiled.

An instant Chena stood there, fear in his eyes. Then, with a protesting whine he sidled around his big parent and went to his corner. Winthrop, who was watching, laughed, and at the sound of his voice, Kamooks' eyes softened and he wagged his tail. He came over

to the table, and nuzzled his man-god's hand. The pat he got on his broad head was reward enough. He returned to the fireplace, and his dreams.

A minute later he had risen quickly, and padded silently to the door. He was not threatening now; merely alert. Then Winthrop heard the scuffling sound of footsteps in the snow.

At the word of caution, Kamooks went back to his place, to lie down, but listening with ears sharply set forward, and eyes fixed on the door, as Winthrop drew the bar. An Indian, face almost hidden in the sealskin parka with its head lining of wolverene fur, which does not gather frost, came in. He grunted reply to Winthrop's salutation, and handed the white man a letter.

Winthrop read and nodded understanding to the messenger, who left. Then the dog shivered in sudden eagerness for the man-god went to the fireplace, and—marvelous thing!—picked up the moccasins. Kamooks arose, and stood there, eyes bright with happiness, studying the man-god's face. Winthrop masked a grin.

"Boy, you're due for disappointment." It was habit to talk to the dog as to a human companion. "Stransky, the killer, is hiding at Halfway House. I've got to surprise him. You'd only be in the way, so you can't go. I'm not even going to bother with the dog team; just mush it on foot.

"You stay with Chena. I'll ask one of the boys to look after you to-morrow."

Kamooks strove with all his might to grasp the meaning of the words. They did not sound promising. Yet the spoken name of Chena meant something. He glanced at the corner where his son was now dutifully curled up. Could it be that the man-god intended to take Chena, and leave him, Kamooks, behind? No. The man-god would never do such an unthinkable thing. Kamooks decided that his idol was merely fooling.

He wagged his tail, as he saw the man-god filling a pack with food and blankets. As Winthrop picked up his rifle, and swung the pack to his back, Kamooks bounded for the door with a rumble of pleasure. Winthrop shook his head regretfully, and patted the dog. "Not this time, old boy."

There was firmness in the voice, and Kamooks looked up doubtfully at the object of his adoration. He was tensed, ready to dash out of the door the instant that it was opened. Winthrop saw, and his face became stern.

"Down, Kamooks!"

The dog shrank back, hurt, humiliated. As though the man-god had beaten him, he crept toward his favorite spot by the fireplace and lay there obediently. Winthrop went out.

FOR a long time Kamooks kept his place. He could not understand why he had been left behind. Sudden fear filled his heart. Must he always stay behind? Perhaps the man-god was angry.

The cabin, so cheerful before, had become very lonely. Even Chena seemed to sense the change, for after a time he came over and touched noses in conciliating fashion with his big parent, as though seeking the comfort of companionship. By and by, he lay down and went to sleep against Kamooks' warm body. Finally, Kamooks got up and walked about the cabin, sniffing. Then he returned to the fireplace and, with Chena, dozed.

Yet in his dreams he was still hopeful for the sound of the man-god's footsteps. But the footsteps did not come, and at last the grayness of daylight filled the place.

Suddenly, Kamooks was wide awake, as though he had heard a call. He listened intently, then got up and went to the door. But the silence held.

Yet something had spoken to him, was speaking again. It was nothing

that could be recorded by the five senses; nevertheless, the call came as clearly as though the man-god himself were there. Kamooks rumbled reply and began scratching frantically at the hewn door. Now and then his deep bass filled the cabin with terrifying sounds.

Chena, backed in the farthest corner, regarded his parent fearsomely. For an hour Kamooks raged, and was then silent, as if convinced of the futility of his efforts. He had gnawed away at the door with his strong teeth until one corner was splintered, but still it held. The single window was too high and too small to scramble through.

Now he contented himself with pacing up and down like a caged tiger while the hours dragged by. At last he heard a light crunching in the snow outside, and he quivered with suppressed eagerness.

But his attuned ears told him that it was not the man-god returning. The door opened, and an Indian stood there with food in his hands. He grinned and spoke in friendly overture.

Kamooks did not unbend. He merely let the Indian open the door a little wider, in order to set the food inside; then, with a fearful roar, he sprang.

It was a bluff and it worked. The Indian, fear in his eyes, leaped backward, and tried to slam the door shut, but Kamooks' big shoulders hurled it open. With a bound, the great dog was outside.

Forgotten was the man-god's order that he must stay behind; something stronger impelled him. He must go to his idol at once. Eagerly he set off.

Two feet of snow lay on the ground, and on the hard-packed streets of the village itself it was impossible for him to pick up the trail of Winthrop. Yet those eyes and that broad head signified intelligence. Around the outskirts of the village, swinging in a big circle, went Kamooks, looking for sign.

There were but three main trails leading in and out of the place, and the man-god must have taken one of them. Kamooks took one that cut straight back over the hills, through a pass. For a mile he followed it without finding a clew, and he turned back. He took the trail that led across the valley in the opposite direction. Intuition rather than his keen nose sent him hurrying back again. The river trail was last. Away he sped, nose close to the snow.

By and by he saw an indentation in the smooth, white surface, where Winthrop had laid down his pack while adjusting the straps. The scent of the man-god was there, and Kamooks' heart beat with sudden joyousness; he was on the right track. At top speed he went on again, trailing now by sight. He was watching for branch trails where the man-god might have turned off, but there were none. The trail led on and on, up the river.

Like a sprinting race horse, the great dog covered the ground. Down the trail came a dog team, with a laden sled, and a man riding the runners. At sight of him, the leader of the team stopped uncertainly. Intelligent mute that he was, the leader recognized the giant as a friend, and so did the driver, but the spectacle of him apparently charging at them was unnerving.

The big dog might be mad. At a command from the driver, the team swung off the trail into the snow and waited, while the man threw off his fur mitten and loosed the six-gun beneath his parka. It was best to be prepared. As though he had not seen them, Kamooks went by like a gray flash.

THE dog-musher grinned understanding, with obvious relief.

"Must have got separated from Winthrop, and is trying to catch up," he

guessed. "Lord, but I'd hate to have him coming at me like that, and meaning business. He's as big as a horse!"

On and on up the river trail went Kamooks tirelessly, as the miles flowed under his hurrying feet. At last he came to an unexpected fork in the trail. One way, his nose told him, was the direction that the dog team had come from. Yet in the snow on the other trail lingered the scent of the man-god. Winthrop had turned off. Kamooks went that way.

He rounded a bend and went through a patch of stunted birch and aspen. The way grew rougher, and the trail more twisting and circuitous. Kamooks understood now; the man-god was taking a short cut. The dog had often been with Winthrop at the Halfway House.

The man had gone slower here, for the snow had become drifted. Kamooks followed the trail by sight, as it passed under the face of a cliff. And then he came upon something that caused the long hairs on his back to erect, while his lips drew back, baring his fearsome fangs. A growl of anger rumbled in his throat as almost buried impulses stirred within him once more. He had smelled fresh blood. There was a large splotch of it on the snow.

The scent of it still lingered in the air, and here, too, the snow was broken and trampled. Muttering ominously, Kamooks nosed out the trail. The man-god had been here; indeed, there was sign of him everywhere. But likewise a stranger had trampled the snow. And where was the man-god now?

A single trail led from the spot, and that had been made by the man-god; there was no mistaking it. His idol had been unhurt, then!

Fury died in the dog's heart, and eagerly he set off on the track. It led away toward the river. He stopped in doubt, as his nose discovered the same odor. At regular intervals, he found, the snow was stained. Fear re-

awakened in Kamooks; not for himself, but for the human being whom he worshipped.

Nosing along uneasily, Kamooks slowed his speed. The trail was that of the man-god; there could be no question as to that. But the crimson stain on the snow! Kamooks could not account for that.

Nearer and nearer to a high bank which overhung the river went the trail. A dense growth of young spruce showed ahead, and closer to the water were fringing willows, stiff and sapless. Kamooks came out at last on the lip of the cliff. Below, in sullen eddies, swirled the water, sluggish with floating blocks of ice. The bank pitched away steeply here.

But the trail did not end. It turned, and followed the river's course as though the maker sought some easier spot to descend to the actual beach.

Kamooks went faster now, for in the thickets where the man-god had passed the scent was stronger. Suddenly he stopped stark, as though frozen, and peered down a break in the bank.

Puzzled. Then understanding came swiftly, terrifyingly. With a bellowing roar, he leaped forward.

DARKNESS had slowed Winthrop's pace at the beginning. He did not believe that he would reach the Halfway House before night, for twilight would follow daybreak within a few hours.

For six months, "Big" Stransky, the man he sought, had been hiding in these wilds. There was little chance to escape over winter trails, with navigation closed; yet with the coming of spring, he might make it and get passage on some early boat up from the States.

Early the previous fall he had murdered two prospectors on Eldorado Creek but before he could get out of the country he had found the neck of the bottle corked. Deciding not to run

the gantlet of peace officers to the coast, he had taken what grub he could pack from the cache of his victims, hid the gold he had stolen and had struck deeper into the wilderness.

The first blizzard blotted his trail. An experienced woodsman, it was not difficult to believe that he could build a cabin back in the hills, and live comfortably so long as his grub held out.

Then a murdered trapper, and another rifled food cache, gave a clew to his whereabouts. But before the law could reach out for him, a three-day storm had granted him a new opportunity to get away. Nothing more was heard of him for two months.

Seemingly, however, his supplies had run low, and, driven to desperate measures by starvation, he had appeared abruptly at the Halfway House and had gotten more supplies at the point of a gun. No sooner had Stransky left, than a messenger was dispatched to Winthrop, the nearest peace officer.

Winthrop surmised that Stransky expected the alarm to be spread quickly. The man had not taken enough food to last him more than a week. The deputy marshal hoped that the killer would return to the Halfway House within a few days for another supply. For that reason, Winthrop preferred to reach the place after dark, so that Stransky, if he were watching, would not be apprised.

When noon came, Winthrop decided that his arrival would be very late, if he kept to the regular trail. Accordingly, he determined upon the short cut that was usually avoided at this time of year.

Although breaking trail slowed his speed, Winthrop knew that he would save time in the long run. He had just swung under a cliff, when there came a shattering impact that knocked him flat. Dazedly, he felt a numb sensation in his left shoulder, and on the heels of the shock came a faint, snap-

ping sound, very thin and spiteful in the frosty air. Stransky had guessed that his pursuer would take the short cut!

Flat on his face in the snow, with his left arm crumpled under him, Winthrop lay still, feigning death. At the same time, he worked loose his six-gun, with the fingers of his right hand. His rifle was out of reach.

For many minutes he lay—silent without hearing anything. Up on the cliff, where he had lain in wait, Stransky was watching, ready.

Footsteps in the snow at last. Although Winthrop, his face half buried, could not see, he could hear the would-be assassin's approach—cautious steps that came nearer and nearer.

From the tail of a half-closed eye, Winthrop could see the man's legs as far upward as the knees. Seemingly, Stransky had been having no easy time of it. His heavy corduroy trousers were frayed at the bottom, and the boots that he wore gaped with holes.

A jolt in the ribs from Stransky's boot, but Winthrop did not flinch. Then the killer was stooping, listening, the sound of his breathing close to the fallen man's ears. A strong hand caught Winthrop's parka, and rolled him over with a jerk. At that instant Winthrop came to life.

Whipping out the gun, he raised it and shot twice, but like a panther the killer was on him, and the deputy knew that he had lost his chance. Yet in desperation he fought back. He was powerful, but with one useless arm he could be no match for Big Stransky.

Now Stransky had wrenched away the six-gun, and Winthrop breathed a prayer. Ammunition was precious to the murderer. The deputy saw the gun barrel grasped by the thick fingers, and the weapon swung aloft. A sickening shock, and then oblivion.

Then Winthrop was awake again, but he knew much time had elapsed.

He was lying in the snow, where he had been flung, and in his ears echoed sounds of combat—bellowing roars and horrified, gurgling cries. He sat up.

A few feet away something struggled convulsively, while over it bent a bristling, gray demon of reddened eyes and slavering jaws.

"Kamooks!" Winthrop's voice, though faint, yet had a ring of command. "Don't kill him, boy!"

On hands and knees he was crawling toward his six-shooter, whose butt protruded from the snow. And at his words, the great dog left off, and ran to him with a whine of anxiety.

Ten minutes later, the three of them moved slowly down the trail. Ahead went Big Stransky, torn, battered, yet saved for the law. Fear showed in the eyes which he turned frequently on the huge dog who walked stiff-legged behind him.

WINTHROP followed, dizzy and weaving on his feet, yet gamely sticking to it. The six-shooter was grasped in his right hand, but it was not needed.

So they went on, until they met a dog team with two men. Winthrop got their attention.

The dog team turned back. It was in his own cabin that night, with Kamooks lying contentedly before the fireplace, and Chena worrying an old pack strap, that Winthrop finished his story.

"Stransky made one mistake," he said. "Before he started packing me to the river, to throw me in, he stripped off my moccasins and put them on. Kamooks trailed him, thinking the track was my own. When he found Stransky wearing my pacs—"

At the sound of Winthrop's voice, Kamooks opened his eyes lazily, and observed with satisfaction that the moccasins of his man-god stood in their accustomed place—which was as it should be. He went back to his dreams.



A Little of Both

By Delos W. Lovelace

A good mixture is brain and brawn, thought Tommy Nolan—and so it was!

TRAFFIC upon Glenwood Avenue, bent upon business or merely out for the joy of riding, turned docilely right and left, without question and without arguing the point, at the sign:

NOLAN & SON, CONTRACTORS,
STREET CLOSED.

But young Tommy Nolan stayed early and late. There was nothing docile about "Big Joe" Hayford and in his own good time he would, Tommy knew, attempt to prove the sign in error.

"Reilly!" He called, and a sliver of a man, gray-haired and cadaverous, limbered forward from off a tar barrel by the curbing.

"Here come Hayford and his gang," said Tommy happily. "Get the men. Don't tell dad."

Reilly shambled away as Big Joe and his band surged forward. Tommy hefted a pickax handle in his right fist. His manner was calm and confident.

The Nolans believed in preparedness, although the Glenwood job antedated by two decades the year when that word attained to the dignity of a slogan. With proper foresight, Tommy and his father, hereditary Democrats, helped to give Adamsburg a pro-Bryan administration while a national tidal wave was sweeping Theodore Roosevelt into the presidency. In consequence of their prudence they acquired the Glenwood contract.

Big Joe, who might, as justly as Tommy, have born the title "Young," believed in preparedness also. Unlike the Nolans he owned to no political allegiance; he asked only that his pot be kept boiling while he founded his municipal dynasty. But he did own the

Glenwood precinct. And when the Nolans, coming into his bailiwick, refused to furnish fuel, he marked them down as enemies.

Young Tommy could add two and two and tell cheese from chalk. He puzzled not at all over the agency which one dark night tore up a newly laid section of his honestly built street.

"Hullo, Nolan!" said Hayford, halting with his adherents at a reasonable ten feet.

"Good morning, Mr. Hayford," replied Tommy.

"T'ell with your 'Mr.!' " rebuked Hayford. "Call me Joe."

"Oh, this is so sudden!"

"I'll sudden you," growled Hayford sotto voce. And then, because he was temperamentally a direct-actionist, he abandoned persiflage.

"Nobody comes into Glenwood without coming across." His adherents grunted approval. "And you've waited too long already. You may think this is Adamsburg, but it ain't. It's Glenwood, and I run it," he ended with heavy humor. "I need administration expenses and the boys need beer."

"The Nolan outfit never gave a crooked dollar on any job in its life," Tommy replied hotly. "Buy your own beer or be damned."

"Will you fight?" Hayford growled.

THE two stood at the edge of encounter. Big Joe towered, his shoulders level with Tommy's lips. Two pin points of eyes squinted ferociously. His long arms ended in great hammer fists, hard enough to crush rock. Tommy, a little shorter, a little lighter, trimly molded where his adversary was rough hewn, waited cheerfully despite the odds.

"You and how many?" he inquired.

The gang leader spat in scorn.

"How many!" he derided. "How many!"

"Just you?" Tommy insisted.

"Just me and I want just two minutes."

"You are about to hear the mournful cry of the undertaker," Tommy warned and cast away his pickax handle.

"Let be! Let be! Let be!" A cracked voice arose and "Old Man" Nolan hurried up. Behind him came Reilly with a score of able-bodied men, all on the Nolan pay roll. In a fraught silence the Old Man wiggled a guiding finger until his henchmen occupied all strategic points.

"Do I find ye fighting?" he demanded reproachfully.

Tommy cast an indignant glance at Reilly, who grinned. Half a lifetime had taught Reilly the elder Nolan's value in an emergency, whereas he had had scant dealings with the college-bred son.

"There will be no fight."

Both sides gasped as Old Man Nolan made his declaration.

Hayford snorted. "Stop me from fighting!" the nasal ejaculation seemed to dare.

"You heard me, Hayford," warned Old Man Nolan.

"Look here!" young Tommy burst out.

The Old Man wheeled.

"Am I boss on my own job or am I not? Say now!"

Tommy grinned helplessly.

"See you later, Big Joe," he suggested.

"Tommy," demanded the Old Man as Hayford's humbled contingent retreated and the workmen went back to the job, "Tommy, don't ye know the time has come when ye must use yer head instead of yer fists?"

"A fine one you are to tell me so," retorted Tommy bitterly.

"The best one!" The Old Man's vehemence shook his voice. "Haven't I fought with me hands all me life! And what am I? Tom Nolan, jobbin' contractor, just?"

"'Tis the books and the brains would have sent me farther. I hadn't them. But you have!" The voice exploded with a high report, like the crack of a whip. "And ye've had a fill of fighting, too. Ye starred with yer feet and yer fists in the college games, football and such. Now star with yer head. 'Tis the head, not the fists will put ye with the big men.

"Do a grand, great thing. Let the papers tell of that, not of how good a bruiser ye are. Ye'll need to start quick if ye want me to know it, too. I'll not be here long."

There was a pause and Tommy's sober nod registered obedience. But his eyes ardently watched Big Joe retreat. Reilly, the unregenerate, was more outspoken.

"That may all be," he gruded, cadaverous and pessimistic, "and again it may not. I've known times when a good fist counted for more than all the brains in the world."

AN air of imperturbability hung about the big office. Its formal pastel walls, its formal chairs and long mahogany table, its formal Oriental rug commanded tranquillity. Nolan was imperturbable—in hand—that is the term. He held himself in such perfect restraint as you have seen exercised by a master whip upon a prize-winning tandem. He had even held his lean vigor against Time's dispersions.

The ardent combativeness which had lighted his eyes was superseded now by a measured constraint. His calm reception of the rebellious tirade from Reilly, before the table, demonstrated his metamorphosis from tempestuous youth to urbane maturity. The headlines of a newspaper at his hand—"Last of Rhine Troops Return" and "Hayford Ends Long Rule at City Hall"—these pointed the passage of time necessary to effect that metamorphosis.

Reilly, still unregenerate, more gray and more cadaverous, smacked a heavy fist upon the mahogany table.

"For all yer money," roared Reilly with another smack, "ye was a better man when I thought ye a cub and ran to yer daddy for help.

"A bad job yer daddy did when he had ye put by yer fists," growled Reilly, becoming a trifle quieted. "Ye have gone from bad to worse since. Nothing but piling up money. Or giving it away like ye plan now, which is almost as bad."

"You simply fail to get the significance of my plan," Nolan said patiently. "The election strips Hayford of power for two years, of course. That may satisfy you, but it doesn't me. I see the chance to put him out for good and I'm taking it."

"I don't see it," grumbled Reilly.

Thomas Nolan, with that acquired tranquillity which somehow after two decades seemed natural, set himself to explain.

"You know that Hayford spent his last cent trying to win this election?"

"Yes."

"And you agree that his ring never will hold together until the next election, unless he finds some money to split in lieu of the city-hall patronage?"

"Yes."

"And that no money is in sight unless he lands this boulevard contract for his dummy, Ling?"

"I don't see that."

"Simple enough. If this grab falls through, the new administration will be in before Hayford can frame another deal big enough to pay him."

"Oh, yes."

"Well, then. We want to break Hayford, don't we? He's been grafting on the city long enough and squeezing us out of a lot of honest business by his crookedness."

"He has that."

"Right! And if we keep this bou

levard contract out of his hands we take the engine out of his machine.

"When the campaign began I anticipated Hayford's move. I was sure that if the election turned against his crowd, he would rush the boulevard contract through for a last killing. So I got ready. And when he tried to slip over his eleventh-hour call for bids, ours was waiting."

"But!" protested Reilly, "what a bid it is! Ye talk as though it was play to take on a job that runs into millions of money without enough margin of profit to buy peanuts. It's never been done. Ye're just stretching yer own neck for the ax."

"I'll take care of my own neck," Thomas Nolan promised. "And there's enough profit for me in the knowledge that I am putting Big Joe out of business."

"For more than ten years Hayford and Ling have been stealing our city bids the minute we turned them in; copying our specifications, cutting our figures a hundred, two hundred dollars. Well, let them try to cut under this one. They've had two weeks to look it over and you can bet they're a lot sicker than you are, Reilly. They're up a tree, I'm positive!"

"Maybe," Reilly brightened a little, optimistic over any chance to escape the impending contract, "maybe the committee will throw our bid into the wastebasket and say they never received it."

"Not much!" Thomas Nolan gave a wise negative with the head his old father had told him to use. "Hayford forced a fool in as president of the city council and now he'll pay for that error. The Honorable President Robet permitted wild-eyed old 'Doc' McNooter to slip onto the committee on highways. Doc is a sad politician but he would fill Diogenes with joy. He's as honest as a number-twelve shoe. The bids will be brought up for con-

sideration on their merits if McNooter has to use a steam derrick."

"Well, then," suggested Reilly dauntlessly, "perhaps Hayford will put the deal over for the new administration when he finds he can't have it."

Thomas Nolan was thoughtful.

"By George!" he exclaimed. "If that happened, I think I'd let the bid stand. A sort of thank offering for Hayford's extinction."

Reilly threw up his hands.

"All right! We'll stable this white elephant. We like trouble. And you can bet we'll have it on this job." He reached for his hat.

"The council will be handing us this bundle in about half an hour. I suppose you'll go over to make a bow of acceptance?"

"I wouldn't miss Hayford's face for money."

Thomas Nolan chuckled at intervals all the way over to the city-hall gallery in which they took seats. For all his growing interests—lumber, banks, railroads—he was first and last a builder. Nothing pleased him so much as the tangible evidence of his work expressed in the broad highways laid out by his construction company. The belief that at last he was to clear away the biggest obstacle to this work offset for him any temporary lack of profits this time.

"Ling isn't here," he said cheerfully. "That means we're to have the contract without a hitch."

"What'll we do with it?" mourned Reilly.

Hayford marched onto the council floor with an aldermanic henchman. As with Nolan, the passing years had added a distinct reserve to his manner; physically, he had the powerful obesity of a prize fighter out of training. Experience had taught him the finesse necessary to win to his goal of city overlordship. It had taught him also to dissemble in the face of defeat, but he

could not hide a frown this day. His face was forbidding.

"He doesn't like the deal any more than you, Reilly," Thomas Nolan repeated.

CERTAINLY Hayford didn't like it well enough to take it; the contract was awarded to the Nolan Construction Company with a celerity that bespoke machine methods.

"I see it clearer and clearer," Reilly groaned as they left the city hall. "Big Joe has us under the ax. Didn't they stick in a penalty of a thousand dollars for every day over contract time?"

Thomas Nolan turned sharply.

"Do you mean you can't finish within time on a job you figure yourself?"

"I can finish within time on any job I figure if I have a fair break. But don't forget"—Reilly's voice lowered to a prophetic whisper—"Hayford ain't figuring on giving us anything like a fair break. His crowd may be out and it may go to pieces in the next two years. But before it does, it will settle with the man who broke it."

The superintendent climbed into his battered work car and drove away. Thomas Nolan, turning into his own machine, hailed Hayford as he strode down the city-hall entrance. The boss smiled, although it took an effort.

"Do we have you to thank for the contract?" The question was sharp with irony.

Big Joe's reply was cryptic and for all his confidence Nolan, recalling Reilly's prophecy, had a brief qualm.

"Suppose," he said, "that you come around three months from now and thank me—if you feel like giving thanks then."

ADAMSBURG had waited ten years for its boulevard. The newspapers turned loose on the story of the award as though it had been a triangular killing. Thomas Nolan got a two-column

picture on page one. And the job got away with a hop, skip and jump. Reilly hand picked his workmen, for there was none too much work that summer, and his purchasing agents bought shrewdly from supply companies that fought for the plums.

After two months the work was easily ahead of schedule. Thomas Nolan was triumphant. The superintendent, pessimistic still, held his speech. Hayford, too, held both speech and act, but daily, Reilly learned, he called mysterious conferences with his lieutenants at his headquarters in a Glenwood Avenue doubtful soft-drink parlor.

Thomas Nolan felt a little the thrill of a pioneer. In a sense he was a trail blazer too. He scoffed at Reilly's subdued forebodings. He began to boast of "my boulevard." He experienced the acute dread which sometimes presages a personal affliction when the superintendent one morning ushered a battered workman into the pastel-brown office.

Even before the door opened he started at the sound of Reilly's voice booming out vituperation. A chorus of shocked stenographic "Ohs!" trailed after the cadaverous pessimist as he towed the workman up to the mahogany table.

"Didn't I warn ye!" Reilly roared in rage and the triumph of vindication.

"Of what?" Thomas Nolan asked quietly. Fear for his beloved project stirred him so that only a positive effort kept his hand from closing up into a hard fist. But for years he had schooled himself in tranquillity and instinctively he felt that now he would need all the wits coolness could command.

"Here, Pete!" Reilly bawled. "You tell him. He might think I exaggerated."

The battered workman moused forward; jobs were none too easy to find.

"Wasn't my fault, boss. I did the rounds every hour. But I couldn't fight that gang. Must have been a dozen. Jumped me about midnight. The whole works was burning before I came to. I think they used a blackjack."

Thomas Nolan turned to Reilly. Under his placid exterior, emotions dormant for years were stirring. Well, first he must get the story from the beginning. Time enough, then, to act.

"What is he trying to tell me, Reilly?"

"He's trying to tell you that last night Hayford's bunch rushed that field opposite the golf club where we've been storin' supplies and burned two hundred barrels of tar, spoilin' fifteen hundred bags of cement and six mixing machines to boot." Reilly's reply came with all the pride of a prophet justified.

"What grounds have you for believing Hayford's men did it?"

"Damn it all!" cried Reilly. "Ye don't think it was Santy Claus, do ye?"

A subdued knock blasted Reilly's hope for a reply to this admittedly extreme conjecture. A secretary brought in a card. Thomas Nolan silently passed it along to his superintendent.

"What did I say?" Reilly triumphed. He waved Pete outside.

Thomas Nolan glanced again at the card.

"Show in the 'Honorable' Abel Manutius Ling," he directed.

The Honorable Mr. Ling was shown in, a serene smile bisecting his round red face. His raiment was a gorgeous fortissimo blue with green stripes. From the low white collar which encircled his moist neck depended a black string tie.

A BLACK string tie was the one unchanging article in the apparel of Honorable Mr. Ling. This appeared whatever splendid costume he elected for the day. In the opinion of

the wearer it lent a touch of character. It really bared his soul. It was a mean-looking, grasping tie, shrinking obnoxiously within its narrow measurements. Sometimes it appeared to shrink so much that the observer was aroused to hope it would shrink a little more and choke the neck it encircled.

But all this is libel upon the hearty camaraderie with which Mr. Abel Manutius Ling swung forward, hand outstretched.

"Luck and good day!" he greeted his host.

Thomas Nolan nodded briefly; but because both his hands were busy with papers of undoubted importance the hand of Mr. Ling went ungrasped.

Mr. Ling, smiling more cheerily, dropped the ungrasped hand upon a chair back as though that had been its objective all the time. Deftly he swung the chair close to the mahogany table, preparatory to a heart-to-heart talk. He sat squarely erect. He placed his hands upon his knees. He expanded his chest. He unloosed an aura of good-fellowship. This was the posture habitual with Mr. Ling when he wished to be most impressive.

"I think my people can do business with your people, Mr. Nolan," he announced.

"To be brief and save time for both of us, Hayford and myself are willing to take over your boulevard contract."

If Mr. Ling had planned this climactic announcement as a bomb to blast his auditors his plan went agley. It is true that Reilly emitted a short bellow, but no further result obtained. Indeed Thomas Nolan displayed pleasure.

"I suppose," he began rather roundaboutly, "that you learned through my bank I desired to get rid of the contract?" And just at this point he chucked into the wastebasket the papers which had so unfortunately occupied his hands during the moment of Mr. Ling's entrance.

"Cer-tain-ly not!" Mr. Ling laughed loud and long as though he had just heard or seen a first-class joke. "You gotta give me and Joe credit for being wise guys. We figured it out.

"When we heard this morning about your fire, Joe said to me: 'Ling, I wouldn't wonder if this'"—Mr. Ling sought for a word—"accident—made Tommy Nolan pretty sick of his bargain. I'll betcha he'd just as soon as not get rid of it."

"Joe and me, we're plungers. We take chances. But you're a business man. Risks ain't in your line. And we felt you'd be glad to get out while you could figure your loss down to the last cent."

Thomas Nolan nodded thoughtfully.

"And what do you consider plunging terms?"

"Oh, just enough to make it worth our while. Just enough to make it worth our while. Let's see. Say ten—no, by George! Say seven and a half. You guarantee us all costs and seven and a half per cent profit."

"I expected you to knock him off his chair." Thus Reilly later described his reaction of the moment.

But Thomas Nolan lifted a speculative gaze to the ceiling.

"I think I'd stand to lose less by finishing the job myself."

Mr. Ling slapped a plump knee.

"By George!" He laughed. "Joe's a smart one. He figured you'd say that. 'That's just the mistake Tommy Nolan will make,' he said to me. And do you know why? I'll tell you, in his own words." Mr. Ling became very emphatic.

"You tell Tommy Nolan he'll make a mistake because he is apt to have another 'accident that he won't figure upon; he's apt to have several.' That's what Joe said."

Mr. Ling's eye hardened. Indeed for the instant he seemed very much like his mean, grasping tie.

"Nolan is apt to have another accident; maybe several.' That's what Joe said," he declared.

"Of course," he hurried on, "me and Joe, plungers, can risk accidents. But a business man shouldn't. Joe said that too. 'A good business man shouldn't take such a chance. Tell Nolan I said so.'"

"Lemme throw him out the window," Reilly urged.

"Certainly not!" cried Thomas Nolan. "It is a fourteen-story drop from the window. Besides, I consider this offer very courteous of Mr. Ling."

HE continued slowly, fastening on Hayford's emissary an eye which for all its mildness somehow seemed a degree harder than the eye which Mr. Ling had squinted a moment earlier.

"It would, however, take another—accident—to convince me I ought to accept. I need a little more proof before I believe—Providence—is so strongly arrayed against the Nolan Construction Company that we cannot cope with it.

"It would need to be only a little accident. In fact a big one, if it cost me much, might make me stubborn. On the other hand I won't run my head against a stone wall. I am open to reason."

His gaze grew milder and harder.

"Tell Joe that, will you, Mr. Ling?"

Mr. Ling arose, smiling.

"I'll tell Joe just what you have told me," he promised. "You'll find him open to reason, too—for a reasonable time." He bowed himself out and the smile which he turned upon the livid Reilly was exceptionally cordial.

When the door closed the superintendent burst forth.

"What the Sam Hill is into ye! Are ye afraid of that pair?"

"Afraid!" Thomas Nolan frowned slightly. "As a matter of fact, I pride myself upon having outwitted Mr. Abel Manutius Ling, completely."

"To my mind ye knuckled under, shamefully."

"Not at all. If I had kicked him out, he and Hayford would have declared open war. Now they'll believe I may be induced to surrender without a fight. They'll assume I desire only proof of their power to hamper us. They'll try to frame some small mishap which will convince and yet not destroy my present receptive attitude. In the meantime we will double our watch to block them. We will gain a week or two, maybe more, before they find out they have been tricked. If that pair think 'Dad' Nolan's son and his old side partner are knuckling under they'll have a sad awakening."

A sudden thought made him smile.

"Dad would applaud my tactics, wouldn't he! Remember that day on Glenwood! 'Head, not hands,' he cautioned me."

Reilly flung to the door.

"I said then and I say now," he cried, "that the Old Man was wrong. Mark Reilly! Brains alone can't do this. 'Tis a little of both ye'll need before the job is over."

The job forged ahead. Thomas Nolan had accurately forecast the moves of Big Joe. Frequent clues indicated the boss was feeling around for that little act of providential opposition, but so surely did the extra precautions operate that every feeler came to nothing.

"'Tis just dammin' up trouble!" Reilly rumbled.

Thomas Nolan answered by exhibiting insurance-adjustment figures on the fire.

"We're actually ahead. Hayford did us a favor," he chuckled. "The adjusters couldn't replace in time so they paid our price on the tar and cement and seventy per cent on the mixers. Dubuc snapped up a big consignment of cement on a falling market. Then he got a better price on the tar from the Hovolik people than Blakes had

given us. And on top of that he picked up six secondhand mixers dirt cheap.

"Then there is Excelsior Hill," he went on, determined to cheer his superintendent. "My experts called it rock. You find the far end of it nearly all drift sand. We save a small fortune on blasting."

HE pointed to a pile of papers, covered with notes.

"Why, we'll make a neat fifty thousand on this job that you called a no-profit white elephant. And Hayford is feeling around in empty pockets." He chuckled again.

"I dunno." Reilly refused to show a reciprocal elation. "They've got something big on the fire and it's almost to a boil. The men are acting queer."

"Let them start. We can't lose now."

Nor did Thomas Nolan's confidence waver two days later when Hayford achieved his little sign from Providence. Coming out to the job he found Reilly waving a huge red-and-black poster. The cadaverous superintendent was speechless, but the poster shouted in two-inch type.

\$7—to—\$10 A Day!

NORTH DAKOTA FARMERS
OFFER THIS, WITH BOARD
TO HARVEST HANDS.

JOBS GUARANTEED

at the

GATEWAY EMPLOYMENT
AGENCY.

"They plastered the boulevard with these. The timekeepers have been busy checking the boys out ever since," roared Reilly, recovering his voice.

"But North Dakota farmers haven't offered such wages since the war!"

"I've told the men that," Reilly snorted, "but they just look wise."

"We'll hear from Hayford after

this," Thomas Nolan prophesied. And that same afternoon Hayford was ushered into the pastel-brown office.

"No use beating around the bush, Nolan," he said. "You wanted a little hint. You've had it. Now I want a plain answer to a plain question. Do we take over the job?"

"Give me a week to think it over," Thomas Nolan temporized.

"No. You'll have to answer now or let—Providence—take its course."

"In that case," said Thomas Nolan finally, after a long look at the ceiling. "In that case you might—as—well—run—up—a—tack—and—sit—on—the—point."

Big Joe leaped to his feet. A thought was percolating; a conviction was growing.

"So you've been stringing us, hey!" His voice became weighted with menace. "All right! I've got a bagful of tricks too. You'll find that out soon."

Thomas Nolan smiled.

Big Joe pelted on.

"You may make a fool out of Ling, but I can spot you half a string and beat you. Think you can kid me!" This with mounting fury. "Me! Joe Hayford! Wait!"

The door slammed.

"Now," said Thomas Nolan, "I'll have to lose a little sleep."

Reilly lost sleep, too.

"That dam'll break any day, now," he forecast, and urged a little by this prophecy Thomas Nolan confided somewhat to the new administration, though he named no names.

"Too little evidence," he demurred when pressed upon this point. But he obtained a squad of policemen to re-enforce the heavy contingent of watchmen.

The first trickle came from Reilly's dam in broad daylight. The men began to melt away. No menace was apparent but they asked for their time in growing numbers.

"I ain't staying on any job where I'm apt to be blown up," one declared belligerently.

"What do you mean?" Reilly asked hotly.

"Ain't you bucking Big Joe Hayford?"

"Who says so?"

"Everybody says so. And I ain't summered here five years without learning what Big Joe will do. If he's going to blow up anybody it won't be me!"

Reilly hurried in to the office.

"We have dynamite on the job. It could easily be made to look like our own carelessness," he warned.

"Pure bluff!" Thomas Nolan declared. "The police have scared Hayford from any night raids. Now he's trying to scare us." He hesitated, his face softening. "But, great Scott! I'd make a deal if I thought he'd do it. I don't want the lives of those men on my hands."

"On Hayford's hands, blast him!" growled Reilly, bold at the hint that his chief might knuckle under. "Stick it. The boys will calm down."

A slow drift continued but the men did calm down and gradually the pay roll gained, too, an ever-increasing percentage of strong-jawed workmen who refused to scare. These became violently partisan. The fight became their fight. The work advanced at a racing pace. Reilly's intense pride in his shock troops caused him all the more dismay when one morning he arrived to find every man idle.

"We're through, boss," one declared. "Some one is planning plain hell."

And that was as much as Reilly could discover. Rumor—no more. But every man had it and dynamite lurked in all their minds, the shaking menace of a treacherous, maiming explosion, grown suddenly imminent.

The superintendent sent searching parties over the work area; he showed them that the only dynamite was under

lock and key; he set a guard over this and more guards to fend off strangers from the job.

"If there's any danger we'll share it, like and like," Reilly declared. "I'll fetch Tom Nolan and we'll both be here with you whatever comes."

He excused himself half an hour later, when he explained the situation to his chief.

"I had to say you'd take the risk too. It doesn't lessen the danger, but it seemed to quiet the men."

THOMAS NOLAN nodded and the two hurried down to Nolan's big car and started off.

They crested a hill and the boulevard stretched before them, dotted with workmen.

"I should think you'd be tired of this shillyshallyin'. If I was twenty years younger, I'd trim this murderin' Joe Hayford to fit in a fryin' pan," Reilly fumed.

He had hardly spoken when the speeding machine shook under the back blast from a distant, terrific explosion. A cloud lifted from the boulevard half a mile ahead.

Reilly's face turned gray.

"That's it," he said in an awed voice.

"He's done it," exclaimed Thomas Nolan and swallowed hard.

They dashed up to a shattered stretch of roadway. Two men lay dead and others were down. The mass of laborers, many bleeding from minor cuts and bruises, was streaming off the job.

"It's come!" A foreman stumbled up, ashake with nervous anger. "We started a fire in a tar boiler and she blew up like a volcano. There must have been dynamite under the ashes."

Thomas Nolan stared moodily. His consternation was now a bitter sorrow.

"This beats me," he said at last. "I'll pay a lot to keep it from happening again.

"I give up, Reilly. Find out whether

these two have any relatives and pay anything they think right. And keep the men on the job. Tell them they'll be as safe as in church. It will be true too, because I am going to buy Hayford off."

"Buy Hayford off! That killer! Jail him, I say."

That turbulent force, repressed for so long, convulsed within Thomas Nolan as he drove toward Big Joe's Glenwood Avenue retreat, but he forced himself to remain calm and, striding into the boss' sanctum, he was self-possessed and adequate. He gave scarcely a glance at the undersized, chinless hanger-on who slipped through a back door, although he divined that here was a messenger who already had brought Big Joe news of the disaster.

THE boss shot his head back, erect and wary. Clearly, he expected a headlong collision and he stood nonplused, though not half as much so as Reilly would have been had the superintendent stood near enough to hear, when Thomas Nolan spoke.

"I want you to take over the protection of my boulevard," he began, so apparently propitiatory that Hayford gulped and grew red as though his Adam's apple choked him.

"You want——" he choked and then his confusion vanished. He smiled in comprehension, that complacent smile which comes when a gambler perceives his opponent weakening away from the evening's biggest pot. His hand closed as though he actually felt the five winning cards.

"I don't believe," he said indifferently, "that I want to consider any arrangement other than the one Ling offered."

"Chestnuts!" The expletive slipped out before Thomas Nolan caught himself. When he resumed it was with that conciliatory manner which had before surprised the boss.

"Providence and its accidents couldn't do me as much harm as Ling's terms. Here is my offer. Fifty thousand dollars to guarantee me against another—accident."

Back of Thomas Nolan's placating accent was finality. It was as though the echo had said: "This much will I sacrifice to protect my men. But no more. Take it or leave it."

"You might," he suggested while Big Joe digested the proffer, "organize a private-detective agency. That would make it look right. An agency big enough to provide me with one guard would be plenty, plenty. Of course I'll keep my own guards on."

"Fifty thousand, you say?" and there was such deliberation in Hayford's tone that suspicion awoke with a start in Thomas Nolan.

"Fifty thousand. Payable September 16th."

"September 16th?"

"I have," Thomas Nolan explained, "fullest confidence in you. But we both know accidents will happen. Inasmuch as the boulevard will be completed by September 14th and the city will relieve me of responsibility next day, I feel a complete insurance against mishaps will be obtained by paying you on the sixteenth."

"What part of the boulevard will be finished last?" This with the same deliberate note.

"The Clear River Bridge at the city limits." The answer dropped like a fisherman's fly upon a trout stream, and Thomas Nolan's face was wooden as Hayford came up to it.

"The Clear River Bridge," said Hayford after a long pause, and then: "I'll take you, on one condition. Pay me September 15th."

"You can make it in the evening," he sneered, "if you are so keen on getting the job off your hands first. Say about nine o'clock." And as though the eagerness had been too obvious he

ended: "The truth is, I have a big debt to meet that day, before midnight."

"At nine o'clock, September 15th," agreed Thomas Nolan and a little blade of anger thrust into him, resentment against this clumsy schemer. But he forced it down and put out a smoke screen.

"I want you to know," he broke forth violently, now simulating the anger he knew Hayford had expected, the anger of a man who has been gouged and intimidated, "I want you to know that I am going hard after the man who blew my boys up to-day. I'll get that fellow if it costs twice fifty thousand."

"I hope you do," Big Joe cried heartily, and then continued with mild resentment, "You're mighty unfair, I think, hinting, as I know you are, that my crowd had any hand in it. But I realize you have every right to be hot under the collar."

"I'll help you!" he cried in a burst of generosity. "I'll help you! We're sort of partners now." And he held out his hand.

Thomas Nolan touched it, briefly. As he drove his machine away Hayford's voice followed.

"Have that fifty thousand in bills."

AND what the Sam Hill do ye know about that!" Reilly exploded when Thomas Nolan confided in him. "The double-crossing fishface. Are ye sure?"

"I could almost see the wheels go round in his big head," Thomas Nolan replied.

Reilly reached under the mahogany table for the battered brass piggin kept there in anticipation of his visits. He drew from his hip pocket six inches of plug cut and bit off a magnificent mouthful. For a while there was no sound save the champ of his jaws broken by the crackle of his hydraulic attack on the brass receptacle. Reilly was thinking.

"What I say this time I'll say no

more," he declared at last. "Ye're a bold, confident fellow and ye think yer tricks will land him. But mark Reilly!" Gravely he lifted Thomas Nolan's right hand, bent the fingers over to make a fist and surveyed the result with an expert eye.

"Mark Reilly! The time is soon to come when this will be needed. I can smell a fight across a county."

"Quite wrong!" Thomas Nolan opened his hand. "The reception committee you organize may do a little brawling, though I doubt it will be necessary. But my head will do my share of the work."

And matters went along on that basis. The job rushed ahead with a smoothness that belied Reilly's prediction. Big Joe Hayford's one-man guard successfully warded off accidents. And the boulevard was completed September 14th.

Adamsburg prepared to celebrate the fruition of old dreams. Tractable Mayor Hitches set the day for September 15th and plotted out appropriate ceremonies that would include accepting the completed project from the Nolan Construction Company. The event was to take place upon the Clear River Bridge, last finished link in the boulevard and the only section not yet opened to the public.

Newspaper reporters and consequently the newspaper-reading public were much mystified when Mayor Hitches regretted on the morning of the fifteenth that urgent out-of-town business forced him to postpone the celebration for one day. The man who had made Mr. Hitches mayor telephoned this information to Thomas Nolan some time before the reporters learned it. Shortly after, Thomas Nolan had a telephone call from Big Joe Hayford, also.

"This change in Hitches' plans won't alter our agreement, will it?" and then hastily, "I gotta meet that bill."

Thomas Nolan closed an eye at Reilly.

"Our agreement stands, Joe. You come to my house at nine," and he rang off.

A deal of young Tommy's old impulsiveness showed in his subsequent remarks.

"He has a note to meet, has he? Maybe that sent him pussyfooting around the city hall all week trying to make Hitches set the program over to the sixteenth. Well, it was set over. I fixed that for him, he'd be surprised to learn. And he'll be surprised, too, to-night."

"Ye should take me along." Reilly spoke heavily, in his favorite rôle of wet blanket.

"No! You're needed to guide the men over from the Anoka Road. I'm going ahead because I refuse to miss Hayford when he finds himself in a hole."

So about seven o'clock that evening, Thomas Nolan drove from his home alone and came by a roundabout way to the far side of the Clear River Bridge. Here, concealed from the bridge approach, he left his car in the brush by the roadside for the district was somewhat wooded and sparsely built up. Then he crossed the bridge in the gathering dusk.

His watch said six minutes after eight. If his clues were true Hayford was due. Reilly was due, too. Nolan turned to the woods at his right as though looking through them to the old Anoka Road. There the superintendent and twenty men should be well started by now on their quarter-mile scramble to the brush at the edge of the bridge. He listened, hoping to catch a sound of them. Instead the hum of a motor lifted down the boulevard.

Thomas Nolan slipped inside the watchman's shanty. Here, he watched until an automobile halted. He peered through the half open door and iden-

tified the big man and short fat man who alighted. Six others slouched in the wake of these as Thomas Nolan stepped forward.

"Good evening, Mr. Hayford."

The big man stared and swore incredulously.

"And what's under your arm, Mr. Hayford?" asked Thomas Nolan, reaching to rap the oblong package which the big man carried so carefully.

Big Joe leaped back and hastily passed the package to Abel Manutius Ling who scrambled away. Then he stopped swearing and signaled to his six.

THE woods to the right remained lifeless. Thomas Nolan set to create a diversion. He tossed a rock as big as his fist at Ling. The fat man scrambled away again, not content until he had got a hundred feet farther off. Hayford and his six fell back also.

"Where's your sense?" shouted Ling. "I'm carrying dynamite here."

Thomas Nolan chuckled for he felt he had delayed the issue and that now Reilly would arrive in time.

"Did you hear that, Mr. Hayford? He says he has dynamite."

"You'll know he has in a few minutes." The boss was returning slowly, his six at heel. "I'll teach you to butt in!"

"When you think of teaching me anything you make a mistake," Thomas Nolan taunted.

"Joe, I was almost sure of your scheme from the moment you worked so hard to shift our pay day from the fifteenth. Take my money and blow up my bridge too, eh?"

"I'll just slip out at the last minute, so there'll be less chance of detection," says Mr. Hayford. "I'll plant the dynamite. A few of my trusty boys can touch it off while I run back to collect my fifty thousand and a choice alibi."

"A good plan! Except that you failed to credit me with being able to add two and two."

Big Joe rumbled like black thunder. Ling slid up to him.

"Beat it!" The fat man whispered. "This is a plant. We'll all do time if we're caught here with this dynamite."

"Beat it, nothing!" Hayford roared, and reaching among his six grasped a club which one thrust forward.

Simultaneously the watchman drew behind Thomas Nolan.

"I'm with you, boss," he whispered. "Take this," and he pressed upon Thomas Nolan a long smooth stick.

It was a pickax handle. Thomas Nolan balanced it distastefully, half minded to throw it aside.

"I showed my hand, did I, Nolan?" Hayford rumbled again. "Then I'll show it now. I'll put you into a worse hole than you've dug for me. I'll not only blow your bridge up—I'll blow you up along with it."

The frustrated boss was berserk mad. He swung his club and lunged, his six with him.

Thomas Nolan leaped to the right. He eluded the first rush and before a second could gather the dark woods blossomed men. A counteravalanche swept Hayford's drive prostrate. The boss and his six were pinioned by Reilly's small army.

Not until Thomas Nolan had looked a second time did he realize that the victory was incomplete. Then he awoke to the receding roar of a motor.

"There goes Ling!" Big Joe gloated. "Now say we brought dynamite to your bridge."

Reilly, the unregenerate, alone of all the observers appreciated the amazing transformation which ensued. Undoubtedly, the underlying cause was a potent vision of the workmen for whose death Thomas Nolan had promised to square. But possibly the immediate

cause lay in his realization that the escape of Ling would materially weaken any charge he might bring against Hayford. Possibly the events of the whole boulevard episode had been shaping to this end.

Possibly it was only the pickax handle and the reminiscences which it evoked. Indeed that seems the most logical assumption for, when Reilly turned, Thomas Nolan was gazing at the club as a man might gaze at a transforming wand. Of a sudden he made it dance like a rapier. Almost Reilly could have vowed it was young Tommy who swayed there on shifting, battle-eager feet. Certainly a changed Thomas Nolan was betrayed in the ardent hand which tossed the pickax handle aside, and in the calm and confident saunter over to Big Joe.

"But I will say you brought dynamite to my bridge, Mr. Hayford. And shall I tell you what else I will say? I'll say you're in for a bit of third degree.

"If you're so sure I have nothing on you now maybe you'll tell me this—Who killed my two men?"

THE question went forward as sharply as a striking hand; Big Joe blinked uneasily.

"Don't try to bluff! How should I know? You have nothing on me. Turn me loose."

"Turn him loose!" Thomas Nolan ordered, and as the warders fell away he added in a flat voice: "Put up your hands."

"Whatdyemean?" Hayford wiggled with that relief which comes from physical liberty, and put the question carelessly.

"I mean," echoed Thomas Nolan, "that you are going to tell me who killed my two men."

"In a pig's neck! I say I know nothing about that."

"Then put up your hands."

"You want to fight?"

"Call it that."

"How many helping you?" Hayford reversed the situation of ten years ago and Thomas Nolan remembered.

"How many! Just me."

The two faced each other, charged again with that force which had brought them into collision before. Thomas Nolan stood straight and firm like a well-tested spear. Hayford bulked more grossly, a bludgeon that had absorbed too much of the soilure through which it had pounded its way. To the men who watched in the darkness, only one of them comprehending the significance of the event, the huge boss seemed to have all the advantage.

Big Joe attacked. His sudden hammer blow was only half deflected from Thomas Nolan's heart. His mouth, as suddenly, flushed darkly wet as a countersmash pierced his guard. The darkness gave great opportunities to whoever forgot science, and the two stood toe to toe, attempting only the shadow of a defense, ripping at one another blows that thudded like fists upon a punching bag.

Hayford got through a beamlike smash. It lifted Thomas Nolan clear off his feet and down and Big Joe leaped in with both feet—the old lumberjack trick of giving a fallen foe the calks. The intended victim twisted away and kicking at the descending feet brought his enemy down too.

They rolled into the brush. Hayford fought to keep them there, trusting to his greater weight. Instead Nolan gained a swift advantage. Every trick he had learned on football fields came back and the boss speedily tore loose.

Thomas Nolan got up limping. Thereafter he moved without the agility which had saved him in previous rushes. So now, his adversary elected to stay at long range. He forced Nolan to breast a small hurricane and under

this the lighter man weakened, visibly. It was purely a weakness of body. And an indomitable will sent the body charging in after it had borne double, treble punishment.

Hayford was tiring too and he closed, patently counting upon his opponent's increasing weakness. Nolan met the challenge, driving forward almost as hard as his less-injured foe, and the latter grappled, tearing as if he would pull his man to pieces. One hand clawed at Nolan's eyes and he twisted sidewise.

A brief space opened between the two bodies and through this Nolan swung his fist like a battering-ram up against Hayford's chin. It was the last of Nolan's strength and it carried every ounce of his weight. Hayford quivered like a taut cable. His clawing hand jerked high in the air like a signal and the hand was still flung upward when he toppled to the ground.

THOMAS NOLAN stood over the boss, drawing drafts of air into his drained lungs. His face, caught in the light of a rising moon, showed black and stained. He closed his right hand slowly and looked at it, felt its hard outline and then he dragged the reviving Hayford erect.

"Who killed my men?" he cried.

Hayford shook his head feebly. He huddled away in fear of another battering-ram blow. He wanted to quit. He was appalled at the endurance of his enemy, cowed by the punishment.

"Who killed my men?" And measuring the distance, Thomas Nolan drove his fist against Hayford's mouth. With that he began the third degree he had promised.

"Who killed my men?"

The question and then the blow, again and again. Here was no rule of head and hands, but the forceful fist Reilly had prophesied.

"Who killed my men?"

Hayford's eyes closed. His mouth became a blubbing opening. At last he began to weep and then it was apparent that he was also trying to speak with his distorted mouth. The confession followed, so abjectly that in the faces of the men who gathered to hear contempt showed. The story was interspersed with long, moist sobs and through it, like a refrain, ran a plea.

"Don't hit me again! Don't hit me again!"

Hayford's six listened, fearful of the startling turn their foray had taken.

"Which of you helped him?" Nolan demanded suddenly. He raised his fist—terrifying with his half-naked body, his face streaked with grime, streaming.

"Just to carry the stuff, so help me!"

A short chinless man came forward whining. He was the same man who had been with Hayford the day of the explosion.

"You're lying!"

"It's the truth. He wanted to do everything himself, just like to-night."

"Reilly!" Nolan called.

The superintendent came close and Thomas Nolan continued softly.

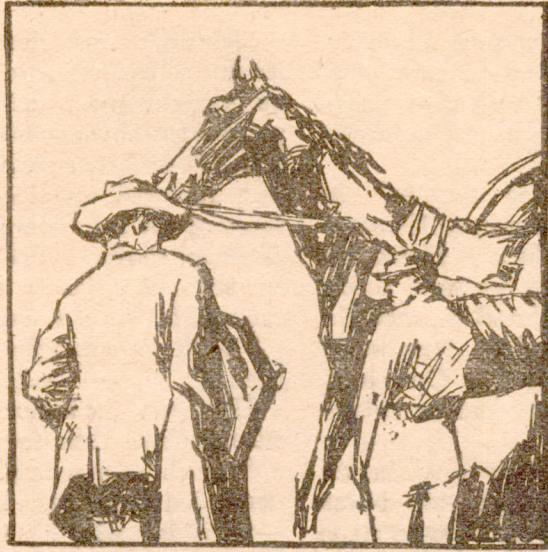
"Take this fellow down to police headquarters. I'll bring Hayford. Don't give your man any chance to get over his scare. We mayn't get far with Hayford's confession, but this fellow's story, to the police, is the goods."

Reilly bustled about. He ordered the automobiles brought around from the Anoka Road. He sent another man to bring up Thomas Nolan's car. He bundled Hayford into it with unmerciful hands, and at intervals he threw new terror into his own prisoner.

"Didn't I tell ye to mark Reilly?" he crowed to Nolan. "Didn't I tell ye? Which was it turned the trick? The head yer daddy bragged on or the stout fist?"

And Thomas Nolan grinned as best as his bruises would allow.

"A little of both," he admitted.



Tender Mitts

By Bert Mohrman

Author of "The Dummy Speaks," and other stories.

In race-track argot "a man's out when he's down," but Mickey Sloane proves the accepted "a man may be down but he's not out."

THOUGHTFULLY, "Old Dan" Crowley kicked at the dust of the Tia Juana paddock and scanned the hard-packed earth for the inevitable blade of grass that he must chew on. And because Dan did not find his green blade and was forced to wander where the grass grew longer and cleaner, Mickey Sloane was saved from relegation to the scrap heap of racing things.

His walk to the center of the racing inclosure brought Dan almost opposite the spot where Mickey and his mount crashed and apparently fractured one of the major rules of the turf.

Hearty, Dusky Belle and Leatherwood were leading the field with Mickey, on Yellow Jacket, slightly to the rear. Hearty had the rail, Dusky Belle was on the inside and Leatherwood far over as they came into the stretch.

Sloane was taking the last dash with a driving finish. His only chance to lead the field under the wire was to cut in between Hearty and Dusky Belle.

But destiny must have been hovering somewhere about, for when Yellow Jacket answered the bat and stretched her old limbs to take the bit, Dusky Belle moved ahead a trifle, and to the left, Leatherwood came across at the same time, strengthening the pocket.

Sloane was caught in the neatest of racing tricks, a three-horse pocket from which horse and rider could only pull out by sheer nerve.

Down swished Mickey's whip on the flank of Yellow Jacket. Crowley, standing at the outer rail now, stopped munching his blade of grass long enough to grin at the nerve of the lad.

Straight for the opening between Dusky Belle and Leatherwood, Sloane headed his mount. It looked as though

the ancient selling-plater would make it, but, tossing her head—she was blind from the pain of her hot straining lungs and heart—Yellow Jacket lunged close to Hearty as Mickey sawed and tugged on the bit, endeavoring to pull her up.

Hoofs crossed, then locked, and horses and riders crashed to the turf.

Crowley, who had half sensed some such catastrophe, watched the accident only slightly alarmed, for he was hardened to the breaks of the turf and had noted that Mickey had fallen clear of his mount.

As the rest of the field swung by and the fallen racers staggered to their feet, Dan clucked his tongue in his mouth and muttered: "Tough-mouthed horse and looks like the kid's got tender hands."

MICKEY was set down for three months. The stewards had seen through their glasses the tugging and sawing and it appeared to them that the boy had willfully fouled.

Despite the impassioned plea of Mickey, who was still an apprentice rider and imbued with the love of the game, and even the intervention of Crowley as an eyewitness, the edict of the racing moguls held. Mickey was on the ground for ninety days. He could not take another mount in official racing until his period of exile ended.

So, with the temporary banishment to racing Siberia, Mickey Sloane became the joke of the Southern tracks.

"Ya, the goat's mouth is too tough for little Willie!" scoffed his fellow riders. "Tender mitts!" they would call after him. "Why don't you get yaself a job makin' whipped cream?" and a hundred other galling jeers.

It was a week before Dan Crowley and Mickey Sloane met again. In the rear of a row of stables, Mickey was going hammer and tongs at a tough little jockey who had voiced some jeering remark. Nerves frazzled by the

continual taunts, Mickey had taken this opportunity to relieve his pent-up emotions.

Righteous indignation, coupled with Mickey's fast-flying fists, were rapidly weaving into a gory mess what was once the little tough's face. Seeing his friend getting the worst of a bad bargain, another jockey took a hand and started to bring the weighted end of a riding crop down on the bobbing head of busy Mickey.

With a beautifully timed open-handed slap, Dan Crowley, who had been watching the scrap from a corner vantage point, sent the aid-de-camp skidding, meantime grabbing Mickey by the arm and hauling him off the now-prostrate annoyer.

"Enough of this, you monkeys! You're not gettin' paid to fight," Crowley bawled.

"You, Scofino," he went on to Mickey's erstwhile sparring partner, "beat it and you, Sloane, go wash the muck and dirt off you."

Scofino lost no time in joining his would-be assistant in fisticuffs and the now quiet Mickey walked to the nearby pump with Crowley.

"What caused the rumpus, Mike?"

Through the veil of cold water that was streaming down his face, Mickey answered: "He called me tender mitts, Mr. Crowley. Ever since I was set down I've been gettin' that all around. Tender mitts. Hell—they ain't so tender." He grinned at the skinned knuckles that had peppered Scofino.

The hulking old-timer and the diminutive jock walked away together in silence. Both of them were thinking, Mickey of the future and Crowley of the past.

"'Tis no disgrace to have the tender hand, boy," said Dan as they stopped as though by mutual consent at the rail fence. "It's damn few of these young roughnecks ridin' to-day have a tender mitt. Your father had them, gentle as

a woman, and no better rider ever lived, so don't be ashamed of that."

A reverent tone flavored Crowley's voice as he spoke of Mickey's father, a premier jockey, killed while riding on a European track.

"A tender hand's the sign of a born horseman, lad," Dan went on. "It's either because you know what a steel bit does to a dainty-mouthed horse or your wrists are weak. Let's see."

Crowley lifted the arm of young Sloane, poking with expert touch the sinews of wrist and forearm.

"Not bad," he commented. "They can stand strength, though. I guess perhaps you got a natural tender pull. No good on a tough plug, but the only hands to use on a thoroughbred—horse or man."

Mickey nodded. "Guess you're right, Mr. Crowley, when I pull hard something inside makes me stop."

Together they spoke of other things and Mickey got to know that the gruff Crowley was more gentle for his gruffness.

"And how do you stand with the Reachley bunch now?" asked Crowley, turning the conversation back to racing channels.

"Any one wants me can have my contract for a plugged nickel," answered Mickey dejectedly. "I was told to pack up and get out to-day and Martin tells me I'm through even after my suspension is up."

"Got any other stable in mind?" queried Dan.

Mickey smiled and shook his head. "Not one, Mr. Crowley. These tender hands—nobody'd want me. I'd do more harm than good."

"Never you mind the mitts, son. If you're ready, you can string along with me. Can't offer you much, but maybe we can both make some money," said Crowley.

"G'wan, run off!" he grunted as Sloane tried to thank him. Funny how

a little gratitude in an ungrateful world kind of upsets the poise and makes an odd lump tickle the old Adam's apple.

Only two horses were carrying the blue and gray of the Crowley entries that season. But there was soon to be a third racer.

On a Connecticut hillside, Lady May ambled along, her coat reflecting the rays of the comforting sun and the rather gawky replica of her own grace trotted at her side. Wee May, just emerging from equine adolescence was the filly that would carry a blue-and-gray-silked jockey under the wire a winner every time out.

Lady May was Crowley's pet. She was an almost human horse, brainier than any jockey who had ever rode her, champion of her division and now mother of the colt that a world of clamoring throngs would soon pay tribute to—so he thought.

Three months later, Mickey was in Latonia when his suspension was lifted. Through the months of bitter exile, Sloane had been training hard.

A natural weight rider, Mickey had given particular attention to a form of riding that has come into great favor on American tracks.

Crowley advocated it and took pride in the training of the nervy youngster. High up, apparently resting on the powerful neck of the racers, a "high-riding" jock takes his position.

It is half standing, half sitting, with the rider hardly touching the handkerchief-sized pigskin saddle. Mickey perfected his style through the days in which he could only exercise the Crowley horses. He seemed part of his mount as he would tear around the track, high up, head pressed alongside the ear of his horse.

Mickey Sloane's first time out in three months did not bring him under the wire leading his field. Mickey lost and lost miserably. He seemed to have

lost his nerve. He kept away from the rail; he avoided chances on the deadly pockets. He was overcautious, it seemed, and, some hinted, afraid.

Crowley clucked his tongue in his cheek very often in those few racing moments. It wasn't quite clear to him why Mickey was behaving that way. Mickey's wrists were strong and dependable. He could have pulled the head of fiery Bucyrus down to submission. But he failed to do so. The tender hand was still there and the strong wrists pulled and tugged just so far and then seemed to realize that the bit was cutting the pink and tender jaws of Mickey's mount.

Mickey was meek and quiet after the race. He avoided Crowley. He went furtively away, not the peppery Mickey of old, but rather a badly whipped apprentice boy who had fallen down.

In his next two starts, however, the spark seemed to come back. First on Mitchy Mitch, a mount he had taken for another owner, Mickey pulled over in second place. On his third start, again on Mitchy Mitch, he led the field by daring riding and disposition of chances that bring that little thrill and desire to yell that racegoers appreciate.

Once more there was talk that soon Mickey would have his necessary number of winners for a full riding license and then, as his father of the gayer days, he would ride winners with clock-like precision.

By the time the summer season had been run on the Northern tracks, Mickey was a full-fledged jock. His success as a rider was practically assured. With the coming of success, the breach between Crowley and Sloane widened. Mickey couldn't find time now to listen to the sage advice of the old-timer.

He was "doing his stuff," could do it every day, so why worry?

When the bigger stables started for the South Mickey began to itch to be

off, to hit the Southern citadels of the flying hoof and take the acclaim of the fashionable followers.

But Crowley unloosed what to Mickey was a bombshell.

"We're pulling away to-morrow, Mike," declared Dan. "No running on the winter tracks for me this season. We'll hike up to Wheaton and start Wee May over the jumps and next year bring her out for the two year olds."

It was then that Mickey showed his first signs of open rebellion since coming under the wing of Dan.

"What's the big idea of passin' up a lot of winter money, Mr. Crowley?"

Crowley frowned and answered: "You sure it's the money you need, lad, or the shallow hullabaloo of the crowds who would recognize you as an equal outside the track?"

Mickey got a little red and sputtered a few unpleasant epithets and marched off.

Nevertheless Dan shipped his horses the next day. And at the station Mickey squirmed under Crowley's deep gaze when the old man shrugged his shoulders and said a little oddly: "All right, boy, but if you feel like a rest, we'll be at Wheaton."

"Well, maybe," Mickey managed with a half-hearted grin, "maybe before the winter's out, I'll be up, Mr. Crowley." He walked rapidly away for he didn't want Dan to see an odd moist spot in the corner of his eyes.

With the "own-boss-don't-give-a-damn" attitude after Dan's departure for Connecticut, Mickey seemed to have the little imp, "Jinx," dogging his footsteps.

MICKEY ran first sometimes, but not often. And bets were going wrong. It seemed that he couldn't pick winners with any more consistency than he could ride them. His small hoard rapidly disappeared.

Then he began to run in second and third money regularly. After a few weeks he found he must argue to get a mount. Then he could only get a leg up when a small-string owner was sending out a forlorn hope that should have been ambling toward a glue factory instead of a starter's stand.

Young Mickey had inherited from his dad a grain or two of common sense, however, and as a student under Dan Crowley he had learned the value of Solomon's "humility is the beginning of wisdom."

He could see the drift of things. The future would be possibly another mount or two, bad luck in a crap game in the saddle room and then drifting from town to town trying to pick up a riding job at some "stick" county fair.

He'd go to Wheaton. He didn't have any false pride in his sensitive nature. Dan had taken that out of him thoroughly. He would accept the inevitable and shake victory from its neck.

Mickey arrived in Connecticut in the stinging cold of January. A wheezy flivver carried him to the farm of Crowley, five miles from the station.

The calm Daniel J. may have fluttered a little when Mickey piled out of the decrepit hack, but he didn't show it either by word or action.

"Come on in out of the cool," he greeted. "Shake down at the fire," spouted Dan, pointing to the cozy crackling logs in the colonial fireplace.

"Thought I'd come up and see how you were, Mr. Crowley," said Mickey.

It is peculiar how two men greet each other after a long absence, especially if they have gone through the rigors of tough times together. Women will gush, cry, and giggle, but somehow men act indifferent, the stronger the association may be, chattering but saying nothing and trying to swallow faster than nature has geared that particular operation.

Crowley and Mickey looked long into

the flames. Dan didn't ask questions and Sloane offered no excuses or a more sensible reason for coming to Wheaton than that he "wanted t' see how you were, Mr. Crowley."

Dan knew, however, that Mickey had been in a slump and at times not riding at all. That's what they publish racing charts for.

After a hearty toasting Crowley broke the barrier of silence.

"Wee May's coming along great," he said. "Can't beat training a filly in the climate she's born in," he rambled on.

"This Southern stuff's the bunk. Too artificial anyhow for good conditioning of a Northern-born horse.

Mickey just followed Dan's lead and acquiesced. At feeding time they visited the stables, where Mickey renewed acquaintances with the other Crowley horses and was introduced to Wee May.

When Crowley had walked to the other end of the stable, Mickey leaned against Peer Gynt's powerful arching neck, threw an arm around the big horse, who rubbed his soft moist muzzle against the boy's face.

"Kinda good to be back, Pete," mumbled Mickey as he turned away, slapping Peer Gynt affectionately.

Through the cold winter months Wee May went through her paces indoors. In the huge stable Crowley had spread tanbark and fashioned a ring much after the circus circle.

Around and around Mickey would walk Wee May, talking, patting and soothing her to relieve any possible skittishness. Through the colder winter months Wee May became accustomed to the voice of Mickey and the running and walking in an ever-widening circle.

WHEN the icebound Connecticut hills began to thaw, Wee May was taken out for her exercise and the first arduous task of finishing off a racer began.

Wee May had never felt the weight of anything heavier than a gentle zephyr on her shiny back. First the light pigskin saddle was buckled on, then after a while leads were slipped into the weight pockets.

Then Mickey, of the tender hands, straddled her one day. For fully five minutes Wee May just twisted and tossed her head at this odd something that clung to her sinewy back. But the hand that slapped her neck seemed reassuring and familiar and maybe the cold steel metal that seemed to gag her and bind down her tongue would not be so unbearable after a while. But it hurt the corners of her mouth.

Gradually Wee May became used to these things and she stepped out with the eager gait of the racer. It was long and flowing, like swift rip tide under a bridge, an undulating roll that fairly ate up the ground.

In April, Wee May would be two years old and ready for her division. She was brought up to what Crowley thought a good racing speed. But Mickey knew the reserve power in those gracefully turned flanks. He knew the wisdom in that sleek head and the high sensitiveness of those pointed ears.

Then one morning the one weakness that is in every racer, sometimes noticeable at birth though often lying dormant for years, was brought out.

Mickey was riding Wee May against time, Dan at the rail, clocking the movements of both his protégés. It was a beautiful showing, but, taking the turn, Wee May swerved a bit. Sloane pulled down hard and up to bring her head in and over the swerve. Wee May answered like a veteran and finished within a few seconds of the time hung up by the champion two year old.

The years of study of breeding conditions, the mating angles that Crowley had so ardently pursued, had told. Here was another Lady May.

As Mickey and Wee May came to

the wire, however, Crowley's smile was turned to a look of chagrin. He hurried over to the pair and in alarmed manner grabbed for the head of the horse. She jerked away and in so doing the fine foam that flecked her lips was changed to a brilliant claret that started to gush and then ooze plentifully.

"Wee May's got the tender mouth, Mike," Dan said in worried tones to the dismounting Mickey. "Tender'n even your tender hands. Look!"

Mickey looked, genuine concern taking possession of him. He opened the mouth of the tossing Wee May. The bit had lacerated the tender pink skin of the jaws and mouth. He, Mickey Sloane, had hurt Wee May! He had caused her pain when he had pulled hard on the bit at the swerve!

Some of the turf's hard boiled would have grinned if they had seen Mickey bury his head in the satin neck of the racer, but they would have grinned in an understanding way if they had seen Wee May lower her head and whinny as though to say: "Don't take it so tough, old-timer."

"She's got to be handled awful tender, Mr. Crowley," said Mickey. "Awful tender!" He led Wee May away, to walk her for a bit.

CROWLEY, his three racers and Mickey Sloane made their début the next season at Aqueduct, the old picturesque track on Long Island, a place of a thousand traditions of heavy plunging and daring finishes of the old days.

Mickey and Crowley renewed old acquaintances as did Peer Gynt and Missy Lou in the exercise pens. Wee May sniffed the aroma of the new and strange land and seemed to like it.

And Scofino, the annoyer of Mickey who had run into the stormy petrel, greeted Mickey with the old "Hello, Sloane! How's the tender mitts?"

"You ought to know they're not so

tender, you monkey," answered the newly peppered-up Mike.

Scofino just glared and grunted and then walked on.

The usual blare and color that greets the new racing season was in full swing when Mickey took out his first mount.

"I'm going to try and boot Gray Goose over for Hayden, Mr. Crowley," he said. "Gonna get my hand in so we can take Wee May out in great shape."

Crowley smilingly nodded approval.

Sloane came back with a bang and Gray Goose was a good horse. He lead the scowling Scofino, on a Reachley mount, by two lengths at the finish. Mickey, youth that he was, could not refrain from a smiling, "Eat dust, Scuffy!" as Scofino glared and muttered an oath.

The weather was bad those first days and Wee May was not sent out.

"We'll save her for a good dry track and the English system at Belmont," declared Dan.

But the weather at the Belmont meet was gloomy and the track muddy. Wee May was exercised daily and gradually ushered into the speed of fast company.

Mickey continued to ride winners. As he rode, it seemed that it was always Scofino that he nosed out of the money. The little Italian was riled clear through.

Then they went to Jamaica where, the last day of the meet, the Sheridan Stakes, with five thousand dollars to the winner, was the goal.

Mickey discontinued his daily riding and only exercised Wee May. Scofino continued to plan and watch. He noticed the way Wee May answered the slightest tug. He noticed the swerve she would always take when rounding a turn and he noticed the high-riding Mickey, way up along Wee May's neck, hands holding down, rather than back, the bridle reins.

Of course the story of Wee May's

tender mouth went the rounds. Things travel swiftly in racing circles, being enlarged upon as they progress.

By the time the news was the chief topic of conversation in the Reachley stalls, the how and why of Wee May's tender mouth was brought up with elaborate garnishings.

"They're using a composition metal bit. Something soft and light. Aluminum maybe," remarked Martin, the trainer. "They'll have to use a few prayers too when we pocket 'em again!"

Scofino grinned maliciously and made mental note of the soft bit.

The day before Wee May's debut, Crowley had run the horse in easy time before the gallery of wiseacre clockers who haunt the stands in the early-morning hours when owners are limbering up their horses in supposed secrecy. It is this gallery that sets the betting odds and floats the rumors as to a horse's condition.

But Dan was wise, yea, very wise. He did not run Wee May up to her form. The tender hands of Mike could keep her under wraps with just a slight pressure. The clockers went off convinced that Wee May couldn't finish anywhere near the top.

Strategic as Dan Crowley was, he had reckoned without Scofino. In fact, Scoffy had not been considered when it came to figuring the sources and obstacles that Wee May must surmount.

THROUGH the blackness of that moonless summer night, Scofino had consummated his plan. With a fine steel file he scraped and scraped the aluminum bit. He was careful that the filings did not fall off the bit, but clung to the sides as the steel ate into the soft metal. As the file rasped through it, the jockey wet the filings with saliva.

Three quarters of the way through, the file stopped. The filings were tamped into position in the fine line and smoothed out. Only a very close

investigation would have showed the dastardly trick.

Evidently Scofino had filed a bit before. The slightest tug now would break that guiding bar asunder. Scofino visioned Wee May taking her swerve and the tender hand of Mickey pulling, tugging gently on the bit. With his visions, Scofino sneaked back to his quarters.

The Sheridan Stakes brought a record throng to Jamaica to witness the initial performance of the season's crop of two year olds. The fifth race on the card, it gave time for even the straggling racing bug to be present.

Wee May was ready. So was Mickey Sloane. Dan Crowley chewed grass and clucked his tongue. He was through giving advice, through explaining plans; he had shot his bolt.

The blare of the band, pop corn, gay colors, straw hats and the thousands of other props known to racing events were assembled.

"It's ours for nothing!" said the confident Mickey as he swung aboard Wee May, first in line by honor of her good looks and ladylike behavior.

Round about they followed the trumpeter, dressed like a master of hounds. Wee May, feeling the drilling of many eyes, tossed her head a little nervously.

At the barrier!

Scofino was up on White Heat, a ponderous brute.

"Back, you, Scoffy!" bawled the timer.

"Easy there, Sloane! Don't try to steal. Lead up easy!"

The barrier was sprung!

The famous cry of racing, centuries old, "They're off!" came from thousands of throats.

Wee May took the starter's signal almost in full stride. Out she leaped for the field ahead. One by one they were passed. Mickey held his position high up. He whispered soothing words into the receptive ear of Wee May.

"Easy, old girl. Hold it! Steady!" he reassured her as though she might understand.

His hands just held the reins lightly. Wee May was running her own race. Scofino on White Heat was already plying the bat. Gerson, on My Boy, was pushing hard for the front. Wee May was taking her first turn like a veteran. The swerve was hardly noticeable.

At the second turn, she swerved, slightly again. Mickey had not even tightened his grip on the lines. Scofino, on White Heat, began to weaken.

White Heat dropped back and My Boy and Lucifer, ridden by Marley, a desperate plunger, crept up. Wee May was skimming the turf.

They came to the third and last turn. It was just a few yards for the stretch. The horses were bunched—My Boy, Lucifer and Wee May. Wee May, turning sharply, lunged to the fullest as Mickey pulled down on his bit to straighten her out.

What was this that the crowd saw?

The reins were dangling loose, the bit had snapped and Wee May, snorting and slobbering had broke her stride, the loose ends of the bit slipping through her jaws.

Mickey, a frantic Mickey, seemed to stand upright and then lie along the neck of Wee May.

"Easy, baby!" he murmured.

How he stayed on was a miracle. A low groan came from the crowd and many turned their heads as the inevitable crash loomed. Dan Crowley too looked away.

Then he swung his glasses again. What of Mickey? That boy was game—Crowley could at least look. Mickey was staying on the back of a plunging fear-crazed racer.

Now, however, Wee May had picked up her stride. Lucifer was leading; My Boy, second; Wee May, third. The field straggled out behind her.

THEN the tender hands of Mickey Sloane were seen slide into the foaming jaws of Wee May as he leaned away out along her neck. The horse's foam-and-red-flecked lips were parted. The jaws seemed to close down on the white hands.

Mickey began talking, it appeared. At least his lips were moving. His face blanched. Still he was holding his high-riding position.

He was guiding Wee May. Those tender hands that had been scoffed at were in the mouth of a racing horse, tugging to hold her head straight.

Wee May passed My Boy. Neck and neck she came with Lucifer. The foam was not so red now. Only a few yards were left of the stretch.

The mob was howling.

Dan Crowley was crying and cursing alternately. And Mickey Sloane was talking, mumbling. The filly, ears back, seemed to lengthen her stride. She passed Lucifer, passed him like a breeze and the tender hands of Mickey Sloane, maybe gouged to shreds now, drove Wee May under the wire a winner, a fifteen-to-one shot, the pride of her class on the day of her *début* into racing society.

The old Jamaica stands creaked and swayed as Mickey and Wee May circled the track to the ponderous roar of hysterical applause.

Arms were held out for the form of Mickey Sloane, slumped now on his seat, a pigskin throne made royal by courage.

Then came Dan Crowley through the crowd.

"Mike!" he called, "Mike, your hands!" Crowley was asking, pleading in spurring jumbles.

And Mickey just clung to the neck of Wee May. He was resting and—grinning.

The tender hands were clasped under the neck of the heavy-breathing, championing Wee May. Her proud neck

was still arching as she nervously pawed the ground, skittish at the crowd.

THE steward lifted Mickey Sloane off Wee May that day.

And the jockey's hands—Mickey, grinning, held up his red-stained hands so that all could see them. They were not pretty sights, but Mickey could still grin. Then he brushed them on his silk jacket.

The hands came away white and whole. They had not been hurt; the skin had not been broken. Just the red from the mouth of Wee May had stained them. The tender-mouthed horse had known. The wisdom of the horseman, Mickey Sloane, had guided him to the right procedure. Wee May had not even scratched those tender mitts.

The crowd separated. Mickey and Crowley and Wee May walked down a lane of reverent onlookers. They could not cheer; it was too wonderful, almost unbelievable. But as the figures of the two men and the horse turned the corner of the clubhouse, the cheering broke loose.

"Sloane! Sloane! Sloane!" reverberated through the air.

Even the betterers who had gone down on White Heat and Lucifer cheered the jockey and Wee May.

In the jockey room Scofino grumbled and still scowled, but vowed that henceforth he would be a different boy. He wanted to shake hands with Mickey, but the vision of what might have happened to those tender hands would not allow him to.

Mickey Sloane, looking up into the eyes of one Dan Crowley, grinned and said: "It's the tender mitt that counts and the tender-mouthed horse, Mr. Crowley."

Dan Crowley shifted the blade of grass to the port side of his mouth, looked down at the diminutive Mickey and said: "Aye, son, tender mitts!"



Splashes of Red

By J. Frank Davis

Author of "Unwritten Law," "Whoso Diggeth a Pit," Etc.

West comes East—and proves that its own methods for crime detection work as well in the big city as they do in the God's country.

THAT star rodeo performer, but as bad an egg as ever moonlit a bronc, the "Oklahoma Kid," wrestled his steer to a quick fall, and the voice of "Foghorn" McNamara, holding his horse quiet to face the crowded grand stand at Speedway Park, came booming across the field to where Millie Wayne, in her cowgirl clothes, stood waiting to participate in the next event on the program.

"That bulldogger was Jack Marling, the Oklahoma Kid. Time, seventeen seconds flat. Next and last contestant in to-day's bulldogging is 'Curly' Bratton."

Preston Campbell, the rodeo judge, gray-mustached Texan of the old school, raised a hand toward the chute where the next steer waited, and the red beast plunged wildly across the

arena, desperate to leave behind him the lithe youngster with the blazing neckerchief who galloped on his flank.

Opposite the middle of the grand stand the horse overtook the steer, swerved in, and Curly leaped and got the horns with not one lost motion. Feet braced, he slid backward for two seconds, then man and steer came to a struggling stop. For one more second they might have been a statue.

The animal's head, then, twisted slowly, grotesquely, as though it cocked its startled eyes to squint sidewise at the sky. Its feet went out from under it. Down together to the ground crashed bulldogger and bulldogged, and the youth's right hand shot upward in signal to the judge.

The Oklahoma Kid, who meantime had been returning across the field, out

of the public picture, stopped beside Millie Wayne.

"Can you beat it?" he demanded. "Drop that hombre into a dipping vat and he'd come up with a pocket full of oil wells! If I could ever get luck to break for me that a way——"

Millie was not listening. A bit breathlessly she was looking toward where Curly and the steer were rising out of the dust. It had been a wonderful throw. After exhibitions like that it had been Curly's habit to wave his hand at her—until the previous day.

A messenger, cantering over from where old Pres Campbell sat on his horse in the center of the field, handed a slip of paper to Foghorn McNamara, who glanced at it and made due announcement:

"That bulldogger was Curly Bratton. Time, eleven and two fifths seconds. The world's record is seven and two fifths seconds. Curly Bratton wins to-day's bulldogging. Jack Marling, second. Billy Toms, third. The next event is the cowgirls' trick-riding contest. The ladies taking part——"

MILLIE'S teeth shut tightly over her lower lip. Curly had not looked at her at all. He had waved his hand toward the stand—toward one spot in the stand, the same spot he had waved to yesterday afternoon, the spot where a brilliant toque hat made a splash of violent red. And under the crimson splash a feminine hand waved back.

It was a soft, pinkly manicured hand, quite different from Millie's not un-beautiful but hard, competent ones. Millie had not failed to note the contrast when its owner—her name was Florraine—had been introduced to a lot of the performers by one of the resident managers of the show after the first afternoon's contests. Millie had closely observed the face, too; an oval, olive face, artistically tinted, with languishing dark eyes. And the clothes.

Miss Florraine wore modish clothes; Millie, even at the moment when Curly, shaking hands with the city girl, had awkwardly murmured his delight at meeting her, had realized how they looked in comparison with her own picturesque but simple working garb. At the same moment she had sensed that the girl was attracted by Curly—as who wouldn't be?—and that Curly was tremendously flattered and impressed.

Then, not much later, Curly and Miss Florraine had spoken together at the edge of the group, and Curly, that evening, carefully attired in his most striking raiment, had left the hotel immediately after dinner and was still absent when Millie went to bed. The previous day he had waved toward the red hat instead of at Millie. And now again on this day.

Millie would be the second on the cowgirl program, and the first contestant rode out to do her stuff. Millie cinched her horse, which did not need it, and only half heard the Oklahoma Kid as he came closer, having observed Curly's gesture toward the stand as well as she, and suggested:

"Let's you and me do a show or something in town to-night. Huh? Whatya say, Miss Wayne? Let's."

Nothing in the world was farther from Millie's mind than going to a show or anywhere else with Jack Marling, but she was angry and her pride was hurt. She and Curly Bratton were not engaged, but everybody expected them to be. His attention had been solely for her in half a dozen Western rodeos and chance had again brought them together at this, one of the first real rodeos, and not a wild-West show, ever given on the Atlantic seaboard outside New York.

For the first day, Curly had been as attentive to her as ever—and then he had met that handsome, sophisticated girl of the red hat.

"Huh?" urged the Oklahoma Kid.

"Whatya say, Miss Wayne? A show and some good eats, somewheres."

That was precisely what she had promised to do, that night, with Curly. Promised it on the opening day of the show, before he had seen the Florraine girl. Millie was conscious, as she straightened, that Curly was approaching now, on his way to the dressing tents. Just as he arrived within hearing, "Red" Peeks, the clown, came riding on his donkey and stopped to pass Curly a .45 caliber pistol.

"Thanky kindly," the clown said. "No more shootin' for to-day and I won't need it to-morrow. My own'll be fixed."

DRESSED for bulldogging and hence with no holster, Curly held the weapon in his hand as he stopped beside Millie and the Oklahoma Kid. Curly did not like the Kid, but, more, he did not like to see him talking to Millie. That he himself was thinking less of her, these days, than of the girl whose bright headdress set off her olive skin, did not alter this feeling; man in such matters is not consistent.

He hesitated a second, looked from one to the other and said:

"We got a date to-night, Millie. Will you be ready 'bout seven?"

This casual taking it for granted that he could do what he had done and not suffer her resentment stirred Millie into cold anger, but she came of a stock trained not to exhibit emotion and merely smiled as she replied:

"You must have got your nights mixed, Curly. Because to-night I've got an engagement with Mr. Marling."

Curly's face fell almost comically. He stared from her to the grinning Oklahoma Kid and opened his mouth as though to protest. Then he swallowed, turned away and walked toward the chutes.

"What time to-night, little one?" Marling asked.

He was staggered by her answer and the flash of her eyes that accompanied it.

"Not any time," she said. "I've changed my mind."

"Next contestant," bellowed Foghorn McNamara, "is Miss Millie Wayne!"

She sprang into her saddle and was off toward the stand, while Marling, who understood some kinds of women very well but her kind not at all, gazed open-mouthed after her. Turning, he also tramped toward the chutes and found Curly Bratton, his face harshly set, standing a little apart from the other cowboys, waiting.

Curly's voice was very low and his normal drawl was exaggerated.

"If you'll excuse me, suh," he said to Marling, "I'd admire to have you not meddle wi' that lady."

"Well, what the——"

"I don't want to have no quarrel with you, suh, but there ain't no reason why we shouldn't understand each other. She don't happen to know you very well, I reckon, and of course I ain't the one to tell her—and I don't go round shootin' off any backcapping talk to ladies or any one else—but she ain't the kind——"

The Oklahoma Kid recovered from his astonishment.

"You got some nerve, telling me who'll I'll take out and who I won't take out. If it wasn't for the rules o'——"

"Sh-h-h, if you please, suh. There ain't no reason for anybody else to know——"

Marling raised his voice even louder.

"Anybody in the wide world can know as far as I'm concerned, hombre! I pick my own girls and my own girls pick me, Millie Wayne or anybody else."

The group at the chutes had fallen silent, ears pricked.

Bratton spoke through his teeth, hardly more than a whisper.

"I'd rather you didn't mention no ladies' names."

"Who the blazes are you, to be telling me——"

A shadow fell upon them and Pres Campbell, ex-Texas Ranger, quietly wheeled his horse. His voice was level but authoritative.

"If you boys got any quarreling to do, wait till after the show. You know the rule about rowdyism. Well, I'll enforce it against both of you if I have to. What's it all about? If you're kicking about your bulldogging time, Marling, you're plumb wrong. I fined you five seconds because there wa'n't no daylight showing between you and the steer at the dead line, but that didn't change the result; even if you hadn't lost that five seconds Bratton still beat you."

"Aw, that's all right, judge," Marling said.

"And you, Bratton, what you got that gun in your hand for? You know there's a rule against carrying a gun except where they're called for in the show."

"I lent it to Red Peeks. His was busted. He just give it back to me."

"All right. Go put it up. And don't let me hear any more ruckuses startin' on this field."

Fully master of the rodeo and its contestants, old Pres turned and cantered back to the center of the field. The Oklahoma Kid had disappeared into a tent and Curly, with not much time before the calf-roping event, hastened to his own.

MILLIE WAYNE, unable to sleep, although the cowgirl in bed with her was piling up strength for the morrow like a child, heard the knock, not far from midnight, on the door on the next room, heard Pres Campbell's quick call of "Who is it?" and the voice of one of the local rodeo committeemen in the hotel corridor, saying:

"Sorry to wake you up, Mr. Campbell, but one of your men's been killed, downtown, and the police have just come and got another one for doing it."

"What's that?" Millie heard Campbell's feet hit the floor, his room door open. "Who's killed? How?"

"Marling. Curly Bratton did it, it seems. Shot him. The cops came out and found the pistol in his room. Recently fired. They had a quarrel this afternoon."

"Come in while I get dressed. I know about that quarrel—it was over the bulldogging win. At least I thought it was; come to think of it, I didn't hear a word of it. Where did they get to fighting? Which one went after his gun first?"

"It don't seem to have been a fight," the local man said. "Marling was shot in the back of the head."

Wide-eyed, Millie swung around to sit on the edge of her bed. She heard Pres Campbell exclaim:

"The thunder he was! I'd 'a' swore Bratton wa'n't that kind of a boy. Does he admit it?"

"No. He says he hasn't seen Marling since this afternoon's show. But he can't prove where he was this evening. Says he was downtown till ten o'clock and didn't see anybody he knew that can alibi him."

"Come in," Pres invited, and she heard the door close.

A murmur of indistinguishable words followed while the Texan dressed. His close to sixty years had not lost him his habit of taking command of a situation or his ability to get into his clothes quickly, and barely five minutes had elapsed before Millie heard his decisive:

"All right, Mr. Taylor. Let's go!"

She had thrown on a kimono and stood in her doorway as committeeman and one-time ranger came out.

"Uncle Pres!" she cried. "I couldn't help hearing. He didn't do it."

"How do you know?" the local man demanded, before Campbell could speak.

"I know him. He'd never shoot anybody from behind."

"Just what I said," agreed the ex-ranger. "But what he seems to need is an alibi. Maybe, if you and he were together any——"

"I haven't seen him since he went out right after supper, and then I don't think he saw me; I just noticed him going through the lobby," the girl said. "But it's nonsense to charge him——"

"He and Marling quarreled this afternoon," put in Taylor. "Over one of Mr. Campbell's decisions."

Millie knew nothing of the quarrel, of course. She could only say again, stubbornly:

"But he didn't do it. You're going to try to get him out, aren't you, Uncle Pres?"

"Going to do everything I can," the old man replied. "I don't guess we'll be able to get him turned loose to-night, but first thing in the mawnin', if we have luck—— You go back to bed, Millie, and get your sleep. I'll let you know how things stand first thing in the mawnin'."

He and Taylor passed down the corridor and were standing at the elevator when Millie called him back and spoke too low for the local man to hear.

"Curly never would bring any lady's name into a thing where it might get into the newspapers unless he was sure it wouldn't hurt her," she said. "He went—— I don't know it, but there's a girl——"

"I've sort of suspected there might be, noticing you two the last day or so," Campbell remarked dryly. "Wa'n't none of my business, of course, but I couldn't help noticin'. Some city lady, is it?"

"She's sat in the same place in the grand stand every day, wearing a red hat——"

"Me, I don't notice ladies' hats much," Pres said. "Maybe, if you could give me a better description——"

"I was introduced to her, at the same time Curly was. Miss Florraine, her name is. She's—she's very pretty and well-dressed and city-acting."

"H'mph!" grunted the ex-ranger. "And boys don't have sense enough to know when they're well off. Any more," he conceded. "then they did when I was one. Who is she?"

"I don't know. Nothing except her name. But if his alibi had to include her, and for any reason he thought she ought to be protected, he'd never tell."

"Florraine," said Pres. "That isn't a common name, or hard to remember. When I get to see him, I'll know what to ask about."

In the detective room at police headquarters, while Taylor remained discreetly silent, Pres Campbell met a character new in his experience—the plain-clothes man promoted from pounding a beat, who had never been outside a big city, never wanted to be, and oozed contempt for every one and everything that was not metropolitan.

"You bozos with big hats," he remarked heavily, "think you can get away with murder. Nothing to it, mister; nothing to it. This Bratton guy did it and we've got him. You and your gang of cowboys can't come into this town and pull your rough stuff."

CAMPBELL, whose competency in crime detection could be attested by thousands of Texans, was here unfamiliar with the laws, unacquainted with police procedure and at sea as to his rights. One more familiar with South-western characteristics than was Detective Moore would have noted a glint in his eye and set of his jaw at the sneer. After the slightest hesitation, to be certain that he had his temper quite under command, the ex-ranger said:

"If you would be willing to tell me a

little, perhaps, about how you know Bratton done it—that is, if it ain't defeatin' the ends of justice any way to tell— You see, suh, I'm in a sort of way the head of this outfit of ours, being the contest judge and so forth. If there isn't any reason why you should be afraid to tell me—"

"Say, what would make you think I might be afraid of anybody in your gang?" the detective demanded truculently. "Not any, cowboy, not any! I don't know how your constables out West go clean up a murder, but me—first thing when a guy gets bumped off like this man of yours, I look for the frail."

"Frail?" queried Pres.

"The skirt; the jane; the woman. And this time it was easy. This Bratton quarrels with Marling only this afternoon over her—and you know that cussed well, because you stopped 'em."

"Me? I thought they were having words over one of my decisions."

"Yes, you did!" scoffed the detective. "Well, they wasn't. Half a dozen men heard the girl's name when Marling spoke it."

"I didn't. What was the name?"

"Say, are you trying to kid me? You know blame well it was Wayne—Millie Wayne. One of them roughneck women with your show."

"Mr. Moore," said Pres, very mildly, "Miss Wayne's a right nice young lady, suh. I'd admire not to have you speak like that about her."

"You'd 'admire' for me not to speak like that about a 'right nice' young lady," mimicked Moore. "Listen, fella! You ain't out in the brush now. You're in a town with bright lights in it. And I talk about women that get mixed up in murders like they're supposed to be talked about. Get me?"

The briefest second Pres Campbell fought for self-control and achieved it.

"Yes, suh," he said. "Well, if there ain't anythin' I can do to help—"

"When we need any help from yap deputy sheriffs, we'll broadcast for it," Moore answered.

"Yes, suh," said Pres, and turned toward the door, observing that of the three or four other detectives in the room, at least two were grinning broadly. "I'll bid you good night, suh."

Out on the street, the local committeeman said: "Well, that's that. I told you my being with you would probably do you more harm than good, my not being tied up with this city administration—but I don't know as you'd have done any better if you'd gone alone. It's never a bad idea to have a witness along when you're talking to a man like that Moore."

"I wanted to see Curly and I'd have liked to see Marling's body, too," the ex-ranger replied, "but there wa'n't any use asking after he got so plumb insulting."

THEY were walking slowly and now became conscious that footsteps behind them were quickening. As they turned a corner and passed out of sight of the police-headquarters entrance, a husky voice called cautiously:

"Go on past that street light and stop."

Campbell, over his shoulder, recognized a thickset, elderly man as having been one of the audience during his interview with Detective Moore.

Taylor whispered: "Detective Graney. One of the old-timers on the force."

They stopped in the shadow halfway down the block and Graney came ponderously heavy-footed to stand beside them.

"Kind of a raw deal Moore give you, back there," he remarked. "He don't know nothing about folks from Texas, Moore don't."

"Do you, suh?" Campbell asked courteously.

"Well, a little," replied the detective.

"And here all I pounded after you guys for was because I got kinda used to Texas fellas in the Spanish War, and most of 'em that I run into was good sports." He added, ingeniously: "And because this Moore—you don't need to go repeating it, either of you, though it ain't any secret to him I think so—is a bonehead, right."

"He didn't seem to consult the rest of you much," Pres remarked tactfully.

"He never does; he knows it all himself," said Graney. "It ain't like he was the chief, you know. It just happens, the chief being out of town and the cap'n off duty to-night, that he's sitting in at the top."

Graney concluded bitterly:

"He's a wise guy—I don't think."

The ex-ranger wasted no time seeking to learn what ancient departmental feud between Graney and Moore might be at the bottom of this bitterness, but asked practically:

"What can we do, friend?"

"What," inquired the detective, "do you want to do—short of getting your man out?"

"I want to talk with him—and I want to see the man that was killed."

"Fair enough," Graney commented. "We'll do the second thing first—over at the morgue. After that we'll come back and you can see Bratton in his cell." He explained this order of procedure by saying: "Moore goes off duty at two o'clock. The fella that takes charge then don't like him much more'n I do."

Taylor at this point intimated that morgues had never entered into his life and he hoped they never would. Campbell was entirely willing to excuse him from further participation in the night's wanderings. The ex-ranger and Detective Graney, presently, were viewing the body of the reckless and once handsome Oklahoma Kid, awaiting the official autopsy that would take place in the morning.

AT his first glance, the Texan spoke with relief.

"Yes," he said. "There ain't any doubt about his being shot from behind. I was afraid some mistake had been made about that and if it had been done from in front, it might 'a' been a fight. Where's the bullet?"

"We never found it," Graney said. "The killing, you see, was out of doors. In that alley that leads up to the side door of the Monaco Cabaret."

"I hope it gets found. Because I'm sure Curly Bratton ha'n't got any gun except a .45. All the pistols in our outfit are that caliber. And there ain't any way of proving it without that piece of lead, because bullets don't always act just the same in all cases—but I'd gamble the best hawse I've got that this hole wasn't made by any Colt. Looks to me as if it was too small going in and too big coming out. When you find that bullet, if it isn't busted so its weight don't prove anything, I'm sayin' it'll be a .38 at the biggest, and perhaps a .32."

His eyes fell upon the pile of clothing that had been stripped from the body.

"Say, Mr. Graney!" he demanded. "Are you sure all these clothes were Marling's?"

"Bound to be," the detective said. "The system they've got here, there's no chance of a mix-up."

"I took 'em off him myself," put in the morgue attendant who accompanied them. "Don't touch 'em. The coroner ain't looked 'em over yet."

"I wasn't aiming to," Pres assured him. "I've been a peace officer myself."

"What's the matter with 'em?" Graney asked.

"Nothing. Only he didn't usually wear a red handkerchief around his neck. Let's go!"

Through steel bars, Pres talked with Curly Bratton. Detective Graney was

kind enough to stand back out of ear-shot.

"Right off, firsthand," Campbell said, "I'll tell you, son, I don't believe you did it. And Millie, she was right positive. Wouldn't make any difference how much evidence these police thought they had, she'd know better."

"They haven't told me all the details of what they think," Curly remarked, "but they've got hold of that quarrel the Kid and me had this afternoon. I don't know how much the boys heard—I don't think they heard anything I said—but I was declaring myself to him after I found out him and her were going out to supper together."

"They were?" exclaimed Pres. "They didn't."

It was Curly's turn to exhibit astonishment.

"She told me they were going to," he said. "If she hadn't— Tell you the truth, judge, she and me had a date for supper to-night and when you come up on the Kid and me, that a way, she had just a few minutes before turned me down and said she was going with him—told me with him present. And while I didn't so much care right at that minute about her going with me, thinking of her going out with him got me mad."

"Why didn't you want her to go with you? If she didn't, were you going to meet the Florraine lady?"

"Oh, judge! Her name isn't going to get into it, too, is it?"

"How are you going to stop these police digging up all sorts of things?" Pres countered. "And if Miss Florraine can alibi you—"

"But she can't," Curly protested. "I haven't seen her since this afternoon at the rodeo and then I didn't see her to speak to." He hesitated a second, then said: "We don't want to drag any nice lady's name into this, judge, but between you and me I was looking for her, Millie having turned me down and

all that. But she wasn't where she and I met last night. So I looked round a while and then went home and went to bed."

HE explained further. "Being kind of upset, one way and another, I forgot to clean my pistol like I'd intended to. Red Peeks had used it for the show, you know. And the police, finding it had been fired—telling 'em about Peek's firing it made no difference, because it wouldn't be no dirtier if I had fired it afterward—"

"I know," interrupted Campbell. "You didn't call on Miss Florraine at her home, I take it."

"She thought her folks might object, me being a cowboy and all," Curly confided. "So we met at one of these cabaret dance places—the Monaco is the name of it."

"The Monaco, eh? Who did you see there you knew—not last night when you were with Miss Florraine, but to-night, when you couldn't find her?"

"Nobody," declared Curly with obvious sincerity. "Not a soul. I went in and looked around and she wasn't there, so I bought me a drink for manners, and pretty soon I went out and looked in a couple other places and then I beat it home to the hotel."

"Was there anybody in the alley when you came out of the Monaco?"

"Alley?" Curly queried. "What alley?"

"Where the side door is."

"I never noticed any side door on any alley. Me, I went in at the front—to-night and the other two times I've been there. I went there the first time with Pearl—I mean Miss Florraine—"

"Got real well acquainted for three days, didn't you, son? Quite a few folks must have noticed it, one place and another. And it never occurred to you, I s'pose, that when Millie said she wa'n't going to supper with you, it might be because she thought prob'ly

you'd rather be out again with the new girl. I don't know that, but I don't guess it's a bad shot in the dark.

"Girls are fussy that a way about dividing their time with new ladies," he went on. "Millie didn't tell me either that or anything else about it all, but I gathered from something she said that you had trompled on her feelings. That didn't stop her saying she knew you didn't kill him, though."

"Who do you suppose did, judge?"

"No more idea'n the man in the moon," Pres had to admit. "But we aim to do some investigatin' between now and sunup, me and this friend of mine that's a detective. I see you're wearing the usual red handkerchief."

Curly's fingers went to it.

"What's that got to do with things?"

"I dunno," the ex-ranger replied. "I dunno as it's got anything to do with 'em a-tall. I only happened to notice it. Have you happened, escortin' her round to one place and another, to meet any of Miss Florraine's friends?"

"I don't remember any names. Just folks we met there in the Monaco and another dance place we went into."

"All seem to be well-dressed, up-to-date folks?"

"Yes. Look here, judge, there ain't no reason to go ringin' her or her friends in on a mess of trouble like this. Her folks are kinda old-fashioned and don't like her to go round to dance halls where it's lively——"

"Lots of old folks are that a way. Did you say they were father and mother both?"

"I didn't say. I don't know as I ever heard her mention. What difference does it make? I didn't find her to-night."

"That's so; so you didn't. Well, I'm sorry to leave you here, son, but I've got to. We'll be doing all we can."

"A habeas corpus and reasonable bail and——" Curly began, but Campbell shook his head.

"This ain't Texas. Up in this country they don't fix reasonable bail for homicide. But keep smilin'. Your friends are all on the job—especially Millie."

"Say, judge," said the cowboy with some embarrassment. "I been kinda foolish, maybe. These new folks I met are right nice folks, but I didn't really—— I don't s'pose anything can be done to square it, but sittin' here I've been thinking that our own kind o' folks is our own kind o' folks. If Millie could sort o' forgive——"

"Curly," said the older man, "Millie's daddy and me were friends as long as he lived—such good friends that she's been callin' me 'uncle' ever since she was old enough to talk. I aim, when she gets married, to do anythin' an old-timer like me can do to see she gets a fairish sort of husband.

"Personally," he continued, "I'd rather she took a kid that had made a few kinds of fool of himself and got over it than one that city glitter was going to get some time after he married, maybe. Millie's got a heap o' sense. She might see it the same way—and then, again, she mightn't, dependin' upon whether the fool kid acted like he'd got over it or not."

LISTEN, judge," said Curly. "From the minute she 'lowed she was going to eat with Jack Marling, I've been looking at things different. I don't s'pose she could understand that startin' right out to try to find another lady was a sort of—a sort of getting square, as you might say."

"I don't suppose she could—not right away," Pres replied. "But time and good fruits of repentance has given her confidence in many a hawse that was a right bad bronc when she first forked him. So long, son! Don't go to frettin' too much—about anything."

Out on the street again, Campbell said to Graney:

"What sort of place is that Monaco Cabaret?"

"Bum!" the detective answered. "But prosperous. The gang that hangs out there has plenty money, these days."

"Bootleggers among 'em, maybe?"

"And hijackers and a few other things. And sports that like to travel with 'em."

"Just between ourselves, did you ever hear of a young lady named Pearl Florrine?"

"The Red Pearl?" Graney replied promptly. "Some stepper!"

"Red?"

"Fits her two or three ways. For one thing, she always wears it. Another, she trains with Reds, anarchists, or communists or sump'n—I don't pretend to know just which kind they belong to. Her regular married name is Ricotti, although Angelo don't go by it."

"Angelo?"

"Her husband. He calls his last name 'Rich.' 'Quick' Rich is how the gang knows him. Got it—though we've never been able to convict him—by his speed in pulling a gat."

"A gunman?"

"Sure. What's all this got——"

"Where is he?"

"He's been out o' town the last week or so, but I seen a report from one of our railroad station men that he got back, unexpected, about six o'clock to-night—last night, I mean; it's morning now."

"Mr. Graney," promised Campbell with confidence, "you take me to Angelo Ricotti, and think up a good way to get him mad and talkative, and I'll give you a laugh on Mr. Detective Moore that he won't get over till Texas is annexed back to Mexico."

BRIEFLY, he went into details. Unhesitatingly, enthusiastically, Detective Graney agreed with him.

It was a little past three o'clock

when they found Quick Rich in the back room of a hang-out whose sentry they and the policeman on the beat had succeeded in suppressing without any alarm being given. One other man was present and Campbell seized and disarmed him while Graney jammed a pistol into Rich's midriff and took from his coat a .38 automatic with its barrel powder stained.

"It's no good, Quick," the detective said, when the handcuffs were on. "We know all about the killing. The Pearl turned you in."

"So she was there, was she?" raved Angelo. "If I'd seen her, I'd 'a' made a double job of it. Well, I got him anyway, the whelp! Waving his hand at her every day in the grand stand in front of five thousand people—and her waving back! And the nerve to take her out and make a fool of me to the whole gang! And Pearl—just because we had some words—kidding him along, with his big hat and cowboy clothes and red handkerchief!"

"You identified him by his red handkerchief, of course, just as he was heading into the side door of The Monaco," Pres suggested mildly.

"Sure I did! They told me he was the only one of that wild-West crowd that ever wore one. Who are you?"

"Mr. Campbell," said Detective Graney unctuously, "is a guy from Texas that used to be a Roughrider. And him and me is going to do some more roughridin'—with a certain know-it-all gent to be rode—along about court time in the mornin'."

"Moore was right at that, in a way," murmured the ex-ranger as the patrolman left to ring for the patrol. "'Look for the woman;' that's as good a rule in some killin's in Texas as it is here in the East. And I followed his hunch and did the same thing. But down in my part of the country we use words some different. When we say women, we usually don't mean ladies."



The Squealer

By Edgar Wallace

Author of "The Missing Millions," "The Valley of Ghosts," Etc.

A Mystery Romance in Four Parts—Part IV.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MARNEY IS SENSIBLE.

PETER wrote to tell of the invitation which Legge had extended to him. Johnny Gray had the letter by the first post. He sat in his big armchair, his silk dressing gown wrapped around him, his chin on his fists; and seeing him thus, the discreet Parker did not obtrude upon his thoughts until Johnny, reading the letter again, tore it in pieces and threw it into the waste-paper basket.

"Parker, if you were asked to take dinner in a lions' den, what dress would you wear?"

Parker looked down at him thoughtfully, biting his lip.

"It would largely depend, sir, on whether there were ladies to be present," he said. "Under those extraordi-

nary circumstances, one should wear full dress and a white tie."

Johnny groaned.

"But supposing the lion tamer had a working arrangement with the lions? Wouldn't you suggest a suit of armor?" asked Johnny without smiling.

Parker considered the problem for a moment.

"That would rather turn it into a fancy dress affair, sir," he said, "where, of course, any costume is permissible. Personally," he added, "I should never dream of dining in a den of lions under any circumstances."

"That's the answer I've been waiting for; it is the most intelligent thing you've said this morning," said Johnny. "Nevertheless, I shall not follow your excellent advice. I will be dining at the Highlow Club on Thursday. Get me the morning newspaper."

He turned the pages apathetically, for the events which were at the moment agitating political London meant nothing in his life. On an inner page he found a brief paragraph which, however, did interest him.

It was in the latest news column, and related to the arrest of a burglar, who had been caught red-handed, breaking into a house in Berkeley Square. The man had given his name as Fenner.

Poor Fenner! He must go back to that hell, which was only better than Keytown Prison. He would be spared the ordeal of Keytown, at any rate, if what Craig had said was true.

Glancing at the clock, he saw that it was nearly eleven, and jumped up. He was taking Marney to lunch and a matinée that day. Peter was bringing her up, and he was to meet them at Victoria.

Since his release from Dartmoor, Johnny had had no opportunity for a quiet talk with the girl, and this promised to be a red-letter day in his life.

He had to wait some time, for the train was late; and as he stood in the broad hall, watching with abstracted interest the never-ceasing rush and movement and life about him, he observed, out of the corner of his eye, a man sidling toward him.

Nearer at hand, he recognized the stranger as a man he had seen in Dartmoor, and remembered that he had come to prison at the same time as Fenner and for the same offense, though he had been released soon after Johnny had passed through that grim gateway.

"I followed you down here, Mr. Gray, but I didn't like to talk to you in the street," said the stranger, apparently immersed in an evening newspaper, and talking, as such men talk, without moving his lips.

Johnny waited, wondering what was the communication, and not doubting that it had to do with Fenner.

"Old Fenner's been shopped by Legge," said the man. "He went to knock off some silver from a house in Berkeley Square, and Shilto was waiting in the hall for him."

"How do you know Legge shopped him?" asked Johnny, interested.

"It was a shop all right," said the other without troubling to explain. "If you can put in a good word for Fenner, he'd be much obliged."

"But, my dear fellow," said John with a little smile, "to whom can I put in a good word? In the present circumstances I couldn't put a word in for my own maiden aunt. I'll see what I can do."

THERE was no need to tell the furtive man to go. With all a thief's perceptions he had seen the eyes of Johnny Gray light up, and with a side-long glance assured himself as to the cause. Johnny went toward the girl with long strides, and, oblivious to curious spectators and Peter Kane alike, took both her hands in his.

After he had handed the girl into a taxi, the older man beckoned him aside.

"I'm not any too sure about this Highlow dinner," he said. "Love feasts are not Emanuel's specialties, and there's a kick coming somewhere, Johnny. I hope you're prepared for it?"

Johnny nodded.

"Emanuel isn't usually so obvious," he said. "In fact, the whole thing is so patent and so crude that I can't suspect anything more than an attempt to straighten matters as far as Marney is concerned."

Peter's face clouded.

"There will be no straightening there," he said shortly. "If he has committed bigamy, he goes down for it. Understand that, Johnny! It will be very unpleasant because of Marney's name being dragged into the light, but I'm going through with it."

He turned away with a wave of his hand, and Johnny returned to the girl.

"What is the matter with father?" she asked as the taxi drew out of the station. "He is so quiet and thoughtful these days. I suppose the poor dear's worrying about me, though he needn't, for I never felt happier."

"Why?" asked Johnny indiscreetly.

"Because—oh, well, because," she said, her face flushing the faintest shade of pink. "Because I'm unmarried, for one thing. I hated the idea, Johnny. You don't know how I hated it. I understand now poor daddy's anxiety to get me married into respectable society."

Her sense of humor, always irrepresible, overcame her anxiety. "I wonder if you understand my immoral sense of importance at the discovery that poor father has done so many illegal things! I suppose it is the kink that he has transmitted to me."

"Was it a great shock to you, Marney?" interrupted the young man.

She nodded.

"Yes, but shocks are like blows—they hurt and they fade. It isn't pleasant to be twisted violently to another angle of view. It pains horribly, Johnny. But I think when I found——" She hesitated.

"When you found that I was a thief."

"When I found that you were—oh, Johnny, why did you? You had so many advantages; you were a university man, a gentleman—Johnny, it wasn't big of you.

"There's an excuse for daddy; he told me about his youth and his struggles and the fearful hardness of living. But you had opportunities that he never had. Easy money isn't good money, is it, Johnny?"

HE was silent, and then, with a quick, breath-catching sigh, she smiled.

"I haven't come out to lecture you, and I shall not even ask you if, for my

sake, you will go straight in the future. Because, Johnny"—she dropped a cool palm on the back of his hand—"I'm not going to do anything like the good fairy in the story books and try to save you from yourself."

"I'm saved," said Johnny with a quizzical smile. "You're perfectly right: there was no reason why I should be a thief. I was the victim of circumstances. It was possibly the fascination of the game—no, no, it wasn't that.

"One of these days I will tell you why I left the straight path of virtue. It is a long and curious story."

She made no further reference to his fall, and throughout the lunch was her own gay self. Looking down at her hand, Johnny saw, with satisfaction, that the platinum wedding ring she had worn had been replaced by a small, plain gold ring, ornamented with a single turquoise, and his breath came faster.

He had first met her at a gymkhana, a country fair which had been organized for charity, and the ring had been the prize he had won at a shooting match, one of the gymkhana features—though it was stretching terminology to absurd lengths so to describe the hotch-potch of contests which went to the making of the program—and had offered it to her as whimsically as it had been accepted. Its value was something under a pound; to Johnny, all the millions in the world would not have given him the joy that its appearance upon her finger gave him now.

After luncheon she returned to the unpleasant side of things.

"Johnny, you're going to be very careful, aren't you? Daddy says that Jeff Legge hates you, and he is quite serious about it. He says that there are no lengths to which Jeffrey and his father will not go to hurt you—and me," she added.

Johnny bent over the table, lowering his voice.

"Marney, when this matter is settled—I mean, the release from your marriage—will you take me—whatever I am?"

She met his eyes steadily and nodded. It was the strangest of all proposals, and Jeffrey Legge, who had watched the meeting at the station, had followed her, and now was overlooking them from one of the balconies of the restaurant, flushed a deeper red, guessing all that that scene meant.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE MAN ON THE ROOF.

ON Thursday afternoon, Emanuel Legge came out of the elevator at the Highlow Club, and, with a curt nod to Stevens, walked up the heavily carpeted corridor, unlocked the door of his tiny office and went in. For half an hour he sat before his desk, his hands clasped on the blotting pad before him, motionless, his mind completely occupied by his thoughts.

At last he opened his desk, pressed a bell by his side, and he had hardly taken his fingers from the push when the head waiter of the establishment, a tall, unpleasant-looking Italian, came in.

"Fernando, you have made all the arrangements about the dinner to-night?"

"Yes," said the man.

"All the finest wines, eh? The best in the house?"

He peered at the waiter, his teeth showing in a smile.

"The very best," said Fernando briskly.

"There will be four: myself and Major Floyd; Mr. Johnny Gray and Peter Kane."

"The lady is not coming?" asked Fernando.

"No, I don't think she'll be dining with us to-night," said Emanuel carefully.

When the waiter had gone, he rose and bolted the door and returned to an

idle examination of the desk. He found extraordinary pleasure in opening the drawers and looking through the little works of reference which filled a niche beneath the pigeonholes. This was Jeffrey's desk, and Jeff was the apple of his eye.

Presently he rose and walked to a nest of pigeonholes which stood against the wall, and, putting his hand into one, he turned a knob and pulled. The nest opened like a door, exposing a narrow, spiral staircase which led upward and downward.

At the foot of the stairs was another door, which he opened, passing into the cellar basement of the house. As the door moved, there came to him a wave of air so superheated that for a moment he found difficulty in breathing.

The cellar in which he found himself was bare of furnishing, except for a table placed under a strong light and a great, inclosed furnace which was responsible for the atmosphere of the room. It was like a Turkish bath, and he had not gone two or three paces before the perspiration was rolling down his cheeks.

A broad-shouldered, undersized man was sitting at the table, a big book open before him. He had turned at the sound of the key in the door, and now he came toward the intruder.

He was a half-caste, and beyond the pair of blue dungaree trousers, he wore no clothing. His yellow skin and his curiously animal face gave him a particularly repulsive appearance.

"Got the furnace going, eh, Pietro?" said Emanuel mildly, taking off his spectacles to wipe the moisture which had condensed upon the lenses.

PIETRO grunted something and, picking up an iron, lifted open the big door of the furnace. Emanuel put up his hands to guard his face from the blast of heat that came forth.

"Shut it, shut it!" he said testily, and

when this was done, he went nearer to the furnace.

Two feet away there ran a boxlike projection, extending from two feet above the floor to the ceiling. A stranger might have imagined that this was an air shaft, introduced to regulate the ventilation. Emanuel was not a stranger. He knew that the shaft ran to the roof, and that it had a very simple explanation.

"That's a good fire you've got, eh, Pietro? You could burn up a man there?"

"Burn anything," growled the other, "but not man."

Emanuel chuckled.

"Scared I'm going to put a murder point on you, are you? Well, you needn't be," he said. "But it's hot enough to melt copper, eh, Pietro?"

"Melt it down to nothing."

"Burned any lately?"

The man nodded, rubbing his enormous arms caressingly.

"They came last Monday week, after the boss had been shot," said the other. He had a curious impediment in his speech which made his tone harsh and guttural. "The fellows upstairs knew they were coming, so there was nothing to see. The furnace was nearly out."

Emanuel nodded.

"The boss said the furnace was to be kept going for a week," said Pietro complainingly. "That's pretty tough on me, Mr. Legge. I feel sometimes I'd nearly die, the heat's so terrible."

"You get the nights off," said Emanuel, "and there are weeks when you do no work. To-night I shall want you. Mr. Jeff has told you?"

The dwarf nodded. Emanuel passed through the door, closing it behind him; and, contrasted with the heat of the room, it seemed that he had walked into the ice well.

His collar was limp, his clothes were sticking to him, as he made his way up the stairs, and, passing the open door

of his office, continued until he reached the tiny landing which scarcely gave him foothold. He knocked twice on the door, for of this he had no key. After a pause came an answering knock, a small spy hole opened and an inquiring and suspicious eye examined him.

The man who grinned a welcome was little and bald. His age was in the region of sixty, and the grotesqueness of his appearance was due less to his shabby attire and diminutive stature than to the gold-rimmed monocle fixed in his right eye.

In the center of the room was a big table, littered with paraphernalia, ranging from a small microscope to a case filled with little black bottles. Under the brilliant overhead light which hung above the table, and clamped to the wood by glass-headed pins, was an oblong copper plate, on which the engraver had been working—the engraving tool was in his hand as he opened the door.

"Good morning, Lacey. What are you working at now?" asked Emanuel with the air of a proprietor addressing a favorite workman.

"The new fives," said the other. "Jeff wants a big printing. Jeff's got brains. Anybody else would have said, 'Work from a photographic plate'—you know what that means. After a run of a hundred, the impression goes wrong, and before you know where you are, there's a squeal.

"But engraving is engraving," he said with pride. "You can get all the new changes without photography. I never did hold with this new method—prisons are full of fellows who think they can make slush with a camera and a zinc plate!"

IT was good to hear praise of Jeffrey, and Emanuel Legge purred. He examined the half-finished plate through his powerful glasses, and though the art of the engraver was one

with which he was not well acquainted, he could admire the fine work which this expert forger was doing.

To the left of the table was an aperture like the opening of a service lift. It was a continuation of the shaft which led from the basement, and it had this value, that, however clever the police might be, long before they could break into the engraver's room, all evidence of his guilt would have been flung into the opening and consumed in the furnace fire.

"Jeffrey's idea. What a mind!" said the admiring Lacey. "It reduces risk to what I might term a minimum. It is a pleasure working for Jeff, Mr. Legge. He takes no chances."

"I suppose Pietro is always on the spot?"

Mr. Lacey smiled. He took up a plate from the table and examined it back and front.

"That is one I spoiled this morning," he said. "Spilled some acid on it. Look!"

He went to the opening, put in his hand, and evidently pressed a bell, for a faint tinkle came from the mouth of the shaft. When he withdrew his hand, the plate that it held had disappeared. There came the buzz of a bell from beneath the table.

"That plate's running like water by now," he said. "There's no chance of a squeal if Pietro's all right. Wide! That's Jeffrey! As wide as Broad Street!"

"Why, Mr. Legge, would you believe that I don't know to this day where the stuff's printed? And I'll bet the printer hasn't got the slightest idea where the plates are made. There isn't a man in this building who has got so much as a smell of it."

Emanuel passed down to his own office, a gratified father, and, securely closing the pigeonhole door, he went out into the club premises to look at room No. 13. The table was already laid: a

big rose bowl, overflowing with the choicest blooms, filled the center; an array of rare glass, the like of which the habitués of the club had never seen on their tables, stood before each plate.

His brief inspection of the room satisfied him, and he returned, not to his office, but to Stevens, the porter.

"What's the idea of telling the members that all the rooms are engaged to-night?" asked Stevens. "I've had to put off Lew Brady, and he pays."

"We're having a party, Stevens," said Emanuel, "and we don't want any interruption. Johnny Gray is coming. And you can take that look off your face; if I thought he was a pal of yours, you wouldn't be in this club two minutes. Peter Kane's coming too."

"Looks to me like a rough-house," said Stevens. "What am I to do?" he asked sarcastically. "Bring in the police at the first squeal?"

"Bring in your friend from Toronto," snapped Emanuel, and went home to change.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A LITTLE DINNER PARTY.

JOHNNY was the first of the guests to arrive, and Stevens helped him take off his raincoat. As he did so, he asked in a low voice:

"Got a gun, captain?"

"Never carry one, Stevens. It is a bad habit to get into."

"I never thought you were a mug," said Stevens in the same voice.

"Any man who has been in prison is, ex-officio, one of the Ancient Order of Muggery," said Johnny, adjusting his bow in the mirror by the porter's desk. "What's going?"

"I don't know," said the other, bending down to wipe the mud from Johnny's boots. "But curious things have happened in No. 13; and don't sit with your back to the buffet. Do you get that?"

Johnny nodded.

He had reached the end of the corridor when he heard the whine of the ascending lift and stopped. It was Peter Kane, and to him, in a low voice, Johnny passed on the porter's advice.

"I don't think they'll start anything," said Peter under his breath. "But if they do, there's a nurse at Charing Cross Hospital who's going to say: 'What, you here again!'"

As Johnny had expected, his two hosts were waiting in room No. 13. The silence which followed their arrival was, for one member of the party, an awkward one.

"Glad to see you, Peter," said Emanuel at last, though he made no pretense of shaking hands. "Old friends ought to keep up acquaintances. There's my boy, Jeffrey. I think you've met him," he said with a grin.

"I've met him," said Peter, his face a mask.

Jeffrey Legge had apparently recovered fully from his unpleasant experience.

"Now sit down, everybody," said Emanuel, hustling around, pulling out the chairs. "You sit here, Johnny."

"I'd rather face the buffet; I like to see myself eat," said Johnny, and, without invitation, sat down in the position he had selected.

Not waiting, Peter seated himself on Johnny's left, and it was Emanuel himself, a little ruffled by this preliminary upset to his plans, who sat with his back to the buffet. Johnny noticed the quick exchange of glances between father and son; he noticed, too, that the buffet carried none of the side dishes for which it was designed, and wondered what particular danger threatened from that end of the room.

"Now, boys," said Emanuel with spurious joviality, "there is to be no bickering and quarreling. We're all met round the festive board, and we've nothing to do but find a way out that

leaves my boy's good name unsullied, if I may use that word."

"You can use any word you like," said Peter. "It'll take more than a dinner party to restore his tarnished reputation."

"What long words you use, Peter!" said Emanuel admiringly. "It's my own fault that I don't know them, because I had plenty of time to study when I was away over the Alps.

"Never been over the Alps, have you, Peter? Well, when they call it 'time,' they use the right word. The one thing you've got there is time!"

Peter did not answer, and it was Jeffrey who took up the conversation.

"See here, Peter," he said, "I'm not going to make a song about this business of mine. I'm going to put all my cards on the table. I want my wife."

"You know where Lila is better than I," said Peter. "She's not in my employment now."

"Lila nothing!" retorted Jeffrey. "If you fall for that stuff, you're getting soft. I certainly married Lila, but she was married already, and I can give you proof of it."

The conversation flagged here, for the waiter came in to serve the soup.

"What wine will you have, sir?"

"The same as Mr. Emanuel," said Peter.

Emanuel Legge chuckled softly.

"Think I'm going to knock you out, eh, Peter? What a suspicious old man you are!"

"Water," said Johnny softly when the waiter came to him.

"On the water wagon, Johnny? That's good. A young man in your business has got to keep his wits.

"I'll have champagne, Fernando, and so will Major Floyd. Nothing like champagne to keep your heart up," he said.

Peter watched, all his senses alert, as the wine came, bubbling and frothing, into the long glasses.

"That will do, Fernando," said Emanuel, watching the proceedings closely.

As the door closed, Johnny could have sworn he heard an extra click.

"Locking us in?" he asked pleasantly, and Emanuel's eyebrows rose.

"Locking *you* in, Johnny? Why, do you think I'm afraid of losing you, like you're afraid of losing Marney?"

Johnny sipped the glass of water, his eyes fixed on the old man's face. What was behind that buffet? That was the thought which puzzled him.

IT was a very ordinary piece of furniture, of heavy mahogany, a little shallow, but this was accounted for by the fact that the room was not large, and in furnishing, the proprietors of the club had of necessity to economize space.

There were two cupboard doors beneath the ledge on which the side dishes should have been standing. Was it his imagination that he thought he saw one move the fraction of an inch?

"Ever been in prison before, Johnny?"

It was Emanuel who did most of the talking.

"I know they gave you three years, but was that your first conviction?"

"That was my first conviction."

The old man looked up at the ceiling, pulling at his chin.

"Ever been in Keytown?" he demanded. "No good asking you, Peter, I know. You've never been in Keytown or any bad boob, have you? Clever old Peter!"

"Let us talk about something else," said Peter. "I don't believe for one moment the story you told me about Lila having been married before. You've told me a fresh lie every time the matter has been discussed.

"I'm going to give you a show, Emanuel, for old-time sake. You've been a swine, and you've been nearer to

death than you know, for, if your plan had come off as you expected it would, I'd have killed you."

Emanuel chuckled derisively.

"Old Peter's going to be a gunman," he said. "And after all the lectures you've given me! I'm surprised at you, Peter. Now I'll tell you what I'm going to do."

He rested his elbows on the table and cupped his chin in his hands, his keen eyes all the keener for the magnification of his spectacles, fixed hardly upon his sometime friend.

"By my reckoning you owe me forty thousand pounds, and I know I'm not going to get it without a struggle. Weigh in with that money, and I'll make things easy for my son's wife." He emphasized the last word.

"You can cut that out!"

IT was Jeffrey whose rough interruption checked his father's words.

"There's no money in the world that's going to get Marney from me. Understand that!" He brought his hand down with a crash upon the table. "She belongs to me, and I want her, Peter. Do you get it? And what is more, I'm going to take her."

Johnny edged a little farther from the table, and, folding his arms across his chest, his lips parted in a smile. His right hand had reached for the gun that he carried under his armpit: a little Browning, but a favorite one of Johnny's in such crises as these.

For the cupboard door had moved again, and the door of the room was locked: of that he was certain. All this talk of Marney was sheer blind to keep them occupied.

It had long passed the time when the plates should have been cleared and the second course made its appearance. But there was to be no second course at that dinner. Emanuel was speaking chidingly, reproachfully.

"Jeffrey, my boy, you mustn't spoil

a good deal," he said. "The truth is that——"

And then all the lights of the room went out. Instantly Johnny was on his feet, his back to the wall, his gun fanning the dark.

"What's the game?" asked Peter's voice sharply. "There'll be a real dead man here if you start fooling."

"I don't know," said Emanuel, speaking from the place where he had been. "Ring the bell, Jeff. I expect the switch has gone."

There was somebody else in the room. Johnny felt the presence instinctively—a stealthy somebody who was moving toward him. Holding out one hand, ready to pounce the moment it touched, he waited. A second passed—five seconds—ten seconds—and then the lights went on again.

Peter was also standing with his back to the wall, and in his hand a murderous-looking Wobley. Jeffrey and his father were side by side in the places they had been when the lights went out. There was no fifth man in the room.

"What's the game?" asked Peter.

"The game, my dear Peter? What a question to ask! You don't make me responsible for the fuses, do you? I'm not an electrician. I'm a poor old crook who has done time that other people should have done—that's all," said Emanuel pleasantly.

"And look at the hardware! Bad idea, carrying guns. Let an old crook give you a word of advice, Peter," he bantered. "I'm not surprised at Johnny, because he might be anything. Sit down, you damned fools," he said jocularly. "Let's talk."

"I'll talk when you open that door," said Johnny quietly. "And I'll put away my gun on the same condition."

In three strides Emanuel was at the door. It flew open.

"Have the door open if you're frightened," he said contemptuously. "I guess it's being in prison that makes

you scared of the dark. I got that way myself."

As he had turned the handle, Johnny had heard a second click. He was confident that somebody stood outside the door, and that the words Legge had uttered were intended for the unknown sentry. What was the idea?

The extinguishing of the lights had not been an accident. Some secret signal had been given, and the lights cut off from the controlling switchboard. The doors of the buffet cupboard were still.

Turning his head, Johnny saw that Jeffrey's eyes were fixed on his with a hard concentration which was significant. What was he expecting?

The climax was at hand.

"It's a wonder to me, Gray, that you've never gone in for slush." Jeffrey was speaking slowly and deliberately. "It's a good profession, and you can make money that you couldn't dream of getting by faking race horses."

"Perhaps you will tell me how to start in that interesting profession," said Johnny coolly.

"I'll put it on paper for you, if you like. It'll be easier to make a squeal about. Or, better still, I'll show you how it's done. You'd like that?"

"I don't know that I'm particularly interested, but I'm sure my friend Mr. Reeder——"

"Your friend Mr. Reeder!" sneered the other. "He's a pal of yours too, is he?"

"All law-abiding citizens are pals of mine," said Johnny gravely.

He had put his pistol back in his jacket pocket, and his hand was on it.

"Well, how's this for a start?"

Jeffrey rose from the table and went to the buffet. He bent down and must have touched some piece of mechanism; for, without any visible assistance, the lid of the buffet turned over on some invisible axis, revealing a small

but highly complicated piece of machinery, which Johnny recognized instantly as one of those little presses employed by bank-note printers when a limited series of notes, generally of a high denomination, were being made.

THE audacity of this revelation momentarily took his breath away.

"You could pull that buffet to pieces," continued Jeffrey, "and then not find it."

"Easy money, eh, Gray?" said Emanuel, with an admiring smirk at his son. "Now listen, boys."

His tone grew suddenly practical and businesslike as he came back to his chair. "I want to tell you something that's going to be a lot of good to both of you, and we'll leave Marney out of it for the time being."

Johnny raised his glass of water, still watchful and suspicious.

"The point is——" said Emanuel, and at that moment Johnny took a long sip from the glass.

The liquid had hardly reached his throat when he strove vainly to reject it. The harsh tang of it he recognized, and, flinging the glass to the floor, jerked out his gun.

And then some tremendous force within him jerked at his brain, and the pistol dropped from his hand.

Peter was on his feet, staring from one to the other.

"What have you done?"

He leaped forward, but before he could make a move, Emanuel sprang at him like a cat. He tried to fight clear, but he was curiously lethargic and weak. A vicious fist struck him on the jaw, and he went down like a log.

"Got you!" hissed Emanuel, glaring down at his enemy. "Got you, Peter, my boy! Never been in boob, have you? I'll give you a taste of it!"

Jeffrey Legge stooped and jerked open the door of the cupboard, and a man came stooping into the light. It

was a catlike Pietro, grinning from ear to ear in sheer enjoyment of the part he had played. Emanuel dropped his hand on his shoulder.

"Good boy," he said. "The right stuff for the right men, eh? To every man his dope, Jeff. I knew that this Johnny Gray was going to be the hardest, and if I'd taken your advice and given them both a knock-out, we'd have only knocked out one. Now they know why the lights went out. Pick 'em up."

The little half-caste must have been enormously strong, for he lifted Peter without an effort and propped him into an armchair. This done, he picked up the younger man and laid him on the sofa, took a little tin box from his pocket, and filling a hypodermic syringe, from a tiny vial, looked round for instructions.

Jeffrey nodded, and the needle was driven into the unfeeling flesh. This done, he lifted the eyelid of the drugged man and grinned again.

"He'll be ready to move in half an hour," he said. "My knock-out doesn't last longer."

"Could you get him down the fire escape into the yard?" asked Emanuel anxiously. "He's a pretty heavy fellow, that Peter. You'll help, Jeff!"

"The car's in the yard. And, Jeff—don't forget you've an engagement at two o'clock!"

Again the half-caste swung up Peter Kane, and Jeffrey, holding the door wide, helped him to carry the unconscious man through the open window and down the steel stairway, though he needed very little help, for the strength of the man was enormous.

He came back, apparently unmoved by his effort, and hoisted Johnny onto his back. Again unassisted, he carried the young man to the waiting car below, and flung him in.

He was followed this time by Jeffrey, wrapped from head to foot in a long waterproof, a chauffeur's cap

pulled down over his eyes. They locked both doors of the machine, and Pietro opened the gate and glanced out. There were few people about, and the car swung out and sped at full speed toward Oxford Street.

Closing and locking the gate, the half-caste went up the stairs of the fire escape two at a time and reported to his gratified master.

EMANUEL was gathering the coats and hats of his guests into a bundle. This done, he opened a cupboard and flung them in, and they immediately disappeared.

"Go down and burn them," he said laconically. "You've done well, Pietro. There's fifty for you to-night."

"Good?" asked the other laconically.

Emanuel favored him with his benevolent smile. He took the two glasses from which the men had drunk, and these followed the clothes.

From the small cupboard he took a telephone, and pushed in the plug at the end of a long flex. He had some time to wait for the number, but presently he heard Marney's voice.

"Is that you, Marney?" he asked softly, disguising his voice so cleverly that the girl was deceived.

"Yes, daddy. Are you all right? I've been so worried about you."

"Quite all right, darling. Johnny and I have made a very interesting discovery. Will you tell Barney to go to bed, and will you wait up for me—open the door yourself?"

"Is Johnny coming back with you?"

"No, no, darling, I'm coming alone."

"Are you sure everything is all right?" asked the anxious voice.

"Now don't worry, my pet. I shall be with you at two o'clock. When you hear the car stop at the gate, come out. I don't want to come into the house. I'll explain everything to you."

"But——"

"Do as I ask you, darling," he said,

and before she could reply, had cut off.

But could Jeff make it? He would like to go himself, but that would mean the employment of a chauffeur, and he did not know one he could trust.

He himself was not strong enough to deal with the girl, and, crowning impossibility, motor-car driving was a mystery—that was one of the accomplishments which a long stay in Dartmoor had denied to him.

But could Jeff make it? He took a pencil from his pocket and worked out the times on the white tablecloth. Satisfied, he put away his pencil, and was pouring out a glass of champagne when there came a tap-tap-tap at the door.

He looked up in surprise. The porter had orders not under any circumstances to come near room No. 13, and it was his duty to keep the whole passage clear until he received orders to the contrary.

Tap-tap-tap.

"Come in," he said.

The door opened. A man stood in the doorway. He was dressed in shabby evening clothes; his bow was clumsily tied; one stud was missing from his white shirt front.

"Am I intruding upon your little party?" he asked timidly.

Emanuel said nothing. For a long time, he sat staring at this strange apparition. As if unconscious of the amazement and terror he had caused, the visitor sought to readjust his frayed shirt cuffs which hung almost to the knuckles of his hands. And then:

"Come in, Mr. Reeder," said Emanuel Legge, a little breathlessly.

CHAPTER XXVII.

MURDER.

MR. REEDER sidled into the room apologetically, closing the door behind him.

"All alone, Mr. Legge?" he asked. "I thought you had company?"

"I had some friends, but they've gone."

"Your son gone too?" Reeder stared helplessly from one corner of the room to the other. "Dear me, this is a disappointment, a great disappointment."

Emanuel was thinking quickly. In all probability the shabby detective had been watching the front of the house, and would know that they had not left that way. He took a bold step.

"They left a quarter of an hour ago. Peter and Johnny went down the fire escape—my boy's car was in the yard. We never like to have a car in front of the club premises; people talk so much. And after the publicity we've had——"

Mr. Reeder checked him with a mild murmur of agreement.

"That was the car, was it? I saw it go and wondered what it was all about—No. XC. 9712, blue-painted limousine—Haimler—I may be wrong, but it seemed like a Haimler to me: I know so little about motor cars that I could be very easily mistaken, and my eyesight is not as good as it used to be."

Emanuel cursed him under his breath.

"Yes, it was a Haimler," he said. "One we bought cheap at the sales."

The absent-minded visitor's eyes were fixed on the table.

"Took their wineglasses with them?" he asked gently. "I think it is a pretty custom, taking souvenirs of a great occasion. I'm sure they were very happy."

How had he got in, wondered Emanuel? Stevens had strict orders to stop him, and Fernando was at the end of the L-shaped passage. As if he divined the thought that was passing through Legge's mind, Mr. Reeder answered the unspoken question.

"I took the liberty of coming up the fire escape, too," he said. "It was an interesting experience. One is a little

old to begin experiments, and I am not the sort of man that cares very much for climbing, not at night."

Following the direction of his eyes, Emanuel saw that a small square of the rusty trousers had been worn, and through the opening a bony white knee.

"Yes, I came up the fire escape, and fortunately the window was open. I thought I would give you a pleasant surprise. By the way, the escape doesn't go any higher than this floor?"

"That is curious, because, you know, my dear Mr. Legge, it might well happen, in the event of fire, that people would be driven to the roof. If I remember rightly, there is nothing on the roof but a square superstructure—storeroom, isn't it? Let me think. Yes, it's a storeroom, I'm sure."

"The truth is," interrupted Emanuel, "I had two old acquaintances here, Johnny Gray and Peter Kane. I think you know Peter?"

The other inclined his head gently.

"And they got just a little too merry. I suppose Johnny's not used to wine, and Peter's been a teetotaler for years." He paused. "In fact, they were rather the worse for drink."

"That's very sad." Mr. Reeder shook his head. "Personally, I am a great believer in prohibition. I would prohibit wine and beer, and crooks and forgers, taletellers, poisoners"—he paused at the word—"druggers would be a better word," he said.

"They took their glasses with them, did they? I hope they will return them. I should not like to think that people I—er—like would be guilty of so despicable a practice as—er—the petty theft of—er—wineglasses."

Again his melancholy eyes fell on the table.

"And they only had soup! It is very unusual to get bottled before you've finished the soup, isn't it? I mean, in respectable circles," he added apologetically.

He looked back at the open door over his spectacles.

"I wonder," he mused, "how they got down that fire escape in the dark in such a sad condition?"

Again his expressionless eyes returned to Emanuel.

"If you see them again, will you tell them that I expect both Mr. Kane and Mr. Johnny—what is his name? Gray, that is it!—to keep an appointment they made with me for to-morrow morning? And that if they do not turn up at my house at ten o'clock——"

HE stopped, pursing up his lips as though he were going to whistle. Emanuel wondered what was coming next, and was not left long in doubt.

"Did you feel the cold very much in Dartmoor? They tell me that the winters are very trying, particularly for people of an advanced age.

"Of course," Mr. Reeder went on, "one can have friends there; one can even have relations there. I suppose it makes things much easier if you know your son or some other close relative is living on the same landing—there are three landings, are there not? But it is much nicer to live in comfort in London, Mr. Legge—to have a cozy little suite in Bloomsbury, such as you have got; to go where you like without a screw following you—I think 'screw' is a very vulgar word, but it means 'guard,' does it not?"

He walked to the door and turned.

"You won't forget that I expect to meet Mr. Peter Kane and Mr. John Gray to-morrow at my house at half past ten. You won't forget, will you?"

He closed the door carefully behind him, and with his great umbrella hooked on to his arm, passed along the corridor into the purview of the astounded Fernando, astounding the man on guard at the end.

"Good evening," murmured Mr. Reeder as he passed.

Fernando was too overcome to make a courteous reply.

Stevens saw him as he came into the main corridor, and gasped.

"When did you come in, Mr. Reeder?"

"Nobody has ever seen you come in, but lots of people see you go out," said Reeder good-humoredly. "On the other hand, there are people who are seen coming into this club, whom nobody sees go out. Mr. Gray didn't pass this way, or Mr. Kane?"

"No, sir," said Stevens in surprise. "Have they gone?"

Reeder sighed heavily.

"Yes, they've gone," he said. "I hope not for long, but they've certainly gone. Good-night, Stevens.

"By the way, your name isn't Stevens, is it? I seem to remember you"—he screwed up his eyes as though he had difficulty in recalling the memory—"I seem to remember your name wasn't Stevens, let us say, eight years ago."

Stevens flushed.

"It is the name I'm known as now, sir."

"A very good name too, an excellent name," murmured Mr. Reeder as he stepped into the elevator. "And after all, we must try to live down the past. And I'd be the last man to remind you of your—er—misfortune."

When he reached the street, two men who had been standing on the opposite sidewalk crossed to him.

"They've gone," said Mr. Reeder. "They were in that car, as I feared. All stations must be warned, and particularly the town stations just outside of London, to hold up the car. You have its number. You had better watch this place till the morning," he said to one of them.

"Very good, sir."

"I want you especially to follow Emanuel, and keep him under observation until to-morrow morning."

Stevens went off duty half an hour after Mr. Reeder's departure. At two o'clock the head waiter and three others left, Fernando locking the door. Then, a few minutes before three, the squat Pietro, muffled up in a heavy overcoat, emerged and he too locked the door behind him, disappearing in the direction of Shaftesbury Avenue.

AT half past three the detective left a policeman to watch the house, got on the phone to Mr. Reeder, who was staying in town, and reported the fruits of his industry.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Reeder, an even more incongruous sight in pajamas which were a little too small for him, though happily there were no spectators of his agitation. "Not gone, you say? I will come round."

It was daylight when he arrived. The gate in the yard was opened with a skeleton key—the climb so graphically described by Mr. Reeder was entirely fictitious, and the cut in his trousers was due to catching a jagged nail in one of the packing cases with which the yard was littered—and he mounted the iron stairway to the third floor.

The window through which he had made his ingress on the previous evening was closed and fastened, but with the skill of a professional burglar, Mr. Reeder forced back the catch and, opening the window, stepped in.

There was no sign of Emanuel, and Reeder came out to hear the report of the detective, who had made a rapid search of the club.

"All the doors are open except No. 13, sir," he said. "That's bolted on the inside. I've got the lock open."

"Try No. 12," said Reeder. "There are two ways in—one by way of a door, which you'll find behind a curtain in the corner of the room, and the other way through the buffet, which communicates with the buffet in No. 13. Break nothing if you can help it, be-

cause I don't want my visit here advertised."

He followed the detective into No. 12, and found that there was no necessity to use the buffet entrance, for the communicating door was unlocked. He stepped into No. 13; it was in complete darkness.

"Humph!" said Mr. Reeder, and sniffed. "One of you go along this wall and find the switch. Be careful you don't step on something."

"What is there?"

"I think you'll find—however, turn on the light."

The detective felt his way along the wall, and presently his finger touched a switch and he turned it down. And then they saw all that Mr. Reeder suspected.

Sprawled across the table was a still figure—a horrible sight, for the man who had killed Emanuel Legge had used the poker which, twisted and bloodstained, lay among the wreckage of rare glass and once snowy napery.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE FINDING OF PETER KANE.

IT was unnecessary to call a doctor to satisfy the police. Emanuel Legge had passed beyond the sphere of his evil activities.

"The poker came from—where?" mused Mr. Reeder, examining the weapon thoughtfully. He glanced down at the little fireplace. The poker and tongs and shovel were intact, and this was of a heavier type than was used in the sitting rooms.

Deftly he searched the dead man's pockets, and in the waistcoat he found a little card inscribed with a telephone number, "Horsham 98753"—it was Peter's.

That had no special significance at the moment, and Reeder put it with the other documents that he had extracted from the dead man's pockets.

Later came an inspector to take charge of the case.

"There was some sort of struggle, I imagine," said Mr. Reeder. "The right wrist, I think you'll find, is broken. Legge's revolver was underneath the table. He probably pulled it, and it was struck from his hand. I don't think you'll want me any more, inspector."

He was examining the main corridor when the telephone switchboard at the back of Stevens' little desk gave him an idea. He put through a call to Horsham, and, in spite of the earliness of the hour, was almost immediately answered.

"Who is that?" he asked.

"I'm Mr. Kane's servant," said a husky voice.

"Oh, is it Barney? Is your master at home yet?"

"No, sir. Who is it speaking?"

"It is Mr. Reeder. Will you tell Miss Kane to come to the telephone?"

"She's not here either. I've been trying to get on to Johnny Gray all night, but his servant says he's out."

"Where is Miss Kane?" asked Reeder quickly.

"I don't know, sir. Somebody came for her in the night in a car, and she went away, leaving the door open. It was the wind slamming it that woke me up."

It was so long before Mr. Reeder answered that Barney thought he had gone away.

"Did nobody call for her during the evening? Did she have any telephone messages?"

"One, sir, about ten o'clock. I think it was her father, from the way she was speaking."

Again a long interval of silence, and then:

"I will come straight down to Horsham," said Mr. Reeder, and from the pleasant and conversational quality of his voice, Barney took comfort; though,

if he had known the man better, he would have realized that Mr. Reeder was most ordinary when he was most perturbed.

Mr. Reeder pushed the telephone away from him and stood up.

So they had got Marney. There was no other explanation. The dinner party had been arranged to dispose of the men who could protect her. Where had they been taken?

He went back to the old man's office, which was undergoing a search at the hands of a police officer.

"I particularly want to see immediately any document referring to Mr. Peter Kane," he said, "any road maps which you may find here, and especially letters addressed to Emanuel Legge by his son. You know, of course, that this office was broken into? There should be something in the shape of clues."

The officer shook his head.

"I'm afraid, Mr. Reeder, we won't find much here," he said. "So far, I've only come across old bills and business letters which you might find in any office."

The bank detective looked round.

"There is no safe?" he asked.

All the timidity and deference in his manner had gone. He was patently a man of affairs.

"Yes, sir, the safe's behind that paneling. I'll get it open this morning. But I shouldn't imagine that Legge would leave anything compromising on the premises."

"Besides, his son has had charge of the Highlow for years. Previous to that, they had a manager who is now doing time. Before him, if I remember right, that fellow Fenner, who has been in boob for burglary."

"Fenner?" said the other sharply. "I didn't know he ever managed this club."

"He used to, but he had a quarrel with the old man. I've got an idea they were in jug together."

Fenner's was not the type of mental-

ity one would expect to find among the officers of a club, even a club of the standing of the Highlow; but there was this about the Highlow, that it required less intelligence, than sympathy, with a certain type of client.

Reeder was assisting the officer by taking out the contents of the pigeon-holes, when his hand touched a knob.

"Hullo, what is this?" he said, and turned it.

The whole desk shifted slightly, and, pulling, he revealed the door to the spiral staircase.

"This is very interesting," he said. He ascended as far as the top landing. There was evidently a door here, but every effort he made to force it ended in failure. He came down again, continuing to the basement, and this time he was joined by the inspector in charge of the case.

"Rather hot," said Mr. Reeder as he opened the door. "I should say there is a fire burning here."

IT took him some time to discover the light connections, and when he did, he whistled. For, lying by the side of the red-hot stove, he saw a piece of shining metal and recognized it. It was an engraver's plate, and one glance told him that it was the finished plate from which counterfeit five-pound notes could be printed.

The basement was empty, and for a second the mystery of the copper plate baffled him.

"We may not have found the Big Printer, but we've certainly found the Big Engraver," he said. "This plate was engraved somewhere upstairs."

He pointed to the shaft. "What is it doing down here? Of course!" He slapped his thigh exultantly. "I never dreamed he was right—but he always is right!"

"Who?" asked the officer.

"An old friend of mine, whose theory was that the plates from which the slush

was printed were engraved within easy reach of a furnace, into which, in case of a police visitation, they could be pushed and destroyed. And of course, the engraving plant is somewhere upstairs.

"But why they should throw down a perfectly new piece of work, and at a time when the attendant was absent, is beyond me. Unless— Get me an ax; I want to see the room on the roof."

The space was too limited for the full swing of an ax, and it was nearly an hour before at last the door leading to the engraver's room was smashed in. The room was flooded with sunshine, for the skylight had not been covered.

Reeder's sharp eyes took in the table with a glance, and then he looked beyond and took a step backward. Lying by the wall, disheveled, mud stained, his white dress shirt crumpled to a pulp, was Peter Kane, and he was asleep!

They dragged him to a chair, bathed his face with cold water, but even then he took a long time to recover.

"He has been drugged: that's obvious," said Mr. Reeder, and scrutinized the hands of the unconscious man for a sign of blood. But though they were covered with rust and grime, Reeder found not so much as one spot of blood; and the first words that Peter uttered, on recovering consciousness, confirmed the view that he was ignorant of the murder.

"Where is Emanuel?" he asked drowsily. "Have you got him?"

"No, but somebody has *got* him," said Reeder gently, and the shock of the news brought Peter Kane wide awake.

"Murdered!" he said unbelievably. "Are you sure? Of course, I'm mad to ask you that."

He passed his hand wearily across his forehead. "No, I know nothing about it. I suppose you suspect me,

and I don't mind telling you that I was willing to murder him if I could have found him."

BRIEFLY he related what had happened at the dinner.

"I knew that I was doped, but dope works slowly on me, and the only chance I had was to sham dead. Emanuel gave me a thump in the jaw, and that was my excuse for going out.

"They got me downstairs into the yard and put me into the car first. I slipped out the other side as soon as the half-caste went up to get Johnny. There were a lot of old cement sacks lying about, and I threw a couple on to the floor, hoping that in the darkness they would mistake the bundle for me.

"Then I lay down among the packing cases and waited. I guessed they'd brought down Johnny, but I was powerless to help him.

"When the car had gone, and Pietro had gone up again, I followed. I suppose the dope was getting busy, and if I'd had any sense, I should have got over the gate. My first thought was that they might have taken my gun away and left it in the room. I tried to open the door, but it was locked."

"Are you sure of that, Peter?"

"Absolutely sure!"

"How long after was this?"

"About half an hour. It took me all that time to get up the stairs, because I had to fight the dope all the way. I heard somebody moving about, and slipped into one of the other rooms, and then I heard the window pulled down and looked.

"So I went to Emanuel's office. I know the place very well: I used to go in there in the old days, before Emanuel went to prison, and I knew all about the spiral staircase to the roof. All along I suspected that the hut they'd put on the roof was the place where the slush was printed.

"But here I was mistaken, for I had

no sooner got into the room than I saw that it was where the engraver worked. There was a plate on the edge of a shaft. I suppose I was still dizzy, because I fumbled at it. It slipped through my hand, and I heard a clang come up from somewhere below."

"I don't know what happened after that. I must have laid down, for by now the dope was working powerfully. I ought to let Marney know I'm all right. She'll be worried——"

He saw something in the detective's face, something that made his heart sink.

"Marney! Is anything wrong with Marney?" he asked quickly.

"I don't know. She went out last night—or, rather, early this morning—and has not been seen since."

Peter listened, stricken dumb by the news. It seemed to Mr. Reeder that he aged ten years in as few minutes.

"Now, Kane, you've got to tell me all you know about Legge," said Reeder kindly. "I haven't any doubt that Jeffrey's taken her to the big printing place. Where is it?"

"I haven't the least idea," Peter said. "The earlier slush was printed in this building; in fact, it was printed in room No. 13. I've known that for a long time. But as the business grew, young Legge had to find another works. Where he has found it is a mystery to me, and to most other people."

"But you must have heard rumors?" persisted Reeder.

Again Peter shook his head.

"Remember that I mix very little with people of my own profession, or my late profession," he said. "Johnny and old Barney are about the only crooks I know, outside of the Legge family. And Stevens, of course—he was in prison ten years ago. I've lost touch with all the others, and my news has come through Barney, though most of Barney's gossip is unreliable."

They reached Barney by telephone,

but he was unable to give any information that was of the slightest use. All that he knew was that the printing works were supposed to be somewhere in the West.

"Johnny knows more about it than I do, or than anybody. All the boys agree as to that," said Barney. "They told him a lot in prison."

Leaving Peter to return home, Mr. Reeder made a call at Johnny's flat. Parker was up. He had been notified earlier in the morning of his master's disappearance, but he had no explanation to offer.

He was preparing to give a list of the clothes that Johnny had been wearing, but Reeder cut him short impatiently.

"Try to think of Mr. Gray as a human being, and not as a tailor's dummy," he said wrathfully. "You realize that he is in very grave danger?"

"I am not at all worried, sir," said the precise Parker. "Mr. Gray was wearing his new sock suspenders——"

For once Mr. Reeder forgot himself.

"You're a damned fool, Parker," he said.

"I hope not, sir," said Parker as he bowed him out.

CHAPTER XXIX.

MARNEY GOES WEST.

IT was five minutes past two in the morning when Marney, sitting in the drawing-room at the front of the house, heard the sound of an auto stop before the house. Going into the hall, she opened the door, and, standing on the step, peered into the darkness.

"Is that you, father?" she asked.

There was no reply, and she walked quickly up the garden path to the gate. The car was a closed coupé, and as she looked over the gate, she saw a hand come out and beckon her, and heard a voice whisper:

"Don't make a noise. Come in here; I want to talk to you. I don't want Barney to see me."

Bewildered, she obeyed. Jerking open the door, she jumped into the dark interior, by the side of the man at the wheel.

"What is it?" she asked.

Then, to her amazement, the car began to move toward the main road. It had evidently circled before it had stopped.

"What is the matter, father?" she asked.

And then she heard a low chuckle that made her blood run cold.

"Go into the back and stay there. If you make a row, I'll spoil that complexion of yours, Marney Legge!"

"Jeffrey!" she gasped.

She gripped the inside handle of the door and had half turned it when he caught her with his disengaged hand, and flung her into the back of the car.

"I'll kill you if you make me do that again." There was a queer little sob of pain in his voice, and she remembered his wound.

"Where are you taking me?" she asked.

"I'm taking you to your father," was the unexpected reply. "Will you sit quiet? If you try to get away, or attempt to call assistance, I'll drive you at full speed into the first tree I see, and we'll finish the thing together.

"You've never been in prison, have you, angel?" Jeff asked, after some time.

She did not answer.

"Never been inside the little bird house with the other canaries, eh? Well, that's an experience ahead of you. I am going to put you in prison, kid. Peter's never been in prison either, but he nearly had the experience to-night."

"I don't believe you," she said. "My father has not broken the law."

"Not for a long time, at any rate," agreed Jeffrey, dexterously lighting a

cigarette with one hand. "But there's a little boob waiting for him all right now."

"A prison?" she said incredulously. "I don't believe you."

"You've said that twice, and you're the only person living that's called me a liar that number of times."

He turned off into a side road, and for a quarter of an hour gave her opportunity for thought.

"It might interest you to know that Johnny is there," he said. "Dear little Johnny! The easiest crook that ever fell—and this time he's got a lifer."

The car began to move down a sharp declivity, and, looking through the rain-spattered wind shield, she saw a squat, dark building ahead.

"Here we are," he said as the car stopped.

Looking through the window, she saw, with a gasp of astonishment, that he had spoken the truth. They were at the door of a prison. The great, black, iron-studded gates were opening as she looked, and the car passed through under the deep archway and stopped.

"Get down," said Jeff, and she obeyed.

A narrow black door led from the archway, and, following her, he caught her by the arm and pushed her through. She was in a narrow room, the walls of which were covered with stained and discolored whitewash. A large fireplace, overflowing with ashes, a rickety chair and a faded board screwed to the wall, were the only furniture in the room.

In the dim light of a carbon lamp she saw the almost indistinguishable words: "His Majesty's Prison, Keytown," and beneath, row after row of closely set regulations. A rough-looking, powerfully built man had followed her into the room, which was obviously the gate-keeper's lodge.

"Have you got the cell ready?"

"Yes, I have," said the man. "Does she want anything to eat?"

"If she does, she'll want," said Jeff curtly.

A SOLITARY light that burned in a bracket near the door, showed that she was in a small hall. Around this, at the height of about nine feet from the ground, ran a gallery, which was reached by a flight of iron stairs. There was no need to ask what was the meaning of those two rows of black doors that punctured the wall. They were cells. She was in a prison!

While she was wondering what it all meant, a door near at hand was unlocked, and she was pushed in. The cell was a small one, the floor of worn stone, but a new bedstead had been fitted up in one corner. There was a washstand; and, as she was to discover, the cell communicated with another, containing a stone bath and wash place.

"The condemned cell," explained Jeffrey Legge with relish. "You'll have plenty of ghosts to keep you company to-night, Marney."

"A ghost would be much less repulsive to me than you, Jeffrey Legge," she said, and he seemed taken aback by the spirit she displayed.

"You will have both," he said as he slammed the door on her and locked it.

The cell was illuminated by a feeble light that came through an opaque pane of glass by the side of the door. Presently, when her eyes grew accustomed to the semidarkness, she was able to take stock of her surroundings.

The night had been unusually cold and raw for the time of year, and, pulling a blanket from the bed, she wrapped it about her and sat down on the stool, waiting for the light to grow.

AND so sitting, her weary eyes closing involuntarily, she heard a tapping. It came from above, and her heart fluttered at the thought that pos-

sibly, in the cell above her, her father was held—or Johnny.

Climbing onto the bed, she rapped with her knuckles on the stone ceiling. Somebody answered. They were tapping a message in Morse, which she could not understand.

Presently the tapping ceased. She heard footsteps above. And then, looking by chance at the broken pane of the window, she saw something come slowly downward and out of view.

She leaped up, gripping the window-pane, and saw a piece of black silk. With difficulty two fingers touched it at last and drew it gently in through the windowpane. She pulled it up, and, as she suspected, found a piece of paper tied to the end.

It was a bank note. Bewildered, she gazed at it until it occurred to her that there might be a message written on the other side. The pencil marks were faint, and she carried the note as near to the light as she could get.

Who is there? Is it you, Peter? I am up above.
JOHNNY.

She suppressed the cry that rose to her lips. Both Johnny and her father were there. Then Jeffrey had not lied.

How could she answer? She had no pencil. Then she saw that the end of the cotton was weighted by a small piece of pencil, the kind that is found attached to a dance program.

With this unsatisfactory medium she wrote a reply and pushed it through the window, and after a while she saw it drawn up. Johnny was there—and Johnny knew. She felt strangely comforted by his presence, impotent though he was.

Exhausted, she lay down on the bed, intending to remain awake, but within five minutes she was sleeping heavily. The sound of a key in the lock made her spring to her feet. It was the man she had seen in the early morning; he was carrying a big tray, set with a

clumsy cup and saucer, six slices of bread and butter, and an enormous teapot.

He put it down on the bed, for want of a table, and without a word went out. She looked at the little platinum watch on her wrist; it was ten o'clock. Half an hour later, the man came and took away the tray.

The weary day dragged through; every minute seemed an hour, every hour interminable. Darkness had fallen again when the last of the visits was made, and this time it was Jeffrey Legge.

At the sight of his face, all her terror turned to wonder. He was ghastly pale, his eyes burned strangely, and the hand that came up to his lips was trembling as though he were suffering from a fever.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"I want you," he said brokenly. "I want you for the life of my father!"

"What do you mean?" she gasped.

"Peter Kane killed my father."

"You're mad," she gasped. "My father is here—you told me."

"I told you a lie. What does it matter what I told you, anyway? Peter Kane escaped on the way to Keytown, and he went back to the club and killed my father!"

CHAPTER XXX.

THE END OF A TETHER.

THE girl looked at him, speechless.

"It isn't true!" she cried.

"It's not true, isn't it?" Jeffrey almost howled the words. He was mad with hate, with grief, with desire for cruel vengeance. "I'll show you whether it's not true, my lady."

He flung out of the cell, and then the door clanged on her and he strode out of the hall, into the little house that was once the governor's residence, and which was now the general headquarters of the Big Printer.

He poured himself out a stiff dose

of whisky and drank it undiluted, and the man who had accompanied him watched him curiously.

"Jeff, it looks to me as if it's time to make a get-away. We can't keep these people here very long. The men are scared, too."

"Scared, are they?" sneered Jeffrey Legge. "I guess they'd be more scared if they were in front of a judge and jury."

"That's the kind of scare they're anxious to avoid," said his lieutenant calmly. "Anyway, Jeff, we're getting near the end, and it seems to me that it's the time for all sensible men to find a little home on the other side of the water."

Legge thought for a long time, and when he spoke, his voice was more calm.

"Perhaps you're right," he said. "Tell them they can clear to-night."

The other man was taken aback by the answer.

"To-night?" he said. "Well, I don't know that there's that hurry."

"Tell 'em to clear to-night. They've got all the money they want. I'm shutting this down."

"Who killed your father?"

"Peter Kane," snarled Legge. "I've got the full strength of it. The police are hiding him up, but he did the killing, all right. They found him on the premises in the morning."

He sat a while, staring moodily at the glass in his hand.

"Let them go to-night," he said, "every one of them. I'll tell them myself."

"Do you want me to go?" asked the other.

Legge nodded.

"Yes, I want to be alone. I'm going to fix two people to-night," he said, between his teeth, "and I'm fixing them good."

"Some of the men like Johnny Gray; they were in boob with him," suggested

his assistant, but Jeffrey stopped him with an oath.

"That's another reason they can get out," he said, "and they can't know too soon."

He jumped to his feet and strode out of the room, the man following at a distance.

At only four places were the cell doors intact, for behind these were the delicate printing presses which from morning till night were turning out and numbering French, American and English paper currency. There was not one of the men at the table, or who came to the doors of their cubicles, attracted by the unusual appearance of Legge, who had not served long terms of imprisonment on forgery charges. Jeffrey had recruited them as carefully as a theatrical producer recruits his beauty chorus. They were men without homes, without people, mainly without hope; men inured to the prison system, and who found, in this novel method of living, a delightful variation of the life to which they were most accustomed.

IT was believed by the authorities that Keytown prison was in the hands of a syndicate engaged in experimental work of a highly complicated character; and no obstacle had been placed in the way of laying power cables to the "laboratories." Jeff had found the safest asylum in the land, and one which was more strongly guarded than any he could have built.

His speech was short and to the point.

"Boys, I guess that the time has come when we've got to make the best of our way home. You've all enough money to live comfortably on for the rest of your lives, and I advise you to get out of the country as soon as you can. You have your passports; you know the way."

"Do you mean that we've got to go to-night, Jeff?" asked a voice.

"I mean to-night. I'll have a car run you into London, but you'll have to leave your kit behind, but you can afford that."

"What are you going to do with the factory?"

"That's my business," said Jeff.

The proposal did not find universal favor, but they stood in such awe of the Big Printer that, though they demurred, they obeyed. By ten o'clock that night the prison was empty, except for Jeffrey and his assistant.

"I didn't see Bill Holliss go," said the latter, but Jeffrey Legge was too intent upon his plans to give the matter a moment's thought.

"Maybe you'll see yourself go now, Jenkins," he said. "You can take your two-seater and run anywhere you like."

"Let me stay till the morning."

"You'll go to-night. Otherwise, what's the use of sending the other fellows away?"

He closed the big gate upon the car. He was alone with his wife and with the man he hated.

He could think calmly now. The madness of rage had passed. He made a search of a little storeroom and found what he was looking for. It was a stout rope.

With this over his arm, and a storm lamp in his hand, he went out into the yard and came to a little shed built against the wall. Unlocking the rusty padlock, he pulled the doors apart. The shed was empty; the floor was inches thick with litter, and, going back, he found a broom and swept it clean.

With the aid of a ladder, he mounted to a beam that ran transversely across the roof, and fastened one end of the rope securely. Coming down, he spent half an hour in making a noose.

He was in the death house. Under his feet was the fatal trap, that a pull of the rusty lever would spring. He wanted to make the experiment, but the trap would take a lot of time to pull up.

His face was pouring with perspiration when he had finished. The night was close, and a flicker of lightning illuminated for a second the gloomy recesses of the prison yard.

As he entered the hall, a low growl of thunder came to him, but the storm in his heart was more violent than any nature could provide.

He tiptoed up the iron stairs to the landing, and came at last to No. 4 and hesitated. His enemy could wait. Creeping down the stairs again, his heart beating thunderously, he stood outside the door of the condemned cell.

The key trembled as he inserted it in the lock. No sound broke the stillness as the door opened stealthily, and he slipped into the room.

He waited, holding his breath, not knowing whether she were awake or asleep, and then crept forward to the bed. He saw the outline of a figure.

"Marney," he said huskily, groping for her face.

And then two hands like steel clamps caught him by the throat and flung him backward.

"I want you, Jeffrey Legge," said a voice—the voice of Johnny Gray.

CHAPTER XXXI.

JOHNNY: WHO WORE SUSPENDERS.

JOHNNY GRAY came to consciousness with a violent headache and a sense of suffocating restriction, which he discovered was due to his wing collar holding tightly in spite of the rough usage that had been his. This fact would have been pleasing to Parker, but was intensely discomforting to the wearer, and in a minute he had stripped the offending collar from his throat and had risen unsteadily to his feet.

The room in which he was had a familiar appearance. It was a cell, and there—

Keytown prison! He remembered Fenner's warning. So Fenner knew!

Keytown prison, sold by the government to—Jeffrey Legge! The idea was preposterous, but why not? A timber merchant had bought a prison at Hereford; a firm of caterers had purchased an old prison in the north of England, and were serving afternoon teas in the cells.

The sound of voices came faintly up to him, and he heard a door bang and the clicking of locks; and with that sound he recalled the happenings of the evening. It must be Peter—they had got him too. In spite of his discomfort, in spite of the awful danger in which he knew he was, he laughed softly to himself.

Above his bed was a window with scarcely a whole pane. But there was no escape that way. A thought struck him, and, leaning down, he tapped a Morse message on the floor.

If it were Peter, he could understand. He heard the answering tap which came feebly, and when he signaled again, he knew that whoever was in the cell below had no knowledge of the Morse code.

He searched his pockets and found a tiny scrap of pencil, but could find no paper, except a bundle of five-pound notes which his captors had not troubled to remove. Here was both stationery and the means of writing, but how could he communicate with the occupant of the cell below?

Presently a plan suggested itself, and he tore off the lapel of his dinner jacket and unraveled the silk. Tying the pencil to the end to give it weight, he slowly lowered his message, hoping, though it seemed unlikely, that his fellow prisoner would be able to see the paper.

To his joy he felt a tug, and when, a few minutes later, he carefully drew up the message, it was to find, written underneath his own, one which left him white and shaking.

Marney here! He groaned aloud at

the thought. It was too light now to risk any further communication. There was a pitcher of water and a basin in the cell, and with this he relieved the aching in his head, and when breakfast came, he was ready.

THE man who brought in the tray was a stranger, as also was the man who stood on guard at the door, revolver in hand.

"What's the great idea?" asked Johnny coolly, sitting on the bed and swinging his legs. "Has Jeff bought a prison to practice in? Wouldn't it have been cheaper to have gone over the Alps?"

"You shut up, Johnny Gray," growled the man. "You'll be sorry for yourself before you're out of here."

"Who isn't?" asked Johnny. "How is Peter?"

"You know damned well Peter has escaped," said the other before he could check himself.

"Escaped!" said the delighted Johnny. "You don't mean that?"

"Never mind what I mean," growled the man, realizing he had said too much. "You keep a civil tongue in your head, Gray, and you'll be treated square. If you don't, there are plenty of men on the spot to make Dartmoor a paradise compared with Keytown."

The door slammed in Johnny Gray's face, but he was so absorbed in the news which the man had unwillingly given to him that he had to force himself to eat.

Soon after, the man came to take away the tray.

"What's your name, bo, anyway?" said Johnny carelessly. "I hate calling you 'Face'—it's low."

"Bill's my name," said the man, "and you needn't call me Bill, either. You say 'sir' to me."

"Woof!" said Johnny admiringly. "You're talking like a real guard!"

The door slammed in his face. He

had further time to consider his plans. They had taken away his watch and chain, his gold cigarette case and the small penknife he carried, but these losses did not worry him.

His chief anxiety was to know the exact character of Keytown prison. And that he determined to learn at the earliest opportunity.

It was late in the afternoon—he guessed it was somewhere in the neighborhood of four—when his lunch came, and he was quite ready to eat it, though a little suspicious of it.

"No poison in this, Bill?" he asked pleasantly, as he took the bread and cheese from the man's hand.

"There's no need to poison you; we could starve you, couldn't we?" said the other. "If Jeff was here, maybe I'd get a rapping for giving you anything."

"Gone away, has he? Well, prisons are more pleasant when the governor's away. Am I right, Bill? Now what do you say to a couple of hundred of real money?"

"For what?" asked the man, stopping at the door. "If you mean it's for letting you make a get-away, why, you're silly! You're going to stay here till Jeff fixes you."

ALL the day Johnny had heard, or rather felt, a peculiar whir of sound coming from some remote quarter of the prison,

"Got electric light here, Bill!" he said conversationally.

"Yes, we have," said the other. "This is a model boob, this is."

"I'll bet it is," said Johnny grimly. "Are you running any electric radiators in my cell to-night, or do you want all the power for the press?"

He saw the man's face twitch.

"Of course, you're running the slush factory here—everybody knows that. Take my advice, Bill—go while the goin's good. Or the bulls will have you inside the realest boob you've seen."

He had made the guard more than a little uncomfortable, as he saw, and sought to press home the impression he had created.

"Jeffrey's going to shop you sooner or later, because he's a natural-born shopper. And he's got the money, Bill, to get away with, and the motor cars and airplanes.

"You haven't got that. You'll have to walk on your own pads. And the bulls will get you halfway over the field."

"Oh, shut up!" said the man uncomfortably, and the conversation ended with the slamming of the door.

Presently a little spy hole in the cell door opened.

"What made you think this is a prin' shop?" asked Bill's voice.

"I don't think anything about it, I know," said Johnny decisively. "If you like to come to me this evening, I'll tell you the name of every worker here, the position of every press, and the length of the lagging you'll get."

The cover of the spy hole dropped.

Jeffrey was away—that was all to the good. If he remained away for the whole of the night—— He was worried about Marney, and it required all his strength of will not to fret himself into a state of nerves.

In an hour Bill returned, and this time he brought no guard but himself, but, for safety's sake, carried on his conversation through a little grille in the door.

"You're bluffing, Johnny Gray. We've got a fellow here who was in boob with you, and he says you're the biggest bluffer that ever lived. You don't know anything."

"I know almost everything," said Johnny immodestly. "For instance, I know you've got a young lady in the cell below. How's she doing?"

"Who told you?" he asked suspiciously. "Nobody else has been here, have they?"

"Nobody at all. It is part of my general knowledge. Now listen, Bill—how are you treating that lady? And your life hangs on your answer!"

"She's all right," said Bill casually. "They've given her the condemned cell, with a bathroom and all, and a proper bed—not like yours. And you can't scare me, Gray."

"I'll bet I can't," said Johnny. "Bring me some water."

But the water was not forthcoming, and it was dark before the man made his reappearance. Johnny listened at the door—he was coming alone.

Johnny pulled up the leg of his trousers, and showed those garters which were Parker's pride. But they were not ordinary garters.

Strapped to the inside of the calf was a small holster. The automatic it carried was less than four inches in length, but its little blunt-nosed bullets were man stoppers of a peculiarly deadly kind.

The door swung open, and Bill stepped in.

"Jeff's back——" he began, and then:

"Step in, and step lively," said Johnny.

His arm had shot out, and the pistol hand of the guard was pinned to his side.

"This gun may look pretty paltry, but it would blow a square inch out of your heart, and that's enough to seriously inconvenience you for the remainder of your short life."

With a turn of his wrist, he wrenched the revolver from the man's grasp.

"Sit over there," he said. "Is anybody in the hall?"

"For God's sake don't let Jeff see you. He'll kill me," pleaded the agitated prisoner.

"I'd hate for him to do that," said Johnny.

He peeped out into the hall; it was empty, and he went back to his prisoner.

"Stand against the wall. I'm going to give you the once-over."

His hands searched quickly but effectively. He was putting the key in his pocket when he noticed the design of the ward.

"Pass-key, I fancy? Now don't make a fuss, Bill, because you'll be let out first thing in the morning, and maybe I'll have a good word to say for you at the Oxford assizes. There's something about you that I like. Give me the simple criminal—and the Lord knows you're simple enough!"

He stepped out of the cell, snapped the lock of the door, and, keeping in the shadow, walked swiftly along the gallery until he came to the open stairway onto the floor below.

The hall was untenanted. Apparently Bill was the only guard. He had reached the floor when the door at the end of the hall opened and somebody came in. He flattened himself in one of the recessed cell doorways.

Two men entered, and one, he guessed, was Jeff. One, two, three, four—the fourth door from the end. That was Marney's door, immediately under his own.

He saw Jeffrey stop, heard the too-familiar grind of the lock, and his enemy disappeared, leaving the second man on guard outside.

IF Jeffrey had made an attempt to close the door behind him, Johnny would have shot down the guard and taken the consequences. But the man was absent for only a few minutes.

When he came out, he was shouting incoherently threats that made the hair rise on Johnny Gray's neck. But they were only threats.

The hall door closed on Jeffrey Legge and Johnny moved swiftly to No. 4. As the door opened, the girl shrank back against the wall.

"Don't touch me!" she cried.

"Marney!"

At the sound of his voice she stood, rooted to the spot. The next second she was laughing and weeping in his arms.

"But, Johnny, how did you get here—where were you—you won't leave me?"

He soothed her and quieted her as only Johnny Gray could.

"I'll stay. I think this fellow will come back. If he does, he will wish he hadn't!"

And Jeffrey came. As the grip of strong hands closed on his throat, and the hateful voice of his enemy came to his ears, Johnny's prophecy was justified.

CHAPTER XXXII.

TRAPPED.

FOR a second Legge was paralyzed with rage and fear. Then, in the wildness of his despair, he kicked at the man, who had slipped from the bed and was holding him.

He heard an exclamation, felt for a second the fingers relax; and, slipping like an eel from the grasp, flew to the door and closed it. He stood, breathless and panting, by the doorway, until he heard the sound of steel against the inner keyhole, and in a flash realized that Johnny had secured the pass-key. Quick as lightning, he slipped his own key back into the lock and turned it slightly, so that it could not be pushed out from the other side.

Johnny Gray! How had he got there? He fled up the stairs and hammered on the door of the cell where he thought his prisoner was held safe. A surly voice replied to him.

"You swine!" he howled. "You let him go! You twister! You can stay there and starve, damn you!"

"I didn't let him go. He held me up. Look out, Jeff, he's got a gun."

The news staggered the man. The search of Johnny's clothing had been of a perfunctory nature, but he had

thought that it was impossible that any kind of weapon could have been concealed.

"Let me out, guv'nor," pleaded the prisoner. "You've got a key."

There was a third key in his house, Jeffrey remembered. Perhaps this man might be of use to him. He was still weak from his wound, and would need assistance.

"All right, I'll get the key. But if you shopped me——"

"I didn't shop you, I tell you. He held me up."

Legge went back to his room, found the key, and, taking another stiff dose of whisky, returned and released his man.

"He's got my gun too," explained Bill. "Where are all the fellows? We'll soon settle with him."

"They've gone," said Jeffrey.

What a fool he had been! If he had had the sense to keep the gang together only for a few hours—but he was safe, unless Johnny found a means of getting through the window.

"In my room you'll find a pistol—it is in the top right-hand drawer of my desk," he said quickly. "Take it and get outside Johnny's cell—on the yard side.

"If he tries to escape that way, shoot. Because, if he escapes, you're going a long journey, my friend."

Inside the cell, a chagrined Johnny Gray sat down on the girl's bed to consider the possibilities of the position.

"My dear, there's going to be serious trouble here, and I don't want you to think otherwise," he said. "I should imagine there were quite a number of men in this prison, in which case, though I shall probably get two or three of them, they'll certainly get me in the end."

She sat by his side, holding his hand, and the pressure of her fingers was eloquent of the faith she had in him.

"Johnny, dear, does it matter very

much what happens now? They can't come in, and we can't get out. How long will it take to starve us to death?"

Johnny had already considered that problem.

"About three days," he said, in such a matter-of-fact tone that she laughed. "My only hope, Marney, is that your father, who, as I told you, has escaped, may know more about this place than he has admitted."

"Did you know anything about it?"

He hesitated.

"Yes, I think I did. I wasn't sure, though I was a fool not to locate it just as soon as Fenner warned me against Keytown prison. These chaps like to speak in parables, and mystery is as the breath of their nostrils. Besides, I should have been certain that Fenner knew the place had been taken over from the government."

He made a careful examination of the bars about the window, but without instruments or tools to force them, he knew that escape that way was impossible. When, in the early hours of the morning, he saw the patient figure of Bill, he realized the extent of the impossibility.

"Good morning, William. I see you're out," he greeted the scowling sentry, who immediately jumped to cover, flourishing his long-barreled weapon.

"Don't you show your nose, or I'll blow it off," he threatened. "We've got you, Mr. Gray."

"They've got you, alas, my poor William," said Johnny sadly. "The busies will be here at nine o'clock—you don't suppose that I should have let myself come into a trap like this? Of course I didn't.

"I squealed! It was my only chance, William. And *your* only chance is to sneak away at the earliest opportunity, and turn State's evidence. I'm addressing you as a friend."

"You'll never get away from here

alive," said the man. "Jeff's going to fix you."

"Indeed?" the prisoner began politely, when a scream made him turn.

"Johnny!"

The shutter which hid the grille in the door was swung back, and the muzzle of Jeffrey's Browning had been pushed through one of the openings. As Johnny dropped flat on the bed, he was stunned by the deafening sound of an explosion.

Something hit the wall, ricocheted to the roof, and fell almost at the girl's feet. Before the pistol could be withdrawn, Johnny Gray had fired. A jagged end of iron showed where his bullet struck.

"The time for persiflage," said Johnny cheerfully, "is past. Now you will sit in that corner, young lady, and will not budge without permission."

HE pointed to the wall nearest the door, which afforded cover, and, dragging up a stool, he seated himself by her side.

"Jeffrey's got quite a tough proposition," he said in his conversational tone. "He can't burn the prison, because there's nothing to burn. He can't come in, and he mustn't go out. If he would only for one moment take away that infernal key——"

"There is another door going out from the bathroom," she said suddenly. "I think it leads to an exercise ground. You can just see a little railed off space through the window."

Johnny went into the bathroom and examined the door. Screwing his head, he could see, through a broken pane, ten square yards of space, where in olden times a condemned prisoner took his exercise, removed from the gaze of his fellows.

He tried the key, and, to his delight, it turned. Another minute and he was in the little paved yard.

Looking round, he saw a high and

narrow gateway, which seemed to be the only exit from the courtyard. And on the other side of that gateway was William, the sentry, well armed and sufficiently terrified to be dangerous.

Slipping off his boots, Johnny crept to the gate and listened. The sound of the man's footsteps pacing the flagged walk came to him. Stooping, he squinted through the keyhole, and saw Bill standing, his back toward him, some six yards away.

There was no time to be lost. He inserted the key, and the gate was opened before the man could turn to face the leveled revolver.

"Don't shout," whispered Johnny. "You're either discreet or dead. Hand over that gun, you unfortunate man."

He moved swiftly toward the terrified criminal, and relieved him of his weapon.

With a gesture, Johnny directed him to the exercise yard.

"Get in and stay," he said, and locked the door, and for the second time. Bill—his other name, Johnny never discovered, to be Holliss—was a prisoner.

Skirting the building, he came to the entrance of the hall. The door was open, and with his hand on the uplifted hammer of the gun, and his finger pressing the trigger, Johnny leaped into the building.

"Hands up!" he shouted.

At the words, Jeffrey Legge spun round. There was a boom of sound, something whistled past Gray's face, and he fired twice.

But now the man was running, zig-zagging to left and right, and Johnny hesitated to fire. He disappeared through the door at the farther end of the hall, shutting it behind him, and Johnny raced after him.

He was in the courtyard now, facing the grille-covered archway. As he came into view, Jeffrey disappeared through the lodge-keeper's door.

Johnny tried the grille, but in vain,

for a pass-key operates on all locks save the lock of the entrance gate of a prison. That alone is distinct, and may not be opened save by the key that was cut for it.

Covering the lodge-keeper's door with his gun, Johnny waited, and, waiting, heard a rumbling sound. Something was coming down the center of the archway. The straight line of it came lower and lower.

A hanging gate! He had forgotten that most old country prisons were so equipped. Under the cover of this ancient portcullis, Legge could escape, for it masked the entrance of the lodge.

He turned back to the girl.

"Keep out of sight. He's got away," he warned her. "This fellow isn't finished yet."

The gate was down. Jeffrey put on the overcoat he had left in the lodge, slipped his pistol into his pocket and opened the great gates. He had at least a dozen hours' start, he thought, as he stepped into the open—

"Please do not put your hand in your pocket, Mr. Jeffrey," said a plaintive voice. "I should *so* hate to shoot a fellow creature. It would be a deed utterly repugnant to my finest feelings."

Jeffrey raised his hands to their fullest extent, for Mr. Reeder was not alone. Behind him were four armed policemen, a cordon of mounted constabulary, spread in a semicircle, cutting off all avenues of escape. And, most ominous of all, was the deadly scrutiny of Peter Kane, who stood at Reeder's right hand.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

MR. J. G. REEDER.

FOR the first time Jeffrey Legge felt the cold contact of handcuffs. He was led back to the porter's lodge, while two of the policemen worked at the windlass that raised the hanging gate.

"It's a cop, Craig," he said, for the

inspector in charge was that redoubtable thief catcher. "But I'm going to squeal all I know. Johnny Gray is in this. He's been working my slush for years. You'll find the presses in the second hall, but the other birds have done some quick flying."

"They've all flown into the police station at Oxford," said Craig, "and they're singing their pretty little songs merrily. The Oxford police took a whole carload of them about eleven o'clock last night. Unfortunately, they weren't so ready to squeal as you."

"Johnny Gray's in it, I tell you."

"Oh, how can you say such a thing!" said the shocked Mr. Reeder. "I'm perfectly sure Mr. Gray is quite innocent."

Jeffrey regarded him with a sneer of contempt.

"You're a pretty funny busy. I suppose Craig brought you here?"

"No," murmured Mr. Reeder, "I brought myself here."

"The only thing I can say about you," said Jeffrey Legge, "is that you're smarter than old Golden—and that's not saying much."

"Not very much," murmured Mr. Reeder.

"But you're not smart enough to know that Johnny Gray has been in this business for years."

"Even while he was in prison?" suggested Mr. Reeder innocently. "The opportunities are rather restricted, don't you think? But don't let us quarrel, Mr. Jeffrey."

The portcullis was raised now, and in a few minutes the girl was in her father's arms.

"Johnny, you've had a narrow squeak," said Craig, as he shook the man's hand, "and there's some talk about you being in this slush business, but I'll not believe it till I get proof."

"Who killed old Legge?" asked Johnny.

"We don't know. But Stevens has

disappeared, and Stevens was Fenner's brother. I got it from Mr. Reeder, who seems to have remarkable sources of information."

"Not at all," disclaimed the apologetic Reeder. "I certainly have a remarkable source of information, and to that all credit must go. But I think you will confirm my statement, John, that Stevens actually is Fenner's brother?"

To Peter's surprise, Johnny nodded.

"Yes, I knew they were brothers; and it is unnecessary to say that their name was neither Stevens nor Fenner. It is pretty well established that the old man gave away Fenner—shopped him for the Berkeley Square job—and possibly Stevens got to know of this, and had been waiting his opportunity to settle accounts with Emanuel. Have you caught him?"

"Not yet," said Craig.

"I hope you won't," said Johnny. "What are you going to do about me, Peter?"

He put his arm round the girl's shoulder, and Peter smiled.

"I suppose I'll have to let her marry you, Johnny, whether you're a crook or honest. I want you to go straight, and I'll make it worth while——"

"That I can promise you!" It was Mr. Reeder who spoke. "And may I offer an apology? I'm rather a wolf in sheep's clothing, or a sheep in wolf's clothing. The truth is, my name is Golden."

"Golden!" gasped Craig. "But I thought Golden was out of this business?"

"He is out of it, and yet he is in it," explained Mr. Reeder carefully. "I am an excellent office man," he confessed, in that mincing manner of his, staring owlishly over his glasses, "but a very indifferent seeker of information, and although, when Mr. John Gray Reeder was appointed over me as chief inspector of my department——"

"Here, stop!" said the dazed Craig. "John Gray Reeder? Who is Inspector John Gray Reeder?"

MR. GOLDEN'S hand went out in the direction of the smiling Johnny.

"Johnny! You a busy!" said the bewildered Peter. "But you went to prison sure enough?"

"I certainly went to prison," said Johnny. "It was the only place I could get any news about the Big Printer, and I found out all I wanted to know. It was a trying two years, but well worth it, though I nearly lost the only thing in the world that made life worth living," he said.

"You've got to forgive me, Peter, because I spied on you—a good spy doesn't play favorites. I've been watching you and every one of your pals, and I watched Marney most of all. And now I'm going to watch her for years and years!"

"You see," said Mr. Golden, who seemed most anxious to exculpate himself from any accusation of cleverness, "I was merely the listener-in, if I may use a newfangled expression, to the information which John broadcasted. I knew all about this marriage, and I was the person who appointed a woman de-

tective to look after her at the Charlton Hotel—but on Johnny's instructions.

"That is why he was able to prove his alibi, because naturally, that section of the police which knows him, is always ready to prove alibis for other officers of the police who are mistakenly charged with being criminals."

"How did you guess about the prison?"

"Fenner squealed," said Mr. Golden with a gesture of deprecation. "'Squeal' is not a word I like, but it is rather expressive. Yes, Fenner squealed."

Two happy people drove home together in the car which had brought Marney to Keytown. The country between Oxford and Horsham is the most beautiful in the land. The road passes through great aisles of tall trees, into which a car may be turned and be hidden from view by those who pass along the road.

Johnny slowed the machine at an appropriate spot, and put it toward the thickest part of the wood. And Marney, who sat with folded hands by his side, did not seek any explanation for his eccentricity.

THE END.



A two-dollar book-length novel, "The Nameless Terror," by "Sapper," will be in the next issue of POPULAR. It is a story of "Bulldog" Drummond, whose exploits have appeared on the screen and the stage, and is published complete in the October 7th number of the magazine.

SILVER HEELS

By Henry Herbert Knibbs

HER coat is flecked with a silvery dust and her mane is silver gray;
Her eye is dark with a gentle pride, as far in the field she stands
Knee-deep in a ripple of meadow grass where the winnowing breezes play;
Ever alert for a voice she loves and the touch of her master's hands.

From the slim, quick ear to the sun-warmed flank, a lyric of living grace,
Clean-cut from the very heart of Life; the dream of a thing complete;
Her stride is a song of joy subdued to the pride of an ordered pace,
And the breast of the earth is proud to bear the print of her rounded feet.

Were I one with the silent earth with the wavering grass above,
And should she stray o'er the dreams I dreamed, with her patient eyes aglow,
Knowing naught of my resting place, yet hungry for human love,
The dust of my lips would call to her, knowing what she would know.

Why? Because love is not alone a gift of the human heart . . .
The little fire of my mountain camp was spiraling clear and bold,
And my mare was grazing across the stream when I saw her stop and start,
As the pit of the night was roofed with red and the trees were touched with gold.

Free as the wild she stood and sniffed the threat in the murky air,
Her velvet nostrils quivering; her rounded eye a gleam;
And fear ran shivering to her flank till I spoke, and she came to where
I stood with the bridle in my hand on the edge of the mountain stream.

She nuzzled my cheek as I bridled her, to say that she understood;
I swung to the saddle and felt her fear restrained as she held her stride,
Working away from the rolling flame that lighted the stilly wood;
We saved our haste for the coming need—a trail that was new, untried.

A lion slipped from the under gloom, and slunk but a pace ahead;
A buck leaped up on a ragged ledge and lunged from the fiery goad;
A tawny cat with its eyes ablaze and a dappled fawn shape fled
In the swirling stars and the stinging smoke that blinded the trail we rode.

Raw fire bit into the choking gloom and seared like a white-hot brand;
The drums of doom rolled thundering and deadened the aching brain;
Yet my mare worked patiently down the steep, unguided by voice or hand,
Till the trail dropped sheer where the bank was cut by the rage of a winter rain.

Perhaps, afoot, I had found a way, clinging to root and vine,
Down to the close-walled stream below, gaining it inch by inch;
But to leave her there? I stroked her neck and spoke to that mare of mine
And I knew that she knew what I asked of her as I tugged at the slackened cinch.

A rush, a roar—and the farther edge loomed clear for a quick-drawn breath:
I led her back from the viewless leap, mounted and closed my eyes;
Touched her flank with a trembling spur as we lunged at the face of death;
A burst of strength, the sweep of space—a grunt—and I felt her rise.

Down in the valley the stars were dim in a light that was not of dawn,
As I dried the reek from her dripping coat and lowered the corral bars;
Then I slept nor knew till I woke again that day had come and gone,
And I found her grazing along the fence, under the Southern stars.

Her coat is flecked with a silvery dust and her mane is silver gray;
Her eye is dark with a gentle pride, as far in the field she stands
Knee-deep in a ripple of meadow grass where the winnowing breezes play;
Ever alert for a voice she loves and a touch of her master's hands.



The Strange Affairs of the Texan Wasp

By James Francis Dwyer

Author of "The Fear Drunkard," "Some One Had Blundered," Etc.

II.—THE YELLOW ANGEL

Robert Henry Blane, known to his intimates as The Texan Wasp, once more hearkens to the siren, adventure, and discovers she holds plenty of thrills in store for him, as into the languorous atmosphere of old New Orleans there creeps a crime-tainted character from the Old World.

TO New Orleans, "the City that Care forgot," rode Robert Henry Blane. Word had come up from old Louisiana that the sun was shining brightly in the romantic French Quarter, that sleek thoroughbreds were running at Jefferson Park and that roses were blooming along Esplanade Avenue, so The Texan Wasp fled from the scouting winds of winter that clattered like invisible Uh-lans through the streets of Manhattan. The debonair adventurer had a great and lasting love for New Orleans.

Robert Henry Blane registered at the St. Charles, but he paid tribute to the glorious past by crossing Canal Street at meal times and eating in the Vieux Carré. At Antoine's and The

Louisiane he ate fat oysters from Bayou Cook, gumbo à la Creole, broiled pompano and roast canvasbacks and blessed the little fat-bellied gods that gave deftness to the studious chefs that ruled the kitchens.

For three whole days The Wasp sunned himself in the soft backwaters of Lazyland, then the golden threads of chance dragged him into a whirlpool. He was sitting in Jackson Square, where "Old Hickory" on his champing horse lifts his hat eternally to the red-brick houses opposite, when a drunken Swedish sailor came weaving along the pathway.

The Swede, a huge, muscular giant, was heavily loaded with wood alcohol. He rolled from side to side of the path,

now and then by an almost miraculous effort preventing one of his big feet from eliminating an inoffensive pansy bed.

Coming toward the viking was a tall, handsome girl carrying a basket filled with all the good things that one can buy in the French Market. Fruit, yellow and gold, gleamed in the sunshine and the bleary eye of the Swede was attracted. Possibly thirst ruled him at the moment.

He gave a little more attention to his steering machinery, swung to port with a curious stealthy movement, then, abreast of the basket, he made a grab for a big orange that crowned the pile.

The orange rolled from the stubby fingers as the frightened girl jerked the basket away. The Swede made a second attempt. He stumbled; his enormous paw hooked itself in the handle; the basket was torn from the grip of its owner; and the purchases were scattered over the walk.

Robert Henry Blane was beside the girl in an instant. He recovered the basket and hurriedly collected the nearest objects while the Swede was climbing to his feet. Instead of apologizing the sailor showed a malicious humor.

WITH berserker grunts of rage he hopped after a rolling orange and placed an enormous boot upon it. He yelled with joy as he pursued another, reducing it to pulp in the same manner. He staggered after a third, gurgling as he clumped along the asphalt.

The Texan Wasp thought it time to interfere with the sailor's fun. As the Swede's hoof was lifted to squash the third orange, Blane gave him a swift push from the rear that sent him sprawling, then, without glancing at the drunk, the Texan picked up the orange and carried it back to the basket.

The Swede lifted himself slowly. His

little blue eyes were aflame. A fool had interfered with his game of squashing oranges. Quietly, ever so gently, he gathered his big body together and rushed.

Blane had stooped to collect some scattered okra and the girl's cry of alarm came too late. The hairy mammoth of a sailor was upon him before he could straighten himself. Arms as thick as the body of a full-grown python were around the neck of The Wasp, a garlic-scented breath with the hurtful possibilities of poison gas enveloped him. The Swede was filled with a great desire to garrote the person who objected to his playful manner of rounding up fugitive oranges.

The great Japanese wrestler, Isuchi, who lived in the days of the Emperor Hideyoshi, invented a grip to foil the garroter. It took Isuchi a year to think it out and of the very few who had patiently learned it was a muscular person from Houston named Robert Henry Blane.

He bent back with the neck-breaking pull of the Swede, then, with lightning swiftness, he applied the grip. A roar of pain came from the sailor, a roar that echoed against the walls of the old houses on the square; his arms were flung wide as he released The Wasp and staggered across the path.

The face of Blane became hard and cold; the scar on his right jaw showed white as his mouth tightened. "On your way!" he cried, as the Swede turned. "Beat it or I'll teach you something!"

The Swede made a noise like an angry boar. "Py chimney! Ah bane teach you sumping!" he screamed, and, as he spoke, he charged.

The sailor swung at Blane's head. The head moved the fraction of a second before the fist arrived, then, as the Swede was carried forward by the force of the blow, cold accurate science fell upon him like a barrage from hell.

The Texan Wasp was annoyed. He detested blind, brutal force and the huge, flailing arms of the ungallant giant put the TNT of hot indignation into the broadside of jolts and jabs that the sailor stopped. The flat nose of the seafaring gentleman thought its owner had challenged a steam foundry. A swift punch to the jaw, placed with matchless precision, ended the fight.

Robert Henry Blane stepped to the side of the girl. She seemed a little stunned by the happening; a little hypnotized by the manner in which the debonair stranger who had come to her assistance had disposed of the giant. The Wasp picked up the basket of fruit and vegetables. Inquisitive folk were hurrying from the levee.

"Let us go," said Blane gently. "A crowd will gather soon. I'll carry the basket, please!"

The girl made no objection. Side by side they crossed the square into Decatur, then, in a strange silence, they walked along by the old Cathedral of St. Louis into Royal. The owner of the basket took an occasional frightened glance at the man at her side; the gray eyes of The Texan Wasp were not altogether idle.

He thought the girl had an extraordinary charm. Into his mind floated pictures of lavender gardens, jealousies, little tinkling fountains in shady courts. His companion seemed to be the spirit of the old French Quarter through which they walked—the quarter of other days.

The girl paused at the corner of Royal and St. Peter. Eyes that were soft and dark and luminous examined the face of Robert Henry Blane. A voice that thrilled him whispered thanks.

"I—I would like my mother to thank you," she murmured. "Mother would think it wrong if I—if I let you go before she could express her gratitude.

It is just a step up Royal Street. I wonder if you would come?"

"I am delighted at being asked," said Blane. "Not that I crave thanks from your mother, but because I am mindful of the honor that you are doing me in taking me to your home."

The girl flushed sweetly. The soft accent of the South had crept into the voice of the adventurer. For the moment his speech and manner were her own.

PASSING out of the white sunshine into the inky shadows of the old house in Royal Street, Robert Henry Blane was strangely impressed. The house seemed a refuge for the past. A refuge for all the dreams and poetry that went with the old Creole days.

Little phantoms of the days of romance peeped at The Wasp from the dim corners of the big rooms, from behind massive pieces of rosewood, from the shade of big armoires of Spanish mahogany—armoires that had held in their perfumed depths the soft linen of countless generations.

The past peeped from behind Empire mirrors that had reflected the faces of Creole beauties for whose smiles be-ruffled bucks fought duels at dawn at Spanish Fort and Lake Pontchartrain. An inquisitorial ghost looked the tall Texan over and wondered if the girl had done right in bringing him into the repository of dreams.

The girl ran toward a figure resting in a big armchair near the window of the sitting room.

"Mother, dear," she cried, "I have brought some one with me! A drunken man upset my basket and this gentleman protected me."

The woman turned and Robert Henry Blane, as he bowed low, felt that she too was of a period that the hurrying present had ruthlessly throttled. A frail, sweet woman whose clutch upon life seemed so feeble that one wondered

where the energy to breathe, to talk, to eat was actually stored.

She was gracious to The Wasp. She made him sit beside her at the window. She plied him with questions, questions that amused him. He was Southern, of course? Ah, yes, she knew it the moment he had entered the room. And he had traveled far? For her foreign places had no lure. She had been born in New Orleans and in New Orleans she would die.

"In this house my great-grandmother, grandmother, mother, and myself were born," she said gently. "My husband lived here for twenty years and sometimes——" She turned her head and looked swiftly at the door by which the girl had left the room a few moments before. "Sometimes," she continued, "he—my husband—returns and talks to me. Talks to me from the court at the back of the house."

Robert Henry Blane, schooled in the art of control, exhibited no surprise at hearing the extraordinary statement. He simply inclined his head and waited for further details. He saw that the woman had chosen the moment when the girl was absent from the room to make the startling confession.

The frail lady watched his face for a moment and, finding that no amazement showed thereon, she leaned forward and spoke in a hurried whisper.

"It is strange, is it not?" she murmured. "I will tell you how it began. Three weeks ago I was sitting one night overlooking the court at the back of the house. I whispered my husband's name, and—and he answered. Answered me from the court. I was astonished and I——"

The girl returned to the room and the mother stopped abruptly in her recital. It was evident to Robert Henry Blane that the story of the spirit voice was one that received little credence from the daughter. He thought the younger woman looked questioningly

at the elder before she again returned to her duties in the rear of the house. The Wasp studied the face of the old lady and found nothing that would suggest mental derangement.

The mother took immediate advantage of the girl's absence.

"He, my husband, spoke to me!" she gasped excitedly. "Dorothy Anne doesn't believe. She was out that evening and she didn't hear. But I heard him distinctly!"

Blane was puzzled.

"Has it happened more than once?" he asked, his curiosity mildly roused by the story. "I mean, have you heard the voice since that evening?"

"Yes, yes!" breathed the old lady, delighted at the interest of the handsome Texan. "I have spoken with him on two other occasions. You see, I could not be fooled because he has spoken to me about something that only he and I knew about. A great secret!"

"That is strange," murmured Blane.

"This—this secret was a piece of verse," continued the frail reciter. "My husband made me learn it, thinking he might forget it. You see, it—it was a very important piece of poetry and—and he couldn't write it down on paper lest some one would steal it. So my husband made me commit it to memory. I was never to tell it to any one. Never! I promised him. I never whispered it aloud even!"

THE slight interest that Robert Henry Blane had in the fanciful tale received a sudden fillip. The story took on a new value. There was a suggestion of an uncanny cleverness on the part of some unknown seeker after information. The Wasp was interested.

"This verse," he said gently, "would it be useful to any one now? Your husband has been dead some years——"

"Seven," interrupted the woman. "He was murdered on the twenty-fourth of December, seven years ago."

"Murdered!" cried Blane. "Here?"

"In Barataria," answered the old lady. "In the swamps across the river. His body was found floating in a bayou near Fleming's on the way to Grand Isle. Do you know Barataria?"

"I have been to Grand Isle."

"Well, it was a boat bringing terrapins from Grand Isle up to Harvey's that found my husband's body. Some one had knifed him. We never discovered who it was."

Again Dorothy Anne returned to the sitting room and on this occasion she showed the reason for her absence in the kitchen. Southern hospitality had to be extended to the visitor and the girl carried a pitcher of golden liquid with tall, slender glasses that, like everything else in the house, seemed to date back to the splendid and romantic days that had fled forever.

She begged The Wasp to drink and the courteous Blane felt that he was whirled back into those other days as he accepted the invitation. For an instant the magic spell cast by the old house and the two sweet women who occupied it clutched him and made him curiously forgetful of the present.

He wondered idly if there really was a busy, bustling Canal Street within five blocks of where he sat, a Canal Street so dreadfully Northern, filled with speeding street cars, wild-eyed shoppers, hurrying drummers, and moneyed Yankees who looked with amused contempt at the Vieux Carré.

The Wasp longed to ask the old lady about the present usefulness of the verse that her husband had taught her, but he held his curiosity in leash and chatted with Dorothy Anne as he sipped the beverage. He thought the girl charming. Her presence brought to his mind thoughts of New England gardens, of blossoming apple trees and dappled sunshine. Her beautiful hands made him think of Betty Allerton, his sweetheart of the long ago.

The chance that Blane awaited arrived at last. The girl left the room and he hurriedly put the question.

"This verse your husband taught you," he asked, "would it be useful to any one now? I mean, would it bring profit in any way?"

"I don't know," replied the woman. "My husband, when he made me memorize the lines, told me that it was part of some secret instructions that would enable him to find something. He didn't tell me what. To me the lines mean nothing at all."

"And have you repeated them to the person—I mean to your husband when he has spoken to you from the court?"

"No, not yet," answered the old lady. "At first when he spoke of them I could not recall them exactly, so I did not like to make the effort. Now I have them perfectly. I could repeat them at once if he asks me."

The Texan Wasp nodded gravely. The frail woman regarded him for a few moments in silence, then she spoke.

"I don't know why I have bothered you with all this!" she cried. "Something—something about you made me think of my husband, so I wanted to tell. You—you are like him. He was adventurous and—and handsome."

Robert Henry Blane smiled his thanks for the compliment as the girl returned to the room, then he rose and thanked mother and daughter for their hospitality.

"You will come and see us again?" asked the mother.

"If I may!" cried The Wasp, his eyes seeking those of the girl.

"Please do," murmured Dorothy Anne.

ONE'S imagination is fired by New Orleans more than by any other city in America. It is a town of haunting memories. It is a place where the unbelievable can be suddenly invested with the props of truth.

Robert Henry Blane motored down to Point à la Hache and dreamed away a few days watching the bald-headed vultures wheel over the desolate land through which the Mississippi plows its way to the Gulf and during those days the story told him by the elderly lady in the old house in Royal Street fought valiantly against all the attempts to evict it from his mind. It stuck like a bur.

It rose up and harried him with questions. What secret did the verse tell of? Who was the clever trickster who had laid such a strange plan to make the old lady repeat the lines? What was the mystery behind the murder of the husband in the swamp lands of Barataria?

There came a morning when The Wasp could not withstand the questions. They drove him up through the flat country to the city, up by the battlefield of Chalmette where Andy Jackson whipped the British while the good folk of New Orleans flocked to the cathedral and prayed for "Old Hickory's" success.

The Wasp went direct to the house in Royal Street and had the good fortune to find the old lady alone. Dorothy Anne was out shopping, so the field was clear for cross-examination.

The elderly woman was evidently eager to tell her story in detail. For some reason or other she looked upon the tall Texan as a suitable confessor and she made no attempt to hide her pleasure at his visit. Tactfully The Wasp listened and questioned.

A STRANGE story was that of Captain Jules Despard, husband of the woman living in the house of memories. It was a colorful and adventurous tale that delighted Blane. A story that belonged to the hectic and feverish New Orleans of other days.

Captain Jules Despard had been a soldier of fortune. A plain, humdrum

existence was a nightmare to him. He craved a myriad of sensations. His fingers had grown stubby from moving pawns on the board of chance.

Blane listened as the old lady unfolded the story of her husband's life. The Road, the Husks, and Fortune calling him insistently! Out of New Orleans to fever-stricken ports along the hot Caribbean. Plots hatched in the Old Absinth House, at Fabacher's over a broiled papabotte, at noon breakfasts in Madame Begue's long-remembered restaurant at the corner of Madison and Decatur.

Crazy plots they were, but thrilling. Crammed with the ginger of glorious chance! Chatter of guns, of ammunition, of fool authorities, of charts, of channels, of signal lights from marshy shores! Mother Trouble as the figurehead, Death at the wheel!

Madame Despard brought out old clippings and letters. An account in Spanish of the arrival of Captain Jules Despard in the schooner *Georgia Lee* at Barranquilla on the Magdalena River. Treasure seeking, so ran the tale. A faded photograph of the captain, a tall, lean-flanked man, leading a half score of followers across the Plaza Bolivar at Caracas. A year in a carcel was the captain's reward for that exploit.

Robert Henry Blane listened attentively, waiting anxiously for the old lady to arrive at the last chapter in the feverish life of Captain Despard. The Wasp was a little afraid that Dorothy Anne would return and interrupt the story, but the fates were kind. Madame Despard came at last to the part that really interested her listener.

"My husband came back from Belize a week before he was murdered," she related. "He was very excited, because he had information of something that would make him rich. Very, very rich. He could not eat; he could not sleep. He was restless and irritable.

Now and then he would tell me little scraps. Tell me of the wealth that would be his.

"It was always like that," she went on. "Always! Treasure, treasure, always treasure! He dreamed of it, waking and sleeping. He would start up in the middle of the night with the belief that he had gold and jewels in his hands.

"It was during that week that he taught me the verse I mentioned to you," she continued. "He made me learn it carefully. He was afraid that he might forget some little word and he could not write it down on paper lest some one would steal it from him. Poor Jules! A score of times I repeated the lines to him till he was satisfied that I knew them thoroughly. Ah, yes. A day before he was murdered, he made me whisper it to him. Just whisper it into his ear."

The curiosity of The Texan Wasp was intense. He wondered what the verse had to do with the death of the adventurous Despard? Who was the clever trickster who was playing on the old lady's credulity in an effort to get her to repeat it? He was puzzled and yet delighted that he was puzzled.

"Could you connect the verse in any way with your husband's death?" asked Blane.

"There were one or two words that had a relation to the place where his body was found," answered the widow. "Once my husband told me that the verses he knew and which he taught me were only part of the whole poem. There were other lines that some one else knew. Do you understand? I think it was a sort of puzzle. I remember distinctly the day he told me this, because I had protested that the lines had no sense in them at all.

"For seven years I have sat here at the window and wondered over it all," she went on. "Wondered day after day. Curiously I felt during that last

week with Jules that he was closer to his dreams than he had ever been. That was strange, wasn't it? You see his belief in the story that he had heard came out from him and forced me to believe. I thought we would be rich. Yes, really rich!

"I would sing songs as I walked about the house and I would tell Dorothy Anne of the things that we would buy and the places where we would go when my husband found the treasure. Then—then one morning the police came and told me that a shrimp boat from Grand Isle had found the body of Jules floating in the bayou near Fleming's. I couldn't believe it. You see—you see, he had made me believe in his star just before he died."

There was silence as the old lady finished her story. The effort seemed to have exhausted her. Her eyes closed gently and her head sank wearily against the pillows. Blane remained motionless, afraid to disturb her slumber.

DOROTHY ANNE returned to find The Wasp sitting in the shadowy room. Blane held up a warning finger as the girl entered and she understood immediately. She beckoned him to follow her into the big kitchen that looked out over the picturesque court at the rear of the house and on tiptoe the Texan obeyed the summons without arousing the sleeper.

"I am afraid that I imposed upon your mother," he whispered. "She told me the story of your father's life. All of it. I had a great desire to hear it, so I did not stop her, and now I think the effort was too much for her."

The girl looked at him intently. "Why did you wish to hear it?" she asked.

"I don't know," replied Blane, looking directly into the soft, dark eyes of his questioner. "Ever since my first

visit I have been wondering. I couldn't rest till——"

"Then mother must have spoken to you of the voice in the court when you first came here?" interrupted Miss Despard.

"Yes," confessed Blane. "She told me of the incident when you were out of the room."

The wonderful eyes of the girl examined the face of the tall adventurer from Houston. They swept over his features in a curious purposeful way, seeking, so the man thought, for every little foundation that would warrant her confidence. He realized this as he waited, his quiet, gray eyes fixed upon her face.

The girl turned, busied herself for a moment with the packages that she had brought home, then spoke softly, her head turned away from her visitor.

"I am glad that you know all about it," she said, her voice so low that Blane could hardly catch her words. "I was thinking of—of telling you myself. I have wondered ever since we first met if you—if you could help."

"I would like to do anything that I could to assist you," said Blane. "I am at your service if you need me."

AGAIN there fell a little silence, as the girl debated the propriety of bringing an utter stranger into the matters that concerned her family, then she spoke.

"I am worried over the matter," she said, turning toward Robert Henry Blane. "You see, mother has heard the voice on two different occasions, and on each of those occasions I was absent from the house. Both times were in the night, as you know. When she first heard the voice, she told me when I came home and I made a resolve that I would not leave her alone in the house after nightfall. That was more than three weeks ago.

"For ten days," the girl continued,

"nothing happened although mother listened on the balcony above the court every evening, then I had to go out again for a few minutes. I had to run up to the druggist's for some medicine that mother was taking. The pharmacy is at the corner of Royal and Louis and I was not away from the house for more than thirty minutes.

"But in those thirty minutes the person who had spoken to my mother from the dark court spoke to her again and asked her to repeat the verse that my father taught her. You see, he must have been watching the house and, when he saw me leave, he must have rushed around into Bourbon Street, ran up the passage at the rear of our house and climbed the brick wall into the court."

"Then you do not believe what your mother believes?" said Blane. "I mean, you do not connect the voice with your father?"

"No," answered the girl.

"Can I ask why?"

"Yes. I am telling you everything, thinking you might be able to advise me. I have not left the house since that evening because I have been afraid that something terrible might happen. I mean something dreadful like what—like what happened to father. Some one wants to know something that mother knows, and—and I am afraid of what they will do in their efforts to make her tell.

"I wish—I wish mother had repeated the verse," the girl went on. "You see, on the second occasion I returned to the house just as mother was going to do what the voice requested her to do and my arrival upset her. I cried out to her and she became excited and fainted."

"And then?" prompted The Wasp. "Did something happen that made you feel sure there was nothing spiritualistic about the affair?"

"Yes," answered Dorothy Anne. "I looked down into the court, but it was

so dark I could see nothing. Then, as I carried mother into the sitting room, I heard some one stumbling through the flower pots at the back. Next morning I went down and looked at them. Half a dozen were broken and there were footprints in the soft soil. A man's footprints."

"Did you tell your mother?" asked Blane.

"No," replied Miss Despard. "I didn't like to. You see, I did not wish to be cruel to mother, who firmly believes that it was my father's voice that came to her out of the court, and then again if I proved to her that some stranger was doing such a wicked thing, she would be horribly frightened."

The Texan Wasp remained silent for a few minutes, then the questioning eyes of the girl forced him to speak.

"I would suggest that we find out why this unknown gentleman is so anxious to hear the verses that your mother learned," he said quietly. "Scaring him off the premises by telling the police will not solve the secret. There must be a great value to the lines. They may be worth thousands of dollars."

"But—but I am afraid of him!" gasped the girl. "I wish now that mother had repeated the lines the last time he came. Then we would be free of him. Now I am terrified. I am afraid to leave the house at night, lest something might happen to mother. You know, she only knows a part of the chant. Perhaps—perhaps he thinks that she knows all of it, and—and if he thought that, he might do something dreadful to us."

Robert Henry Blane stepped to the side of the girl.

"Do you believe in me?" he asked gently. "Do you trust me?"

"Oh, yes! Yes!" she answered.

"Then let us do something together," said Blane. "Let us make a little plan. I am rather interested in this fellow who is trying to fool your mother. Sup-

pose to-night that you go out and leave your——"

"I cannot! I am afraid!" cried the girl. "This—this brute who is pretending to be the spirit of my father might kill mother!"

The Wasp took the soft hand of the girl and held it in a firm grip.

"I will be in the court when he comes," he said quietly. "I give you my word that no harm will come to your mother. No harm at all. There is something big behind all this. Now let us map out a little plan that will make this faker look cheap."

IT was exactly eight o'clock when Robert Henry Blane crept up the little passage from Bourbon Street to the brick wall that fenced in the courtyard at the rear of the old Despard house. The passage was not more than two feet wide and it was dark and smelly. Some disputed right to the few inches of ground had left it unoccupied between two houses.

Blane, on reaching the wall, felt carefully for projections that would help him to scale it, then quietly climbed over and dropped noiselessly into the court. Dorothy Anne had agreed to leave the house at fifteen minutes after eight and the Texan thought to make himself perfectly at home in the yard before the arrival of the person who was evidently watching the house in the hope that the girl would leave and give him a free field for his humbug.

The Wasp found a large Spanish water jar in one corner of the yard and snuggled in behind it. A solitary light showed in the rear of the Despard house. Its yellow gleam came through the French windows and faintly illuminated the handmade ironwork of the balcony that ran around the rear of the house, high above the courtyard. Blane knew that the light came from a small sewing room in which Mrs. Despard often sat.

The minutes passed slowly. Infinite silence reigned in the court. Faintly, ever so faintly, came the soft rumble of cars running on Royal.

Then, after what seemed a century of waiting, the sharp ears of Robert Henry Blane heard the patter of feet in the passage up which he had come from Bourbon. Keenly alert he thrust his head forward and registered the slight sounds that followed.

There was the scratching of feet on the brick wall, the grunt of a person slightly winded by the effort made in scaling the barrier, then the *plop* as the intruder dropped on the soft soil. The fellow passed close to the corner where Blane crouched. He was stumbling forward to a point beneath the window in which the light showed.

The incidents that followed were peculiarly eerie and outlandish. They brought a certain queer thrill to the nerves of The Texan Wasp, who generally adopted a rather blasé attitude in the face of all kinds of happenings. He found himself gripped by a tremendous and all-consuming curiosity.

From the darkness of the courtyard there went up a low moan that had an immediate effect. The French windows of the sewing room were thrown open and Madame Despard appeared upon the balcony. Her attitude, as far as The Wasp could judge, gave no indications of fear. She seemed excited, but not alarmed. She leaned over the iron railing and whispered the name of her dead husband.

"Jules!" she murmured. "*Jules!*"

THERE was no response. The intruder was coy. He wished to let the mystery of the night help him in his work of deception. Blane thought him a rather clever and artistic scoundrel.

Madame Despard called again, and her call brought a faint ghostly whisper from the court. A whisper so wonderfully soft and pliant that The Wasp

was thrilled by the creepy feel that the fellow put into it. It might have been the faint echo of a voice calling from the farthest star. The work was admirably well done.

Blane watched the woman on the balcony, outlined clearly against the windows of the sewing room. She was erect now, her hands clasped upon her breast, her whole attitude expressive of belief and exalted joy.

The faker in the court began to whisper softly. Attenuated whispers that seemed to be thin tentacles of sound filled the darkness. They rose and fell and died away. They were disjointed and meaningless, but they were fearfully and dreadfully ghostly.

The fellow was bulldozing the widow by all the old tricks and humbug peculiar to the séances of spiritualistic fakers. He was exhausting her small brain power by getting her to puzzle madly over scraps of nonsense. Coquettish scraps that carried a sort of "well-there-might-be-something-in-it" feel which tired the listener who tried to solve them.

For five minutes or more the widow, hands clasped and head thrust forward, tried to dredge something understandable out of the farrago of nonsense, then the fellow thought it time to make a bold attempt to get the information that he sought. There was a slight interval of complete silence, then he called the name of the woman on the balcony, called it softly, lovingly.

"Luella May!"

It was a little thread of musical sound that went softly upward.

"Jules! Jules!" gasped the woman.

"The verse!" came the whisper from the court. "You have not forgotten the verse?"

"No, no!" cried Madame Despard. "No, Jules!"

"Then say the lines!" came the whispered order from the man in the darkness.

Robert Henry Blane leaned forward. His ears ached with the longing to hear the lines which he knew the woman would repeat. Hearing was the predominant sense at the moment. The silence of the courtyard as Madame Despard braced herself and moistened her dry lips brought to The Wasp an almost unbearable agony.

Then came the words, clear and distinct. They were meaningless words. They floated down to the dark court. Only once was there a break as excitement overcame the speaker and forced her to pause for an instant. It was a strange verse:

"Deep it lies where the shell mounds rise,
Darky keep a-blinking for the big, blue flies,
Big, burned cypress on the right of the stream,
Mighty lonely when the bitterns scream.
Step off the distance from the big shell mound,
Nine to the left and then turn round."

Madame Despard's voice died away. There was absolute silence in the courtyard. The woman thrust herself forward over the railing of the balcony and whispered again and again the name of her dead husband. No answering voice came back to her.

The Texan Wasp, crouching behind the Spanish tinaja, knew why there was no response. Blane's keen ears told him that the fellow in the court was crawling on all fours toward the brick wall at the rear. His mission was accomplished and he wished to escape as quickly as possible.

The Wasp, noiseless as a stalking panther, reached the court side of the brick wall as the fellow dropped into the passageway leading to Bourbon. Mystery, with manacles of steel, bound the tall Texan to the fleeing faker. Something extraordinary, unbelievable—something that was a little terrifying was, so Blane felt, connected with the mission of the man he was starting to trail. He told himself, as he scaled the wall and followed, that the fellow must never get away from him. Imagi-

nation pictured some great palpitating nodule of horror that was on the point of bursting.

THE fellow hurried up Bourbon Street to Iberville and turned eastward to the river. The streets were nearly deserted. The French Quarter has little attraction for pedestrians when the night comes down.

The pursued reached the levee, paused for a moment beneath an arc light and scribbled hurriedly on a scrap of paper. The Wasp, hard on his trail, knew that the fellow was putting down the lines that Madame Despard had repeated. They were evidently so important that he did not trust his memory till he could reach a place of comparative privacy.

The man swung southward, taking advantage of all the shadowy sections that he could find. A less efficient trailer than The Wasp might have been thrown off the track, but Blane was an artist in the business of keeping a person in sight without rousing the suspicion of the pursued.

The man reached Howard Avenue and increased his speed. At a run he dashed along the avenue toward Lee Circle and Blane, hugging the shadows on the opposite side of the street, followed swiftly. The terrible curiosity of The Wasp was increasing with each step that he covered. He had a firm and overwhelming conviction that he was on the track of big things.

At the base of the monument erected to the memory of the great Confederate leader, the quarry halted. Blane crouched in the shadow of a big magnolia tree and waited. The actions of the fellow suggested to The Wasp that the monument was the agreed meeting place with a friend.

The guess was correct. From the other side of the avenue came a man moving as fast as a lame leg would allow him to and, as the newcomer

passed under the fierce rays of an electric arc on Lee Circle, the Texan in the shadow gave a soft whistle of astonishment. He recognized the limping friend of the man he was following.

The mind of Robert Henry Blane flung up a picture of other days. A picture of a narrow street in Marseilles where a half score of small but wonderfully active French police were blazing away at the roof of a house upon which a lame bandit had taken refuge. The lame one rejected all their suggestions to surrender. He was in plain view, standing bareheaded in the white sunlight of the Midi, his yellow face with huge teeth scowling down at his pursuers.

On that morning at Marseilles, The Wasp, whose knowledge of the Continental underworld was second to none, had immediately recognized the man on the roof. Once or twice, here and there in the big cities of Europe, he had spoken to the fellow. He was known as Gabriel Amade and his Christian name together with his strange yellow face had earned for him the soubriquet of "*L'Ange Jaune*"—The Yellow Angel.

It was The Yellow Angel who limped across Lee Circle to meet the clever faker who had forced Madame Despard to repeat the lines. And it was evident to the watching Blane that the lame man was delighted with the report which the other made. Gabriel Amade patted his friend softly on the shoulder, then the two turned and hurried along St. Charles Avenue in the direction of Canal.

A rather startled Texan followed on their heels. The yellow-faced bandit had a reputation for tackling big jobs and his ways of getting through those jobs had brought the bloodhounds of the world on his trail.

The pair reached Canal and The Wasp took advantage of the increased pedestrian traffic and moved closer.

Under the lights of the big thoroughfare he could see the yellow face of the French bandit as he turned from time to time to his companion. A joy that was immense sat upon the queer citrine features of the fellow.

At a jog trot they reached Rampart and swung to the right, Blane at a safe distance in the rear. The lamp of a small and rather frowsy hotel seemed to attract them. They headed for it, passed through the door of frosted glass and were lost to view.

Robert Henry Blane stood and reviewed the happenings of the night. The fact that the Despard house had been watched with such care that the departure of Dorothy Anne was immediately noticed by the watcher proved that the information sought from the widow was considered of great consequence. The joy of The Yellow Angel confirmed this belief.

The Texan Wasp, standing on the curb, repeated the scrap of doggerel in an undertone. The verse seemed absolutely meaningless, a loose jumble of incoherent directions. One by one he analyzed the lines, seeking something definite and useable. He took the first: "Deep it lies where the shell mounds rise." The "it" suggested treasure, of course, but "shell mounds" might be anywhere. The whole State of Louisiana was covered with shell mounds.

The second line was more indefinite than the first. It was merely advice to a ducky to "keep a-blinking for the big, blue flies." Large blue flies, like shell mounds, were not unusual. The third line told of something that could be taken as sailing directions: "Big, burned cypress on the right of the stream." Nothing very tangible. Across the Mississippi in the great swamp stretches of Baratavia there were thousands of cypress trees, burned and otherwise.

The fourth line that told of the bit-

terns screaming was also coy in the matter of details. In the swamp patches between Galveston and Key West, the bitterns boomed at all hours in their breeding season.

The fifth and sixth lines were more informative. They suggested that the big shell mound was the point from which measurements should start and that nine steps and a turn would bring you to something. Something! Where?

A TELEGRAPH messenger passed whistling. To The Texan Wasp came an idea. His old adversary who was now his friend, No. 37, was still in New York. The great man hunter, who carried within his brain a complete Who's Who of the Underworld, might know something of the immediate aspirations of Gabriel Amade. It was worth while asking.

The boy had a form and a pencil. Blane wrote a wire reading:

TO OCCUPANT, Room 74, Delza Hotel, New York.

Do you know anything of *L'Ange Jaime* of Bordeaux? Here now in New Orleans. Think he has big scheme on hand. Interests me greatly. Wire immediately all that you know.

BLANE.

Hotel St. Charles, New Orleans.

The messenger, with a dollar tip, hurried off with the wire; Blane slipped off his tie and collar, carelessly thrust his shapely shoes into the mud of the gutter, ruffled his hair, turned up the collar of his coat, pulled the rakish velours hat well over his eyes and stepped across the street to the hotel door through which The Yellow Angel and his friend had disappeared.

A dwarfed and consumptive-looking clerk squatted in the pill box that was labeled "Office." The Wasp turned upon him a smile that suggested near drunkenness. The clerk grinned. He guessed that Robert Henry Blane had received a load in a speak-easy along Rampart.

"What is it, colonel?" asked the clerk.

"Want a—a room," hiccuped The Wasp. "Nice room. Feel very tired."

"You can have one, skipper," said the clerk, humorously changing the title of his guest. "The whole caboose is yours if you've got the frog skins."

The Texan Wasp sprawled forward and became confidential. "Misht my friends," he gurgled. "Two o' 'em. Thought they might 'a' come here. Jusht a minute ago. Good fellows! Two, jusht two."

The clerk was amused.

"Don't think they did, general," he said, switching his customer back from the sea to the army. "Two chaps came in a few minutes ago, but I don't think they were your friends. They might be. Look 'em up if you like. They're in No. 14 and you're going to rest your tired frame in No. 17. Same landing. The stairs are behind you. Here's your key. Good night!"

With erratic steps the Texan stumbled to the stairs, clawed for the banister with an artistry that delighted the clerk, then climbed laboriously into the upper regions. The Yellow Angel and his spiritualistic companion were quartered quite close to the room allotted to Blane and the knowledge pleased him. The night was young.

HALF a dozen times during the next three hours Robert Henry Blane rose from his crouching position before the door of room No. 14 and fled into his own. Each time he returned as soon as the field was clear. He returned with an eagerness that would have made an observer wonder.

The thin door allowed scraps of conversation to filter through to the alert ears of the Texan. They were thrilling and absorbing scraps. Within the room the yellow-faced bandit and the faker were busy dovetailing the verse that Madame Despard had repeated

with lines that they already knew. Out of the medley they were fashioning a concise and definite set of directions.

The interruptions caused by other guests seeking their rooms, and which forced The Wasp to retire momentarily from his observation post, maddened the Texan. He lost track of the verbal smithy work that was being done within the chamber of the two. And it always seemed that he was chased from the corridor when the most important work was in progress.

On one matter Blane was certain. He understood the method which the two had adopted to make sense out of the matter they had collected and that which they already knew. First came a line from the widow's chant, then a line of their own. Then another line from the Despard verse and after this another of their own vintage. The secret was plain to Blane. Madame Despard had told him that her husband only knew part of the whole poem and, as he listened, he realized that either half was useless without the other.

The gurgling of a bottle came from the room as the night progressed. The voice of The Yellow Angel mouthing the lines became thicker; the rather cultivated tones of his friend lost the charm that had been noticeable to The Wasp as he listened to the fellow in the courtyard of the Despard house.

Delight at the victory which enabled them to read off the full directions to the place they sought had tempted them to indulge deeply in bootleg stuff that they had on hand. The listener at the door found it harder to understand the words that came to him.

It was midnight when the two retired. Blane listened to the confused mass of adjurations, congratulations and imprecations that they exchanged. They were both hopelessly drunk. Their puzzle had been solved and they were jubilant.

The last remark was made by the

French bandit. His English, not too good when he was sober, was shot to pieces by the wood alcohol that he was celebrating on.

"To-morrow him come. Ah buys zee boat!" he gurgled. "Piff, piff, piff, we go! Mighty fast boat, by gar! What he say here? Black Bayou where zee lily pads are! Mon Dieu! Ah am zee rich man! Rich! Rich! Ah go back to Bordeaux an' buy one tam beeg house! Zee grand house for Gabriel Amade!"

Robert Henry Blane went back to his bare and stuffy room, seated himself in a chair and considered the situation. The Yellow Angel and his friend had robbed Madame Despard of a secret that was evidently worth money, much money, if one could judge by the words of the bandit. They had robbed the girl, Dorothy Anne. They had robbed the old house of memories. They had robbed Captain Jules Despard, although the captain had gone to a place where treasure doesn't cut any figure.

Blane returned to the passage and tried the door of room No. 14. It was bolted from the inside and there was no transom. Although drunk, the pair had securely closed the door before retiring.

The Wasp scurried back to his own room, opened the window and thrust his head into the night. The room he occupied was in the rear, its walls close to the back of buildings fronting on Burgundy. About three feet below the window ran a plaster ledge of some fourteen inches in width and the Texan calmly analyzed the chances of reaching the room of the two by means of this pathway.

The ledge offered a precarious foothold to a climber. Here and there it had been bitten into by the relentless teeth of time, proving that its composition was not of a granitelike character. Beneath it was a thirty-foot drop into the cluttered yard of the hotel.

Blane's eyes examined the section of ledge that showed in the light thrown from his window. He thought of his weight with a little twinge of regret. Lacking an ounce of fat, he scaled one hundred and seventy pounds and he wondered if the builder of the ornamental excrescence had ever dreamed that a person of that weight would attempt to climb along it.

HE thought not. But then the builder had never imagined that the plaster shelf would be a path along which a cool-headed person could reach a scrap of doggerel that held the secret to some wonderful cache.

Some five feet above the ledge ran a wire that would give a person on the bracket an opportunity to balance himself by clinging lightly to it. The Wasp blessed the wire. He thought a kind Providence had placed it there so that he might imitate Blondin in passing to the chamber of the two. He sat himself down to wait till The Yellow Angel and his friend had passed into a state of drunken slumber that would make it perfectly safe to call upon them.

A clock struck one as Blane lowered himself cautiously onto the ledge. Very gently he tried his weight upon it, his muscular hands gripping the window sill and easing his poundage softly onto the perilous shelf.

Scraps of soft plaster crumbled under the shoes of the adventurous Texan and clattered into the yard below. The noise they made was not altogether pleasing. A sort of hissing whisper came up out of the darkness to the ears of the amateur Blondin. But the nerves of Robert Henry Blane were of steel. They had been tried in many corners of the earth.

Carefully, slowly, he moved forward. His right hand went up and gripped the wire. It steadied him on the narrow pathway. Inch by inch he shuffled along, the little warning whisper of fall-

ing plaster accompanying him as he moved. He thought of Captain Jules Despard. He felt that the spirit of the dead captain, if aware of the purpose of the journey, might lend a helping hand. The belief pleased him.

He passed the window of room No. 16. He passed that of No. 15. The next window was that of the chamber he desired to reach. He held his breath and moved ever so slowly. The inch-by-inch progression from his own room had taken more than half an hour.

A PARTICULARLY threatening section of the ledge met him as he crept close to his goal. It was a treacherous stretch, where the shelf had been weakened considerably by the leakage from a downpipe. A leakage that had continued for years.

The hail of plaster that dropped into the yard made The Wasp pause. He clung to the wire in an effort to ease the strain. A section of crumbling cement tore itself from a point directly in his path, dropped into space and sent back a threatening rumble as it struck an empty barrel in the yard. For an instant Blane wondered if the whole ledge was going. He stood tense and motionless, listening to the trickle of dry pebbles that followed the fall of the large mass.

His situation was perilous. Caution suggested a quick and speedy return to his own room, but caution was swatted heavily by the old Blanelike slogan of "Take a Chance." He took it, a bold chance.

He stepped boldly forward over the gap caused by the breakaway, flung his hands up into the darkness and grasped the window sill of room No. 14. He clung to it and listened to the cannonade of plaster missiles that came from below. A full yard of the ledge had collapsed beneath him.

The Wasp took a breath of relief and hauled himself up. The window

was unlocked. Noiselessly he crawled into the room and dropped upon the floor.

He knew that he was between the beds of the two. The drunken pair were conducting a snoring competition, responding to each other's efforts with a vigor and regularity that spoke highly for the soporific properties of the boot-leg stuff they had swallowed.

Blane was a swift and competent worker. He found the clothes of The Yellow Angel and transferred to his own person all the papers that he found in the pockets. He did the same with the clothing of the spiritualistic faker, keeping the papers of each separate so that he would be able to return the documents to the pockets he had taken them from. Then with great deftness he unbarred the door, slipped into the passage and reached his own room.

Then, in the papers he had collected from the pockets of Gabriel Amade, Blane found what he was in search of. It was the completed verse, the lines recited by Madame Despard interlaced with those that the pair already knew.

Hurriedly the big Texan copied them on the back of an envelope he found in his pocket. A thrill of delight came to him as he scribbled them down. They were strange lines:

Deep it lies where the shell mounds rise,
Up Black Bayou where the lily fields are.
Darky keep a-blinking for the big, blue flies.
Hold to the right to dodge the bar.
Big, burned cypress on the right of the stream,
Spanish moss like a giant's beard;
Mighty lonely when the bitterns scream.
Don't be afeard, darky! Don't be afeard!
Step off the distance from the big shell mound.
Ninety paces, darky, bearing straight to the right!
Nine to the left, and then turn round,
Swing a spade, darky, and the snake will bite!

The task finished, Robert Henry Blane peeped out into the passage. It was empty. In stockinged feet he

dashed back to the room of the two, replaced the papers in their clothes and noiselessly retreated. He had to take a chance by leaving their door unlocked. He reasoned that the condition in which they retired would make it impossible for them to remember with any degree of certainty whether they had locked it or not.

FOR a long time The Wasp sat looking at the lines on the back of the envelope. They brought to him a succession of spinal thrills. They fascinated him. They possessed a queer quality of delightful idiocy that brought again the exquisite creepy titillation of the skin that we experience over childhood wonders, but which we lose in later life. With this sensation still upon him he laid himself down on the hard bed and fell asleep.

Robert Henry Blane was awake at six the next morning. He stepped into the passage and listened for a moment outside the door of room No. 14. The barrage of snores was still walloping the silence. Blane smiled and returned to his own chamber. He carefully rubbed the mud from his shoes, put on the collar and tie that he had discarded on the previous evening, stepped downstairs and out into the sunlight.

He walked to the corner of Canal and Rampart and looked around for a likely messenger through whom he could establish a liaison with his hotel. He was anxious to know if the great man hunter had responded to the telegram of inquiry regarding Monsieur Gabriel Amade, known to the continental underworld as The Yellow Angel.

A colored boy sprang at the chance to run a message, and Blane, with an eye upon the hotel that sheltered the pair of worthies, wrote an order to the mail clerk of the St. Charles. He was anxious to hear from No. 37.

The boy darted up Canal Street and inside of ten minutes he was back with

a telegram. It was from the great sleuth, and it read:

L'Ange Jaune escaped from the penal settlement at Cayenne four months ago. Was serving twenty-five-year sentence for murder. Leaving here for New Orleans at once. Keep him in sight till I arrive. Dangerous killer. Stops at nothing. THIRTY-SEVEN.

The message pleased Robert Henry Blane. The bulldog tenacity of the man hunter in his fight against crime and criminals was rather delightful. Personally he, Blane, had no quarrel with the French bandit on the matter of former escapades, and he would never have mentioned The Yellow Angel to the sleuth if the lame crook had not interfered with the widowed lady and her daughter who lived in the old house in Royal Street.

Blane thought of Dorothy Anne at the moment and he gladdened the heart of the negro boy by hiring him to take a message to her. He told her that all was well, that there was no danger as far as she and her mother were concerned and that he would report personally at the earliest opportunity.

That much attended to, he sat himself down to watch the door of the frowzy hotel. Sooner or later the two would bestir themselves and get upon the trail of the thing they sought. Blane thought that he would go along with them. He had an all-consuming desire to see the "it" which the verse mentioned. It was treasure, in all probability, hidden somewhere in Barataria.

The Wasp had a belief that a local resident would tell him the exact situation of Black Bayou, and that with the information he possessed he might locate the exact spot, but he thrust aside the desire to outwit the pair by beating them to the cache. He had a longing to trail along with them and this longing was augmented by the message that came from No. 37 asking that The Yellow Angel might be kept in sight till

the great tracker of criminals reached New Orleans.

Hour after hour passed. The Wasp held his post. The noon whistle screamed from a factory near the Bayou St. John before the pair appeared.

They stepped forth together, apparently well pleased with themselves and the world in general. They swung into Canal Street and Robert Henry Blane took up the chase. The Wasp felt that the welding of the scraps of doggerel would lead himself and the two he followed into an inevitable clash, but he was resolved to let the pair lead him to the cache when he would decide what he would do.

They ate a hurried breakfast lunch at a restaurant on Beronne, then, with determination in their stride, they headed for the levee and boarded a Tchoupitoulas Street car. Blane, as he swung himself onto the rear platform, had no doubt as to where they were heading. The car would pass the landing dock of the ferry for Harvey's and beyond was the treasure country.

The guess was correct. With The Wasp trailing them, the pair boarded the old ferryboat that thrust its blunt nose into the swift, yellow waters of the Mississippi. The Father of Waters wrestled with the old tub, which, after describing a great arc, dropped down before the thrust of the current and dived into the pile-sheltered landing of Harvey's. Harvey's, flat, bleak, and unromantic, was the gateway to the "Free State of Barataria."

Thousands come to New Orleans and never see Barataria. Some one mentions it and they are curious. Where is it? What is it? Who lives there? The ordinary resident knows little of it. He waves his arm in an indefinite manner and tells the little that he knows.

Why, it's the swamp country on the other side of the river. Miles and miles of it running down to Grand Isle where they breed the terrapins. You've

read Hearn? Lafcadio Hearn? Well, he wrote about it. Tales of the days when the waters of the Gulf rose like a million stallions and came charging up over the leagues of half-submerged country and flung themselves into the Mississippi.

It is the country of shrimps and shrimpers, land of the Cajuns. The uncharted territory in which Jean Lafitte, the pirate, and his thousand followers had their haunts in the roaring days of old. There Lafitte is supposed to have buried his treasure, which the Cajuns hunt for in their spare time. Unromantic folk ask why the pirate didn't dig up the hoard when he wanted money in his latter and poverty-stricken days, but the Cajuns ignore the question. The hoard is there. Somewhere!

ALL the stories that Robert Henry Blane had heard about the swamp country flowed into his mind as he followed the two along the straggling street of Harvey's. New Orleans seemed a thousand miles away. He was in Barataria with the smell of black mud in his nostrils, the wind charged with the odor of shrimps from the cannery on the canal, where a mile of straight waterway takes the adventurous into the network of bayous that lead away to the Gulf.

The Yellow Angel and his friend made for the canal and their mission was immediately obvious. They wished to buy or rent a motor boat. They asked questions of slouching loafers who fished the narrow waterway. They tramped up and down, examining the rather tired craft chained to the mud banks of the canal. They had long arguments with the owners of paint-blistered boats whose disloyal engines refused to start when the prospective buyers asked for an exhibition.

They consulted together, sitting on the banks of the straight mile of water that led to the bayous. They watched

the shabby, untidy vessels that came chunking up from Grand Isle, the clumsy stern-wheelers that had worn themselves out pulling half-mile tows of cypress logs out of the mysterious lands that battled continually with the flood.

It seemed to Blane, as he watched from a distance, that the sorcery and the fierce diablerie of the swamp country had slackened their desire for the moment. The bayous possessed an atmosphere of weird magic, an air of shamanism that took the immediate hurry from the pair.

The afternoon passed without a bargain being struck. Night came down upon Barataria and the two sought a small restaurant and lodging house. Blane, cleverly keeping out of their way, saw them eat a meal and retire to their room above the restaurant.

The Wasp understood the slowing-up of the pair. Now that the directions to the cache were in their hands they were a little afraid to put the verse to the test. And they were a trifle startled at the look of the country they were called upon to explore. They were town rats, and the bare, bleak swamp country looked evil and threatening.

The Wasp thought of No. 37. He wondered if the delay in the purchase of a boat would enable the man hunter to reach New Orleans before the two made their drive into the bad lands. Blane thought not, but he was so impressed with the ability of the sleuth to reach any spot in the quickest possible time that he thought it well to leave a report as to what was doing.

He found a messenger and sent him across the river to the Hotel St. Charles with a letter that was to be given to the great detective on his arrival. The letter contained instructions as to the manner of reaching Harvey's and where to find Blane on arrival there. This done, The Wasp found a room and went to bed. The verse swirled round

within his brain. He found himself chanting the lines:

"Big, burned cypress on the right of the stream,
Spanish moss like a giant's beard;
Mighty lonely when the bitterns scream!
Don't be afeard, darky! Don't be afeard!"

He thought that this adventure, above all the other strange affairs in which he had been interested, was the most thrilling. He fell asleep and dreamed of Captain Jules Despard, of Dorothy Anne, and the old house of storied memories.

THE YELLOW ANGEL and his friend showed increased activity on the following morning. Immediately after breakfast they induced the owner of a small speed boat to give them a trial of his craft, and the watching Blane saw that the demonstration was satisfactory. The boat was brought up to the drawbridge that spanned the canal, and the two tinkered with it during the late morning and the early hours of the afternoon.

Cajun curiosity was stirred by the news of the purchase. Waterside loafers, startled by the fact that two strangers had bought a speed boat after a short trial, sought for reasons. Few strangers go into the swamps. Hunters occasionally, but hunters went with guides. The two, so rumor ran, were going alone. It was against all the laws of Barataria.

A loafing resident, who had blunted his information-seeking teeth upon The Yellow Angel and his pal, offered his opinions unsolicited to Robert Henry Blane.

"They say they're hunters!" he snorted. "Why, they never hunted anything but cooked grub since they were born!"

"Fishermen, perhaps?" suggested The Wasp, amused at the old man's indignation.

"No, nor fishermen either!" cried the local resident, made acidulous by stored

curiosity. "I know fishermen when I see 'em, an' sometimes I can smell them when I don't see 'em. Do you know what I think those birds are?"

"What?" asked the amused Texan.

The other spat into the waters of the canal and took a long look at the distant speed boat, above which on the bank sat a group of silent watchers. "I think they're treasure hunters," he whispered. "That's what I think. They know something. Found an old chart, I guess. If I wasn't sick to death with rheumatism, I'd take my old boat an' follow 'em. They're pullin' out this afternoon."

"Which is your boat?" asked Blane.

"The yellow one that's tied up next to theirs," answered the other. "They wanted to buy it yesterday, but I wouldn't sell it to 'em. Drat 'em!"

The Texan Wasp glanced at the yellow boat and then at its owner. He carelessly took a roll of bills from his pocket and stripped off five tens.

"You might rent your boat to me," he said quietly. "I can handle it. Get it all ready so that I can start after they get away. And hold your tongue about the matter. Savvy? Keeping your mouth shut will bring you another half hundred. Go to it. I'll be sitting here if you want to tell me anything."

The Cajun took the bills, winked slowly and ambled off to do the bidding of his generous patron. There is little money in Barataria. Besides, the owner of the yellow boat saw a chance of finding out the real reason that was taking what he described as "a close-mouthed pair of damned furriners" into the swamp country.

The afternoon wore on. The Yellow Angel made several trips to the local store and returned with loads of provisions and gasoline. The inquisitive loafers grew in numbers. They craned their necks and fought with each other for positions as they watched the preparations. Then, close to sun-

set, The Yellow Angel started the engine and excitement ran high.

Blane, at his post of observation, watched the start. The pair were not accomplished boatmen. They made a bad get-away, narrowly escaping a collision with an upbound shrimp boat, then, with the bandit at the wheel, they straightened out and headed down the canal for the bayous.

The Wasp, at a run, made for the yellow boat he had hired. Its owner was ready for him.

"Everything is in tiptop shape," confided the old man. "Engine runs like a watch. Plenty o' gas on her. I'll start her up. An' say, if you can find out what those chaps are goin' after, I'll go——"

"Hop ashore and throw off!" interrupted The Wasp. "Quick about it!"

The owner, recognizing authority in the voice of his client, sprang ashore. He tossed off the ropes and thrust the boat away from the mud wall, but, as he straightened up, he was nearly knocked into the canal by the rush of a stranger. A man with cold, merciless eyes and a chin that had thrust peace to the winds had charged down the sloping bank, gathered himself together as the boat swung away from the shore and with a mighty leap landed in the cockpit beside Blane.

"Just in time," he growled. "Had the devil of a trip. Flew part of the way to make a fast connection. Got your note at the hotel and came straight over. Queer country this, isn't it?"

ROBERT HENRY BLANE smiled as he glanced at the man hunter. The eyes of No. 37 were fixed upon the speed boat that carried The Yellow Angel and his friend into Baratavia. Without being told, he sensed the quarry like a falcon.

Hurriedly Robert Henry Blane told of the house of memories, the verse of Madame Despard, the addition made to

it by the pair they were following, the purchase of the boat and the stories of treasure buried in the swamps.

"If I had arrived five minutes earlier, I'd have had him before he started," snapped the sleuth. "We might lose him down here."

"We won't!" snapped The Wasp. "And I wouldn't have stood for you pinching him before he started on this expedition. I want my share of the fun."

"Very well," agreed the sleuth. "But it looks to me that his boat is a lot faster than yours. They're dropping us."

This fact was evident to Robert Henry Blane. The pair in front had the faster boat and before they reached the end of the canal where the network of bayous led into the big swamps, the distance between the two boats had increased perceptibly.

The light was failing fast. The weirdness of the marsh country was made more evident as the boat containing Blane and the man hunter swung into the bayou at the end of the canal. A clear path had been cut through the lily beds, but the black water, unrestrained by the mud walls that marked the canal, slopped in among the trees whose low-hanging branches were decorated with huge beards of Spanish moss. From far ahead came back the *pip-pip* of the leading boat.

Blane turned over the wheel to the sleuth and tinkered with the engine. He was a trifle annoyed. If The Yellow Angel and his friend got away from them in the swamps, there was a chance of the pair doubling back by another route and making for the city with anything that they might have discovered.

Past half-submerged trees and great stretches of lily fields raced the boat. Darkness came down on the swamps like a pall of velvet. At great distances apart there gleamed a candle in

the hut of a moss gatherer or a fur hunter. The silence was terrific.

The Wasp shut off the engine and the boat drifted. No. 37 made a queer snarling noise that brought up a picture of a bulldog registering dissatisfaction because an enemy had found safe sanctuary.

"Nice place," he grumbled. "Darkest spot I've ever seen."

"Seems as if we've lost them," said The Wasp. "If we could locate Black Bayou, we might pick them up."

"If there's any bayou blacker than this, I'd like to see it," growled the man hunter. "I didn't believe you could get this quality of blackness anywhere."

From far ahead a lantern flashed and The Wasp started the engine and made cautiously for the pin point of light. Any one who could give definite information as to their position or the position of Black Bayou would be a god-send.

The lantern bearer was a colored man in a flat-bottomed boat attending to his traps on the edge of the bayou. A shack, supported on poles, showed above the water as Blane turned a flash light on him.

"Yessuh," admitted the trapper, answering the question of The Wasp, "you is mighty close to Black Bayou right now. Jest creep along the shore heah for a hundred yards or so an' Black Bayou is to yoah right."

THE flash light revealed the lily-choked opening of Black Bayou. Blane killed the engine, took a long pole and thrust it into the slime. Noiselessly and carefully he drove the boat forward, and as he worked there came to him a strange conviction that the channel up which they worked their way was the one mentioned in the verse. In a whisper he confided his belief to the sleuth whose ears strained the silence.

The slowly moving boat disturbed

the slumber of swamp things. Dank, blind, clammy things that plopped from mud banks, rotten logs, and lily pads as the boat nosed its way forward. Turtles, lizards, crabs, giant frogs, and water snakes.

There was protest in the little slurring noises that they made, in the discontented *plop* as the black water received them. The invisible things whispered of death, a devilish death in the slime with the roots of submerged cypress trees clutching one's body.

It was slow and tedious work. The mud odor was appalling. Vicious snags tore at the bottom of the boat; the tenacious, octopuslike lilies clutched the craft with a million fingers.

The two men took turn and turn about with the poling. The job would have been disheartening to any other pair. Blane stiffened his courage and brought new strength to his aching limbs by picturing the old house in Royal Street, the fair face of the girl who had such implicit trust in his honesty. The man hunter thought only of the quarry, Gabriel Amade, The Yellow Angel of Bordeaux.

A TRAILING bunch of Spanish moss, hanging from a limb, brushed the face of Robert Henry Blane, feeling for all the world like the wet beard of some old man of the swamps who protested against the approach of the Texan and his companion. The Wasp recalled the lines of the poem and cautiously turned the flash light on the right bank. A big, burned cypress leaped out of the blackness! It was the cypress of the verse and "the Spanish moss like a giant's beard."

"We're close," he whispered. "If they have beat us to it, they cannot be far away."

A slimy frog plopped onto Blane's hand; from the bow of the boat came a soft hiss that suggested the presence of a cottonmouth who had dropped

from the overhanging limb as the boat slipped beneath.

And then, as the boat crept round a bend of the bayou, the light of a small fire showed immediately ahead.

Blane stopped poling. Standing together in silence he and the sleuth regarded the blaze. The boat nudged the bank of the bayou.

The figure of a man came between them and the flames. The fellow tossed a bundle of wood upon the fire and it blazed up brightly. The Wasp and No. 37 could see the stretch of shell-made bank on which the man stood. They could see the boat; they had a fleeting view of another person digging furiously some twenty feet from the blaze.

Blane reached out and felt the muddy bank against which the boat rocked. It was not exactly dry ground, but it was dangerous to pole their craft closer to the shell mound on which were the two men they had followed. It was wiser to climb ashore and approach through the undergrowth.

No. 37 understood. The two climbed noiselessly upon the bank, tied the boat securely to a stump and crept toward the fire. The approach was a quagmire. They sank to their knees in black mud; they found precarious footing on submerged tree trunks.

NEARER and nearer they came. Blane, glancing at his companion, could see the features of the man hunter. Now both men on the shell mound were digging furiously; their muttered words came to the Texan and the sleuth. The fire illuminated the showers of shell lime that were tossed out of the trench in which they worked.

The Yellow Angel gave a cry of delight that went out over the swamps. A hoarse cry of joy that was a little frightening in that wilderness. His companion rushed to his side. Together they dropped upon their knees in

the trench, and The Wasp and No. 37 seized the opportunity to move swiftly toward the shell mound.

They stumbled through the mud till they found solid footing beneath their feet. The two in the trench were half hidden by the depth of the ditch they had dug. Something that they had discovered had dragged their heads earthward and held them there with the grip of unholy greed.

No. 37 raced across the shell mound, a short revolver in his right hand. He cried out the name of Amade, and The Yellow Angel thrust his head out of the trench. The firelight showed him the face of the enemy, the pitiless tracker of criminals whose numerical pseudonym was known from one end of the world to the other.

A cool devil in the face of danger was Gabriel Amade. For an instant he stared at the man hunter, then he sprang from the trench, dropped to his knees and started to crawl hurriedly through the underbrush to his boat. A bullet from his gun whizzed by the head of the sleuth; the silence of the bayou was shattered by the explosion.

No. 37 rushed forward. The Yellow Angel had gained the bank of the bayou. He sprang for the boat as the man hunter fired. The big hands of Gabriel Amade clutched at the side of the boat, held him there for an instant, then the black waters of the swamp sucked up to him as the boat listed; the fingers lost their grip and the escaped murderer sank into the stream. Black Bayou had taken the French bandit to its depths.

The great detective stepped back to the trench to find The Wasp trussing up the spiritualistic faker who had induced Madame Despard to recite the lines that had been told to her by her husband.

"They had just found something," said the Texan. "It's in that bronze pot. Wait till I bring it to the fire."

THE strong right hand of Robert Henry Blane took a handful of coins from the Javanese pot of bronze and let them run slowly through his fingers. The Wasp had a knowledge of numismatics that would have done credit to the keeper of a coin museum, and he recognized the pieces as they shuffled down his palm and trickled like frightened things into the heavily leaded pot.

They were wonder pieces of other days. Pieces whose days of active circulation were buried in the centuries. Coins from fivescore ports. Gold star-pagoda pieces from the Coromandel coast, minted two hundred years before; yellow mohurs struck by Mogul emperors; coins from Morocco bearing the Hectagram, or so-called "Solomon's Seal;" pieces of the old Sierra Leone Company, showing the hand of a slave grasping the hand of his master.

Round pieces, square pieces, shapeless slugs upon which a clumsy imprint had been made. He smiled grimly as he looked at them. Sweat polished by forgotten fingers. Pale gold doubloons—"Doblon de Isabel"—that had paid for murder and pillage. Time-fretted pieces from hot slave ports that had been exchanged for living flesh. Yellow, century-worn slugs from the Guinea coast whose soft jingle had

placed iron shackles on black wrists and ankles.

Blane had a desire to laugh. To laugh at the soul-killing methods by which men tried to gather gold. In the slime of the bayou was the escaped convict from Cayenne who had been offered up as the latest sacrifice to the god in the bronze pot.

The Wasp glanced at No. 37. The sleuth was testing the cords that held his prisoner. He turned as he felt the eyes of the Texan upon him and spoke slowly.

"I suppose we had better stay here till dawn," he said. "I heard a snake hiss when we were coming up this bayou and I've got a dread of snakes. I would have turned back if I didn't think that *L'Ange Jaune* was in front of me."

"And when we get to New Orleans I'll take you down and introduce you to a young lady who is a representative of the Old South," said Blane quietly. "We are going to take her this pot of coins if you have no objection."

"I have none at all," answered the sleuth. "My reward rests in ridding the world of a bad gentleman. I sent The Yellow Angel to Cayenne and I was a little peeved to think that he had escaped. I'll be greatly pleased to meet your young friend."



UP in Willimantic, Connecticut, the trustees of the Methodist church have decided to tear down the church steeple because the high cost of paint and labor makes it cost too much to keep it painted.

Well, after all, church steeples are ornamental, but a church can do its work without one.

By the way—are you being kept on the jump to maintain some church steeple in your own affairs? A house with a rent that is more than you can afford, or an expensive car, or amusements that cost you more than they are worth in pleasure? If you are, why not try out the scheme of the Willimantic Methodists?

A Chat With You

WHEN you select a novel or story for THE POPULAR," writes Cornelius Shea of West Stockbridge, Mass., "how do you judge it? Does style or plot come first with you? Is it the story, or how the story is told? Which do you put first?"

When we select a story for this magazine our first thought is that it be interesting in a pleasant way—but better than that, riotously humorous, touchingly pathetic, heroic in a thrilling fashion, romantic in the best meaning of that word. But you know what we like. You had a chance to judge our taste in the present number. Perhaps it is not better than many another we have seen plated and sent to the press-room to pass over the rollers. But at the same time it is a good number—as good as any perhaps that have preceded it. "The Final Score," by Elmer Davis, is in our opinion one of the best novels of the year. Think back! Has the atmosphere and charm of it quite evaporated? Do not the ambitions, the loves, the hates, the tragedies, the final consummation—do not these things leave something with you still?

* * * *

AND is it style or plot that makes "The Final Score" a fine novel? In our opinion, answering Mr. Shea, neither and both. A good style without a good story is nothing. And a good story cannot be told unless it is told in a good style—and that means the style best suited to the story. The two belong together. They are not to be separated. Suppose B. M. Bower

wrote in the style of H. de Vere Stacpoole? And suppose Stacpoole imitated the diction of Knibbs or Montanye? The best style is the best way of telling any particular story. One style suits one story, another suits a far different tale. That style is best that is most suitable, least obtrusive, most charming and moving. And the story is best which is told best. There are only a limited number of plots for stories. Some say nine, some say sixty—but there are not so many. It is how these plots are modified and adapted, how they filter themselves through the personality of the author, how they are adapted to his manner of speech and his artifice of disclosure that makes the reading of fiction like the study of the shifting designs in the kaleidoscope. One thinks there must come an end to the infinite number of changes—there are only so many colors in the spectrum. But there is no end. The combinations and mutations are never exhausted. There is always something new, something fresh, something piquant if you are alert and care to hunt for it.

* * * *

FOR instance, there is an author, a Mr. McNeile, who has appeared once or twice in our pages. He signs himself "Sapper," which corresponds in the British army somewhat to what we call an engineer. Sapper, some years ago, created a character called "Bulldog" Drummond. And when we say created a character we mean something important. Great fictional char-

acters are not created every day. You can count on your fingers the great characters of modern fiction—Sherlock Holmes, Raffles—are there any more? Perhaps you cannot think of another, but there is one. He is Bulldog Drummond.

* * * *

THE difference between a real character and one of the lay pieces that pass for men sometimes in fiction is the difference between photography and painting, between the movies and the spoken stage. There is a magic by which the real character comes to life and steps right out of the printed page into your consciousness. Perhaps you remember those old-fashioned stereoscopic lenses that ornamented so many dim-lit parlors in the country in the days not so long ago. There was a double lens, one for each eye, and then there was a rack on which to place the photographs. The pictures were made in duplicate—one for each eye—and mounted on cardboard. Now the wonder of it was this: There were pictures of Niagara Falls, the Swiss mountains and various other things and when you looked at them with the naked eye you felt that they were well enough and true presentments of the truth. But when you looked at them through the double stereoscopic lenses—behold what a marvel! For mountain and waterfall and human figure came out in sharp relief. One could realize for the first time how dull and flat a thing the photograph was. Here you see the things round and whole and vital.

* * * *

NOW writing is a bit like this. There are many writers who can give us a picture that checks up in its light and shadow with life and that has in a faint way the faculty to tell a more or less moving tale. But when the real

character comes along, the one we see through the stereoscope, we realize what faint shadows of men the other folks in the other stories were.

"The Nameless Terror" is the two-dollar, book-length story that appears complete in the next issue of this magazine.

Scarce a page or two have passed before the reader meets Bulldog Drummond. And after that there is no printed page, no interference between reader and story, for Drummond is there and you are following his adventures through one of the most exciting tales we have printed in a long time. Drummond has character, style, personality. It is not just his big build and great strength, nor is it his genuine ability concealed under a mask of careless flippancy; nor his quick wits, nor his humor or resourcefulness—you cannot say you like him for any one of these things. It is because he is Bulldog Drummond. And what there is about Drummond that makes him lovable and memorable you must read the story to find out.

* * * *

IN the same number there is a notable array of talent. There is A. M. Chisholm with a funny story. There is H. H. Knibbs with a novelette of the West. There is the first installment of "Carib Gold," by Ellery Clark. This is a new tale of romance that some day will be a classic. There are contributions by Charles R. Barnes, Arthur Colton, and James Francis Dwyer.

None of the stories was selected, to answer Mr. Shea whose inquiry heads this column, either for style or plot. They all were selected because they were good stories—both in style and plot and each fitting each—and all, we hope, fitting together to make the sort of a magazine that you should order from your news dealer now.

Health Heroes

FIFTY years ago every man, woman and child in the world was threatened by lurking dangers against which there was no protection. From time to time epidemics of contagious diseases raged through communities. The doctors of those days did their best to *cure* but were largely powerless to *prevent* sickness. Small wonder that strange beliefs were associated with the prevention of diseases, the causes of which were unknown.

There is a record in an old book of English customs of many curious charms to ward off disease—powdered snake-skins to prevent typhoid; a live spider in a peach-stone basket hung around the neck as a preventive of scarlet fever; garden snails and earth-worms steeped in beer to check consumption. In our own day, some of us were told that a bag of sulphur worn on the chest would prevent diphtheria.

From Superstition to Knowledge—

Until 1876 not one doctor among thousands knew what caused contagious disease. It was in that year—less than fifty years ago—that Louis Pasteur, great French scientist, startled the world by announcing his discovery of germs as a cause of disease. It was the key to the mystery of the cause and prevention of contagious diseases.

The history of medicine from that time reads like a romance—a wonderful story of achievement, of work and struggle, disappointment and hope—and constant fight against the ignorance

which cloaked diseases. In just four short years, from 1880 to 1884, were discovered the germs of pneumonia, typhoid, tuberculosis, cholera, erysipelas, diphtheria and tetanus, usually called lockjaw.



Lucky Little Girl!

Fortunate are the youngsters born in this day—whose parents can use the marvelous gifts of modern medical science to prevent sickness.

The splendid work of the Health Heroes is bringing longer, healthier, happier life to millions.

From Knowledge to Action—

Now that we know the cause and know how to fight disease, how can we best apply this knowledge to keep our children well?

The schools of the country, supplementing the work of health officers, provide a natural place for the beginnings of health education.

Cooperate with the school. Aid the teacher who is striving to interest your child in the practice of health habits. Have your child examined by your physician. Have him inoculated against the dread diseases which

formerly took thousands of lives.

Every year the fight against disease goes on—a tremendous war! Every year the rules of health laid down by the great Health Heroes, are being better understood and followed. To secure the desired result—healthy boys and girls—parents, teachers, specialists, doctors, nurses, as well as the school janitor must join hands with health officers in campaigns for healthier and happier childhood.



The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company recognizing the importance of the great work that 1,000,000 teachers are doing in promulgating health practices has organized a school health bureau under the guidance of eighteen well-known educators of the United States and Canada. These men and women, as the Metropolitan's educational advisory group, are pointing the way in which the Company can best assist educators in school health campaigns.

The advisory group has approved a program which includes the printing of special booklets, leaflets, and charts for use by the teacher in class

instruction. A book of instructions for the school janitor has also been prepared. Through cooperation with parents-teachers associations and women's clubs, the message of child health is being spread in many communities. The Company's agents are carrying a similar message to millions of homes.

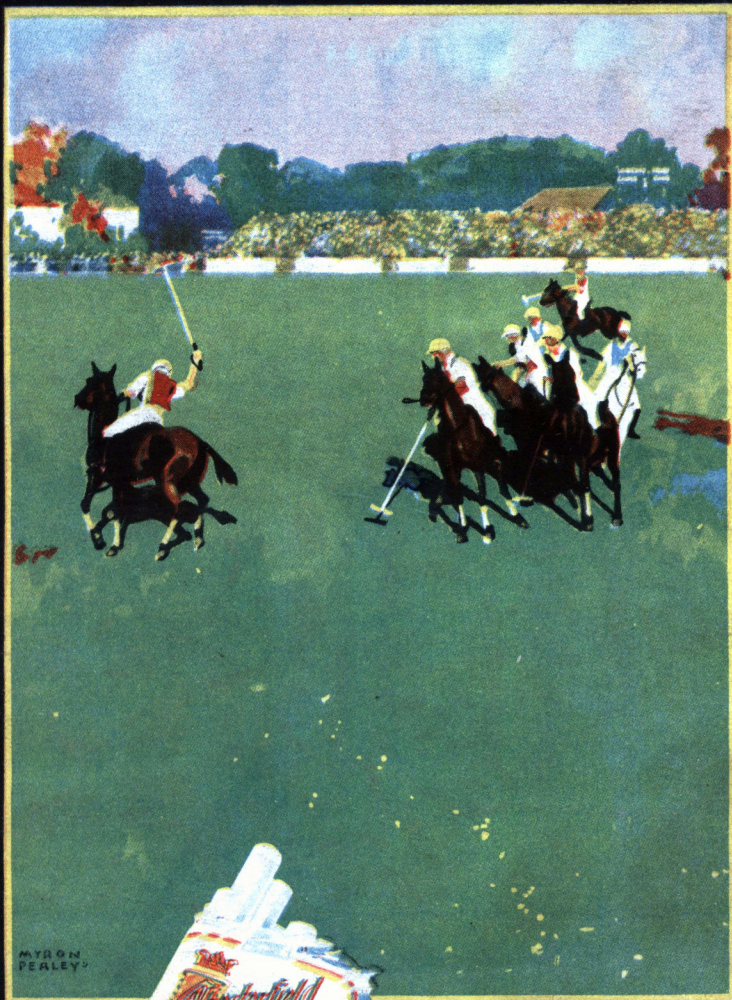
A series of pamphlets, "Health Heroes", for the use of Junior and Senior High School students has been prepared. Although intended primarily to assist school teachers, they will, upon request, be sent to others interested in child health.

HALEY FISKE, President.

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