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Vol. LXXIX

FEBRUARY 7, 1926

No. 2

TWICE-A-MONTH

THE POPULAR

MAGAZINE

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Clay Perry

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Mary Shannon

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Continued on 2nd page following

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The Two Reds of Travoy

By Clay Perry


Give a man a simple fact which has the appearance of profundity about it, and he will take it for the magicking of the gods, sensing mystery where there is merely incomprehensibility, and in his very human way he will weave around its incongruity the most fantastic legend he is capable of imagining. In such wise, the existence in the Canadian timber country of Travoy of two very red-headed, very blue-eyed young giants, resembling each other to the point of confusion, gave rise to countless fireside tales of the Herculean valor, the flabbergasting ubiquity of "The Two Reds of Travoy."

CHAPTER I.

TALL-TIMBER TALK.

I'll bet you an even thousand acres of my white-pine stumpage north of Lac Bleu that I can do it," Jim Harris emphasized his statement with a bang of his clenched fist on the arm of the seat where he sat with Derosier. "But I have not as much pine stumpage to match such a bet!" Derosier objected. "There is not that much in the whole Travoy, outside your own. Not that I should hesitate to take your wager, but—"

"You've got plenty of pulp wood," Harris broke in. "I'll take fifteen hundred acres of spruce and hemlock along the Coulonge, where you're not cutting, against my pine."

"But the time is so long. It takes
thirty—forty years to grow pine for falling, even under ideal conditions. And I do not consider the Travoy ideal by any means."

"I'll tell you what I'll do!" ejaculated Harris, with the swift, almost belligerent manner he had. "I'll set the limit at ten years—and stake my thousand acres against your fifteen hundred that this reforested land of mine will be valued for taxation at ten times its present assessment. Valuated by the Dominion government—and take my chance you can influence them through politics."

"That seems fair enough," Derosier agreed, with a swift veiling of his black eyes. "It will tie us both up, so far as the acreage in the wager goes, for ten years. Yes, I take you!"

His eyes were afire. He seemed caught up in the current of nervous excitement which possessed the other man as an electric force. This capitalist from the States was a new sort of character to Derosier. He had got in touch with Derosier through brokers in Montreal and in one swoop had bought up more stumpage in the Travoy than Derosier had acquired in his entire career.

NOW Harris was offering to bet a thousand acres of the most precious timber stand in the section on an untried experiment in reforestation. He had bought it at a price which Derosier considered murderous. Derosier knew timber and the men who dealt in timber, but he did not know nor understand Jim Harris.

Jim Harris was a gambler who believed implicitly in the "hunch" and would go the limit on one. He was known in Wall Street as "Sky High" Harris. His associates in the Street would not have understood his venture in Canadian timberland any more than Derosier understood his gambling spirit. No one who knew Harris would have dreamed of his casting an anchor to windward. He was a bull and a plunger who had made and lost several fortunes, yet seemed always to come out on top.

Jim Harris’ business was stocks and bonds. His sport was the risking of his money on the rat-a-tat of racing hoofs and the biff-bang-biff of the padded mitts. It was through his love of these sports that he came to be sold the idea of reforestation. At Saratoga he met a man who drove a pair of hobbies stranger than Harris’ by far. This man trained prize fighters at his lakeside hotel and raised pine trees from seedlings over a tract of more than five thousand acres of abandoned, sandy farm land. Harris had bet and won on a world’s championship bout, by following Tom Luther’s advice, and Luther had sold him the reforestation idea at almost the same time.

There was, however, something more than a hunch behind Harris’ lavish purchase of stumpage and stump land. He had a daughter, Gwen, thirteen years of age, who called him "Jimmy" and refused to be mothered by her rather pettish female parent and refused to be spoiled by her father’s fondness. The seven big tracts Harris bought in the Travoy were for Gwen. Likewise the stump land which went with the stumpage. He had already begun to reforest this with white pine.

The Travoy is a great triangle running up from the Ottawa River, between the Coulogne and the Black, in Quebec province. It is a wilderness of woods, with the towns few and far between, and when Jim Harris invaded it, with Derosier, who seemed to be the king bee of the timber kings, as his broker and agent, he was casting his anchor to windward.

Harris and Derosier were on the train, southbound, for Quebec, when the plunger from Wall Street proposed his wager with the timber king of
Travoy. It was not a bluff, with Harris. He was in dead earnest, for he had been sold thoroughly to the idea that he could reforest the sandy wastes, the burned-over, cut-over bush which he had picked up with timbered acreage, and make this land increase in value at the rate of ten per cent a year.

It might be, too, that Harris proposed the wager by way of casting another anchor out—for Gwen. It would tie up his pine so that he could not touch it for at least ten years. The element of chance, however, was stronger than caution or precaution, with Harris. He bet on a hunch.

As for Derosier—he wanted that pine and saw a way to get it. In his way, Derosier was a gambler, too. He had been acquiring stumpage steadily for years, buying on what amounted to a margin, extending his holdings and logging operations deeper and deeper into the wilderness, paying big interest on loans, reaping each year just enough to keep on buying—meanwhile waiting for a decided bull movement in the timber market.

“Shall we put it in writing?” he suggested to Harris. “Make it a contract, so that in the event of death——”

“That’s right! Sure. Anything might happen to you or to me in ten years. We’ll draw it up in legal form.”

Harris called his secretary from a few seats ahead. He dictated to him a form of agreement, the secretary typed it on his portable machine in duplicate. After careful correction and revision by both Harris and Derosier it was rewritten. By the time the train had reached the station at Quebec it was all ready. The three went before a notary public and, with the secretary as a witness and the notary public’s clerk as another, the wager was drawn up and stamped as an official contract.

Harris could see no chance for a catch in the document. There was none.

Derosier signed it, with its provision that neither of them was to fell a tree on the stumpage they had put up until the wager was decided on the basis of assessed valuation. And Derosier, who lived in Travoy village, in the heart of the Travoy triangle, further agreed not to set foot upon the Harris plantations nor to allow his employees to enter them.

Harris had the right to employ an expert forester or foresters to develop his plantations and to safeguard them in whatever way was legally possible.

There was a provision that, in the event of a forest fire, the wager should be declared off, but with the reservation that the bet must stand despite drought or flood or any damage inflicted by an “act of God.”

“I’m not going to be up in the woods very often,” Harris told Derosier, when they parted. “I’m leaving to you what little logging there is to be done. And you can sit around and watch that young pine grow by the minute and win your pulp wood away from you!”

He finished, laughing.

They had already entered into a straight business agreement which made Raoul Derosier the manager of Harris’ stumpage, with instructions to begin cutting certain portions of it. But Harris did not intend to fell much timber. He had resolved only to log off enough to make his reforestation project pay for itself the first ten years—or rather, to make his forest pay for his plantations.

When Jim Harris got home to New York, he told his daughter a little story. “Jimmy has just bought a little playground for you, up in Canada,” he said. “A few acres of timber and bush, a couple of lakes and some rivers running by. I’m going to have a shack built in the middle of it some day. When you’re eighteen, you can have a car of your own and run up and see the little trees I’m having planted in your playground.”
“Are there any Indians up there?” Gwen queried eagerly.

CHAPTER II.
THE TWO REDS.

In July of the year 1914, Raoul Derosier was showing Gwen Harris about the vast acreage of timberlands which Gwen’s father had bought, in and about Travoy, half a dozen years before. They had traveled miles of the narrow, wood-closed trails called “travoys,” and which gave the village its name, and they had seen nothing save woods, bush, and here and there a stretch of young pines, all ranged in rows, varying in height from three feet to six or seven or even ten feet.

Each tree told its story of growth, from year to year, by the length of its trunk between the regularly radiating growth of branches that sprang out from the trunk almost at right angles. Almost always there were five branches for each year. The year spaces were irregular, telling, too, their story of the good years and the bad—of the individual struggle of each tree against adverse conditions for its growth—too much shade, exposure to harsh winds, injury of some sort—or showing how, under better conditions, the conifers had fairly leaped heavenward, at the rate of as much as two feet in a single year.

The road skirted one side of one of these “plantations,” then plunged into a thicker, natural growth of firs and ended suddenly. The horses stopped. The road ended because a clearing absorbed it. It was a small clearing, but it looked even smaller than it was because of the steep mountain which rose high on the north, opposite the riders, dwarfing the real size of a grassy hill which bulged like a low buttress to a tremendous cathedral façade. At the foot of the hill was a little log cabin.

In front of the cabin flowed a furious little brook, its liquid chatter filling the vale with cheerful music. A solitary, towering white pine rose in the middle of the clearing, its roots dipping into the tiny stream at a shallow place. The opening was hemmed about on three sides with the fronded bulk of firs and hemlocks. Two tiny patches of cultivated ground broke the verdant expanse of grassy hillside and narrow valley. A dun cow, picketed out in the deep grass, up the hill, seemed doomed to a summer of happy if hopeless effort.

“How quaint it is!” exclaimed Gwen. “The very picture of a habitant homestead.”

She sat her horse with lithe buoyancy which was suggested in every gesture and movement, the while each swift change of expression upon her beautiful face indicated a fresh and eager interest in everything she saw and heard. Her attitude was of expectancy, as if she felt there was something unusual in the little cabin, with its bulky stone chimney from which rose a spiral of blue smoke that climbed straight out of the breathless vale into the deeper blue of the Canadian sky.

She shook her curly bobbed head of deep brown hair with an impatient movement, while a twinkle of humorous determination crept into her hazel eyes.

“I’d like to see inside!” she exclaimed. “I must see inside!”

“I fear you will be disappointed,” Derosier remarked.

It was characteristic of him that he did not say more, and it was characteristic of Gwen Harris that his cryptic remark should serve to stimulate her curiosity the more.

“It is a real habitant farm, isn’t it?” she continued. “I can see an old calèche behind the shed and, yes, there is an ox yoke hanging on a peg in the end of it. It doesn’t look as if they used the calèche much. There isn’t a wheel track, and the trail leads right
on, past the pine, through a ford and up to the cabin. Just think! They live in seclusion—far from any one—nobody passing. Only those who come to visit them travel this road at all. At the end of the road—in a world of their own! Do you know them, Mr. Derosier?"

Derosier seemed to be quietly enjoying her enthusiasm, but his response appeared calculated to cool it.

"Oh, yes, I know them," he said indifferently, "William Legrand and his twin sons and an Indian woman."

"Oh! A—a squaw man?" Gwen half whispered, as if she feared her voice might carry to the cabin.

Derosier masked his eyes with a downward sweep of very long, very black lashes which glistened in the sunlight. He adjusted a strand of his horse’s mane.

"No, not exactly a squaw man," he replied, speaking slowly and with apparent care in choosing words. "Though ever since his wife died, the Montagnais woman has lived with them, as housekeeper."

Derosier’s reserve seemed to pique the girl. She glanced up swiftly at him as he sat, erect as an arrow, upon the beautiful, coal-black stallion he rode. A hint of perplexity showed in the twitch of her arched eyebrows. Derosier stared straight ahead, but Gwen got the feeling that, while he regarded the cabin ahead, he was seeing also to one side, entirely conscious of himself and of her.

In profile she saw a dark-visaged, not handsome, but very striking man, his face as smooth as that of a very young man, the calm, quizzical expression of his eyes suggesting maturity, but the ensemble of his features, his poise, confusing his age. He had a prominent nose, suggestive of the hawk, very full lips half hidden by a carefully trimmed and pointed black mustache, small eyes, black as coal, deep set, a trifle close set, and high cheek bones which, she decided, must have come from some Slavonic ancestor—though his face was not broad.

Derosier had been a puzzle to Gwen, from the first. She comprehended that his Gallic blood must make him different from her own people and she discounted that. He was wealthy, polished in his manners. He had admirable reserve, admirable poise—he was a gentleman in every way—and yet there was something mysterious about him. Only a woman would have felt it.

Gwen had come up into Quebec, to Travoy, expecting to find her father’s agent a man of middle age, one whom she would regard almost as an uncle—and instead she found Derosier a man apparently young enough to be of her own generation—for Gwen was of that rising, flaming youth of America that lives twice as fast as the generation preceding it.

Gwen admired Derosier. She thought of him, not sentimentally, but romantically, as one of the lords of the North, and she was firmly convinced that his reserve, his poise, his politeness, came from the nobility of the Old World, of France. This idea was strengthened by the fact that he held aloof from the bourgeoisie of the country and was looked up to by the habitants and the woodsmen and their families as a veritable patron. He paid wages to most of them.

"Twin sons!" she mused, coming back to the prospect before them. "Tell me about them!"

"They are sometimes called ‘The Two Reds,’" Derosier offered, with a smile. "‘The Two Reds of Travoy.’"

"Yes? And is that all of the Legrand family? He is French, of course?"

"Oh, not all Frenchmen, even in Quebec, have the proverbial corporal’s guard—or I suppose you would say baseball nine—for a family," Derosier
returned. "He says he is English. I say I am French," he added dryly.

"Oh, well, you are French!" Gwen cried. "And nobody could doubt that. It isn't merely your name, either. It's—its—"

"Legrand," he interrupted her, as she struggled for a word, "is a name which might very well be English or French. It might be of Norman origin, and you know how much the Normans influenced England. Anyway, we can give him the benefit of the doubt. He appears to have come here from abroad and his twin sons are red-haired and blue-eyed."

"For Pete's sake!" ejaculated Gwen, shaking her head in ecstatic amusement. "Now, I am going to see inside that cabin. A habitant who has a French name and claims English blood and has an Indian squaw for a housekeeper and twin sons, red-headed, blue-eyed—The Two Reds of Travoy—Say! Let's go!"

He followed as she led the way.

They were giving the horses a drink in the ford when Gwen got her first glimpse of the three characters which were to have a tremendous influence upon her life from this moment.

The Montagnais woman appeared in the door of the cabin. She stood motionless, seeming to fix her gaze upon Derosier and suddenly Gwen thought she saw the woman give a little start—or perhaps a signal. It was so plain that Gwen turned quickly toward Derosier to see what answer he made. He seemed either to have missed the signal or ignored it—or else it was not, after all, intended for him. He met her gaze for an instant quizzically, then he smiled.

"Shall we go in?" he queried.

"Oh, by all means! That is an interesting-looking Indian. She isn't at all fat and greasy and dirty or wrinkled and witchy."

Derosier laughed, then sobered. "The Montagnais are quite the best type of our native tribes," he said. "Splendid representatives of the noble red man of the Laurentians. Mountain people, their name means. Senwa, this woman, was once the wife of a very great chief. A noble ruler of his own kind. But she left him."

"Romantic as well as interesting," Gwen responded her voice jesting, but her thought entirely serious. "I suppose she had a white man as sweetheart—or—"

"No one has ever heard so," Derosier cut in crisply, and jerked his stallion's head up abruptly, turning him up the slope of the bank toward the cabin.

The squaw stood stolidly, yet with an air of expectancy, it seemed, until he came close to the door. Then she vanished. Derosier dismounted and waited for Gwen, helped her off, with a hand under her foot, and led the horses toward the shed, while Gwen adjusted her white riding breeches and gay little long-skirted jacket of bright green.

At the corner of the cabin the Montagnais woman, emerging apparently from another door, met Derosier and took the horses from him, led them into the open shed and tethered them. Derosier strode to the door which opened in the middle of the log wall of the house and called out, loudly:

"Bon jour?" Then he turned to Gwen, with a nod. "They are at home," he said. "Enter!"

The color had mounted to Gwen's cheeks, either from the excitement of the adventure or her recent exertions on horseback in the heat of the afternoon. Her eyes were bright and wide and, as she stepped up abruptly from the ground to the high doorsill, she was framed there, in the outdoor light, for those within—a lovely picture of youth and graceful beauty.

Two pairs of very blue, very amazed eyes took in the picture, in frank ad-
miration. For an instant hazel eyes went from one pair of blue ones to another, then she gasped, and it would be hard to say which of the three was most embarrassed.

SEATED side by side, at the end of a table fashioned of a single slab of sawn timber, dark with age and unadorned by napery of any sort, sat a pair of stalwart young men whose heads were as similar as if nature had used an identical mold to cast them. The faces were of the type called square—but rectangular, of course, longer than wide, and with the suggestion of sharp angularity about the chins and the foreheads.

This angularity was emphasized by spare cheeks, not thin nor emaciated, but muscular, like those of a hard-trained athlete. The features looked more as if they had been graven, than molded, as if the heads had been hewn from some solid substance.

Both heads were crowned with a thick crop of crisp hair, the color of bright copper, tangled in waves and kinks which one could not call curls—but which must have been ringlets when they were very young and had long hair.

“T’ve brought in your new neighbor to see you,” Derosier said.

As his gaze was directed to a darker portion of the room, Gwen’s eyes followed. She saw, then, that there was another person there. He sat motionless, half wrapped in a quilt, in a rocker. The figure was what seemed a very old man, with long gray beard and hair flowing, uncut, down to his shoulders. The astonishing thing was that the hair was coal black, framing a face so sunken and lined it seemed impossible he could speak in any other voice save the rasping mumble that came from his throat.

“Good night, M’sieu’ Derosier!” he said, in the peculiar idiomatic greeting of the locality which makes it seem a farewell. “Good night to you!”

“This is Miss Gwendolyn Harris, daughter of Mr. James Harris, you know, who bought your land.”

Derosier presented her impartially to all three men, but one of the twins seemed to feel responsible for the response. He rose, keeping his finger inside the leaves of a thick book which lay beside his plate.

Again Gwen gasped, for he rose to a height that seemed towering in the low-ceilinged cabin. He loomed above the squat table, the huddled figure in the rocker, a head above Derosier, and looked down at her from a height that forced her to tilt her head—and delighted her immensely.

“Which—which one are you?” she inquired, with a tiny giggle at herself.

“This is Arthur, I believe,” Derosier put in, with a glance at the book. “Arthur is interested in trees,” he went on, “and ever since your father started his reforestation project, he has been studying forestry.”

A sound like a sniff of disdain came from the other brother. He did not rise and for the first time Gwen detected what she thought was a subtle difference in those remarkably similar faces. It was in the eyes. Arthur’s were serious; his brother’s were sulky, watchful and, at this moment, resentful. The next instant she had to change her judgment.

“My name’s Martin,” the seated one said, with a calm drawl. “The other twin, you know.”

Gwen’s laughter bubbled out and as she laughed she saw a gleam of impish humor leap into Martin’s eyes. He did not move a muscle of his face; his features remained grave and sober; but she was sure that, inside, he was smiling.

Arthur clumsily shoved forward the chair in which he had been sitting. Gwen accepted it with the realization that the rocker, the two chairs at the
table, the table itself, a bench in a corner, and a bulky towering highboy against one wall were the only furniture in the room. The highboy was stacked with books. Above it hung a framed picture, the face turned to the wall. A broad, dusty band of crape hung over it, into which a tiny British flag was thrust.

Opposite the door was a fireplace stuffed with fir boughs as a camouflage for an ashy, unused cavern, at this season. The floor was of wide boards with their cracks caked by the dust and dirt of long usage, the square heads of hand-forged iron nails showing.

Before the fireplace lay a magnificent deerskin and before the highboy the pelt of a great gray timber wolf. Guns hung on wooden pegs driven into the bare log wall at one side of the fireplace. A short-handled cant hook stood against the chimney, suggestive of the timber woods and the work of the pioneers who had cut out a clearing in the forest—and now that this was done had relegated the cant hook to the domesticity of fire tongs.

“How is your father these days?” Derosier inquired solicitously of Arthur.

“About the same. No worse.”

“His only trouble is talking too much,” put in Martin, in a sort of growl.

Derosier gave a swift glance at the aged man, whose dull eyes seemed attracted only by the bright light in the open door. In Derosier’s glance there seemed almost a hint of apprehension.

“He still talks of England?” queried Derosier.

“Yes, always,” Arthur responded. “That is all he talks about. But he never tells us anything—you know.”

“Ah, I see!” Derosier sighed, almost with relief, it seemed to Gwen, who was flushing with sudden pity for this old man in the rocker.

Her gaze came back to the twin brothers, as she was struck by the thought of how much unlike their father they were. He was sallow of face, as if a man once deep dyed by the sun, fading in the shelter of the cabin.

“Arthur, I wonder if I could get you to help me out a little the first of the week?” Derosier inquired briskly.

Arthur Legrand’s face showed a shade of the same stubbornness which Gwen thought she had detected as typical of Martin.

“In the garden?” he asked defiantly.

“No. Not in the garden,” Derosier responded quietly. “I want a hedge of cedar started about the east and north, and on the west side of the drive and then—”

“Trees! I’ll come!” Arthur broke in abruptly.

Gwen began to notice the way in which the Legrand brothers were dressed. Their remarkable heads, Arthur’s astonishing height, had claimed her attention so that only now did she note, with a woman’s eye for detail, how their clothing bespoke poverty. Faded, worn, patched woolen blouses of the cruiser-shirt type hung outside trousers of denim, threadbare at the knees, ending above the ankles in raveled edges, as if they had been so worn at the bottoms they had to be cut off, but had never been hemmed.

Gwen judged that Arthur’s blouse had once been brown—but it had faded to a neutral tone, while Martin’s, apparently once gray, was now of the same indescribable dinginess. Gwen bit her lips to keep from betrayal of the wave of pity rising within her. At this moment, her gaze went to the emaciated figure of William Legrand, then to the crape-draped picture, facing the wall, and the pitiful suggestion of an ancient tragedy seized her so powerfully that she had to turn quickly to the door to hide the tears that came swiftly in her eyes.
The Montagnais woman came to the door of the lean-to kitchen, with a gur-
tural murmur, and Derosier wheeled swiftly to the other door.
“My horse,” he explained briefly. “He is always getting into trouble.”
Gwen turned to Arthur with a brusque question, to hide her agitation.
“Don’t you like gardening?”
“Not for a man who plants currants in a white-pine country,” came the
swift retort.
Gwen was puzzled. But she did not wish to seem ignorant and, casting
about for an explanation, decided it must be that this lover of trees thought
Derosier should be planting them instead of fruit bushes.
“Does your father get about, much?” she queried, a generous thought in
mind.
“Not since the old horse died.” This came from Martin unexpectedly, in a
slow drawl. “Dad’s had to ride out behind the cow.”
“Oh! Oh!” she gasped, struggling to keep from laughter at the thought, the
idea. “Well—I wonder—I was wondering if he wouldn’t enjoy an auto-
mobile ride. I’d like to send over my car.”

The brothers looked at each other, then at their father. Legrand the elder
sat, seemingly lost to their conversation, staring out the door.
“I’ll send the car over to-morrow,” she declared. “I—I’m sure it will do
him good to get out in the air and—comfortably—and—now I must go.”
She rose hastily and so supple were her emotions, torn between tragedy and
comedy, that she giggled, a bit hysterically. “Do you really harness up
the cow to the calèche?” she asked, wary of Martin’s dry tone.
“Not too often,” came the drawling answer, his tone holding a hint of with-
ering, scornful contempt for a quizzing stranger.
“Only when she’s dry and ain’t good

for nothing else. You’ll probably have
to wait till next spring to see the show.”
Gwen flushed hotly, managed a cool
farewell, though her nostrils were di-
lating with anger, resentful of the boor-
ish sting of Martin’s humor.

As she went out the door, she heard
the weak voice of William Legrand
rasping out:
“Is she English?”
“American,” one of the twins re-
sponded.
“If she is English, you ought to
ask her to call again,” the old man com-
mented, with a sigh.

CHAPTER III.

WITH STARTLING INTENSITY.

GWEN walked swiftly to the shed
where the horses had been tethered,
anxious to find Derosier before he re-
turned to the cabin. He was standing
at his horse’s head, in a thoughtful atti-
dute, while Senwa, the Montagnais
woman, spoke rapidly to him in her
own tongue. At Gwen’s appearance, he
went over swiftly to untether her horse.
Senwa scuttled into the cabin as if
frightened.
They were passing the front door on
the way to the ford, when one of the
twins—Arthur, she judged, because of
the book that was still folded upon his
fingers—appeared in the door, stooping
beneath its frame.
“Father wants us to thank you for
the kind offer of an automobile ride,”
he said. “He ain’t—he never rode in
one. I’ll be over Monday morning,” he
added hastily, addressing Derosier.
“White cedar, of course?”
“Use your own judgment on that,”
Derosier replied.

The shock of red hair was ducked
back beneath the lintel suddenly.
As they forded the brook, Gwen was
half angry with herself for her offer
to send the car over. Lured into pity,
she had been stung by the acrid humor
of Martin Legrand’s drawing scorn deeper than she cared to reveal to Derosier. Had it not been for him she felt that she would have turned about and relieved her feelings with some sort of tirade.

Second thought, however, forced her to admit she might have cut a sorry figure against the rasping tongue of the man—and she felt sorry, still, for the aged man. The picture of Arthur, barefooted bookworm, poverty-ridden, but with conscientious scruples against berry bushes, helped tame her resentment.

Then she looked back, from the edge of the woods, and broke into a gay peal of laughter that shook her until she groaned with exhaustion. She saw a red-headed, barefooted giant riding down the hill toward the brook on the back of the dun cow. His feet touched the tops of the daisies and clover. Her laughter filled the vale and must have been heard by the cow rider, as well as by those in the cabin, but there was nothing vindictive about her mirth. It was pure laughter, bubbling from the wellspring of a delicately balanced sense of humor.

Very shortly she became sober and thoughtful.

“They are not really habitants,” she declared, to Derosier. “They seem to be English, poor, uncultured and—and—I don’t understand them,” she finished, shaking her head.

“The wife was English,” Derosier explained. “She died when the twins were small boys. William Legrand seems never to have recovered from the shock of it—nor the fact she was English. The curious thing is that he never speaks of his wife directly, nor of his past life. Nobody knows who he is, exactly, nor where he came from. Either he has actually forgotten—or else he chooses not to recall.”

Derosier shrugged his shoulders.

“I heard him asking if I was English,” Gwen remarked. Then, after a pause, she went on: “That picture, turned to the wall—with crape on it—and the little flag. Is it because—” She halted with a question unspoken.

Derosier, with uncanny perception, supplied the rest.

“Because of the Indian woman? No. I told you he is not a squaw man.”

“Not exactly,” you said,” she reminded him.

“Well—it does not do to probe too closely into antecedents, up in this country,” Derosier responded. “Remember the proverb, ‘Scratch a Turk and find a Tartar.’”

“Oh, you mean—but I can see no shame in Indian ancestry!” she cried.

Derosier was riding along beside her, his horse pacing one rut of the narrow road, while hers walked the other. He made a swift movement, turning toward her with something like a leap of his whole body.

“Do you mean—do you really mean that you believe what you say?” he demanded, so intensely that she was startled.

“Why, of course!” she cried, her eyes widening as she looked straight into his—and then wavering from the fixity of his gaze. “I mean—suppose, for instance that William Legrand were the son of such a woman as Senwa—the wife of a chieftain who had turned away from her own people to marry a white man. It seems to me the son would possess a sort of natural nobility.”

“Hum! That is a refreshing point of view,” Derosier mused, a trifle dryly, she thought, and wondered if he was mentally smiling at her.

“And you, for instance,” he went on lightly, “would not hesitate to marry such a man? A breed, they call such a one.”

“Well—that is rather a personal question,” she parried, laughing.
"I beg your pardon—I meant it to be merely hypothetical, like your example of supposition. I should not have asked it just that way. But, you see, it is so easy for a stranger to be romantically sympathetic, to feel no prejudice, objectively, against mixed blood. But when it comes down to the final analysis—the prejudice is there."

"I don't believe I should ever have it—if I really admired and respected—and loved a man with Indian blood. If he were truly worthy," she added judicially. "Of course, if the mixture of blood meant a sort of degeneracy—it would be quite different."

"Quite, quite!" Derosier said emphatically. "You have answered the question fairly enough."

His intensity seemed to melt away as a smile came over his face, quite transforming it, softening his harsh features, making his sharp eyes liquid and seeming to change their very color from black to a soft, deep brown. He looked almost handsome—and young.

Gwen asked many questions about the Legrands. Derosier answered them, but she observed that he volunteered no information. He seemed holding back from free and frank discussion of them, as if he felt he had already said enough. And he had, for Gwen's imagination seized upon the negative innuendo cast upon William Legrand's origin.

Unconsciously she began to regard the red-headed twins as beings apart from her world, not merely because they were poor, awkward, uncultured; not merely because they went bare-footed and rode in a calèche hitched to a milch cow—or rode on a cow's back—but because her subconscious mind was trying to adjust red hair and blue eyes and broad foreheads and fair skin with the idea of a strain of Indian blood.

They must have taken entirely after their mother in physical characteristics, she decided, thinking of the English woman whose death had helped to deaden the soul of William Legrand. It was nothing uncommon, she knew, to find a mixture of French and Indian in the better families of Quebec. The name Legrand added to the puzzle.

It was a peasant name, common to the habitants, such a name as a wanderer might have borne who had married a squaw—or such a name as the son of such union might adopt. She compared it with the name Derosier—but she was not really comparing names so much as she was comparing personalities and circumstances. This was where she was unconsciously unfair.

From Derosier she learned, by persistent questioning, that Legrand had come into the Travoy country a quarter of a century ago, had taken up a timber claim, started logging it, built a cabin, cleared a patch for farming—was making good—and then his wife died. A woods accident rendered him physically incompetent. He lost all ambition, let his sons grow up wild, cared for only by Senwa, who had attached herself to the family from the first, as if by right of blood ties—Derosier did not say this but this was the impression Gwen got.

The boys did attend an English Protestant common school, but were forced to go to work in the woods at an early age to make a living for themselves and the father. He became senile, living only in dim memories of a shrouded past in which England and everything English loomed big. He took to a rocking-chair and never left it, save for a ride to the village now and then.

He sold the remnant of his timberland, including a cut-over bush—the last few acres to Harris, through Derosier. It was worthless land, save for some such improvement as reforestation. William Legrand kept only the tiny clearing and the cabin. The twins with Senwa's help in gardening, gath-
ering the fruits of the forest, managed
to maintain a semblance of a home.

"I should think that two such hulking
men could earn enough to live more
comfortably—so they need not go bare-
footed," Gwen remarked.

"Wages are not high, up here," De-
rosier explained, "and, most curious
and inexplicable of all the eccentrici-
ties of William Legrand, is the ex-
pensive monument he has erected at his
wife's grave in Quebec. It must have
cost many hundreds of dollars. Be-
sides, Arthur is an easy victim for
every book agent that comes to Travoy.
He buys every book that is offered him,
regardless of its subject or price. I
know of two agents who make a spe-
cial trip up to Travoy each spring to
sell Arthur Legrand books—for cash."

"I see. What about Martin?"

Derosier shook his head.

"He does not work steadily. A little
trapping, a little hunting, much fishing.
Works on the drive in spring. He is
unlike Arthur, as unlike mentally as he
is like him physically."

The memory of Martin—she sup-
pposed it must be Martin—calmly riding
the cow down from the pasture, the
big, hulking man on the back of the
scrubby little animal, recurred to her.
She laughed again, a little, but very lit-
tle, for suddenly the picture became pa-
thetic, tragic, combined with the mem-
ory of the other one, Arthur, with the
big book under his arm, stooping be-
neath the low door, his sharp query
whether Derosier's work was garden-
ing, his eager acceptance when he
found the work was to be with trees.

CHAPTER IV.

AN ABSURD PICTURE.

THAT night, Gwen dreamed of the
Two Reds of Travoy. Her subcon-
scious mind, fed by her active imagina-
tion, was feverishly at work. The
dream became a nightmare. She awoke,
trembling. She had seen the twins in
the accoutrements of painted savages:
Martin with a fierce face made awful
by bright pigments, brandishing a
tomahawk and about to take her scalp,
the while Arthur, with a birch-bark
scroll, painted in sign pictures the
meaning of her last words. In the
background stood William Legrand,
garbed with a chief's headdress, repeat-
ing over and over the admonition:
"Make her say she is English."

The sultriness of midsummer in the
forest settled upon the Laurentian
country, fierce, hot days and cold nights,
stifling in the valleys. Mrs. Harris
complained querulously of the heat and
declared the pungent odor of pitch
pines smothered her. Gwen loved it.
Mrs. Harris had come up, with Gwen,
as a favor—and she never failed to
remind her daughter of this. Jim Har-
sis' literal fulfillment of his promise to
present his daughter with a car of her
own and send her to her "Canadian
playground" when she was seventeen
had seemed utter idiocy to his wife,
who preferred Europe to America, any-
way.

Mrs. Harris would have been in Eu-
rope now, but for the fact that Jim
Harris had one of his "crazy hunches"
and forbade her to go abroad. Harris
declared that Europe was going to be
no place for a tourist very shortly.

The "little shack" he had built was a
sprawling, great log lodge, ringed with
virgin pines, hemlocks, firs, spruces—
the remnants of a once-great forest
which had been laid low by the ax for
miles in every direction, save for the
great stand of pine in the tract which
had come to be called "Thousand
Acres."

Gwen had driven up, charmed with
her powerful car. George, the chauf-
feur, served as mechanic the whole trip.
Her mother was a complaining pas-
senger. Gwen awaited, with some im-
patience, her father's arrival and Mrs.
Harris awaited it with more impatience. Since the one venture away from the lodge, a visit to Derosier’s villa at Lac Bleu, two miles away, Mrs. Harris had not stirred out of the lodge and its clearing—for the return trip through the woods, at night, had quite unnerved her.

Every owl was a wolf, every rustle a predatory animal of some sort—and the sight of a great moose, standing in the road and staring blindly into the headlights, sent her into a swoon.

On the other hand Mrs. Harris was quite sure that there was, nowhere outside of Paris, another such “perfect gentleman” as Raoul Derosier. In consequence, Derosier spent as much time at the Harris lodge as he did at his own villa—perhaps more. He brought over two splendid saddle horses for Gwen—and for her mother if she wished to ride. He devoted himself to amusing them.

Mrs. Harris made no objection when Gwen ordered George to take the car out, the following afternoon, to give a poor invalid a ride. It seemed quite right for her daughter to be charitably condescending to the peasants who clustered about the Harris estate.

Gwen had intended, at first, to drive the car herself, but a new feeling of diffidence at making a second call at the Legrands caused her to send George alone, with explicit directions how to find the cabin. The wood roads, though narrow and rough, were perfectly passable and safe at this dry season, the soil being mostly sandy loam. George left, with some headshaking doubt of his ability to find his way about the woods.

Late in the afternoon Gwen saddled Sprite, the cream-white horse Derosier had put at her disposal, and rode into the village of Travoy. Mrs. Harris had expressed a desire for some fresh fruit and was impatiently anxious for mail from her husband.

TRAVOY was a logging camp, grown into a tiny town. The sole reason for the village was timber. The sole reason for the network of logging roads which radiated like small veins from the miserable, meandering main road that ran up into the foothills from the Ottawa, midway between the Coulogne and Black Rivers, was timber. The village betrayed itself with its very name. The roads that met at odd angles in the midst of the woods where the village squatted were travois for hauling out timber.

Loafing lumberjacks, always idle at this season, sprawled on the piazza of the single store, jabbered in French and waited for the call to enter the woods again. Women, herding incredible quantities of children, went about bare-footed or in moccasins, many of the villagers being partly of Indian blood. Besides the store, there was only a straggle of log or frame houses, some sheathed with tar paper, some whitewashed, some brightened with brilliant blues and pinks.

There was probably no one in Travoy who could speak more than a few words of English, save MacLaughlin, the Scottish proprietor of the general store, which was an establishment subsidized by Derosier. The appearance of such an attractive personage as Gwen Harris, daughter of “the American,” in riding costume, was an event to which all the villagers looked forward daily.

Gwen would have liked to talk to some of these people, but she knew so little French that she was afraid to do more than wish them “Bon jour” or “Bon soir.” She had a great deal of her father’s fear of being laughed at. It was this shrinking from the appearance of ridicule that touched her to the quick when Martin Legrand made his remark about the cow and the calèche. She knew her French accent was execrable, for she had learned French phrases from her mother.
MacLaughlin produced the fruit, sending a beady-eyed boy scurrying to a cabin after a pail of juicy blackberries. She was waiting for him to sort over the mail when a murmur, rising to a clamor, outside, and then to shouts of laughter, drew her to the door. She gasped at the sight that greeted her and which was the cause for the burst of mirth. Driving slowly up the street, wheels deep in the clinging sand, came George in the big car, his face as red as a cock’s comb, and attached to the rear by a strong rope was a dilapidated, dish-wheeled old calèche, its battered, torn top shading the unmistakable figure of Senwa, the Montagnais woman from Legrand’s.

PACK of chattering children followed the queer trailer, walking so close that the sand caught up by the wobbling wheels sprayed on their bare legs. They shrieked with delight, chattered, pointed, giggled and howled. Women came to the doors of the houses and burst into laughter. Men who had been half asleep in the shade sat up or jumped to their feet and began to guffaw. There was a great commotion.

Sprite, snorting at the hitching post, danced a jig. George, catching sight of the horse, drew up squarely in front of the store and stopped. If looks could kill, there would have been wholesale murder in Travoy this day from George’s glances.

Senwa was clad in the brightest colors calico could afford, with a top-heavy straw hat on her sleek black head, the hat adorned by bright flowers and ribbons. She lolled in utter luxury save for the effort required to hold at forearm’s length a shiny tin pail with a cover on it and, in the other hand, to hold a black clay pipe from which came, now and then, a cloud of smoke.

For an instant Gwen hung between laughter and wrath. It was a comical, and utterly absurd picture—but the fact that the whole village was laughing stung her to the raw. And then even MacLaughlin yielded. His explosive “Haw, haw!” behind her brought her about, facing him, with blazing eyes. She dashed the pail of berries to the floor and strode out the door, through the crowd of men, women and children that had collected about the equipage and jumped on the running board of the car.

“George, what does this mean?” she demanded.

Almost instantly silence fell, but soon there burst out again the irrepressible giggle of the children, sly whispers that spread to the adults, but quiet enough so that every one could hear what she said.

“I—I lost me way, miss,” George stammered, growing redder.

For the first time Gwen noted that the car had come into Travoy from a direction opposite the Legrand place. George had gone out over a road which ran past the Harris lodge southward. But he entered the village from the north.

“Lost your way? But—but where is Mr. Legrand? Did he—— Oh, they sent Senwa to guide you back home, didn’t they?”

She was struggling to be generous, trying not to believe that the calèche meant what her quick imagination was forcing her to believe it meant.

“Beg pardon, Miss Gwennie, but that ain’t it a-tall,” complained George, with a vindictive glance back at his trailer and its passenger. “I guess the squaw has got a note for you that’ll explain what I can’t. I don’t understand a-tall. You see, I went over there to the Legrand place, as you told me. I found it all right, and I could have found me way back, too, but the—that confounded redhead—he called me back and sent me off, with the squaw and that there wreck of a buggy, on the wrong road. Why, I been drivin’
through the woods and swamps for over an hour, tryin' to get back!"

What George said had reduced almost to oblivion, so far as Gwen's perception was concerned, the gaping, giggling crowd about her.

"The redhead! Which redhead?"
she asked.

"I— Why, I only seen one, Miss Gwennie. He was a tall, red-headed feller who went barefeet. You see, first thing—"

"It is the two red rogues," some one whispered, so close to her ear she caught it.

"Never mind now, George," she cut in, and with white face and head held high, her eyes snapping as she swept a glance about her, she strode swiftly to where Sprite was tethered and swung upon his back.

"Come on, I'll lead you home," she said to George, her only thought to get out of this audience and into the friendly shelter of the woods.

She started off at a gallop. Poor George, biting his lips, put the car into gear. He jerked the front wheels of the calèche off the ground as he started. And Gwen, already far ahead, almost at the edge of the woods, heard a burst of laughter coming down the breeze.

She lashed Sprite with her quiet, but drew him up sharply at a turnout, to wait for George whose speed was braked by the deep sand as well as by the danger of the ancient calèche's collapsing and pitching Senwa out.

"You said she had a note," Gwen said to George, when he came up to her. "Get it from her."

George got out and went back to Senwa's seat, making grotesque signs with his hands and shouting at the Montagnais as if he thought she was deaf: "Note! Note for Miss Harris. She want it—note."

But Senwa shook her head. "I give to her," she muttered, waving her pipe at Gwen.

Gwen rode back to the calèche. She was beginning to get a grip on herself. Her anger had flashed, like lightning, from the laughing villagers to the Legrands, but she had a moment of reasonableness and reflection, as she waited for George, and she began to see that she had judged in advance of all the evidence.

Senwa bobbed her head, her bonnet swaying precariously, clenched her pipe in her teeth, then removed it and laid it carefully in her lap, transferred the precious pail from one hand to the other, fumbled in her voluminous skirts and produced a folded paper.

Gwen took it wonderingly and opened it swiftly. Her gaze fell upon a few lines of stiff, vertical handwriting which looked as if it had been laboriously copied from a form.

MISS HARRIS: We thank you for sending the car because the cow ain't dry and here is a slip of it and please accept it as such. Father couldn't use the car though and Senwa want to go do some shopping.

ART AND MART. THE TWO REDS.

As she looked up, bewildered, hung between anger and disgust, Senwa thrust the tin pail toward her.

Gwen saw at a glance that the pail contained milk. She snatched it from Senwa's hand, lifted the cover, poured out on the ground the milk, took a coin from her purse and dropped it in the empty pail, slammed the cover back on and restored the pail to the stolid-faced Senwa.

CHAPTER V.
THE RED'S REVENGE.

NEVER had Gwen Harris been in the habit of taking her troubles—or her joys—to her mother. It was to "Dad Jimmy" she turned, in pleasure or in pain, and, since Dad Jimmy was not here to receive her confidences and right her wrongs, Gwen remained at the stables, fussing with Sprite, until
George returned from the Legrand place. He was bursting with repressed rage and ready to pour forth his story, interrupted so abruptly at the village, but Gwen sent him off to secure the berries she had so violently discarded.

Gwen went to the piano and began to play. It was her next best refuge in the absence of Dad Jimmy. As she played, improvising, she tried to forget — and to think — and since these were impossible for her to do at the same time, she reviewed the scene of the afternoon and crashed out great chords that drove Mrs. Harris to the refuge of her chamber. Her thoughts were a moil of anger, wounded pride, bursting curiosity and a desire for bitter vengeance.

"'Art and Mart,'" she found herself repeating, in a sort of monotonous war chant in tune to her music. "'Art and Mart, The Two Reds; Art and Mart!' The cow and the calèche — the cow and the car and the calèche!"

It was a stormy song. It was a comical song — but not once did she laugh, nor smile. Her face was set, white and the muscles so stiff they ached.

The man who had done that was beneath contempt. Who had done it?

"Art and Mart" the signature said, very plainly. But she could not believe it. Art or Mart? A dozen times she decided it must be Martin, he of the acrid, biting scorn, and a dozen times she doubted it and ended by starting for the stables to saddle Sprite and ride furiously over to the Legrand place — but got only as far as Sprite's door, where she wept a few tears on Sprite's velvety nose, uttered a great, furious "Damn!" at herself and everything in general.

It took George a long time to get the berries. In fact, it was dark when he returned. She saw that there was something wrong as soon as she got a glimpse of his face. Instead of being red, it was white and his eyes gleamed with excitement.

"Did you have to pick those berries, George?" she inquired sweetly.

"No! I saw — I saw that redhead!" George replied, without his customary politeness and in a tone so strained and mysterious that Gwen flew down from the piazza where she had been fighting mosquitoes to avoid facing her mother's querulous demand why she had forgotten the berries. She rode on the running board to the garage.

"You saw the redhead! The same one?"

"Miss Gwennie — I don't know!" George confessed, emphasizing every word. "Nobody don't know. Mr. MacLaughlin, he don't know. I didn't know they was two of 'em until he told me to-night. I didn't know what you meant, this afternoon, when you asked me, 'Which one?'"

"They're twins — identical — except well, you couldn't tell them apart, George, I guess. But what —"

"Miss Gwennie, one of them red-headed twins come into Travoy this evenin' and beat up the town!" George spoke in a half whisper, with the air of one who has seen something terrible.

"I was standin' in the store, near the front, talkin' with MacLaughlin about — about what happened this afternoon and suddenly this same tall, red-headed feller —"

"The same one! You mean the same one that —"

"I thought it was the same one that made me take the squaw in the trailer, but I ain't sure now. Anyway, it was one of them redheads — one of them 'Two Reds,' they calls 'em. He come up on the steps. They was a great big lumberjack standin' there, leanin' against the wall. MacLaughlin said he was 'Big Bruno,' and he's a scrapper from way back. Sort of a bully in the village, I guess."
"Well, this redhead come up to him and said something in French that I couldn’t understand. MacLaughlin thought he said: ‘You laughed.’ It was just two words, like that—and then he hit the Big Bruno and knocked him clean off his feet. When he got through with him, he had some teeth missing, one arm busted and one eye closed up tight."

“For Pete’s sake!” This was Gwen’s sole comment.

“And then,” George went on, warming up to his subject and taking more relish in his tale, “and then, this redhead he went up to another fellow and said them same two words—and knocked him for a goal—and another! Several of the rest pitched onto him and he took ’em all to once. He kept sayin’, in French, ‘And you laughed—and you laughed—and you!’ and punchin’ their heads at the same time. Well, it looked like what I imagine a riot in Dublin between an Irish cop and a bunch of Ku Klux Klanners would look like, for a while, with the redhead playin’ the part of the cop.

“He didn’t seem to have no trouble a-tall with them fellows. Those that he didn’t put away could run fast, that was all—and when he’d battered up those that tried to stand up against him, he stopped and made a little speech—it was all in French, too—about how he hoped no man in Travoy would ever laugh at a woman again—or their women and children neither—and if they did—well, he promised ’em somethin’ that sounded as if it meant murder. MacLaughlin said it meant murder. Anyhow, nobody in town laughed at him. When he was through, he walked down off the piazza and into the woods. I—I waited a while before I come home.”

In spite of herself Gwen felt the blood beating up into her face, her fists clenching, her breath coming fast at this tale of an epic combat in the woods.

“MacLaughlin said it must have been Martin Legrand,” George continued, “because Martin’s got a reputation as being a terrible fighter in the lumber camps. He’s licked every one that ever stood up against him since he was seventeen years old. MacLaughlin said he was a bad egg and that if Mr. Derosier ever got anything on him he’d put him behind the bars.”

“Martin? Then he—he will be arrested for this!”

“MacLaughlin said he didn’t think so—because none of them fellows would make a complaint against him, he said. They’d be afraid to do it—all but Bruno, and he’ll wait a chance to get him some time. And he’ll probably get his, tryin’ to get the redhead, because he is some fighter, Miss Gwen-nie,” George finished, “even if he did tag me with a squaw in a buggy.”

Gwen giggled, but her eyes flashed fire the next moment.

“George, I want you to promise never to say a word to any one about that note Senwa gave me—not a word. Will you?”

“Not a word, Miss Gwennie.”

“Because I think one of the Legrands wrote it—and the other one, when he found out what happened in the village this afternoon, came in and beat them up.”

“What gets me,” George put in, “is why he should be so mad because they laughed at a squaw!”

“It gets me, too!” Gwen admitted, but she did not mean exactly what George meant. “And I want to find out which did which before it gets me any farther.”

When Raoul Derosier called at the Harris lodge, later on that evening, Gwen met him on the piazza, for reasons of her own. It was plain to her at once, by his face, that he had heard something that disturbed him terribly.

“Miss Harris,” he began, “I am
frightfully sorry for what happened this afternoon. That was an inexcusable, deliberate insult to you. I am going to see that the guilty one is punished—and punished severely."

“Oh, the guilty ones have already been punished, quite severely, I am told,” she returned laughingly.

“Not at all,” he declared. “Those who laughed are not to blame. They would laugh at anything. I mean the Two—”

“The Two Reds—or one of them,” she supplied quickly. “But how do you know who did it?”

He hesitated.

“Ah!” she exclaimed. “You are not sure! Well, then, I shall enlighten you on one condition, Mr. Derosier. Will you promise to do what I ask?”

For an instant, only an instant, he was silent. Then he came close to her, his dark eyes glowing from the light that streamed past her out of the windows of the lodge.

“I will do anything for you!” he declared quietly, yet she sensed an intensity of feeling in him that made her pulses flutter oddly.

“Then—I want you to promise you will not have any one arrested—nor speak to any one about this.”

“Well—that is—difficult,” he objected, his tone telling her that she had asked him to abandon the grim purpose that had helped put fire in his eyes and make his face so set. “But if you ask—I promise.”

“Then tell me!” she demanded excitedly, holding out to him the crumpled note which she had several times crushed up to throw away, yet had kept it. “Do you know this handwriting?”

She folded the note so that he could read only the first line and the signature:

**MISS HARRIS:** We thank you for sending the car.

**ART AND MART, THE TWO REDS.**

“It is Arthur Legrand’s,” he declared, without hesitation. “I have seen his writing too often to be mistaken.”

“And have you seen Martin’s, too?” she queried.

He shook his head, with a smile.

“Martin could not write as well as that, though,” he said.

“How about the father, William Legrand?” she persisted.

“I do not believe he can write.”

“It doesn’t fit together, at all!” she cried. “But let’s drop it, please. Of course, I do feel sorry for Senwa. I suppose even an Indian woman could comprehend the ridicule.”

Derosier was silent; but she felt that his attitude was tense. She thought she heard him draw in a quick breath.

Mrs. Harris called to them. Derosier spent the evening playing piquet with Mrs. Harris and Gwen played improvisations at the piano.

Try as she might to shake off the sting of that car-and-calèche travesty and the crowning sting of the note and the pail of milk, Gwen could not erase the thrilling picture of the giant redhead striding into Travoy and literally wiping up the town—because the villagers had laughed. Nor could she force herself to believe that this punishment had been only because they laughed at Senwa. She had felt the ridicule too keenly herself to forgo entirely a bit of egotistic thrill at the revenge.

It sent her fingers crashing out a martial strain which Mrs. Harris interrupted, plaintively demanding her to “please refrain from playing that terrible Grieg and try some of those quieter things from the French.”

**CHAPTER VI.**

**MART, THE ROUGHNECK.**

**WHEN** Martin Legrand had come to man’s estate, he reached the conclusion that he was no gentleman, that he would never be a gentleman and,
furthermore, that he did not care to be a gentleman. Ever since he could remember his father had talked of their "gentle English blood," with the maddening mystery of a clouded intellect at first, then with the prattle of premature senility. Always he had spoken in parables—and Martin had ceased to regard William Legrand's mutterings as having any significance whatever.

Ironically, it was William Legrand's very insistence upon the purity of his blood that helped spread the story that he was, in fact, something else than English. Had he not bragged of being English no one would have thought anything strange that he had a name which might be French, and none would have cared whether he were white, part white or even all Indian. In Quebec, Indian blood brings no dishonor, save such as is borne in the person.

William Legrand had set himself apart from his neighbors or, as the habitants expressed it, he was "sitting too high," and in consequence his sons had been forced to fight, hand and foot and tooth and nail, for respect. They had won it. The struggle had brought cynical bitterness to Martin. He laughed at his father's claims, with reason, for the old man never offered any proof that he came from the "pure English stock" of which he prated. Not so much as a scrap of paper, not the name of a town in England, not a story of his early life did he bring forth to establish his pretensions.

"When I am dead and gone," he would say, "then you'll know. Your mother would tell you, quick enough, but she—"

That was as far as he ever got on that subject. Emotion of a dangerous sort seized and shook him and left him staring and white.

Arthur Legrand withheld judgment on his father. Slower of emotion than Martin, he was not so impatient. Again and again Martin attacked his twin's half belief in their father's verity with the weapons of sarcasm and irony, pointing to their present poverty, to the lack of documents. So far as they knew, William Legrand possessed not even so much as a marriage certificate. But Arthur listened, considered and suggested that perhaps William Legrand had hidden something which would be found after his death, or perhaps had intrusted his whole secret to some one to tell them when he was gone.

"While he lives, we ought to act as if we thought what he says is so," Arthur always said. "I don't know anything better we can do."

This silenced Martin, but he continued to laugh at the idea that they were of the gentility and to declaim his desire never to pose as a gentleman. He was in rebellion against society. He saw himself as a man doomed to waste his whole life in the woods and, to drown out this insult, Martin flung his great physical powers into play at the slightest opportunity, which meant whenever resistance offered. He gloried in brute strength and delighted to think of himself as a supreme roughneck. He had plenty of opportunity to prove this in the lumber camps.

So much alike physically and so different mentally, Martin and Arthur Legrand, by their very 'twinship, were bound together in a loyalty which nothing could weaken. The one was always ready to rush into danger or to shoulder the blame for the other. An instance was the arrest of Martin Legrand for shooting deer out of season.

ARTHUR, unknown to his brother, went to the magistrate and forced the puzzled judge to believe he was the one who had done the deed—but when witnesses to the shooting were called they were so confounded by the resemblance or else so afraid of the twins that they refused to swear to anything.
Arthur risked perjury—but Martin evened up the score by going out openly and shooting another deer at the edge of the village of Travoy, dragging it through the street and announcing his name at the top of his voice. And no one made a complaint.

Martin knew the woods; Arthur knew the trees. To Martin the forest was a collective thing; to Arthur it was a vast army of individuals. His love for trees led him to seek knowledge of them, from the leaves of books as well as from the leaves of the trees themselves. Martin spent his spare money on guns, traps, fishing tackle and bait; Arthur was always in debt at the end of each summer to some book agent or other, a large share of his coming winter’s wages pledged ahead so that he was often hard put to obtain an outfit for the camps, on his advance “time,” from MacLaughlin.

But with all his study and fine knowledge of timber and trees, Arthur earned no more in wages than Martin. Martin had dropped books at the door of the little school when he left it, to pit bone and sinew against the tough fibers of the timber trees and the harsh winds and frosts of the Canadian bush in a crew of lumberjacks. The trouble was that Arthur did not understand how to capitalize his knowledge.

There were two men who might have helped him. One was Raoul Derosier. But Derosier had run against the sharp thorn of Arthur’s knowledge in a manner that caused him to refrain from recommending Arthur to the other man, who should have had his services and who could have boosted him to the top in a science of which little or nothing was known in the Travoy country. With Arthur Legrand as his forester, Jim Harris would have made doubly sure of winning his bet. His plantations would have been protected from a danger which was even now threatening them.

Martin hated Derosier with ardor. He regarded Derosier as the apotheosis of the aristocrat, the mockery of his father’s mysterious hints at their gentility helping him to form this hatred—but he hated him, too, for the dominance he had over the Travoy country, for the servile attitude of all who lived thereabouts as economic dependents, and for the primitive conditions under which they labored in the camps and on the drives.

These were conditions which were everywhere accepted as natural; the low wages were no lower than were paid elsewhere, but Derosier’s very patronage of William Legrand, his frequent visits, his solicitous inquiries concerning the aged man’s health and especially his ability to speak to Senwa in her own tongue—all these irked and angered Martin and helped him to breed a spirit of dangerous rebellion against Derosier. As yet it had not broken out in the open.

On the other hand Arthur distrusted Derosier. Derosier knew it—and he knew the principal reason. Had he heard Arthur’s blunt and cryptic remark to Gwen, in response to her query why he did not like gardening, he might have been alarmed. But Derosier felt secure. He was a gambler, but he was one who made chances rather than took them. He had reasons for believing that Jim Harris could not plant and raise to maturity, or even to the promise of maturity, a forest of white pine in the Travoy.

The coming of Gwen Harris into Derosier’s world, eager, palpitant upon the threshold of womanhood, beautiful and full of music and laughter brought to Raoul Derosier the first great desire of his life. And since he was a man who did not take chances, but made them, he began carefully to lay the plans for making her his own.

Gwen knew nothing of the wager between her father and Derosier and De-
rosier was aware of this fact. He was glad of it, for he was one who never allowed business to mix with sentiment.

CHAPTER VII.
A MEETING BY CHANCE.

THE recruiting of men for the lumber camps of Quebec went ahead, in the early fall of 1914, quite as if that obscure heir to the throne of a European dual monarchy, Francis Ferdinard, had never lived at—all—to be assassinated. It was of no importance that he had been killed, of course. He was no more significant, in death, than the spent match which has flamed and died in touching fire to a carefully prepared bonfire.

August was not done when the axmen and sawyers started into the woods, as usual, over the traveys which radiated from the village of Travoy and up the Couloge and the Black Rivers for the cuttings. Raoul Derosier was very busy, for a few weeks. He was doing double duty. James Harris had not come up to Travoy for his expected and usual flying visit. Mrs. Harris and Gwen, staying on, waiting for him, were informed by telegram, relayed to Travoy over the single telephone line, and much garbled in transit, that he would be unable to come up at all.

The message came to them in these words:

Threat of war has thrown market into panic. Must stay here and sit on the lid. May go over to London any day. Wait for me.

Mrs. Harris raved and raged and wept and was only pacified when Derosier called, after a long absence, and she remembered that she had made up her mind that this wealthy Canadian was just the match for Gwen. She had hoped to capture a title for Gwen in Europe, France preferred. She supposed, now, that all the eligibles would go to war and be killed. Mrs. Harris made a great to-do over the telegram, however, so much that Gwen had George saddle Sprite to ride over and try to get Derosier. Gwen knew that only his presence could calm the high hysteria into which her mother had plunged herself.

Galloping up the long drive to Villa Bleu, as Derosier had named his elaborate lodge, she brought her horse to a sliding halt just in time to avoid running down a man who came out upon the drive, enveloped in the foliage of a great arm full of cedar rootlings.

"W-well!" she panted, as the dust of her quick stop settled and Sprite dropped his head to munch the tender grass. "It's a wonder I didn't ride right over you."

The man dropped his armful and calmly began to press dirt about the roots of a bushy cedar he had thrust into a hole prepared for it. It was Arthur LeGrand. He poised on his toes, looking up at her from where he crouched, and the light of the sky seemed reflected in his eyes in deeper hue.

His face was tawny, freckles showing a darker shade through the tan. He was wearing moccasins, with short leggings of leather incasing the raveled edges of his denim trousers. His faded shirt, drawn tightly about his back and shoulders and clinging to his great muscles, revealed a body of wonderful power. From about him rose the odorous incense of bruised cedar leaves.

A strange emotion stung her. She told herself that it was not anger, that she had not been angry for a long time, that pity and her sense of humor had banished the hurt to her pride that had come from the note rejecting her charity and from the crude incident of the calèche and the Indian squaw—but anger rose within her, nevertheless.

"Oh, it's you!" she cried. "I've been looking for you. I want to know why
you acted so mean about my sending the car over to give your father a ride.”

“Mean?” The query came slowly, in a drawl so like the exasperating, ironic tone of Martin’s voice that it nettled her further.

“Yes, mean!” she stormed. “Don’t pretend innocence. George told me that you sent the car away and then called him back and roped the calèche to it and put Senwa in the calèche and sent her through the village, on parade—with a quart of milk. It was your handwriting—that note. I found that out. It was certainly not—not gentlemanly.”

“We do not pretend to be gentlemen, Martin and I,” came the whimsical response. “Poor father—”

He left the rest unsaid, tightening his lips as if to keep from uttering another word.

“You thought I’d blame Martin,” she charged him, wondering at the rising wave of emotion that was possessing her.

“No,” he drawled, patting the earth carefully about the cedar roots. “No, I hoped you wouldn’t. Every one else did, of course.”

“Well, it doesn’t matter what every one else did—I blamed you.”

“I’m glad of that!” He chuckled.

“And then you went and made a fool of yourself—and of me, too, by—by making a scene in the village, that night.”

“Oh, so you think I did that, too!” he exclaimed, regarding his knuckles soberly. “The skin ain’t badly broken,” he said.

Gwen’s heart gave a tremendous bound. “Then—then it was you who did that!” she cried. “It was you! Why did you do it?”

Again he looked up at her and for the instant it seemed to her as if they both hung suspended, caught up in the witchery of an unaccountable moment.

“Well—if I had done it,” he began—and paused. It seemed to Gwen as if he never would finish his sentence. “If I had done it, it would have been because I couldn’t stand it—” His voice was low, quiet, musing, but shaking with the throb that seemed also to beat into her ears and throb in her pulses. “Because I couldn’t stand it to have any man laugh at you, look at you, see you and know how beautiful you are, because I want no one to look at you except myself—if I had done it.”

Through half-closed lids Gwen saw him rise, as if he were lifted up by a force stronger than himself. His head, with its flaring, thick, burnished crown of hair came even with her breast. One of her hands twitched with the curious and utterly feminine desire to thrust into that tangle of hair and run her fingers through it tenderly. She felt as if she were suffocating.

A touch would have crumpled her. She did not know what was the matter. She did not know that she had fallen in love with a backwoodsman who had brought ridicule upon her—and whom she, in her confusion, also charged with visiting vengeance upon those who ridiculed her.

His voice broke the spell that gripped her. Its tone was suddenly different, harsh and ironic. It seemed as if it were no longer Arthur speaking, but Martin.

“Or it might have been because I am no gentleman!” he cried. “But, you see, since I am the one who wrote the note and sent Senwa riding in the calèche, behind your car, with a quart of milk—it must have been Martin who cleaned up the town.”

She broke into a laugh, bitter, sharp and loud. It startled Sprite. He jerked up his head and leaped, snorting, up the driveway. She whirled him and sent him at top speed past where Arthur had stood—her head held high. Arthur Legrand stood aside and made
a mocking bow of servility, such as the lazy, loafing habitants at Travoy gave her.

Dust rolled about him in a cloud, but he stood, with unblinking eyes, heedless of everything but the graceful, indignant figure that dwindled out of his life—perhaps forever—down the long avenue of dying Lombardy poplars which he was replacing with cedar.

The next day Arthur Legrand went into the woods as a member of one of Derosier’s cutting crews, up on the Coulogne.

CHAPTER VIII.
STRIKE AND COUNTERSTRIKE.

The word came to Raoul Derosier in mid-December that the timber jacks in the big crew up the river had struck for higher wages. Bruno Lescaut—Big Bruno—was in charge of the crew, a fit man for the job, which was to drive a hard pace despite the lower wages that were offered this fall. This was the first direct and substantial effect that the war had upon Travoy.

Derosier was annoyed at the news. He had expected Lescaut to handle such situations without difficulty—particularly since Lescaut had a score to settle with Martin Legrand. It was Martin, Derosier guessed, who had stirred up the trouble and made a resolve to rid himself of this troublesome red-headed whirlwind at the first opportunity. Derosier was engaged in recruiting another crew at this late date, for invasion of the spruce and hemlock of the Black River forests—at the urgent request of Jim Harris.

Jim Harris was making the fight of his life to save himself from financial disaster in a market debacle. The war had come home to Wall Street, and it was toppling the flimsy structures of many a fortune into the dust. Jim Harris found himself obliged to call up every resource he had. With his back to the wall the doughty veteran of a score of crises fought like a wounded bull—and a wounded “bull” he was, with the “bears” after him.

His last ditch was his Canadian timberlands—and he was making a stand therein. It was a bitter necessity. He had intended to hold off from that rich Black River stumpage of pulp wood until prices went up—until the end of the decade he had set as the time he would cut and sell for profit instead of putting it all back into the reforestation project—and even then, he had promised himself, those profits would be set aside for Gwen. Now he had to break the promise.

Derosier also had been forced to plunder his pulp-wood stand, on a lowering market, to cover his widespread holdings in stumpage which he had bought in anticipation of a steady rise. He was glad of Harris’ necessity. He was acting for Harris on a contract basis, based upon the wage level of the preceding years. Now he sent employment agents into Quebec and Montreal to pick up the sweepings of the water fronts and ship them into the Travoy by the carload, raw material for the woods—very raw indeed—but cheap. These were the men he must use on the Harris contract unless—

There was a brighter side to the strike, after all. It could be turned to advantage, by a bold stroke. Derosier decided upon the bold stroke.

There was assembled at Travoy, when he heard of the strike, a motley throng of “greenhorns,” awaiting shipment up the Black River. They were here to be outfitted at the store. Here they drew clothing and supplies against their “time” and thus placed themselves in debt to their employer for at least a month’s work at the wage level established in advance. MacLaughlin was, really, only the manager of the store. Derosier was the owner.
Derosier sent a curt message to Lescaut:

Discharge all strikers and send them out. Am forwarding new crew to-morrow.

Two days later, a bitter cold day, there straggled into Travoy, out of the snow-laden woods, an uneasy, bewildered army of timber jacks from the Couologne. When they swarmed into MacLaughlin’s, their uneasiness changed to alarm, then to slowly growing anger, for they learned that already their places had been filled by another contingent of men, who had “gone in” by sledges, over one travoy road, while they walked the long distance down another.

Worse than that, as they were paid off, they found that they had scarcely enough coming to them to even up their scores at MacLaughlin’s, for their outfits, for provisions purchased by their wives against their “time” while they were gone—and it was midwinter.

There were two things for the strikers to do. Derosier offered them, through MacLaughlin, who was ostensibly employment agent for James Harris, new jobs on the Black River—at the same wages they had quit. Either this, or else they must strike out for themselves, seek employment at a greater distance and have their credit cut off at the store meantime.

Among the strikers were The Two Reds, Martin and Arthur; and the grumblings of the men soon convinced MacLaughlin—who reported to Derosier over the private telephone line which ran from the store to Derosier’s villa—that one or both of the Legrands had led the strike. Then came Big Bruno, to report in person on the doings up at camp.

Bruno was “laying for” Martin Legrand. His bones and skin had mended from the injuries inflicted by the vengeful redhead who had objected to his laughing at a squaw’s riding in a motor-towed calèche, but his spirit was sore. He had become convinced that it was Martin had done the job. The fact that Martin had fomented the strike helped increase Bruno’s desire to “get him.” He did not dare attack Martin openly and not even his high-colored description, given to Derosier, of how Martin had disorganized his crew resulted in Martin’s being black-listed.

“I’ve left it to Mac to hire men for the Black River,” Derosier told Bruno; “and if Martin and Arthur Legrand want to hire, he’ll probably take them on. You ought to be glad to be rid of The Two Reds.”

Bruno sought other means of revenge. When Martin, in line with the other strikers, came up to the grilled window of MacLaughlin’s office, where they were drawing their “time,” Bruno was at Mac’s elbow.

“Mart Legrand,” droned MacLaughlin, reading from the time book Bruno had turned over and from his own account books. “Deduct for outfit, eighty-five dollars and fifty cents. Deduct for goods since last pay day, forty-two dollars and twelve cents. Deduct for two broken peavey handles, one lost peavey, one broken ax bitt, one cracked saw blade—”

He read a list of breakages charged against Martin that caused Martin to gasp, grow red and then white. The totals of wages and charges, when compared, left Martin with a debt to the paymaster.

“Just a minute!” he cried. “I didn’t have any breakage charged to me up in camp.”

MacLaughlin, over his spectacles, regarded Martin coldly, then turned, with a question on his face, to Lescaut.

“I charge him wit’ breakage dat de gang make w’en dey go on strike an’ get fightin’ and it goes down against his time,” Bruno explained. “He mak’ troub’ and he settle for dat.”

MacLaughlin looked back at Martin.
"I won't stand for that!" Martin raged. "It's robbery! Bruno is trying to get even with me, that's all."
"You'll have to take it up with Mr. Derosier, then. Please stand aside. The other men are waiting for their pay."

MacLaughlin was trying to be impartial, but, to tell the truth, he had no love for Martin.

"We're hiring for the Black River," MacLaughlin went on, droning it out mechanically, as he shoved a slip toward Martin. "Sign here, if you want to go on."

Martin seized the slip and tore it in two, flinging the pieces back.

"It's a frame-up!" he charged. "Bruno, I'll take this out of your hide!"
"I got my skin on pret' tight," mocked Lescaut. "An' I got good strong lock on it, too!" and he pushed back his coat, displaying a sheath knife at his belt.

Martin stamped away from the window, passing down the line of men which extended to the door, flung outside, onto the piazza, with red rage in his heart—and showing in his eyes.

Arthur was waiting for him.

"Father's needing us, I guess," he said to Martin, in a tone which penetrated the latter's anger and sobered him. "We best hurry home."

CHAPTER IX.
BITTER QUESTIONS.

As the two brothers plodded through the deep snow, Martin asked no questions and volunteered no information. He kept his trouble to himself, the more because he knew that Arthur would insist upon taking a big share of the blame for Bruno's injustice and would insist also on sharing his meager balance of wages with his brother.

They passed the deserted Harris lodge with eyes straight ahead, neither speaking. Neither of them had mentioned Gwen Harris since she left the Travoy, at the time they went into the woods. With her mother Gwen had returned to New York.

An almost unearthly stillness hung over the little clearing where the Legrand cabin stood, this winter afternoon. The homestead seemed jealously isolated by the drooping, white-laden firs; the brook's song was hushed by the frost. Not a foot had disturbed the smooth sheerness of the white carpet laid by the snow. It was a peaceful but somehow depressing scene in all its loneliness.

When they stamped their feet on the step at the back door, the first sound came to them, from within the cabin, as a hoarse, harsh challenge.

"Who is that? Are you English? Only English enter here!"

Senwa opened the door, her little black eyes full of anxiety. She made signs to them to wait, that she wanted to speak to them outside, but Martin pushed her roughly away and Arthur followed him as he strode through the lean-to kitchen into the large main room.

They confronted the leveled muzzle of a gun. William Legrand sat bolt upright in his chair, with a rifle leveled across the table, his finger at the trigger. His dull eyes blazed with a fierce and fearful light, and for an instant the brothers were stricken speechless and motionless before him.

William Legrand was the first to relax, letting the heavy rifle slide through his hands until its butt thumped the floor as he cried out: "Ah! You have come, then! You English have come to go to the war!"

The brothers looked at each other as if suddenly they had heard a trumpet. It was the first call to arms. It astonished them to hear it, from the lips of their father, buried here in the wilderness, buried alive, so it seemed, in the hazy half world of his past.
NEITHER of them had thought of the war as a personal matter. Up in the camps no one talked of it, except as a remote affair among the Germans, the Austrians, the Russians, French and English professional armies. The heroic stand of Belgium and the thrilling "back-to-the-wall" stand of the tiny regular army of Britain against the German push for Calais had scarcely trickled through to them, deep in the forests of Coulogne.

"My sons! You are English and you have come to go to the war!"

William Legrand was speaking again and he continued with a flood of questions for which they had no answers, for he was asking them of army movements, naming generals and field marshals and cities and sectors of which they had not even heard.

"I told him that you would go!" he exulted. "I told him that it was only these cursed habitants who would hang back. They say they will never fight—but you are English, my sons, and of the blood of England and you will go—as I told him."

Arthur turned to Senwa.

"Who has been talking to him?" he demanded.

"It is M'sieu' Derosier," she replied. "He come an' talk to your fader, to cheer him up. He tell him of de war. It make him better, you see? He can talk fine."

"Derosier, eh?" Martin burst out, with a dry laugh. "That's good! Looks like he wants to get rid of us, Art. Talking the old man into sending us away to the war. That's good!"

"No, no!" Senwa interrupted, showing considerable agitation, for her. "M'sieu' Derosier, he not want you to go to war. He say nobody go. It's your fader—he say you will go, for sure!"

"Look here!" Martin turned upon his father, almost savagely. "Don't you think we come out because a Frenchman fired us for wanting decent pay. You think we want to go over and fight for the French? Not much! Derosier came and talked to you about the war, eh? Wants us to go to war, I bet you! Well, he's going to have a little war all his own, right here at home, before I get through."

William Legrand, sitting bolt upright, a gaunt, emaciated, trembling figure, stared wildly at Martin.

"Not going?" he muttered faintly. "You are English and you won't go? It isn't for France—it's for England, I tell you! The Germans are trying for the Channel. We fought 'em back, once—but we need men, more men! We need men to save England!"

"They want Paris," Martin declared, with a sneer, "and maybe they'll get it and for all of me they can. Let them kill off all the Frenchmen they want to."

William Legrand flung at the barrel of the rifle. He began to breathe fast.

"If not for England," he pleaded, "if not for France, you will go—for the family honor, my sons?"

His last words acted like a goad upon Martin. He faced his father furiously. All his pent-up rage, his rankling sense of injustice, his suspicion of Derosier's motives in talking to William Legrand about the war seemed to come to a head, together with an ancient grudge he held.

"Look here!" he cried roughly. "I want to know what you mean! You've talked about your family, your English blood, ever since I can remember—and yet not a word that you can tie a hold on. What's the riddle? I'm tired of being told we're pure English and all that, when we've got the damn French name of Legrand and a squaw living with us, instead of a white woman."

"It was your mother's wish that—"

William Legrand tried to check Mar-
tin's flow of denunciation, but could not. Martin's blood was up and neither age nor illness nor the mention of his dead mother could cool it.

"You've hidden behind her tombstone long enough!" Martin raged, heedless of Arthur's hand on his arm and of William Legrand's white face.

The elder man shrank as if from a blow.

"I want to know why Derosier comes here so often and talks to you," Martin went on, "and to the squaw in her own language—and yet he treats us like dogs, with his slave work in the woods for slave wages—and then lets his foreman rob us, too! What has he got on you, on us—or what have you got on him?"

Senwa had shuffled up behind William Legrand’s chair, silent, stolid of face, but with her eyes fixed so intently upon Martin that she seemed waiting, watching for him to say or do something. Martin ignored her.

"If we’re so English," he continued, "that you think we ought to go and fight—let’s hear what kind of English we are—or what kind of Indians!"

William Legrand never answered the flood of bitter questions that Martin heaped upon him. He half rose from his chair, pulling himself up by the edge of the heavy table, his lips writhing, contorted, stammering something unintelligible, out of which only the distinct words, "English—Indian—Derosier," came and held no meaning for Martin or for Arthur.

Then Senwa pulled the old man back and placed a hand over his mouth and at her touch he went limp and silent.

WILLIAM LEGRAND relapsed out of the hot passion and fever of semilucidity into the twilight zone in which he had lived for so long, a dull-eyed, pitiful wreck of a man who stared dully out the window from glassy eyes and who muttered nonsense. Fever burned him and racked him, through. The doctor whom Arthur and Martin brought, almost by force, from Pembroke, pronounced it a paralytic stroke and said that William Legrand might never recover—that he might die at any time, or live on for years.

Martin was badly shaken by the effect of his tirade, but his remorse curled into more bitter hatred of Derosier, whom he blamed for the original fever that had roused William Legrand to such hysteria about the war. The expense of getting the doctor had taken almost all of Arthur’s money.

Martin, without explaining the situation to Arthur, declared that he had been robbed of his own wages and that he was going to make Derosier pay for it. An appeal to Derosier for reversal of Lescaut’s breakage charges met with no success. Derosier was polite, but sarcastically reminded Martin that since he had lost hundreds of dollars by the strike, one who led it should not mind losing a little.

"He who aims to be a great leader of men must be prepared to make sacrifices," was Derosier’s vitriolic irony.

"You slave-driving robber!" was Martin’s angry retort. "I’ll make you pay for this and for other things. You and your war talk have driven my father crazier than he was! You keep away from him hereafter."

"Martin, I hold no grudge against you," Derosier said. "You are your own worst enemy. I am sorry about your father. I can give you a job on the Black River, away from Lescaut and——"

"To hell with your job and with Lescaut, too! I’m going to start a little war right here at home—and Lescaut will be the first casualty!"

With this hot threat, he left Derosier’s villa and headed for MacLaughlin’s.

The next morning Big Bruno was found lying in the snow, close to a side
door which gave entry direct to MacLaughlin’s private office and which served as the bank of Travoy, in the absence of any other such institution. In one hand Lescaut clutched a key which fitted the store door; in the other he held a crimson-stained knife—and his neck was broken.

Martin Legrand had disappeared.

CHAPTER X.
WAR IN THE TRAVOY.

War raged in the Travoy. It was as if the crimsoned knife and broken neck of Big Bruno had been signals for an outbreak among the timber jacks which had begun in a small way with the strike at his camp. From the passive weapon of the strike the war shifted to crude, savage action, a sort of sabotage, in which Derosier suffered the loss of tools, supplies of the eatable sort in large quantities, even horses from the camp stables—and the law, invoked to check the wave of defiance and unrest, seemed powerless to check it. Strike breakers, imported from the slums of the cities, failed to stem the rising tide which threw Derosier’s whole organization into confusion.

An evil genius seemed to permeate the North Woods, striking first one camp, then another, like an epidemic of disease. Gradually a tradition grew concerning the root and cause of the strikes and violence. It was such a tradition as sensible men would laugh at, for it was on a par with Indian superstitions of the dread loup garou, or werewolf, who was able, so the stories go, to travel hundreds of miles in a single night.

The tradition was of a giant woodsman, with a shock of flaring red hair, who seemed to exercise an irresistible power over the very thoughts and actions of the timber jacks and who seemed able to be in two places at once. At any rate, he was blamed for having fomented a strike on the Coulogne, one day, and, on the same day, to have led a striking crew on the Black River in an attack on the camp storehouse, to get food which had been refused them unless they returned to work. The camps were more than fifty miles apart.

Among the timber jacks this man came to be known by the significant title of “The Red.” No one knew him—or at least, no one mentioned him by any other name. There were those who professed to be wise, but either they were not so sure or else they were afraid to say what they thought.

Since Martin Legrand’s disappearance, officers had been combing the Travoy for him. One day they invaded a far-away subcamp, attached to the Black River string, and arrested one who answered the description of Martin Legrand to a hair. But when he was brought before the judge, he was able to prove an absolute alibi, for it was Arthur Legrand they had. Arthur had gone to work as an ordinary axman for one of Derosier’s bosses, forced to earn some sort of wages to care for his father in his continued illness.

This experience cooled the ardor of the authorities. There had appeared no eye witnesses to the killing of Lescaut, and Lescaut was not deeply mourned. The crimson-stained knife and the key to MacLaughlin’s office found in his fingers were not the best sort of evidence of his innocence. The indictment against Martin Legrand was filed—and forgotten.

The tradition concerning The Red did not reach Derosier for a long time, and then it came very much garbled. He suspected that The Red was none other than the fugitive, Martin Legrand, but could get no direct evidence. Derosier was at his wit’s end, with a double-barreled job on his hands; his own operations and that of
Jim Harris, with notes coming due on the stumpage he had bought, far north, on speculation—and prices continuing in a slump, for pulp wood and lumber wood as well.

Derosier called frequently at the Legendre cabin, despite Martin’s warning. He called ostensibly upon a charitable mission. He held long conversations with Senwa, always in the Montagnais tongue which he spoke fluently, as well as Senwa herself. William Legendre’s name was often upon their tongues.

One day in March, Senwa informed Derosier that one of the twins had been there after midnight, had ridden her remain in her bunk in the lean-to, in a voice so terrible she had feared to disobey, and then had ransacked the little attic above the main room. She found that he had taken traps, fishing tackle, an old shotgun and some cast-off clothing. He had left without her seeing him, but she believed it was Martin, for he was the hunter and trapper. Arthur had gone to Montreal, after the trial, and had not been seen in the Travoy since.

Derosier was convinced that Martin had made a dash into Travoy, in need of hunting and trapping supplies, and that the fugitive could not be far away, probably in some hidden nook whither he emerged to run a trap line or to fish through the ice of some wilderness lake. He sent a half-breed tracker on the snowshoe trail left by the visitor, but a blizzard drove the man back with news of failure to follow the trail.

Simultaneously with this visit, a big strike broke out in the Black River camps, where Derosier thought he had quelled the trouble. The men demanded doubled wages until the spring drive was brought down the Black to the Ottawa and announced they would refuse to cut a stick of timber, break out a rollway or float a log unless their demands were met.

On investigation, Derosier became convinced that The Red was at the bottom of this latest outbreak. But he was puzzled to account for Martin’s supposed presence in Travoy—and forty miles north within twenty-four hours—if his reports were reliable. His head boss swore that he knew The Red had been in touch with some of his men that very day.

Derosier redoubled his efforts to apprehend Martin. But for every move he made in that direction, The Red seemed able to checkmate him. He struck at far separated points and seemed, indeed, endowed with supernatural speed. The Red was everywhere—and nowhere. His fame spread beyond the Travoy. It came down to the military, at recruiting headquarters in the river towns, from the lips of woodsmen who drifted in from the forests, in surprising numbers and soon spent their money, many of them signing up for the army to see service in France.

The military blessed this mysterious outlaw. England wanted men and was not particular what motives drove men into the army. And The Red was driving scores of them into the ranks to help save England—and France!

The crisis came with the opening of spring. Conditions became so bad that Derosier wired James Harris, advising him that he would be unable to abide by the terms of the contract, though Derosier himself had originated it and subscribed to it.

Jim Harris, desperately counting upon his pulp-wood sales to save him from utter ruin, turned to the one person in the world in whom he had utter confidence. That was his daughter, Gwen. His wife had been in Florida, during this crisis, but Gwen had remained in New York with him, his constant companion. In this new emergency it was natural he should confide in her, for she knew more of the Travoy than he did.
Gwen urged him to go up into the Travoy at once.
"Why should I?" he demanded.
"Well, Jimmy, I'll tell you—I've got a hunch," she responded, using his own language. "Suppose you play my hunches for a change."

She forbore to remind him that his hunches, of late, had not panned out so well, but he got the implication and winced. But he could stand the gaff, Jim Harris could. He could stand anything but ridicule. Father and daughter were very much alike in this respect as well as in others.

"Well, all right," he said, "I'll go—and from now on I'm going to try playing your hunches. Got any more?"

He was half playful, half serious and, as time went by, he became much more serious.

CHAPTER XI.
HARRIS PLAYS A HUNCH.

The train from Montreal, northbound, was made up entirely of day coaches. Jim Harris, fidgety and impatient, sought a seat in the smoker. He dropped into a seat in front of a young man at whom he took a second look because of his powerful build, his strong face and the deep blue of his steady eyes. A black-felt hat planted firmly on his head showed, beneath it, a close-cropped growth of reddish hair, but his mustache was deep brown. His face was ruddy and the color extended down his neck and even to his throat. Harris decided he was a Canadian of the Scotch-Irish or perhaps Scotch-English strain so common in Ontario and the western provinces, but more rare in Quebec. He looked like an outdoor man, too. Perhaps he was doing something in timber. Timber was on Harris' mind to the exclusion of everything else, just now.

In his brusque but inoffensive manner Harris turned about in his seat and addressed the stranger.

"You happen to know anything about the Travoy section?"

The man seemed to hesitate at first, then he smiled and answered:
"A lot. I was born there. Left last Christmas."

"That so? I don't suppose, then, you know much about the trouble that's been going on in the lumber camps. Or do you?"

"I've heard there were some strikes," the stranger admitted, with apparent indifference.

"And worse!" Harris went on.
"Wonder what the real cause of it is?"
"It may be they have some real grievances," suggested the young man.
"Wages are pretty low in the woods."

Harris decided that the Canadian knew more than he professed to know about conditions in the woods.

"What do they pay?" he asked.

"As little as they can," came the prompt answer, in a harsh tone. "And that amounts to not over two dollars and a quarter a day, on the average. I worked at that wage up to the time I left for Montreal."

"Humph! You're a woodsman, eh? Well, then you do know something. Frankly, I'm looking for information. Mind if I ask you some questions? Here, have a cigar."

He transferred himself to the seat beside the other.

"My name's Harris," he announced bluntly. "Jim Harris. Got some timberland up in the Travoy. Maybe you've heard of it?"

The other man nodded noncommittally and turned his keen blue eyes to the window, as if interested more in the whirling landscape of white and green outside, then in a smoking-car conversation.

"My agent tells me he's got to pay higher wages or the timber jacks on my job will quit and leave my stuff high and dry. Says they are quitting and coming down into the States for
better pay—or joining up with the Canadian army."

When the stranger answered, his voice seemed to have changed. Instead of polite indifference, it indicated sudden interest.

"Perhaps your agent is right," he said. "He should have begun the season with better wages. I was one who went on strike early in the season."

"You were, eh? Well, look here, you’re just the man I want to talk to, then! Now, I won’t ask you who you are. And, further, I’ll give you my word to keep close any information you can give me. I want to get the men’s viewpoint."

"I do not believe I can help you much," was the diffident reply. "Though you are fair enough. I’ve been away and—"

"Tell me this!" insisted Harris, brushing aside the objection. "Is it true, do you believe, that any one man could cause all this trouble?"

"One man?"

"Yes. According to what I’ve learned, a wild sort with a knack of leading other men. A big, red-headed— I beg your pardon, if I seem to be describing you!" he laughed. "You’ve got an alibi, anyway," he jested. "And it doesn’t seem possible any one man could be responsible for so much widespread trouble."

"No," was the monosyllabic comment.

"I say he’d have to be two or three men to travel as fast as Derosier claims he does."

"Derosier? He is your agent?"

"Yes. You know him?"

"Quite well. He is widely known in the Travoy."

"My daughter, Gwen, spent some time up here last summer," Harris went on, "and she doesn’t agree with the reports I’ve had from Derosier about certain things. For instance, he informs me that he believes it is a young scamp by the name of Martin Legrand who is causing the labor trouble and that it all started with a quarrel between him and a man named Lescaut, one of Derosier’s woods bosses, last summer—ending in a killing. Gwen says she does not believe it. She won’t give a reason, but— I’m strong on woman’s intuition." He grinned broadly, but the grin ended in a wry grimace. "My own hunches went bad on me," he confessed. "Now I’m playing Gwen’s."

Harris drew a long breath and seemed lost for a moment in musing.

"Well, I don’t suppose all this interests you," he burst out. "In fact, I don’t know why I’m telling you. You look like a woodsman. You know the Travoy. What do you think of this situation?"

"I think there need be no great labor trouble if the wages are raised to two fifty a day and other conditions made right," was the deliberate response. "Personally, I should be willing to undertake a contract on that as a maximum basis."

"You would?"

"Yes."

"Humph! Look here, I’ve been experiencing one of my old-fashioned hunches, mister. It’s got me, strong—but I’m afraid to play it. Are you a man that knows timber well?"

"Nothing better."

Harris fairly jumped up from his seat, so quick was his movement. "Say, my daughter’s in the second car back," he said. "I want you to come in and meet her. I told you I’ve been taking her advice—on the hunch end of it—and I don’t know but what we might talk business—the three of us."

The brawny Canadian glanced up at Harris with such a strange expression that Harris was inclined to think there was something wrong with his looks; then he decided that, after all, his proposition was a curious one to make to a man he had just met.
“I’m in earnest,” he declared. “I’ll trust her judgment on a man, where I wouldn’t trust my own—and my own tells me I want to talk business with you—about my Travoy timber.”

“I’m afraid not,” came the reply, cold and yet with a touch of diffidence that robbed it of offense. “I—I have met your daughter and—I’m afraid her advice would be against me. I—My name happens to be Legrand.”

Jim Harris stared incredulously from his keen eyes, beneath shaggy brows, into the steady blue orbs of the other.

“Legrand? You mean—you’re not—”

“Not Martin Legrand,” came the answer. “Arthur—one of The Two Reds of Travoy—and some of them have adopted a little rhyme about us: ‘Art and Mart, never apart.’

“It was I who was tried for the murder of Bruno Lescaut—and acquitted,” he went on. “The crime is still held against Martin. That—and many other things. But if you are playing your daughter’s hunches and wish to settle this indecision—ask her about Arthur Legrand and see, then, if you still want to talk business with me.”

Again Harris stared, his eyes narrowing. Never once did he take his eyes from Arthur Legrand’s and Arthur met the gaze unflinchingly until suddenly Harris shot out a hand and gripped him by the shoulder.

“You wait!” he shouted. “You wait! I’ve got another hunch and I’m willing to bet on it!”

He whirled and strode down the aisle, leaving Arthur sitting like a man stricken with sudden paralysis, unable to do anything save stare out the window, frozen in the grip of emotions he thought he had killed. Fire at his heart and ice in his blood, it was.

When he saw Harris again, he shrank as if from an expected blow.

But Harris again gripped his shoulder and a smile came on his rugged face. “Well,” he said, “I’ve come back to talk business with you, Legrand!”

CHAPTER XII.
THE HIDDEN CACHET.

PEACE reigned in the Travoy, this spring. Peace had been established and had prevailed since the early part of March, since the return from Montreal of “The Other Red,” Arthur Legrand, who had blossomed forth as woods boss on the Black River contract. It was curious how benign was the influence of The Other Red as compared with the malign influence of the one whom they called simply “The Red.” It was gossiped about that Arthur Legrand, who had shouldered his brother’s crime in standing trial for the killing of Lescaut, was now striving to make up for the damage that Martin had wrought. This was village talk.

The strikes of the winter had pinched the dependents of the timber jacks very hard. They were the ones who suffered most. Children had learned from their mothers to speak of The Red as an evil one—and now they were learning to bless The Other Red.

The village did not realize half the miracle. Arthur Legrand was serving two masters and serving them well. He had been accepted by Derosier, at Harris’ suggestion, to take the place of Derosier’s woods boss, Leclerc, on the Black River contract, with no change in the terms of the contract. Harris had taken Gwen into the conference with Derosier over this matter, after she had persuaded her father not to take the drastic action of breaking off with Derosier entirely.

Jim Harris, when he found Derosier surprisingly anxious to be agreeable and meet him more than halfway, gave Gwen credit for more business acumen than she really possessed. He did not realize how much her mere presence in Travoy had to do with Derosier’s
agreeableness and acquiescence in his recommendations.

There was another reason for Derosier's being willing to have Arthur Le- grand replace Leclerc. Arthur Legrand knew too much about timber and about trees—particularly white pine and more particularly the strength and weakness of planted pine—for Derosier to dare to refuse him this job.

Harris was in a desperate hurry to get back to New York. He had to make a stop at Ottawa for a conference concerning the marketing of his pulp wood and Wall Street demanded his presence. Derosier comprehended Harris' situation without knowing the details—for he, too, was making his "back to the wall" battle.

GWEN suggested, and Derosier seconded, that she remain in Travoy until her father could return for her. She wanted to go up the Black River to the camps for the break-out. Mrs. MacLaughlin, the wife of the storekeeper, invited her to stay and promised Harris to keep his daughter under her wing. Harris agreed to let her remain. Gwen was accustomed to taking care of herself and Harris felt that her presence and her keen eyes would be a safeguard to his interests in the timber.

Mrs. MacLaughlin was hungry for some woman of her own race to gossip with. She had little to do with the wives of the woodsman, for as the wife of Derosier's factor she felt herself above them and they spoke little English, anyway. She poured into Gwen's ears the news and near news of the winter in the Travoy.

Gwen heard from her lips of the strikes and how Derosier tried to nip the first trouble in the bud, of the killing of Lescaut and of Martin Legrand's disappearance, of Arthur's arrest and acquittal, of William Legrand's illness and the story which had leaked out of how he had tried to drive his sons into the army at the muzzle of a gun.

"And you know," Mrs. MacLaughlin gasped out, as the finishing touch to this story, "there's some say as Mart's gone into the army, but I don't think so. It's my belief he's been livin' deep in the woods, trappin' furs. The fur market is good. Yes, trappin' and huntin', as he was always doin'. Now, not a word to any one, but I don't believe Art Legrand was all winter in Montreal!"

"You—you mean you think he was—in the Travoy some of the time!" exclaimed Gwen.

"Well, I'm not sayin'," was the response. "But you know how a man could easy stop trouble when he's helped start it."

"Oh! The—the strikes!"

"No one man—even be he as wonderful as they say The Red is—no one man could have gone up and down the whole Travoy triangle this past winter at the speed of an express train and more like a flyin' man, dropped out of nowhere into one camp, and then within in a day's time appear in or near another camp. Remember, they're as like as two peas to look at, them Legrand twins."

"Yes—I've seen them. Father said that Arthur told him he had left for Montreal at Christmas, come to think of it. He didn't say he had been there all the time. I wonder—"

"It's none of my business," Mrs. MacLaughlin declared. "I have nothin' to do with the Legrands. Mac, he thinks there's the devil in 'em. Personally I admire Art Legrand for a man. It's Mart's the wild Indian. He'd be up to anythin'. They do say there's Indian in 'em—though I don't go so far as to believe that. The old man's queer. Mart seems to have some of the queerness. He'd not be beyond killin' a man—not that I say he mur-
Gwen was a trifle frightened. She glanced questioningly at Derosier.  
"It is all right," he said. "A whim of his. I'll go out, to humor him. He may become excited and worse if he is not humored, the doctor says."

When Derosier had left the room, Legrand bade Senwa bend close to his lips.

"The cachet," he whispered, so loudly that Gwen could hear his words. "Give her the cachet. Tell her to keep it. She is English and she will understand. Tell her to keep it until I am gone. Tell her to give it to them—so they will know. It is her wish. She was English—and it is my wish that what she wanted shall be done."

"The cachet!" Senwa exclaimed, with a show of unusual agitation and excitement. "Where is the cachet? Where you hide? I give to the English lady."

"Has the Frenchman gone home?" queried Legrand suspiciously, and with his head cocked, listening. "Give me the rifle. You will try to fool me, Senwa. You will give it to him because he is a——"

Senwa, with a swift side glance at Gwen—a glance filled with what seemed like sudden fear—clapped her hand over William Legrand's lips.

"No listen to him," she wheezed violently. "He crazy. No good in the head. He no talk sense. No cachet at all. He theenk so. You better go, thank you. He get sick."

Seeing Legrand sink back, with a sigh, and the light fade from his eyes, and sensing something sinister in the squaw's voice and her glittering black eyes, Gwen was glad to leave the room.

"He is quiet?" queried Derosier, betraying deep concern, when Gwen joined him outside. "The poor old man is really quite out of his head."

"Yes, she quieted him," Gwen answered. "He seems to give up to her easily. It is too bad about him. He
imagines that he has some sort of treasure hidden, it seems. He talked about a cachet and wanted the squaw to give it to me to keep for his sons, until he had died. Goodness! It was rather uncanny. He asked for his rifle, once.”

“A cachet—hidden!” exclaimed Derosier sharply. “Oh, yes, that is a favorite hallucination of his! He excites himself when he gets to talking and Senwa has to force him to stop. By the way, Miss Harris, why is it that you use the word ‘squaw’ when you speak of Senwa?” he finished.

“Why, I—I don’t know! Because she is an Indian, I suppose.”

Derosier’s smile was enigmatic.

“You remember you declared, last summer, that you had no prejudice against one of Indian blood?”

“Yes. I meant that, really.”

“You try to be free from it, but out of your very blood and brain, despite your protest, the prejudice springs. You call an Indian woman a squaw—and you would not call an Italian nobleman a ‘wop,’ would you?”

His smile robbed the query of offense.

“I suppose it is vulgar to call her a squaw,” she confessed, troubled and a bit nettled. “But she is a squaw!” she finished defiantly.

“Yes—yes, that is so,” muttered Derosier. “Nothing can change it.”

CHAPTER XIII.
LITTLE WHITE OWL.

For some time, William Legrand had been sleeping fitfully, sitting bolt upright in his rocker for hours, staring and muttering to himself. He was most quiet when he had the old rifle lying across his knees. Senwa humored him, but she was afraid to go to sleep herself when he sat thus.

She listened sharply, this night. It was midnight before she heard it—a sound like the unimportant hoot of an owl, in the pine that towered above the ford. When she heard it, she rose and went softly out of the cabin. If William Legrand heard it, he paid no attention. Senwa had made a pot of a little screech owl that hung near the cabin.

A lithe figure, in moccasins and moving with the easy stealth of an Indian, met her halfway between the cabin and the brook. He spoke to her in the Montagnais language softly, yet with authority.

“I have come for the cachet,” he said. “It is time. He remembers too well.”

“I do not know where it is hidden,” was Senwa’s troubled response. “It is years since he has spoken of the cachet. It cannot be in the cabin. I have searched.”

“It is there!” was the fierce declaration. “I know it is there and you must get it. If you do not, I shall go and find it myself.”

“No, you must not! He has the rifle and he has, hidden, some cartridges. I could not get them away from him.”

“Did he speak of the cachet after she had gone?”

“Yes, long after. But he would not tell me where to find it.”

“Go now and tell him that the English girl has come for it. Go! When did you see it? Did you see what was inside?”

“I and I only have seen it. It was when she died—the Englishwoman, the mother. It has in it papers—much writing. It is of metal. No one knows save Senwa. They do not know.”

“Senwa, the cachet contains writings which tell the secret—our secret which must never be known. Look you, I must have it now, for I am going to make the American girl my wife. And if she knew—she would never marry me.”

“Ah! But, Little White Owl—”

“Do not use that name!”
"But I cannot say the other. My tongue will not twist to it. I am too old. I wish to say—what if The Two Reds should be told of the cachet—and it is gone?"

"I will take care of that. You must get it for me. Put the old man to sleep as you know how to do, with your hands and the old songs."

"Place your hand upon my head, Little White Owl." She knelt on the ground before him.

With a strange look on his face, he laid his hand on her sleek coarse hair.

"Now, go!" he ordered. "Bring me the cachet—or never again shall I touch you so."

Senwa rose and entered the cabin as a breeze blows. A dim light burned on the table. The dull eyes of William Legrand seemed drawn to the tiny flame as he sat with the heavy rifle upon his bony knees, his hands resting upon it.

"Old man," Senwa addressed him, in a singsong voice, "the English girl wishes now to take the cachet. She is waiting. Tell me where to find it and I shall give it to her."

Legrand blinked.

"Where is the Frenchman?" he queried. "Is he near?"

"He has gone far, to the place where the men cut the trees."

"Let the English girl come in then."

"She fears to enter. You frighten her, with the gun. Let me take it away and hide it."

"If she's English, she need not fear."

"The cachet is beneath the bricks of the hearth," he mumbled. "Take it to the English girl and make her swear never to let it come into the hands of the Frenchman. If he has it, he will have what he has long sought from me, because of what I used to know. I have forgotten now. I have forgotten. But still he fears—the secret. Bid the English girl to keep it until I am dead—then to give it to them, my sons, to prove what I have told them. Martin laughs, but he will no longer laugh. Bring me the cachet before you give it to her."

Senwa sang on monotonously and continued to caress his wrinkled brow, as if she had not heard him. She crooned and soothed him to sleep. Then she crept swiftly to the fireplace and lifted loose bricks, one at a time, softly, slowly, and extracted from a cavity beneath them a rusted cachet or strong box of thin iron.

A few moments later a gliding, noiseless figure, with the easy stealth of a forest Indian, threaded a narrow, half-overgrown trail which skirted the base of the mountain behind the cabin, making his way swiftly toward Lac Bleu. Wrapped in a bundle of furs he carried a cachet.

Senwa sat before the fireplace. She sprinkled ashes on the hearth until they filled cracks in the bricks. A screech owl whistled plaintively beneath the window.

CHAPTER XIV.

UP THE RIVER TRAIL.

THERE came up the river trail into the Black River camp, by the rollways, one May day which seemed bursting with the promise of spring, a dainty, rosy-cheeked, brown-haired girl whose grace and beauty captured the attention of every timber jack along the river front and threatened to disorganize their feverish labor at preparing for the break out.
The break-out was to begin the next day. Far up at the end of the trail, which turned away from the river at the first deck of logs, stood the boss, superintending the construction and placing of a huge skidway which was to extend from the foot of the rollway down to the water’s edge and down which the logs would go thundering and plunging, without check from the rocks and roots, bared all along the bank by the torrents of the stream.

The boss looked up, feeling rather than seeing the cessation of work, and he saw her, far away. A piercing, stabbing pain smote him. It was the first pang of jealousy.

Gwen Harris had come up the river with Derosier, who walked closely beside her along the trail, with an air of deferential possessiveness.

It was the first time Arthur Legrand had seen her since that summer day when he had found his heart upon his lips before her, the day when he had spoken words which he could never even remember, because they were so inadequate to his emotion, the day she had laughed at him scornfully and had gone galloping swiftly away on the cream-colored horse of Derosier’s.

It was the first time he had tried to see her, but all winter long he had thought of her. In the frigid silences he had fought memories and hopes until he believed he had conquered. But now she was coming toward him. It was spring.

Unless he ran or ducked between the log piles or did some ridiculous thing such as turning his back upon her when she came, he would soon face this girl. He was racked by an agony of suffocating emotion as he watched her approaching, sure-footed in her little high-laced boots, graceful in the close-fitting woolen breeches and the gay Mackinaw, the gray fur cap.

What a scene this was for her to see, he thought. She had come here expecting to find the majestic, grand, picturesque and beautiful. But the mountains, which were majestic, were hidden by the tattered remnants of the gashed forest. The river ran black, oily and dirty, with no dash of white-water rapids.

THE logs were ugly piles, the stark members of once tall, fine trees. Ugly stumps and uglier brush piles, hideous black-log or tar-papered cabins set at odd angles in a clearing of trampled mud, and the muddy trail and the débris of chips, bark and sawdust, piles of sullen logs, drifts of snags, sweating horses—all this was what she was seeing—and the boss stood, a shaggy, muddy, bearded figure at the end of the muddy trail.

Then suddenly she was standing before him, with a hand outstretched, her head uptilted as it had been the first time he saw her, and a smile upon her face, friendly and glad.

“Oh, here you are! How do you do, Mr. Legrand? My goodness! For Pete’s sake, have you gone and grown some more?”

He was conscious of the sorry figure he cut, of his straggly beard, his long hair that curled about his ears and at the nape of his neck, his torn, faded, muddied Mackinaw and visorless cap, his stiff, cracked hands, clumsy boots and generally seedy appearance. In truth he had not dreamed of seeing any woman in this place.

He had been striving, since he took hold up here, to make up for the time lost by the strikes—and he had succeeded. But it was at the cost of day-and-night labor, sleeping, when he did, with his boots on, without thought or regard to his personal appearance or comfort. His eyes were bloodshot and watery from lack of sleep. His muscles ached—and his heart ached, too.

He hid himself under a jest.

“Grown some more whiskers and red
hair, I guess,” he drawled out, thrusting the fingers of his left hand in his bushy brown beard as he took her extended hand in the other.

It sent an electric thrill through him to touch her hand and another thrill flashed when her clear bubbling laugh broke out at the joke.

Derosier, without offering his hand, began at once to ask numerous questions concerning the progress of the work. Legrand answered them methodically, but mechanically. Gwen’s eyes flitted from one face to the other. “You look,” she said, in a pause, “as if you had worked very hard—and as if you had spent the winter in the woods.”

There was kindness—and there was something else in the remark.

Derosier’s neat, well-groomed appearance caused Arthur to realize to the full what a wild man he must look. He reflected bitterly that the first time she had seen him he had looked like a wild man, too, with uncut hair and bare feet. He was playing well, the part he had boasted of—that he was no gentleman.

“You have been working like a beaver,” she said. “You see, I have come up to keep an eye on you and report to father.”

Derosier turned to inspect the work at the skidway and moved some distance from them.

“By the way,” Arthur blurted out, “I haven’t had opportunity to thank you for the recommend you gave me! I want to do it, now.”

“A recommendation?”

“Yes. On the train up from Montreal, when your father went to ask you—about me. It was splendid of you, Miss Harris, because I had not the slightest claim on your consideration, your respect. In fact, I told your father that you probably would not advise him to deal with me.”

“Oh!” She laughed with curious timbre, coloring a bit. “Well, I am going to be honest—like you. I was not very ladylike. I saw that father was sold on you, anyway, and I merely told him that you were no gentleman—and were proud of it—but that you knew timber and I believed you were thoroughly honest.”

With that she turned away and rejoined Derosier.

Arthur stood for a moment as one paralyzed. His lips moved under his beard. “No gentleman, eh? Proud of it, eh? Thoroughly honest! I’ll show her how true those words are!”

CHAPTER XV.
DOUBLE FOR THE RED.

It did not take Gwen long to discover that Arthur Legrand had accomplished something like a miracle on the Black River. She made Derosier explain everything about the work and when he failed on details there was Leclerc, the former boss, a voluble, obliging little man whose broken English she loved to hear. He filled in details. Still she felt she had not penetrated to the secret of Legrand’s power over this crew of malcontents. The men were a tough, surly looking lot.

“By gar, dose fellaire from outside de Travoy is so bad de men from de Travoy won’t work wid dem,” Leclerc declared. “Dey all quit an’ go somew’ere else. Dees fellaire is bums. But dey nevaire work so ’ard before.”

She suspected part of the truth—that Leclerc was a little lazy and he betrayed his idea of being an executive when he told her that it had worn him out patrolling the river, from one gang to another, trying to speed them up. Leclerc’s style was to bully and command; Legrand’s was to jump in and lead. He set the pace and with his size and strength he was able to force work where the other could only obtain an imitation of it.
Still, there was the feeling of something else, some mysterious force which had aided Leclerc. She felt also that Leclerc, with all his volubility, was holding back something because of Derosier’s presence. She seized the opportunity, when Derosier went up the river to look over a tract of timberland he had recently tied up with an option, to dig for the secret.

“Mr. Leclerc,” she said, “you know, better than any one else, why Mr. Lecland was able to get so much out of this crew, when so clever and able a man as yourself met with difficulty—through no fault of your own.”

The Canadian swaggered a bit under the flattery.

“By gar, I tell you, Mees Harris, it’s not so funny w’en you know how every-thing happen!” he burst out. “Dat Lecland, he’s got somet’ing up his sleeve. I tell you somet’ing nobody know but myse’f. I don’t even tol’ dees to M’sieu’ Derosier. It’s some of my beezees, none of hees own.

“You know,” he went on, “I got kick on de haid in bad fight las’ wintaire. I’m not ver’ well for long tam. All right! Now, I’m pret’ bad off w’en Lecland, he come up de rivaire. Wall, firs’ t’ing off he come to see me. He’s pret’ square fellaire. He come an’ tol’ me he’s goin’ to be de boss on de camp an’ me, I don’t give a care. I’m pret’ seeck man. Wall, he tol’ me I get de same pay anyhow an’ dat’s fine.

“‘All right,’ he say. ‘Me, I’m goin’ to call meeting of de men togedder; you kip still an’ don’t say word about de new boss.’ All right.”

“He didn’t want them to know he was the new boss?” queried Gwen.

Leclerc nodded and winked.

“By gar, de word go roun’ like brush fire dat dere’s goin’ to be a strike meet-ing! By gar, dey t’ink it’s De Red come into camp! You see, he’s de brudder, but he look lak de same wan.”

Gwen experienced a thrill of some-thing like discovery. Mrs. MacLaugh-lin’s shrewd conjectures began to appear more than mere gossip.

Leclerc described how the timber jacks all gathered about the main shanty at noon and how Lecland appeared on the high stoop and faced them.

“Eet’s got so quiet you t’ink dere’s goin’ to be a beeg storm!” Leclerc described the scene dramatically. “Me, I’m sittin’ inside de door, wit’ my eye on a knot hole. Dere’s fellaire below de stoop can spik French. He spik w’at Lecland say so eve’body can un-derstan’. Wall, Lecland, he say: ‘Mens, I come to brang you good news. We goin’ to get pay two and a half a day. We goin’ to work on t’ree shift’s w’en we man de rivaire on de night-tam. We goin’ eat five hot meal a day w’en we work sunrise to dark. Tam an’ wan half for overtam for de mens w’at want to do two shift’s ’stead of wan. You see?’

Indeed Gwen could see what effect such an announcement must have had upon the men, said by one whom they believed was their own leader—The Red, whose mysterious comings and goings, whose messages and commands had swayed them to strikes, to sabotage, to violent passion and savage action during the winter.

“Wan mineet she’s all still,” Leclerc went on. “Den dey began to yell. How dey hollaire! But he hol’ up hees han’ an’ he say: ‘Me, I got de promise of dose t’ing for you mens, an’ me, I’m goin’ to stay here and see you get dem. Me, I’m goin’ to be boss of de woods and de rivaire till de rear of de drive she’s gone down de Black Rivaire into de Ottawa! W’at you t’ink of dat?’”

Gwen chuckled.

“It must have been great. What did the men do—and say, Mr. Leclerc?”

“Well, I got my ear full off dat knot hole. Some wan hollaire out: ‘Hooray for T’e Red!’ Den dey all go
crazee. Dey t'row deir hat in de air and dey bus' wan anodder on de back wit' deir fists and dey laugh an' laugh an' den dey laugh again. By gar, me, I nevaire feel so more fonny myse'f in my whole life. Because, you see, I'm got two jokes inside myse'f. Because I know eet's not De Red, but hees brudder!"

Leclerc burst into laughter at the memory.

"You see, dey can't tell de diffrrance. Den he say: 'I guess some of you mens know me all right. My name she's Le-Grand an'—' Everybody start to hol-laire: 'Hooray for Mart, De Red! Hooray for De Red!'

"But he don't smile leettle bit himse'f. He say: 'Of course, you know I spen' mos' de wintaire in Montreal.'"

"Wall, dey go more crezee dan be-fore. It's good joke, eh? By gar, Le-Grand he laugh himse'f, soft lak. Me, I laugh so I can't breathe, behin' dat knot hole. You know what he tol' me? By gar, he turn aroun' an' he say to me: 'Leclerc, eef any wan come to you an' tol' you I'm not myse'f, you sen' heem to me an' I show heem damn queech!'"

Sheer admiration shone in Leclerc's eyes and face. It was apparent he bore no grudge against Arthur Legrand for superseding him. Gwen could comprehend the relief Leclerc must have felt to be relieved of dangerous responsibility by a powerful man who bore the very name which had turned the timber jacks into raging savages—and now calmed them and made them laugh.

"'Yes,' he say, 'I spen' mos' de wintaire in Montreal!' An' dey t'ink dat's bes' joke in de worl'."

"'And all the time,'" Gwen remarked quietly, "'he had been in the woods, with his brother?"

"'Sh! Sh! Nobody know dat!'" cautioned Leclerc. "'Dat's de beeg joke, you see?"

The mystery was quite clear to her now. Arthur and Martin Legrand together had made up the supernatural being—The Red. This was the solution of the mystery; this explained the tales of prodigious journeys comparable to the dashes of the loup garou through the forests.

The Two Reds of Travoy had been impersonating each other—or at any rate, Arthur had been impersonating Martin, loyal to him in his extremity as a hunted man, loyal to him even in his vengeful purpose to harass Derosier, disorganize his crews and carry on a guerrilla warfare of hate in the whole Travoy.

And now Arthur had turned from destruction to construction.

"'But—what has become of Martin?" she queried. "Do you know?"

Leclerc waved a hand toward the north.

"Plantee countree up dere in de mountains for man to hide," he said. "Plantee peoples, too. De Montagnais, dey tak' care of deir own!"

The significance of Leclerc's final remark struck through Gwen's warm, eager interest like a chill. The memory of Senwa, stolid, leathery of face, beady-eyed, her strange domination of William Legrand flashed up in her mind.

Derosier had said that William Legrand was "not exactly a squaw man." Here was another mystery. Later, when she reviewed the story Leclerc had told and fitted things together—Mrs. MacLaughlin's words with Leclerc's, Derosier's with Leclerc's—and analyzed the actions of The Two Reds, in their strange collaboration of the winter, she was forced to admit that the twins had conducted themselves with the guile and temper of Indians. If ever two blue-eyed, red-headed men could be accused of bearing a drop or two of the red man in them, it was The Two Reds of Travoy.

Then she recalled her positive decla-
ATION to Derosier that such a mixture of blood would find no prejudice in her, that she would not hesitate, even, to marry a man of mixed blood, and her cheeks burned hot—and she wondered why.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BREAK-OUT.

A LITTLE cabin, one of three which were set apart from the buildings where the men ate and slept, had been cleaned and arranged for Gwen's convenience during her stay at the camp. It lay between the one where Arthur Legrand made his headquarters and the one which Derosier was to occupy. It differed from these two only in the oaken bar which had been fashioned to bolt the door from inside.

She was the only woman in the camp. Leclerc's wife and her sister had formerly occupied this cabin, but with the departure of all the men from the Travoy for other camps these women had gone out, too. It added spice to her adventure. Gwen was not afraid—but the oaken bar helped her courage.

Leclerc came to her cabin with the announcement that one of the rollways was to be dumped, though the break out had been set for the following day. The big skid had been completed and they were going to try it out.

"Me, I'm goin' to dump dat rollway," Leclerc announced, with some pride. "De boss, he say mebbe you want to see eet."

"I wouldn't miss it for anything!" she declared, and hastened to the river bank with Leclerc.

Legrand was there, working away with a gang of men at adjusting the long, heavy skid from the base of the log deck down into the water.

Gwen wanted to speak to Legrand. She had been doing some very clear, serious thinking. She had begun to comprehend the splendid loyalty of Arthur for his brother. A man who would take the chance of being convicted for murder, in his brother's place, a man who would voluntarily bury himself in the woods and impersonate this brother, wanted for the crime still and perhaps under the dread danger of the "dead or alive" slogan of the Canadian police—such a man might very well have shouldered the blame for a lesser misdemeanor.

She had reached the conclusion that it was not Arthur who had written her that note, despite Derosier's declaration he knew Arthur's handwriting. The trick of the trailing calèche and the squaw and pail of milk, which went with the note, fitted so admirably with Martin's temperament, as she was coming to understand it, that she was no longer in doubt that Martin had brought the ridicule upon her and Arthur had revenged her, when the villagers laughed.

ON the basis of this supposition, however, there was the uncomfortable accompaniment of the quarrel between Lescaut and one of The Two Reds the previous summer. The quarrel—then the killing. The sequence was inescapable. Putting two together to make four was not always such a childish, nor such a simple, operation after all, particularly when one pair of twins were twins who looked so much alike that one could pass for the other.

She was full of the discovery of her own reasoning and it annoyed her to be ignored by Arthur. Leclerc stationed her at a safe place, not far from the upriver side of the huge rollway which was to be dumped. Legrand was on the other side, peavey in hand. At a nod from him, Leclerc, with an ax, walked beneath the frowning face of the stacked timber.

"All ready here!" Arthur called out, and stepped closer to the pile.

"Bien sûr!" came Leclerc's tenor.

At that instant Arthur looked di-
rectly at Gwen—and almost without thinking she raised her hand and beckoned to him.

Leclerc's ax rose and the sharp blade descended, biting deep into the stake, driven into the ground up against the base log of the pile. Legrand stood, leaning forward a little, staring at her as if he had not quite made out her signal. Then she saw him start forward. Leclerc struck another blow with the ax and a splinter flew from the stake as if shot from a bow.

There was a crackle, a wooden groan. Her shriek stuck in her throat or else was drowned out by the thunder of the logs. At the instant Leclerc had cut the stake, Legrand had sprung forward, Leclerc himself leaped in the direction he was facing, away from her and toward the side where Legrand stood.

The cut stake snapped like a match stick. The groan became a rumble, a thunderous roar. The logs seemed to leap from position and bounce down the skidway. They plunged like live things into the water. Spruits of spray rose high as the logs dived and splashed in elephantine commotion. Some of them emerged end-first, rolling and showering water. The current caught them and swung them downstream.

The face and front portion of the pile flattened down quickly, so that she could look across—and where Legrand had stood there was nothing. Then she saw men with peaveys and pikes leaping off the shore onto the moving, moiling legs. They began running them. Every man seemed headed for one certain spot. It was as if they were searching frantically, hurriedly, for something.

From immobility Gwen went into action which was so without conscious direction that she found herself running over floating timber without knowing how she got down the steep bank. The pulp wood was in large logs twelve feet long. It was massed on the surface in an uneven layer which moved so slowly, compared to its mass, that it seemed solid.

Gwen's impulse was to get as quickly as she could to the spot where the men were converging. She did not once doubt that Arthur had been carried down beneath the logs and that it was her beckoning hand that had sent him into danger. A creeping terror gripped her with paralyzing effect so that her feet dragged as she scrambled over the rough surface of the forming jam. She tripped and fell. As she scrambled to her knees, she realized that the logs where she had fallen were no longer packed tightly together but were gradually spreading out, fanwise.

The stiff floor of timber had begun to spread and disintegrate. She grasped at a long pole which lay on the logs. It was a length of slim tamarack, cut and peeled for a pike handle and forgotten, while seasoning, on top of the deck that had been broken out. It helped her to pull herself from between the logs where she had slipped to the knees in water.

SHARP, hoarse cries and the clatter of peaveys working madly at a knot of stacked-up logs on the surface of the river, far at her left, increased her agony. But the impact of her fall had detached from the main jam a little knot of logs and the current swung it out. Like a raft it floated, holding her up as she half lay, the pole beneath her, half knelt—and before she could get back, the water gap had widened and she was being carried off downstream.

Even then she did not cry out; she was not frightened for herself. She was too much in the grip of frightful anxiety for Arthur Legrand to think of herself. She did wonder why no one had warned her, forgetting she was dressed in Mackinaw, knee-tight
breeches, high shoes, fur cap and that she carried now what looked like a pike pole, so that she looked, at a distance, exactly like a riverman bent on heading the jam. She did not know that a jam had formed, that the rivermen’s haste and frantic labor was for the purpose of breaking it up.

She reviewed feverishly the scene at the rollway. It seemed almost as if she had touched an electric button, with that gesture to Arthur. He had leaped forward eagerly, even as Leclerc cut the stake, and then——

She shuddered and passed her hand over her eyes to try to shut out that vision. A sudden weakness gripped her and yet it was not because of her own danger. The shouts and curses and clamor of the jam breakers was behind her now. The current had carried her swiftly downstream. Below was a blunt peninsula covered by a growth of poplars and brush.

Her raft seemed heading for this, but near it the current swerved it out and around with the loose-held knot of logs bobbing and beginning to loosen themselves from each other. The river narrowed suddenly and plunged into the gloom of a tamarack swamp which wooded both sides of the stream for several hundred yards.

A dull roar, far away down the river, came to her ears as she rounded the point and plunged into the dark, forbidding stretch of the swamp—and the sound brought to her, for the first time, keen consciousness of her precarious position. The roar came from the white-water rapids, less than a mile down river. She raised herself gingerly, disengaged the pole to try to shove her raft ashore.

The movement revealed to her how unsteady the self-bound raft was. It began to spread. Half a dozen logs disengaged themselves. She slipped astride a huge hemlock which had a bulge on one side that acted as keel and ballast and kept it from rolling easily. She thrust her pole down—down—and gasped as her hand touched water. The pole did not reach bottom.

The icy chill of snow water crept up her legs. Her teeth began to chatter. The roar of the rapids rose in crescendo, from a trick of the wind, but with the effect of clamoring savagely for her.

"By my careless act I have brought a man to death and now I am paying," flashed through her mind. "He is crushed or drowned and I am going down into the rapids. No one to see me or save me."

But the irresistible command of life and its instinct of self-preservation swept aside this morbid thought and she began to doubt what her eyes had seen. Perhaps he had not gone down, after all! He was so strong, so capable. With a thrill like a flame, his words, spoken long ago, came surging back to her:

"I couldn’t stand it to have any man laugh at you, look at you, see you and know how beautiful you are—because I want no one to look at you except myself——"

How stupid she had been! Facing death, she saw clearly and regretted the obstinate density of her pride and passion. Of course it was Arthur Legrand who had punished them for laughing!

Again she thrust the pole down, but the very vigor of her action was fatal to her purpose. She swayed to one side as the pole again failed to strike bottom; the big log rolled very slowly. She slid off, clinging desperately to the pole. Its lower end was swept swiftly downstream by the force of a powerful undercurrent and she sank.

She struggled toward the surface, but was struck a blinding blow on the forehead by the end of a log. She clutched hopelessly at the rough bark of a hemlock which rolled lazily over toward her—and then came blackness.
CHAPTER XVII.
A CONVERSATION OVERHEARD.

A

n age later, life struggled painfully back to Gwen, bringing a feeling of nausea. Something seemed to be bearing down on her brows and the bridge of her nose. She made out that it was from a stiff swelling which partly closed her eyes. She could open them only by determined effort.

She was lying partly on the ground, partly held against rough clothing. She saw a pair of heavy, calked shoes, woolen socks and, turning her head slowly, her gaze traveled up to the bushy brown beard, curling red hair, tattered Mackinaw and woolen cap, all in a blur, indistinct.

"It is you!" she exclaimed huskily, and coughed.

A feeling of such relief and security swept her that she allowed her swollen lids to close again and sank deep in the arms of the giant who held her. He moved, and she heard the drip and spatter of water from his clothing. She felt him rising with her, but she did not stir, except to take a tight grip on his Mackinaw. Soon he was standing, swaying a little, and from dizziness she slid her arms about his neck and held fast.

"You are all right?" His voice was hoarse, husky as if he had swallowed much water. He coughed.

She felt his muscles rippling with strength. Drowsily she answered his question:

"I am all right—now."

She turned her face away from the roughness of his wet coat, but still her eyes remained closed and then she felt his breath on her face and his lips upon hers—and she gave him her own, soft and yielding. It did not seem to matter; she was so tired, so utterly giving herself up to his protection. It was the grateful kiss of a child that she gave him.

The result startled her eyes open. He laughed harshly and she looked up and saw a strange, savage light in the blue eyes above her. It startled her, then frightened her badly. The feeling of security and trust vanished. She struggled to get free and he set her on her feet.

"I guess you can walk, all right," he declared. "Follow your nose up the river trail. Here, this way!"

He seized her roughly by the shoulders and gave her a little shove. She stumbled and he swore. It shocked strength into her, helped clear her head.

"You—you must take me back to camp," she stammered. "Mr. Derosier will be worried and I——"

"The devil with Derosier! I've other business to attend to."

It was almost dark, there in the tamarack.

"But—but you're not going to leave me in here alone?" she wailed. "I can scarcely see! What a brute you are! Indeed, I believe you are no gentleman."

She steadied herself by clutching at a tree and turned toward him. Her hand went to her lips, where his bearded face had touched—and then realization came to her and a wave of fire swept her. Fear took the place of incredulous anxiety, fear and indignation.

"Certainly you are no gentleman!" she charged him hotly, striving vainly to see his face in the gloom.

"Certainly not," came the retort, gruff and ironic. "So you better trot right back to Derosier. Don't thank me; it was no trouble at all, I assure you," he added, in a mocking tone. "So glad to have been of trifling service."

He moved away even as he spoke and crashed through the brush and his sarcastic reproof broke her last shred of bravery. She wept—but she wept silently.

After a time she fished out a wet kerchief and bathed her face. She
could make out the trail easily. It was not difficult to see, when she did not try to raise her eyes. She stumbled upriver. As she went, she kept wiping her lips with the back of her hand.

The trail ran directly into the camp clearing, behind the rollways. From the river the cries of the timber jacks, the clank of peaveys and the rumble of rolling logs came to her as out of a dream. Her thoughts were in turmoil. Shame and indignation and heartbreak fought for mastery within her.

She was thankful that every man from the camp was on the log jam. She reached her cabin, warm from the fire that had been kindled earlier in the day, thrust more wood on the fire, barred the door and took off her wet clothing. She had brought a change with her against the possibility of rain or snow.

She was roused from feverish, uneasy drowsing beside the fire, some time later, by footsteps on the ground and a voice calling:

"Mees Harris!"

"Mr. Leclerc?"

"Bien! I did not know w'ere you be. De boss tol' me kip an' eye out on you."

"Oh, has Mr. Derossier returned?"

"No. Eet weel be ver' late before he be back. Fifteen mile op de rivaire he go an' de travoy is mud. De boss, Legrand, he jus' come back from down to de rapid."

"Oh!"

"He fear of a jam at de rapid," Leclerc went on.

"Other business to attend to," she muttered.

"Pardon, I do not compr'en'?"

"I say he is a very busy man."

"Pret' soon I breeeng you some supper. He say, seence Mr. Derossier ees not return, perhap' you weesh to eat in your own cabin, eh?"

"Thanks. I'm not hungry."

But a few minutes later, Leclerc knocked at the door.

"I breeeng you some hot coffee an' some grub," he said. "You not feel so well?"

"I—I guess I've caught a little cold," she responded. "Thank you ever so much, Mr. Leclerc."

"Oh, dat's all right. De boss sen' eet ovaire an' I'm to ask you eef anyt'ing you weesh."

"Oh! Tell him I'm ever so much obliged to him. Tell him I am afraid I'm causing him entirely too much trouble and——" She hesitated, wondering what else she could say to sting Arthur Legrand.

"Tell him I wish to be undisturbed," she finished. "Good night!"

She opened the door gingerly and took in the tray of food. Despite her throbbing head and aching throat and the determination not to touch the food Legrand had sent her, she drained the huge cup of coffee and soon began to eat of the coarse, wholesome food. After a time she became so sleepy she could keep awake only by pacing the floor. Still Derossier did not come.

For the first time in her life, Gwen was afraid. She glanced again and again at the heavy bar on the door, tried it to see that it was secure. She draped a blanket over the single, small window which opened to the east. The cabin stood between that of the camp boss and one formerly occupied by Leclerc, in which Derossier was to stay. Legrand's cabin was to the east. A light burned in the window opposite hers.

At last, from utter fatigue, she lay down on the army cot which had been made up with many blankets and in a few minutes she slept soundly.

Gwen was wakened by a voice that seemed to come out of her uneasy dream, which had been a nightmare similar to her actual experience on the
logs. She awoke with perspiration bathing her and a sense of suffocation. She found she had pulled the heavy blankets over her head and that the room was stifling from the muffled window.

She removed the blanket and pushed the hinged window open a little. A yellowish square of light stared her in the face. Above the murmur of the river came a voice so close that it startled her, until she made out that it was from the window opposite.

“You’ve got to do it, Mart. I’ve got to get away from here.”

The hoarseness had disappeared. He spoke in a ringing tone, as if quite carried away by desperate necessity.

The voice that answered was low, rumbling, protesting. She held her breath, listening, quite unconscious of anything wrong in her eavesdropping. Somehow, this conference seemed to concern her.

“One reason,” Arthur went on, “is that I have been a fool. But the officers want me and that’s all there is to it. I’ve got to go to Ottawa. Sergeant Corkhill is waiting there.”

“I’m the one ought to go,” came the bass rumble.

“No. It couldn’t be done. You must take my place here. Nobody will be the wiser. You can take down the drive better than I could.”

“But Derosier!” objected the other.

“Mart, you must not try to find objections. I tell you that when they send for you like this, you’ve got to go.”

“You seem crazy to go.”

“Perhaps I am—crazy.” Arthur’s tone was bitter.

“I’d rather go myself.”

“This is one case where we can’t change places, Mart, except that you can take my place here.”

“That girl!” came the rumbling voice, in a tone not at all complimentary to the girl. “I believe you’re crazy about—”

“Let that rest, Mart.” Arthur’s tone was dry, incisive and harsh.

Martin’s voice—Gwen knew it, now—went on with:

“She’ll know the difference.”

“She will never betray it.” The confidence in Arthur’s tone gave Gwen a bit of a thrill. “You see, she knows that—”

What Arthur said was drowned in a laugh from Martin.

“Be funny if she didn’t know the difference,” he declared.

There was a silence while Gwen held her breath.

“Not funny,” came Arthur’s voice, “nor dangerous. You’ve got nothing to play up to, there, Mart, in taking my place.”

“That so?” Martin’s voice was freighted with half-laughing significance. “I don’t know about that.”

“Nothing!” declared Arthur, almost fiercely. “Nothing she has not already chosen to forget. Listen, Martin,” he went on sternly. “The important thing is to get the drive down to the booms on the Ottawa. Forget everything else. Above all—forget that you are Martin Legrand until the job is finished.”

“I ought to be going with you,” Martin protested.

“One of us is enough, Mart. It had to be me.”

“One of us is one too many, I’m thinking,” Martin growled savagely. “There’s no need—Well, I’ll do your job, Art. Maybe it will be the last thing I can do. I owe it to you. If I never see you again—”

“None of that!” Arthur’s voice was sharp. “You talk as if this was a hanging.”

“About as bad.”

“Pshaw! I’ll get off easy. Sergeant Corkhill—”

“If you don’t—Well, I’m going to follow you, Art.”

“Do this job! Do this job!”

“Oh, all right. Don’t worry. Say,
how long is Derosier going to hang around?"

"He’ll leave to-morrow. Now I’ve got to dig out while everything’s quiet. Strip those wet clothes off you. I’ll have to put ‘em on the way they are. How did you get so wet?"

"Fell in the river." Martin chuckled.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE REDS GO TO WAR.

On tiptoe, Gwen Harris stood, her ear turned to the open window, frozen to inactivity by the rush of overpowering conjectures which resolved themselves slowly into a terrible conviction of the meaning of that midnight conference between Arthur and Martin Legrand.

Arthur Legrand was going to give himself up to the officers at Ottawa; Martin was taking Arthur’s place as boss of the river!

Was it for the killing of Bruno Lescaut? What else could it be?

"As bad as hanging," Martin had said.

The utter silence of the forest, broken only by the murmur of the river and now and then a hollow thump as a lazily floating log struck another, became oppressive to her, now that the voices were stilled. Mechanically she tiptoed to the door and fumbled in the darkness, at the bar. It stuck and, even as she tugged vainly at it, there was the sound of a door closing softly in the cabin to the east.

"Arthur!" she cried, in a whisper.

The bar would not yield. She rushed back to the window, his name on her lips.

Where the yellowish square of light had been in the opposite window, there was now only blackness. The darkness and the silence was as if a heavy curtain had suddenly been dropped. The drama was over—or had it just begun?

Much later she heard Derosier enter the camp, speaking in French to the man who had gone upriver with him and who was taking care of the horses. She heard her own name mentioned, then a "Bon soir" and Derosier entered his cabin softly.

She did not sleep much. At dawn she was up and bathed her sore eyes. The injury seemed better. She could open her eyes without feeling as if a leaden weight rested on them. By skillful adjustment of her hair and the fur cap, she was able to regard herself in her mirror without wincing.

The stubborn bar yielded to a blow from a billet of wood. She stepped out into a gray, wet world out of which rose the rumbling of logs, shooting down the skids into the river. The men were taking advantage of every hour of daylight.

Derosier found her standing beside a rollway, watching the work of breaking-out.

"You slept well?" he queried. "I hope I did not disturb you when I arrived. I tried to get back earlier, but the team was mired once and it took us two hours to get them out."

Gwen was watching the tall, bearded figure, far out on the slowly moving mess of logs which boiled out in a continual froth of wood from the flow of timber constantly dumped down the bank. Leclerc was in charge of the dumping. The other, the figure, the clothing, the bearded, bushy-haired head of Arthur Legrand, was in charge of the beginning of the great movement of floating timber which was the drive. But she knew it was not Arthur Legrand.

"I slept quite well, thank you," she responded absently. "Though the strange silence bothered me, at first."

"It is almost palpable," he said. "One becomes accustomed to it, however. There is little to keep one awake, in the woods."
"I wanted to see the drive start out," she remarked, "so I got up early."

"Legrand is putting himself into this with all he has," Derosier commented. "I am satisfied that Arthur has done all he could to repair the damage his scapegrace brother did. The law ought to apprehend that rascal."

"Where do you suppose Martin Le- grand is hiding?" she inquired, without looking at Derosier.

He made the same gesture Leclerc had used, toward the unseen but always comprehended ranges of the Laurentians to the north.

"The authorities have grown indifferent, I believe," he said complainingly. "It is necessary to stimulate their efforts. Now that the military is so active, the peace officers are inclined to be lax, unless it is something demanded by the military."

Derosier's face was dark and Gwen, with a hasty glance at him, changed the subject.

"I am anxious to get back to Travy," she remarked. "I have seen everything that I want to see. And I have a headache. I bumped my nose on a log yesterday."

He regarded her keenly.

"Why, your eyes are swollen!" he exclaimed. "You were hurt! Why didn't you tell me?"

"I have just confessed at the first opportunity." She laughed. "It is nothing serious."

"We shall start down at once. I must see Leclerc for a moment. Pardon me. I will have breakfast sent to you."

After he had gone, the figure that seemed to be Arthur Legrand came ashore and directly up the bank toward her. She waited, fascinated by the expectation of the encounter.

"Good morning, Miss Harris!" he greeted her gruffly. "Well, we are getting things going at last!"

There was no one near by. He looked her directly in the face with a bold, ironic expression, as if he was testing her out. She wondered how any one could mistake him for Arthur, once one looked in his eyes.

"I am sure," she said, "that you will do all you can to hurry the drive down. There has been so much trouble and delay caused, during the winter. Mr. Derosier is much pleased with what has been done since you took hold. We need to make delivery of this drive quickly."

His eyes had narrowed, as she expected they would, at this reference to Martin Legrand's work among the laborers.

"Since you represent your father, Miss Harris," he said, in a cold tone, "I want to let you know now that I am quitting the job as soon as the head of the drive reaches the booms. Leclerc can handle the rest."

"You had better inform Mr. Derosier," she returned.

"I am not working for Derosier."

"Oh, but you are!" she contradicted. "He holds the contract to deliver our logs."

"I am not working for Derosier," he repeated stubbornly.

Then he seemed to remember himself, who he was supposed to be.

"I mean, I took this job for your father," he went on. "I would not have done it for Derosier alone."

"Derosier holds the contract, pays the wages, delivers the pulp wood and we—father and I—have nothing to do with it, with the woods crews and the river crews—nor with the river boss." She spoke dryly. "However, if you wish, I will inform Mr. Derosier—"

His manner changed from stubbornness to mocking politeness.

"Please don't bother. I'll write it out and send it to him!"

She had been trying to tease him, but his blunt manner stung her into the retort:
"Why don’t you tell him like a man?"

Again the cold light blazed in his eyes.

"He wouldn’t appreciate it," he declared. "He doesn’t understand that sort of thing."

"Do you call it acting like a man to allow your brother to suffer for your crime, Martin Legrand?"

He scowled, then dropped his peavey and seized her roughly by the left shoulder.

"Do you think you know what you’re talking about?" he demanded.

"Yes, I know everything," she responded, ignoring his grasp. "I know everything you have done from the first. I overheard you and Arthur last night. I would have stopped him. You should have been the one to go and not—"

"And I suppose now you are going to tell Derosier!" he broke in, dropping his hand from her shoulder and facing her defiantly.

"I’m no telltale," she returned. "But if you had not offered to go to Ottawa in his place, I should certainly have informed Mr. Derosier that the man who killed Bruno Lescaut is masquerading in his brother’s place here. You should have forced Arthur to let you go!" she burst out. "How could you let him do that?"

To her utter astonishment, Martin broke into a laugh.

"You know everything?" he mocked. "What a little fool you are! I suppose you think you’ve got Arthur where you can twist him around your little finger, eh?"

She went white with anger, a strange sort of anger because it was in defense of Arthur, as if he were being attacked by an enemy.

"I know better than that!" she cried. 

"Because he is a man!"

"And Derosier, I suppose, is a gentleman?" he sneered.

"The question is whether you are going to act like a man yourself."

"Um! And what do you think I ought to do?" he demanded sarcastically, but with a sincerity behind it which steadied her.

"Go to Ottawa and give yourself up to the authorities instead of allowing Arthur to do it," she answered. "This Sergeant Corkhill—"

"Who do you think Sergeant Corkhill is?" Martin broke in.

"I suppose he is an officer of the Mounted Police."

"Oh! Oh!"

"You ought to tell him the truth. You will do it, if you are man enough."

"The truth, eh? You know what it is?"

"You killed Lescaut!"

He seemed to hesitate, then he snapped out: "Wood rat! That wasn’t murder."

"You killed him, though!"

"Well, certainly."

"And you allowed Arthur to stand trial for it once and now you’re letting him go again to—"

"I knew and Arthur knew he would be acquitted—but Derosier would frame me."

"’As bad as hanging!’ You said that yourself."

"Look here!" He was laughing in a way that brought red to her cheeks. "You’re one of those bright young women from New York who thinks the world revolves around her silly, shingled head. One of those that thinks she’s wiser than hell. Go and tell Derosier about me! That sort of meddling goes well with your wisdom and your eavesdropping! Go tell him!"

Her flush faded to the whiteness of anger again. He was taunting her, laughing at her, and nothing stung her so much as this.

"I tell you I am no telltale!" she cried. "I asked you civilly to try to hurry the drive and you tried to resign
and shift the giving of your resignation onto me. Your opinion of me makes no difference at all. In your own heart you know what a coward you are, hiding behind your brother!”

The look on his face stopped her.

“Look here!” he rasped out, his voice shaking. “You don’t know what you’re saying! You don’t know what you’re talking about. Look here! D’you know why I’m quitting this job soon as I can? So I can enlist and get out of this country, where Derosier thinks he has been appointed king. He’d put me in a cell, quick enough, if he could and keep me there on one thing or another. Think I want to lie in prison and rot when my brother’s gone in?”

“You mean that Arthur has enlisted?”

“They sent for him because he knows timber. They sent for a man to take charge of their Sitka spruce for the army. Airplane stuff. Understand that?”

“And Sergeant Corkhill?”

“Sent for Arthur. Recruiting for aviation. What did you think?”

“I—I thought he was going to prison—for you. I—I’m sorry.”

She wilted, her head bowed, utterly dazed, ashamed and remorseful.

“Uh-huh! I don’t suppose he’d have gone so fast, but he was so crazy over you. It ain’t that he feels he owes anything to England, any more than I do. It’s because every day, everywhere, he’s seeing slackers!”

He did not appear to be aware he was giving contradictory reasons. His emotion was too genuine for her to reprove him.

“It’s got to me, too,” he raged, “but if he hadn’t gone, I’d stay right here and make war on the slackers. But I’m going in, too. After I’m gone, you tell Derosier. Will you?”

He was eager now. “I’ll take your drive down—Jim Harris’ drive. Your dad’s a he-man. Nothing against him.

It’s Derosier, with his sneaking charity and whispering around with that squaw and driving the old man crazy about the war that I can’t stomach. Derosier—the worst slacker of ‘em all! Trying to shove Art and I into it by working the old man up about England with her back to the wall. Him knowing the old man’s batty over everything English and would do anything to prove how English he is. And Derosier’s hinting, whispering, stirring him up and painting us with a red streak, when he’s got a yellow streak himself a yard wide. Suppose Derosier’ll get into it? I guess not—and he’ll keep all of his men out of it he can.”

MARTIN was at fever pitch. The cold flame in his eyes seemed to have been gathered from the very snows amid which he had buried himself for so long, hiding away from the law and leading a fierce fight against the injustice of the man he hated. She could understand why he was so insistent that he was not employed by Derosier. His voice shook her with its intensity.

The words he used rang strangely in her ears. The term “slacker” had not the meaning for her that it came to have later, but for all that she felt his scorn and passionate indignation.

“If you’ve got any fairness in your make-up,” Martin went on, “you’ll keep this away from Derosier. I’m going in. Call it running from the law if you want. Not for England! Not for France! Look here! Are you going to do that?”

“Has Arthur—— Is he going across?” she stammered.

Something clutched at her heart. seared her with sudden fear, put an intolerable ache in her throat. It was not Martin’s scorn. His denunciation passed over her. It did not matter even that he called her a little fool. Through all his violent, scorching outburst she felt the surge of something in Martin
that thrilled her. His very denial of patriotism was in turn denied by his expressed hatred for the slackers.

"Martin LeGrand!" she cried, gripping his arm. "Martin, you are a man! I am a little fool. I deserve all you gave me. All save one thing, your belief that I'd betray you. I won't. I promise you that! Now Derosier is coming to take me back to Travoy. You must take the drive down. Write him a formal resignation. Sign Arthur's name, remember. He'll never know you took Arthur's place, from me. He'll find out, of course, that Arthur has enlisted—but, Martin, you're making a mistake about Derosier. He's too much a gentleman to—"

Martin shrugged, with an expression on his face that caused her to despair of making him believe any good of Derosier.

"Listen!" she cried. "If you see Arthur, tell him——"

She hesitated. The memory of that burning kiss, of the harsh laugh, the curt, rough manner with which he had thrust her away and sent her alone back to camp made up a bewildering chaos in her mind.

"Tell him I'll never forget his saving my life, down the river, there—— And tell him——"

She cast a hasty glance at Derosier, who was walking slowly toward them, in conversation with Leclere.

"There are some things I must ask you, Martin," she said. "Who wrote that note to me and sent Senwa in the calèche? Who went into Travoy that night and fought them, for laughing at her? And who really killed Bruno Lescaut?"

"I thought you knew everything—from the first!" he charged her harshly. "If you weren't so put up with yourself you'd know I wrote the note and that Art went in and settled with 'em for laughing. I killed Lescaut, I told you. That all?"

"Why did you write such a note? And why did you kill Lescaut?"

"I wrote the note because I wanted to teach you a lesson not to be so high and mighty with your charity," he answered. "And I killed Lescaut because I wanted to keep on living myself for a while."

"Thank you, Martin. You've answered like a man, if not like a gentleman."

"I don't pretend to be a gentleman at all," he retorted roughly. "What else you want me to tell Arthur?"

"Tell him that I'm glad—he kissed me—good-by."

Again the red crept into her cheeks and it rose hotter because of Martin's ironic laugh.

"I don't know's he'd care to hear it," he said.

CHAPTER XIX.
FACING A CRISIS.

ON her return to Travoy, Gwen wrote the following letter to her father:

DEAR JIMMY: LeGrand is bringing down the drive at a speed never before heard of in this country, MacLaughlin tells me. I suppose this is the news you most want to hear, if Mr. Derosier hasn't already informed you.

The other news is that I've had my first honest-to-goodness proposal of marriage. From Mr. Derosier. I haven't given him an answer—because I don't know what to say. I admire him. He is a gentleman and wonderful—but there is something that seems alien about him. Perhaps it is because he is French. Another thing is his attitude about the war. I don't suppose that can mean much to you, down in New York, but up here it is beginning to matter more than anything else. There is in Quebec opposition to the threat of a draft and Raoul Derosier is the ardent leader of the opposition.

"The Two Reds"—The Legrands—are going into the army; in fact, one has already gone and the other will go as soon as he gets the drive down. Leclerc is handling the rear and will superintend the sorting and rafting at the boom works. LeGrand has done wonders.

I am learning to speak French quite well,
under Mr. Derosier’s instruction. Perhaps, after I get used to the language—so that I can think in French—I shall feel differently toward him. He is fine, Jimmy, but there’s some sort of queer hunch working inside me, a feeling of unrest and dissatisfaction with myself and, added to that, a curious feeling that everything isn’t all right somehow. I don’t know how to explain it to you. Are you sure your agreement is all right, with Mr. Derosier? Sounds cold-blooded to ask suspicious questions concerning one’s suitor, doesn’t it? But he is a sort of enigma to me.

The pine plantations are doing very well. Some of the older trees are twelve feet high. I went through the Thousand Acres the other day with MacLaughlin. Those big trees are wonderful. Mac can’t see why you’re not cutting it. He thinks you’re foolish to let it stand. He says that if Derosier had it he’d be cutting, hand over fist. I told him that Thousand Acres was my playground that you’d given me. He took it seriously and it seemed to hurt his Scotch heart to see so much valuable timber and none of it being harvested.

I think I’ll be coming home soon—just as soon as the drive is down.

Two days after she wrote, Gwen had a wire from her father. It read:

Meet me at Montreal to-morrow. Don’t give anybody an answer yet.

Gwen chuckled over the admonition.

Derosier came to the store as usual that evening, just as a packet of mail had arrived. Gwen was helping MacLaughlin sort it when she came across a letter addressed to Derosier. The handwriting seemed unaccountably familiar. The postmark was indistinct. Derosier opened the letter as soon as she gave it to him and read it.

“Legrand has quit the drive!” he exclaimed.

“So suddenly! Why, he——” She checked herself on the verge of betraying her knowledge, which she had promised to keep secret.

“His resignation,” Derosier said, handing her the letter, with a hardening of his face.

She knew, when her eyes fell on the curt, meaning sentences, why that handwriting had seemed familiar:

Accept my resignation as river boss. Have private business to attend to.

ARTHUR LEGRAND.

“This isn’t like Arthur Legrand,” she commented.

“It is like either of The Two Reds,” Derosier declared harshly. “Like either of them!” he repeated.

“Somehow,” she responded, “I don’t believe he means to have this take effect at once. I think he’ll take the drive down. I was talking with him just before we left and—I think he is anxious to get into the army. This handwriting is distinctive, isn’t it? I remember it from the note he sent me, thanking me for sending my car.”

Derosier’s eyes dilated and he looked at her sharply, but she did not meet his gaze.

“Yes, it is characteristic,” he replied. “The handwriting and the message.”

“Oh, I have had a message, too! I am going to meet father in Montreal to-morrow.”

“You are going? I am to meet him there also. That will be pleasant. It is a lonely trip.”

He pocketed the letter and seemed to put its ominous message out of his mind. But by his manner Gwen felt that a crisis was coming, either from the meeting of the two men at Montreal, or from that resignation. Why had Martin handled it so clumsily? She could not believe he would quit the drive until he had finished his job and yet—perhaps he did not trust her.

THE trip to Montreal was made as easy for Gwen as Derosier could make it, and he was able to be very agreeable and entertaining. He refrained from reminding her, in any way, that he was a suitor who was waiting for his answer. When the subject of the drive and Legrand came up, as it did unavoidably, he dismissed it by saying that he could trust Leclerc to finish the job.
The crisis she felt coming was precipitated by Jim Harris. It was prepared, while she was dressing in one of the rooms of the suite her father had engaged at the hotel. Derosier initiated the discussion during his conference with Harris.

"Mr. Harris, I wish to suggest a modification of our agreement not to fall timber on the stumpage we have put up in the wager," he said. "I need the timber from my pulp-wood stumpage. Unless we can do this mutually, I shall be forced to call your notes given me in the last of the concessions you purchased of me."

"Derosier, I came up here to try to raise money, in advance of delivery of my stuff—and I have failed. I've got to ask you to extend those notes because, even with the sale of the pulp wood I've got cut, I'm going to be up against it. But I can't touch my pine under any consideration and——"

"It would save you—it would save us both difficulty," Derosier remarked. "I cannot and will not—because of Gwen."

Derosier fell silent. When he spoke, his tone was constrained.

"Your appeal for an extension hits me at a bad time," he said. "I have asked your daughter to marry me and if——"

"What does she say?" queried Harris, who believed in poker rules at other games than poker.

"She has given me no answer. Understand, I do not wish to convey the impression that anything in our business relations is dependent upon—Miss Gwen."

"I understand," Harris responded—and he did understand perfectly that if Derosier could afford to be lenient, at all, he could afford it regardless of his feelings toward Gwen. Harris played poker more carefully.

"I shall be glad to have a talk with Gwen," he said.

Derosier let it go at that and withdrew. Harris knocked on the door of Gwen's room. When she sang out to him to enter, he opened the door and stood on the threshold, regarding her seriously.

"Gwen, do you want to marry Derosier?" he inquired bluntly.

"Jimmy! I don't know. Truly I don't. Why?"

"Fine!" he exclaimed. "I want you to take your time about deciding. I want to have him go back to the Travoy with this matter undecided, if you can do it honestly and fairly to yourself. Then come home with me."

"Why, Jimmy!" She stepped close to him and looked searchingly into his face. "Jimmy, you look bad! You've been working and worrying yourself almost sick. What is it?"

"I need you—your help," he confessed wearily. "Let's get this over with and go home. Your letter helped me a lot, Gwen. I want you to understand that I wouldn't ask you to marry the best man on earth to help me if you didn't want to marry him—or even if you did happen to want to, but I do——"

"I'd do anything to help you, Jimmy, Anything—I can do."

"I know it. And in this case you can help most by just being—undecided."

"Honestly, I am," she told him. "I want to see Derosier alone again, before we go."

"I don't know my own heart, Jimmy," she added dreamily, and unconsciously she put the back of her hand to her lips, as her eyes fixed in a thoughtful stare. She was seeing a wild, racing river, fronds of tamarack, a bearded face bending over her. She was hearing, though, a harsh, laughing voice, bidding her to "follow her nose" and another, the twin to it, so like that its tones rang the same, saying: "I don't know's he'd care to hear it."
The interrupted conference between Harris and Derosier terminated quickly—and satisfactorily to Harris, while Derosier professed himself satisfied too. It was a good game of poker.

After supper Jim Harris asked to be excused. He needed sleep. Derosier quickly suggested that Gwen and himself ride about the city. Derosier sensed that a crisis was near. But the crisis did not come. Gwen told him that she could not make up her mind what to say—except it would not be "No" and could not be "Yes."

"May I call to see you in New York?" he asked. "I will wait for you as long as you wish."

"Yes, you may call," she said.

She felt instantly like a wicked woman, for Gwen had quite suddenly decided that she was not going to be in New York any longer than it would take to get into some relief organization and get into this war and find out what it all meant. Many of her friends had already gone. She had not thought of their motives, before, save that they were brave and adventurous, or perhaps just curious and restless and unsettled, like herself.

CHAPTER XX.
A MESSAGE IN CODE.

I AM sorry that you are not able to remain in Travoy for the summer," Derosier said to Gwen, "now that we are being deserted by some of our most annoying neighbors. May I presume to suppose that the actions of Arthur Legrand were—annoying to you?"

"Very!" she burst out, with a passion that surprised herself.

"I had thought so," he commented. "I must tell you that there has been something mysterious in Arthur Legrand’s behavior for the past six months. I have at last obtained reliable information that he and his twin brother have been playing a game on us. Aimed at me, with a great deal of vindictiveness. But I know now where I shall strike—for I know at this moment where Martin Legrand is and I am going to see that he is brought to justice at last."

"You know?" she gasped.

"Yes. The resignation. It was Martin who wrote it."

"But—that was Arthur’s writing—just as on the note to me!"

"You will forgive me if I deceived you. The twins write almost exactly alike. However, when Martin signed Arthur’s name, he betrayed himself. Arthur’s signature is distinctive and different."

She hesitated to ask questions, or to charge him with deceiving her, also, in telling her that the note she had got from Senwa was in Arthur’s writing. Did Derosier know of Martin’s doubling for Arthur, as well as Arthur’s doubling as The Red during the winter, as Leclerc had insinuated was the case?

"There will be no further annoyance for you when you come to Travoy again," Derosier declared quietly.

"That—that will be fine!" she stammered.

But in her room at the hotel, she sat and thought hard. Derosier’s cold-toned declaration that he would bring Martin to justice frightened her. She did not wish to see Martin, who had proved to her his splendid qualities, his loyalty, who had upbraided her and yet had made her respect him, thrown into prison on the eve of following Arthur into the service.

But how could she stop it? Only by betraying to Derosier her own guilty knowledge of the doubling of one brother for the other—and then perhaps without any good effect.

She saw now that Martin’s hatred of Derosier, his determination not to work for him an hour longer than he could do it, had betrayed him. He had re-
signed because he would not work the drive as Derosier's river boss. Of course Derosier knew that handwriting! He had shown that when she asked him about it at the store, only she had not been quick enough to guess it then.

ROUSING, Gwen knocked at her father's door and woke him.

"Jimmy, I want to send a telegram," she said. "It's got to be relayed over the river trail, up the Black, to the camp headquarters on the drive."

"What's up? Well, you can wire money with your message, to have it carried on."

"I'm going to help a fugitive from justice to escape and go and fight for his country."

"Um! Who is this romantic person?"

"Martin Legrand."

"Whew!" Jim Harris rolled off the bed, where he had flung himself down fully dressed. "The Red, eh? What's the story, Gwen?"

"It's Martin, who is bringing down our drive, taking Arthur's place—he's in danger of being discovered. Arthur's gone in to the army and in order to hold his crew together he got Martin to pose as himself. I overheard them planning it and I had a talk with Martin the next day. He is doing this job for us—and for Arthur, of course. I mean, he wouldn't do it for Derosier, not even under the alias of Arthur's name. I've got to warn him now that Derosier knows all about it and is going to have him arrested for the killing of Lescaut and——"

"This is dangerous business, Gwen. I don't know that The Red ought to escape."

"I don't care how dangerous it is!" she declared.

"Gwen, is there any other reason—more than the log drive?"

"Yes. I hated Martin at first, but I admire him now. He's a man, all through. A roughneck and a rebel—but a real man!"

"He admits he killed Lescaut?"

"Yes. In self-defense."

"Hum! You let me tend to this telegram. I know the ropes and the blind-message game pretty well. I've used 'em some." He grinned.

The message that went to the telegraph station at La Bouche Riviere, nearest to the Black River drive camp, was directed to "Arthur Legrand, Derosier Drive, Black River," and it read:

Let Leclerc take drive. Follow Sitka immediately.

G. HARRIS.

CHAPTER XXI.

BACK FROM THE WAR.

SPRING came again to the Travoy, all smiles and warm, gushing eagerness. It was the year following the end of the Great War. One might think there had never been a war, so far as the Travoy was concerned—unless one scrutinized closely the men who came down the rivers with the drives and who gathered as usual at Mac's, in Travoy village, and lined up all the way from the porch outside the front door to the pay window in the rear, far down between the counters, to get their cash for their time slips.

It was seen, then, that these hibernating animals who went into the woods and the snows in October and came out in May were almost all men of middle age or boys in their teens—except a few young men among them who looked old. These young-old men were those who had come back from the war.

They drew big wages, boys and men, and they knew what was responsible for this, yet no one spoke of it, because it was the war—and yet all thought of it. Among these young-old men were some whose faces were scarred or drawn and among them were some whose souls were scarred and who
would leap and scream at the sound of a dynamite blast beneath a log jam.

It took long for the pay off this spring. There were more men than ever in the long line leading up to the pay window. The operations of Raoul Derosier, lumber king, had become more extensive with each year, beginning while the war was at its height. The price of timber and pulp wood had gone up and up, and wages, too. Derosier was reputed to have become a millionaire through his operations in timber.

Not a little sensation was caused in Mac's when a tall, lean-faced young man in the smart and distinctive uniform of the Royal Flying Corps entered the door, following along in the line. It was late in the evening and the smoky oil lamps gave only those nearest him a good look at his face. One of them started, with an exclamation.

"The Red!"

It ran along the line, like a ripple:

"It is The Red. No—the other one, returned from the war."

The excitement grew. Yet nobody spoke to Lieutenant Arthur Legrand, as he shuffled along in the line toward the pay window.

"Mac will tell him," some one whispered to another, who asked a question.

The line moved on. Others fell in behind. Each one, as he came to the window, shoved his time slip through and gave his name. MacLaughlin, with his steel-rimmed spectacles pushed low on his nose, looked over them at the links in this endless chain, then through them at the time slip and shoved an envelope out to the man who slid aside and let another take his place.

At last it was the turn of the man in uniform. He gave his name in a husky but firm tone.

"Arthur Legrand." Then he shoved across the shelf a worn and soiled piece of paper.

MacLaughlin stared at him, his mouth falling open until his too-white, too-regular false teeth gleamed and his too-red, too-hard gums were revealed.

"Arthur Legrand! Well, well! You are back? Well, well! When did you come back?"

"Just now. From Ottawa," was the husky response. "And I'm quite out of luck. That's my time slip for a month's salary as river boss in the spring of 1915. I never turned it in."

All the time he regarded MacLaughlin with a steady, level glance. MacLaughlin seemed taken so aback he could only stare at him in return. Legrand called his attention to the ancient time slip. MacLaughlin regarded it with suspicion.

"Well, well! So it is!" he exclaimed. "And you're just turnin' it in? Yes, yes! This is very odd. I shall have to—I will have to verify it. Yes. Kindly step inside."

He stepped back and opened the door to the cubby-hole of an office and Legrand slid out of the line and through the door.

MacLaughlin resumed paying off, with a feverish haste quite unlike his usual deliberate method.

"And have you been home at all?" he asked, turning to Legrand as he closed the window.

"No. Well, what's the news? I've not heard from Travoy since—since almost a year ago."

"No? Not home at all? Ah! Then nobody has told ye?"

"Told me what?"

The long, lean face, burned a reddish brown, the blue eyes, narrowed in steady, boring watchfulness, never left MacLaughlin's vision, though he turned his head nervously from side to side, arranging papers, envelopes, pen, ink—anything that came to his hand.

"They have not told ye that William Legrand, your farther, is dead? Two months ago next Sunday?"
Legrand’s brows contracted, but his keen eyes were as watchful as ever.

“No. I did not know it. Two months ago?”

“Yes. He sank away peacefullike. Yes, he had all the comforts could be given him. Mr. Derosier attended to that. Yes, and we tried to locate you. Martin himself did not know where to find you.”

“Martin? He is home? I didn’t know that, either.”

“Yes. He was home.”

MacLaughlin’s reply held something of sinister significance.

“How long since he went away? Where did he go?”

MacLaughlin swung from left to right, his eyes avoiding Arthur’s. He cleared his throat.

“It’s sad news I’m telling you, lad. I don’t relish it. They took him away to the prison.”

Arthur Legrand’s face twisted into a bitter smile. He dropped his gaze for an instant, his brows contracting into furrows.

“To prison! Before or after father died?”

“Long after. Three weeks ago. He was taken the day after he came.”

When Arthur Legrand looked up again, it was as if he had passed through a scorching fire and the sparks of it remained in his glance.

“Where?” he demanded.

“Quebec. The Fortress, you know. The old charge. Of killin’ Lescaut.”

“Mac, why did you let them take him! You know he’s not guilty of murder!”

MacLaughlin’s half-defiant gaze broke and wavered before the blazing accusation in Arthur’s eyes.

“It’s for the trial to show,” MacLaughlin said.

“You have been summonsed—as a witness?” came the stern query.

“Listen! Is there some one at the door?”

MacLaughlin leaped for the door, but Legrand gripped his arm so hard that he winced and dropped heavily into a seat.

“The trial will show nothing, unless you have been summoned,” Legrand said quietly. “Of course, I understand that it was Derosier had him taken. And of course you are afraid to tell what you know, because you are Derosier’s man. Nobody was ever more Derosier’s man than you. But you know—and I know—that Martin was not guilty. But I suppose you would even commit perjury for Derosier. I suppose you don’t dare do otherwise. You would have to tell them, if you testified, why Bruno had the key!”

“You don’t know what you’re saying, lad! No one knows why he had the key. I swear——”

“I said ‘perjury,’” Legrand broke in.

“A lie spoken under oath is perjury.”

“They’ll not have me in court. Mr. Derosier——”

MacLaughlin halted, seemed to shake himself together. He was soon the cold, hard, self-possessed man he had always been.

“Look here!” he said. “You come back from the war and I’m the first to break the news to you. No one else dared. Yet all knew. They wait for Mac to do it. I heard them whispering. I have told you. You cannot threaten me, Arthur Legrand! How will your word go against mine?”

Legrand got up and looked down, with a sort of sadness, upon MacLaughlin’s white head.

“Yes, you told me the bad news when none else dared,” he said. “But you dare not tell the truth. I know. I’ve got to have the money due on that old time slip. Get it for me. It’s overdue.”

“I will that. It’s right you should have it.”

MacLaughlin busied himself in going to the brass-bound safe and pulling out
a drawer and counting out bills and silver.

Legrand took the money from him, without a word, though MacLaughlin chattered about how he had saved it for him and was only waiting and hoping that he would come to claim it.

As Arthur opened the door to go out, he inquired:

“Senwa still stays at the cabin?”

“Yes. She has been keeping the house until you came home.”

“She will hear, soon, that I’ve come back. I’m not going to the cabin. When you see her, tell her I shall be home as soon as I can. I am going to Quebec—to tell them the truth, Mac. It will be your word against mine—or with mine.”

He left MacLaughlin staring at the door with wide eyes, clutching in his hand until it crumbled to bits the brittle fragment of paper, Arthur Legrand’s old time slip.

CHAPTER XXII.

“I KILLED LESCAUT.”

WHAT a home-coming!” Lieutenant Arthur Legrand stood stock-still, in the darkness, on the porch of Mac’s, as if hesitating which way to turn. His lean, bronzed face was drawn with a tension that had not been there since a certain day when he had visited a hospital in Nice. Not since that day had he seen Martin—Captain Martin Legrand of the 1st Lancers. The tides of war had washed them apart. Now Martin was home and in prison. The first shock, news of his father’s death, was absorbed and swallowed up in this.

The store was dark, for MacLaughlin had put out the lamps as soon as he finished the pay off and cared for the pressing wants of a few timber jacks. Only a dim light filtered through the ground-glass window of the office.

Lieutenant Legrand stepped to the edge of the platform, grinding together in his pocket two bits of metal. They were not coins and they grated hollowly. They were medals. He looked along the weed-grown path which ran the length of the building, passed the single step which rose before a narrow door and glanced on to the well behind the store. Above the door was a window opening from the second story, the living quarters of the MacLaughlins.

So intent was Legrand in his peering study of the path that he whirled as one surprised in some guilty act at the dying whir of an automobile motor that had crept up to the porch silently, in the sand, and a soft voice which came to him from where the motor stood.

“Pardon me! Can you tell me whether the store is closed?”

He turned and walked toward the voice. There was an exclamation, then a scramble of footsteps and Gwen Harris came swiftly toward him, both hands out and, in a voice filled with surprise, cried out:

“Arthur Legrand! Am I right or wrong? Oh, I know you now, with your beard off. Arthur Legrand!”

Dazedly he removed his cap. He did not know how to handle it and meet those outstretched hands. Fumbling, he took one of them and the other gripped his elbow.

“Turn around and let me look at you!” she commanded. “Lieutenant Arthur Legrand, eh? See how well I know the uniform? When did you get back?”

“To-night. And how long have you been in Travoy?”

His tone was so constrained that she dropped his hand and stepped back from him, with a little gesture of embarrassment.

“Oh, we just drove up to-day, father and mother and I. I’ve come foraging for some chuck. Not a thing to eat in the house. And the canteen’s closed.
Oh, I forgot I'm not—Seeing you here in uniform took me back."

"You were 'over there?"' he half whispered it.

"Absolutely. Two years. Not on end, but altogether. First with the Frenchies and then with our own boys. I didn't get near the Canadians. I tried. I heard of you and of Martin. D'ye know, I believe that name, Mart the Red, got to be known in every language of Europe and then some! Is he well? Did he—did he come back?"

"Three weeks ago, but they took him to the Fortress as a distinguished guest, in reward for his services."

Arthur's irony was so like Martin's that Gwen gasped as much to hear it as at the news.

"Martin in prison? Why?"

"Because, I think," Arthur responded deliberately, "the Travoy has no use for war heroes."

"This is terrible!" she exclaimed.

"Fortunately," Arthur went on, in the same deliberate voice, "I am able to prove that he is not guilty."

"Why—why—is it the old charge? Lescaut? But *Martin told me——" she checked herself.

"That he did it," Arthur supplied.

"When did you see him?"

"Just before he went in. Didn't he tell you? Didn't he give you my message? Oh, I don't mean——" She broke off in confusion as she recalled exactly what her message had been.

"He was partly delirious when I saw him—the only time I saw him. He was raving about your gratitude to me for saving you from the river and something about being grateful himself, too, because you'd warned him. It didn't seem to make sense. What was it about?"

"Oh! Then he didn't tell you—anything else?"

"Nothing. Why?"

She ignored his question, but gripped his arm with nervous fingers,

"But look here, Arthur Legrand! Are you sure you can prove him innocent? Self-defense?"

"Why, he didn't kill Lescaut!" cried Arthur. "Come here!"

He led her to the edge of the platform, pointing along the path, scarcely to be seen in the darkness now, but a glow of light from the window above the door marked a definite spot for them.

"I killed Bruno Lescaut, right under that window," he told her. "I was going to the well for a drink and I surprised him, on the step to the office door, fumbling at the knob. He whirled on me, with a knife, and instinctively I struck up at him. Well, I ask you to believe this—I did not know, until afterward, that my blow took him so hard that it actually broke his neck—that and the fall he took."

Gwen Harris stood with her hands clasped before her, staring up at his face, holding her breath.

"So, you see, I can prove Martin is not guilty," Arthur added. "And I'm going to Quebec to-night and have it over with."

"Arthur Legrand!"

"You think I'm lying? Why should I lie to you? That is exactly what happened."

"But—they acquitted you once!" she cried.

"For lack of evidence, yes. You see, I did not even take the stand. The trial was a mere formality. I entered a formal plea of not guilty—and no one was more astonished than I to be cleared."

"I do not believe you killed him!" she declared. "Nobody will believe you. Why, Martin told me, up at camp——"

"But I tell you I did it!" Arthur's voice rose high with his earnestness.

"But you lied to me once before, to shield Martin, and you are lying again," she charged him, in a sorrowful
You lied when you said you wrote that note to me. Do you know—I still have that? It was Martin wrote it and he admitted it to me at the same time he admitted he killed Lescut. Of course it was self-defense! Lescut struck at him with his knife. 'I did it because I wanted to go on living,' he told me.

'Martin told you that? When? Where?'

'Just the morning after you left for the Sitka spruce. Don’t you remember?'

'But—but he was speaking for me, then!' he declared, with a flash of comprehension. 'He was acting for me.'

'He was speaking for himself—to me,' she declared, 'and he was not acting at all. He told me what a little fool I was, I well remember,' she added, with a little dry chuckle. 'You see, I am something of a detective. Didn’t he ever tell you that I knew, all the time, what you were doing—and how I thought, then, that you were going to give yourself up to the police and—'

'Ah! That must have been what he was trying to tell me at Nice! It must have been. I see, now. He babbled about your being grateful for being saved from the river. He meant the drive, of course, and wanted me to take credit. I never saved you from anything—and he was partly delirious at the time.'

She stared at him for a moment as if she believed he was out of his head. Then she laughed, with a catch in her throat.

'He didn’t want to hear it. Martin was right,' she muttered, under her breath. 'He is ashamed.' Aloud she said wearily:

'Well, I must get into the store and find something for us to eat at the lodge. But, Arthur, you will see a lawyer and try——'

'I shall not require a lawyer. I will go directly to Judge Des Plaines, who handled the case for the government when I was tried, and tell him the truth.'

She was shaking her head, looking at him with amazement and sorrow. He caught the gleam of her eyes, even in the gloom.

'For the love of God, don’t try to make out I’m making a martyr of myself!' he cried hoarsely. 'That’s too much.'

'Don’t go to him with this story,' she implored. 'They will only arrest you as an important witness. It will never save Martin. You cannot prove your confession.'

'But I can!' he answered grimly. 'If you do not believe me, ask MacLaughlin. He is in the office. The door, here, is not locked. Ask him.'

He turned to go.

'Wait!' she cried, clutching at him. 'You must not do this, Arthur! It will only help convict Martin. Can’t you see that? Perhaps he has already confessed and——'

'He shan’t do that!' came his hoarse cry. 'I’ll stop it!'

He fairly leaped from the porch and went striding off, into the darkness of the travoy that led to the south.

CHAPTER XXIII.
MAC TALKS OF TROUBLE.

GWEN cut short MacLaughlin’s greetings as he came out of the office, carrying a lamp and peering at her from reddened eyes.

'I have just met Arthur Legrand,' she said. 'What is the matter with him, Mac?'

'Ah, well! He takes it hard, of course. You have not heard this awful news, eh? Martin in prison for murderin’ Lescut, an’ William Legrand dead, and Arthur only heard it as he come home from the war.'
“William Legrand is dead! He didn’t tell me that. Oh, the poor boy! Mac, look here! I want some provisions. You know what we’ll need for all of us. Do them up while I talk to you. Do you know what Arthur is going to do?”

“He was talking nonsense to me,” he grumbled, but his red eyes wavered from side to side. “Some crazy idea of saving Martin.”

“He is going to Quebec to-night, to shoulder Martin’s crime—to try to do it. He is going to confess that he killed Lescaut. He told me to ask you. What did he mean? We must stop him.”

“Yes, and that we must!”

MacLaughlin’s voice broke in a squeak, with his exclamation. He whirled from the shelf where he had been taking down tins of canned food and faced her, the tins slamming on the counter with a bang.

“You’ll help me, Mac?”

“All I can! We will inform Mr. Derosier of it. It’s Derosier can stop him. He has the power.”

“Derosier! But Mac, I wouldn’t—I couldn’t—”

“Only Derosier can stop this silly from running his head into a noose,” he chattered on, and as he spoke he turned to the telephone.

“You must not expect me to ask him—anything!” she cried, her face going white.

“It’s a matter of life and death, and I tell you Derosier’s the only one! He is not one to let anything come between him and his duty. This difficulty between him and your father now, will make no difference.”

“I don’t mean that!” she cried, in desperation, as Mac began to crank the phone. “You must not mention me. And what can he do, anyway?”

“What can he not do? He has power. He has friends, powerful friends. Yes, in Quebec as well as in the Travoy and even at the Fortress. Politics! You have been away a long time. Politics rules. How many votes d’you think Mr. Derosier holds in his hand? Politics!”

He spoke Derosier’s phone number at Lac Bleu.

In the extremity, in the necessity for doing something swiftly, there came to Gwen that sort of clairvoyance which she may have inherited from Jim Harris, with his hunches. Her power to guess or to foresee was so strong and unerring that Jim Harris, losing confidence in himself, had turned to her, at first in jest, but at length in all seriousness and had “played her hunches.”

“Mac,” she said, “there was an eyewitness to this killing who could prove what happened.”

MacLaughlin’s hand hesitated on the crank of the phone. He turned slowly toward her. In his eyes was a glitter.

“Ah! Legrand said that? It proves only that the man is crazy. It’s a lie.”

He began feverishly to wrap up the provisions. He shoved them across the counter to Gwen. He seemed anxious to be rid of her.

She did not know what to say. Her hunch had struck a weak and sore spot in MacLaughlin, but she was bewildered at this effect.

“You’ll be needin’ flour and bacon,” he mumbled, enumerating a long list of things. “I was forgetting. Yes, it is a lie. Well, you leave it to me. I’ll handle it myself.”

He broke into a scornful laugh, but it trailed off into something else. Gwen was puzzled. MacLaughlin knew something—feared something. What was it?

“Derosier must stop the fellow,” he muttered. “Arthur Legrand shall make no one suffer for his guilt.”

“Arthur is not guilty!” she cried.

“No, no! Course not—of the murder. It’s of Martin I’m thinking. ‘The
"Two Reds, Art and Mart, never apart. What difference? Trouble enough when they’re both back. Trouble enough. Derosier will stop it."

"Mac, you must promise not to mention me to Mr. Derosier in this," she said firmly.

"Well, for who else would he do it?"

His glittering eyes, fixed upon her in a sort of leer, sent her into a new panic. Hastily she gathered up her purchases and went to the door. Behind her she heard Mac cranking the phone.

The desperate impulse to follow Arthur Legrand along, and stop him from going to Quebec at all, came to her, but she despaired of being able to do anything with him—and she was already overdue, back at the lodge. Jimmy would be worried. Poor Jimmy, he was already too much worried!

CHAPTER XXIV.

A RESCUE REFUSED.

WHEN Gwen reached the lodge, it was to find Derosier in earnest conversation with her father, in the huge, beamed sitting room. She drew back, as she entered the door, her arms full of bundles, meaning to retreat to the kitchen door around the piazza, but he rose, though his back was toward her, as if he had felt her presence. He relieved her of bundles and, when she heard his softly modulated voice and shook hands with him, she was no longer afraid of him. She thought it strange she had been afraid at all. She had forgotten he was so much the gentleman.

His manner reassured her. He was quite as if she had never written him that scornful letter from Paris, declaring that she could never even dream of caring for him enough to be his wife, now that she knew the meaning of the war and the meaning of his opposition to the recruiting of men in the Travoy.

"Well, we are at peace again," he murmured, with a little quirk of his lips. "The war is over. Everybody is trying to forget it."

In the letter she plainly had called him a slacker. Well had she learned the meaning of that word which she had first heard from the lips of Martin Legrand. So this was his answer to the letter! It caused her to lose, not only her fear, but to gain a sort of beginning of contempt for him.

"Yes, now we are at peace," she responded lightly, and then the words slipped out without thought: "But those who fought for peace will not so soon forget the war."

She colored as she saw her father’s harasse face turn toward her.

"I do not mean that bitterly," she added. "But it is true."

"No one begrudges them their memories," Derosier responded, his face showing no resentment. "Those who stayed at home and fought for a principle cannot afford to be bitter in their defeat."

"Yes, we who fought the war for a living have got to get over that, too, if we can," sighed Jim Harris, with half-serious and half-jesting intonation.

It brought a laugh, but Gwen was too high-pitched to be at ease. Besides her recent encounter, she knew that Derosier and her father had been talking about timber. Timber and notes overdue and then timber again.

"Mr. Derosier," she said, "I am upset. I have just learned of William Legrand’s death and of Martin’s imprisonment, in a very startling way. I had thought that Martin’s wild mistake would be forgotten—with peace."

"Canadian justice does not forget," Derosier responded, with a stern gravity she felt was somehow insincere. "If every man who enlisted to evade punishment for crime were to be forgotten——"

Gwen interrupted: "Since his brother
was tried for the alleged crime and acquitted, it seemed as if Canadian justice was satisfied. At least, leniency might be obtained for him.”

“No doubt it will,” was Derosier’s reply. “But the dignity of the law cannot be sacrificed. There is too much unrest, too many crimes happening to allow any criminal to go scot-free and openly to return to the scene of his crime as if his adventure abroad had made all amends.”

“You are firmly convinced that Martin is guilty?” she inquired. “Nothing has happened since—”

“I condemn no man in advance,” he hastened to say. “Not even his flight into the army, his lawless disruption of our camp crews, not even his disappearance after Lescaut was killed are sufficient to condemn him. If you ask me if I believe he will be convicted—yes!”

Jim Harris sat silent, witnessing the duel between Gwen and Derosier, but his expression told of his quivering sympathy.

“Fair enough,” Gwen admitted, “but suppose there was some one who knew he was not guilty of deliberate murder and yet is hiding what he knows?”

“There was no eyewitness to the killing,” Derosier declared. “I have made careful investigation. It was one of my employees who was killed and I have taken all steps to satisfy myself concerning the circumstances.”

“Mr. Derosier,” Gwen said, “I am going to give you a warning. I don’t know I ought to, but it seems to be of immediate importance. Arthur Legrand has gone to Quebec to confess that he killed Bruno Lescaut.”

The effect upon Derosier was curious. He sat motionless, but the flash of emotion that came over his face made it seem almost as if he had leaped up like a tiger.

“How do you know this?” he demanded sternly.

“He told me. He swears he killed Lescaut himself and that there is proof of it.”

“When did you see him?”

“Just now, at the store. He had just learned of Martin’s arrest. MacLaughlin said that you would be able to stop him from this.”

“Well, if he is such a fool, why should I stop him?” was Derosier’s response to this, relaxing in his chair. “Now there is no danger of a miscarriage of justice.”

Gwen murmured some excuse and went swiftly from the room. She avoided her mother, who was struggling with the supplies Gwen had brought and trying to make a Canadian girl understand her rusty Parisian French, and went to her own room. There she sat, with clenched hands and trembling limbs, suddenly stricken by the sense of danger to Arthur Legrand as if Derosier had uttered a threat rather than a sigh of relief.

She could not ask Derosier, now, to use his influence, for she suddenly had a violent hatred for him. Before it had been hatred of his principles, a patriotic, war-created hatred. Now it was for the man himself. There was nothing she could do—but she jumped up, with the memory of MacLaughlin’s obstinate, hurried efforts to get Derosier.

There was MacLaughlin! Why had he been so sure Derosier would stop Arthur? Acting on the inspiration, Gwen went to the telephone in the butler’s pantry. This was one of the extensions of the private phone service maintained by Derosier and it had never been disconnected. She got MacLaughlin so quickly she knew he had been close to the phone, waiting for it to ring.

“Mac, this is Miss Harris. Mr. Derosier is here, at our place.”

“Ah! There is one thing to do. Ask him to stop the silly fool yourself!”

“Mac, I can’t do it. I’ve already told
him of Arthur’s purpose. He will do nothing—for me.”
“You asked him to?”
“No.”
“Ask him! Ask him! You need only ask him for the favor.”
“I can’t do it. Mac, I thought you would handle this yourself. That’s why I called you.”
“You will take no step to save this poor boy?”

MacLaughlin’s tone was condemning and it was also desperate with his anxiety. She sensed it and hung up the phone, without replying.

Her action had the effect she hoped for. MacLaughlin called back. She let a maid answer. When she was summoned, she waited for a full minute before she spoke into the transmitter.

“Yes?”

“Do this one thing,” came MacLaughlin’s voice eagerly. “Call Mr. Derosier to the phone and tell him who it is wishes to speak to him.”

Gwen hesitated, but she could see no reason for refusing. It looked as if she had gained her point. But she sent the message to Derosier by the maid, instructing her to have Derosier answer on the extension phone in the sitting room. Gwen sat with the receiver to her ear, in the pantry, and listened, without shame.

“Yes, this is Derosier.”

“It’s MacLaughlin. At the store. Mr. Derosier, I’m calling you at the request of Miss Harris who hesitates, out of natural delicacy, to ask you to intercede with this poor boy, Art LeGrand, who has gone to Quebec to try to take on himself his brother’s crime.”

Gwen had to fight herself to keep from breaking in with denial of Mac’s specious appeal, but she held her tongue and held her breath.

“That is unnecessary, so far as I can see,” came Derosier’s mild but decisive voice. “I am surprised you ask it. I shall stop in and see you to-night.”

Something very much like an exclamation of despair came to her over the wire, then Mac hung up and the line went dead.

CHAPTER XXV.

ANOTHER HUNCH.

In the sitting room, Jim Harris sat and gnawed at his fingers. His face was haggard, his eyes ringed with dark circles, his graying hair in disarray from nervous hands thrusting through it.

“You tell me,” he said to Derosier, “that we’ve stripped out all the pulp wood and all the good pine except from Thousand Acres!”

“Well, there is scarcely another winter’s cutting left. A season will finish. It is a clean-up.”

“I had no idea it was so near gone,” Harris muttered. “You should have warned me.”

“What good would a warning have done? It would grow no more timber. I followed your instructions, cut as fast as I could and shipped every stick. You got war prices on most of your stuff.”

“I know—but it was not enough. Derosier, I’m licked. It’s a clean-up with me. All I’ve got in the world is this Canadian timberland. I suppose,” he began, and then sank into painful silence, broken in an instant by his uneasy tone, “I suppose it would be useless to ask you to modify that wager now—as you once wished to do?”

“Circumstances are so different now,” Derosier said in a cool, almost wearied tone.

“You mean—Gwen’s refusal? Well, Derosier, that was your own fault. It was up to you—and I told you so. I warned you, when I learned what the trouble was. Your obstructionist activities—”

“Politics!” exclaimed Derosier. “Mistaken for something else; that is all.”
Harris shook his head, defending Gwen when he was in the last ditch himself. The war had not been particularly popular with Harris, but he had not sympathized with Derosier's attitude at all.

"You do not understand the politics of Quebec," Derosier went on. "I am stronger now than before the war. I control not only the Travoy, but the whole northern district. And I knew I should, when I acted."

"I see, I see. But, nevertheless, that is what cost you her regard."

"It is a loss that can never be replaced!" declared Derosier, in a low tone, but with an emphasis that caused Harris to stare at him out of bloodshot eyes.

"I am a man of principle, Mr. Harris, and principle has cost me a great deal," Derosier went on smoothly. "It has cost me not only much happiness but much money. My own holdings are stripped to the bone. They call me a millionaire—and, in fact, Harris, I am land poor."

"You should have reforested."

"Ah! You still believe in that! Well, within three months——"

"The bet will be decided. I had almost forgotten!" Harris brightened. "Well, I'm going to win!" he declared, with a hint of his old-time fire. Derosier's face remained impassive. His eyes were stony and inscrutable.

"That remains for the forestry department to decide," he said.

"Hum! The last report I had was that, at New Year's, the young pines were vigorous and healthy and growing strong."

"On the contrary, I have been given to understand that your plantations are not doing so well," said Derosier flatly. "I am sorry to say this—but a blight seems to have struck the pine. It was as I—feared, at the first."

"A blight! What do you mean? My forester——"

"Inspected it during the winter. It is now spring. The damage has just begun to show. Another month will show its full effect."

Harris struggled to his feet, his face seeming to become more haggard, his eyes staring wildly.

"But this is impossible!" he cried. "How could an expert forester be so deceived? You are joking, Derosier, or bluffing!"

"In business I do not joke or bluff," Derosier declared, with a smile. "You know that. I am only telling you what you can see for yourself to-morrow. I am sorry. Despite the fact that I seemed to be taking the long chance, and you seemed betting on a sure thing—I am sorry."

"Derosier, if this is so then I am not only ruined, but Gwen is a pauper!" cried Harris. "It's for her I've been saving that—that Thousand Acres and I thanked God I had tied it up this way so I couldn't touch it! Thousand Acres and the plantations are for her."

Derosier sat for some time in silence. His dark face and his black eyes gleamed in the light.

"What you say has a powerful effect upon me," he remarked, at length. "You know my feelings. You know that I extended your notes at one time because of them and——"

"I honestly believed I could help you—with Gwen," Harris broke in. "And I tried! Mind you, I did not try to force her, but I did all I could—fairly."

"Perhaps," was Derosier's dry comment. "And all that is past and it is nobody's fault—except my own, perhaps, as you say. But for whatever I am to blame, the blight cannot be traced to me. It is an act of God."

For the first time a gleam of satisfaction appeared in his eyes, but Harris did not detect it. He was pacing the floor.

"How bad is it? The plantations
cannot be badly damaged since the first of the year."

"I should not venture to judge," De-
rosier replied coldly. "I have kept my part of the agreement—not to set foot in your plantations. Nor have I felled a tree in my pulp-wood tract which I tied up with the pine. Now, at the end of the summer, it will be known whether you keep the Thousand Acres and take also the pulp wood—or whether it is to be the other way."

Harris' face grew bitter. But his bit-
terness was with himself.

"It is all my fault," he groaned, "for gambling with Gwen's future!"

"Well—she does not know," came Derosier's flat tone.

"All the more shame to me!" cried Harris, betraying his suffering.

"It had been my intention," De-
rosier remarked slowly, "to repudiate the wager, had I been so fortunate as to win her favor. It will do no harm to tell you this now, since that has be-
come an impossibility. You see, I have learned not to gamble on a woman's favor." He got up and went out.

Harris sank in his chair, head bowed.

Gwen came into the room with her face ablaze and her eyes streaming tears and went up behind him and put her arms about his neck. They were arms that would have comforted any man and her voice, as she spoke, was like that of a mother to her son. Her anger soon melted into a pity that transformed her face to its highest beauty.

"Jimmy, I have been listening," she said. "I wanted to hear what Derosier would say to you—about business. I have distrusted him for a long time. I am sorry I heard something I was not supposed to know—but I am glad, too. Because something tells me that his report on the pine isn't the literal truth. I've a hunch, Jimmy, a good one! And I'm not going to let you play it, this time—I'm going to play it, myself.

"I am going to Quebec to-night, in the car," she went on, "and get hold of a man we can trust—a forester who knows his business and who can put us right on this 'blight.' I don't know what it is, but I don't think it's just what Derosier intends us to believe. Now, above all, don't worry about me—and my future. I'll gamble with you on that. Now I've got to hurry. The moon is just up and it's a nice, bright big one and George has had his supper and I'm going to snatch one and be off. Trust me, Jimmy!"

"I am ashamed to look you in the face, Gwen," muttered Jim Harris, in a broken tone. "But you are giving me the most wonderful moment of my life. God bless you!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

ALONG THE TRAVOY.

ALL night long, Arthur Legrand walked the forest travoy which led to the railroad station at Le Quesne, so that he might catch the earliest train in the morning for Quebec. No lonely patrol in the war-blasted woods of the war zone had ever been half so terrible as this journey. The familiar woods of the Travoy seemed an ominous, hos-
tile enemy bent upon destruction.

The cuttings were constant reminders of Derosier, the timber king, Derosier, who had put Martin in prison as a cruel revenge for Martin's leadership of the men of the woods in the fight for a living. Arthur had no doubt of De-
rosier's responsibility for Martin's swift arrest on his return from the war. Arthur had sensed the tense subjection of the Travoy to its overlord, the fear that held men's tongues and caused them to glance askance at his uniform.

He did not entirely understand it, but he could guess at the reason and com-
prehend it. He knew of the draft law that had been put in effect against op-
position and that Derosier had taken an
active part in the bitter fight against it. All this was now open history. He knew how many of Derosier’s best lumberjacks had been enlisted through Martin’s fiery leadership against Derosier’s economic oppression—and how many had followed Martin and himself into the service, even before the draft. Derosier would not forget that or forgive it.

There was something else, something mysterious and sinister prompting Derosier’s hatred of Martin and of Arthur. For a long time, Arthur had felt it. He had been suspicious of Derosier’s interest in their father and, without being able to lay a finger on the reason for the suspicion, it became more ominous, now that William Legrand was dead.

There was something in Derosier’s past connected with the shrouded past of William Legrand. Of that Arthur was sure. His father’s mutterings had penetrated Arthur’s perceptions more deeply than Martin’s. And now, with his broadened experience of life, with wisdom and insight gained in the hectic years of the war he began to try to analyze more keenly every word, look and act of Derosier’s and of William Legrand’s reactions to them—and Senwa’s.

Arthur was certain as he went along the travoy that he was going to prison, and perhaps to the gallows, in Martin’s place. On this lonely journey his mind became more active and clear than it ever had been before in his life. Whatever happened to him or to Martin, Arthur was resolved that the mystery which shrouded their lives should be cleared up. Either he or Martin must do it.

“I will begin with Senwa,” he said, aloud.

An owl, in startled alarm, hooted at him as if in mockery. But alarm came to him from another source. A glow of light began to filter through the trees behind him. It became brighter and came closer. Then he heard the thrumming of a laboring motor.

Instinctively he knew what it meant and he dodged into a thicket of balsam beside the road to allow the powerful car to pass, lurching from side to side in the sandy ruts and plowing up sand in a spray from its big tires.

He made out, with a great leap of his heart, Gwen’s form in the front seat beside the chauffeur. He saw another form in the seat behind, but shaded by the top so that he got no glimpse of the face. Then the car roared on, down the travoy, to the corner where a main road, which led south and eventually struck the provincial highway to Quebec, would take it off from Arthur’s trail. He was westbound, to the railroad which closely borders the Ottawa.

He was trembling a little when he stepped out into the road again and it was not entirely from the sudden fear of being seen. It was from the knowledge that Gwen Harris was headed for Quebec—and that she was going there because that was his destination. But soon his tremor stilled and he became very calm—cold. After all, her anxiety might be for Martin! It was the news of Martin’s arrest that had seemed to disturb her so much. Well, that didn’t matter. It was for Martin he was going, too.

But his face was set and gray as he plodded on. Mechanically he noted where the car turned south, made sure that it had not gone on, west, to the station, then strode more swiftly through the night.

CHAPTER XXVII.
ACCORDING TO THE LAW.

WHEN the clerk announced the presence in the outer office of Lieutenant Arthur Legrand, of Travoy, Judge Des Plaines was busily engaged in reviewing the evidence in the case of
Martin Legrand, which would go to trial the following day.

The judge was a ranchman of the splendid type which has given to Quebec some of the most forceful and eloquent barristers and statesmen in all Canada. He was one of those men with a veritable passion for his profession and in his calling he regarded himself almost as one bound by holy orders to administer justice. His duties were not merely to hear evidence at a formal trial, but to seek for it in advance, to examine every shred of evidence offered, to search for more and more and never to be satisfied until he had found out the whole truth.

The evidence accumulated, to date, seemed as conclusive of Martin Legrand’s guilt as circumstantial evidence could be. But he felt, with professional instinct, that Arthur Legrand had something of tremendous importance to impart to him. The fact that he had been attached to the court at the time Arthur Legrand was mistakenly arrested and brought up for this same crime helped to deepen his interest in this caller. Inquiries he had made concerning Lieutenant Legrand had resulted in the information that he was not yet demobilized, but was still in the service abroad.

“Admit him,” Judge Des Plaines said to the clerk. He cleared all papers from his desk, folded his hands and sat looking directly at the door through which the visitor must enter.

Des Plaines was a fine-looking man, with hard gray eyes and graying hair which he kept brushed smoothly back. His face was at once handsome and strong. It was a face that invited confidence.

Lieutenant Arthur Legrand, when he entered, saluted in military fashion, not so much from force of habit as from the feeling that it was proper to salute this dignitary.

The judge saw a tall, bronzed young man with eyes that looked directly into his own, who stood at ease in the middle of the floor, who was carefully groomed and, though his face showed signs of great strain, seemed calm and self-possessed. When he spoke, despite a certain huskiness of tone, his words were clear and carefully chosen.

“Judge Des Plaines, I have come to give evidence in the case of my brother, Martin Legrand, who is held for the killing of Bruno Lescaut. I only learned of his arrest last night and came at once.”

Judge Des Plaines nodded in approval.

“You are in time, fortunately,” he said. “The trial is set for to-morrow.”

Arthur Legrand gave a little start, his lips framing the word, “To-morrow,” but he said aloud:

“I have evidence that proves Martin Legrand innocent of the charge. I killed Bruno Lescaut myself.”

Judge Des Plaines gave a little exclamation, but whether of surprise or satisfaction was not evident.

“You wish to make this as a deposition, under oath?” he inquired severely.

“Yes.”

“You are Arthur Legrand, the same man who was tried on this same charge at the session of February, 1915, and acquitted?”

“Yes, but—”

“And you would commit perjury now, in order to try to clear your brother?” The question was stern, but not unkindly given.

“Perjury?”

“You have already pleaded not guilty to this crime—and you are officially not guilty and on record as such and the court could not admit such a statement as you propose to give, because it would amount to perjury. It would be impossible—and such a statement could not help, but would only injure your brother’s case.”
Arthur Legrand took two long breaths, then burst out: "But I am guilty! I mean—that I did kill Lescaut! It was——"

"Then why did you not plead guilty at the time of your trial?" interrupted Des Plaines severely. "You entered a plea of not guilty. It was supposed that you were the victim of mistaken identity—and now you claim that you are the man."

"Judge Des Plaines, I am not—I was not guilty of murder. I was advised—I understood that I was required to plead not guilty, as a formality, in order that the law might be satisfied."

"You were not so required to do," declared Des Plaines. "Advised, perhaps. You did not take the stand for examination, your attorney taking advantage of the law which does not compel an accused to testify. You have been found not guilty nevertheless and your brother is now—as he was then—charged with the crime. The evidence is to the effect that some one did kill the deceased and the charge is murder. The law does not make a distinction—unless you or some one killed him in self-defense and can so prove to the satisfaction of the court. But you have been acquitted of the killing, in being found not guilty of murder. You can see that your effort is useless," he finished kindly, "and cannot save your brother."

"But I tell you that I did kill him—in self-defense—and I am not saying this merely to try to save him!" cried Arthur hoarsely. "I wish to confess to the killing of Bruno Lescaut as an act of self-defense. That I can prove."

"By your confession?" Judge Des Plaines shook his head. "Officially I can take no cognizance of such a confession and——"

He was interrupted by the discreet and silent entrance of the same clerk who had announced and admitted Legrand and who, at a nod from Des Plaines, advanced and whispered something in his ear.

"Let them remain," the judge said. The clerk retired.

Des Plaines continued:

"And there was no eyewitness to this crime. I had thought, when you came, that you had evidence of another sort to offer."

"But there was an eyewitness, your honor!"

Judge Des Plaines stirred as if about to rise, but he seemed to think better of it. In a quiet tone he asked:

"Who is the eyewitness?"

"It is Angus MacLaughlin, of Travoy."

"Ah! You are sure of this?"

"As sure as I stand here, Judge Des Plaines."

Again the clerk appeared. He had answered a signal from a buzzer on Des Plaines' desk.

"Kindly escort Lieutenant Legrand to the waiting room," he said to the clerk. "Lieutenant, I shall see you again in a very few minutes. I am obliged to interrupt this conversation for another important matter."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

INTERESTING NEWS.

THE clerk led Arthur to a recess at the end of the corridor which ran between the outer and the inner offices of the suite and showed him to a seat.

"You are not to leave here until you are summoned," he said.

Arthur sat down. But a moment later he sprang to his feet and stood staring into the face of Gwen Harris. Another clerk had brought her along the corridor to the same recess and left her there, hurrying away at once, with a murmured: "You will please wait here until——"

"Miss Harris!" gasped Arthur. "Why are you here?"

"I—— Why, they brought me here
to wait—for Mr. MacLaughlin," she answered, in a bewildered manner. Her face went crimson, then white. "Arthur—you have not——"

"MacLaughlin!" he cried. "You brought MacLaughlin here?"

"He came with me," she responded. "He is in the judge's office now. Arthur, why did you not tell me—everything, last night? That it was Mac who saw—who witnessed—what happened then at the door of that store office?"

There was reproof in her voice, but it was gentle and sorrowful rather than condemning.

"It would have made it easier for me," she said. "Arthur, you should have told me!"

"You would believe nothing I told you," he responded, a trifle bitterly. "And I did not wish you to know that, anyway. How did you get him to come? You did that——"

"It was Derosier got him to come," she declared, with some hint of irony in her voice, "Mac would never have come for me—but now he is here he is going to make a clean breast of it—and now I believe you, Arthur. I could not believe you last night. I thought—thought you were only desperately trying to save Martin."

"Indeed I was!" he exclaimed sharply. "But I do not understand how MacLaughlin—how you induced him to come. You say Derosier——" He hesitated, fixing her gaze with keen, penetrating eyes. "You asked Derosier—to send him?" he demanded, his husky voice sinking almost to a whisper.

"Oh, no, no!" she cried. "I did not ask Derosier anything. I could not do that. Arthur, I started for Quebec last night because I—because father and I are in trouble—and I came to get you to help us. If you are free!" she exclaimed, in sudden alarm. "You have—told them?"

Arthur nodded, with a wry smile on his lips.

"I am free. It will be easy for me to get arrested, though," he added. "How long I shall be free, I do not know. I was bidden to stay here until called. Trouble?" He concentrated his gaze upon her face, so plainly showing marks of loss of sleep and worry. "What is the trouble?"

"Oh, that can wait! First, I must know this: How did you discover that MacLaughlin was a witness to the killing of Bruno Lescaut?"

"Tell me, first," he parried excitedly, "what happened to MacLaughlin, that he came here? Is he going to tell the truth, do you think?"

"Yes. MacLaughlin will tell the truth," she replied, "because he is no longer Derosier's man. He is his own man. He has resigned as agent at Travo. Derosier went to the store, late last night, after he had been at our lodge. And when I drove down to the village for a last appeal to MacLaughlin to help me, he was preparing to drive to Le Quesne and take the train for Quebec. Well—I brought him with me instead."

"And you came to Quebec because——" He seemed unable to go on.

"Because I wished to keep you out of trouble—to help Martin if possible—but I wanted to keep you out of trouble so you could help me!" She gave a nervous little laugh. "Tell me, now, how you knew MacLaughlin was a witness, a guilty witness, to the fight between you and Lescaut?"

"I can see that he has told you the truth," Arthur said. "It was a fight. Well—I'll tell you how I knew. It was Martin who put me on the track—and Martin did it without knowing what he was saying. That was at Nice. I told you how he babbled in delirium."

"It appears that a lumberjack by the name of Ripaud, a half-breed who had been one of Derosier's camp spies and
who was hand in glove with Lescaut, was a member of Martin’s company in the action in which Martin was wounded so badly. Martin did not know of Ripaud’s character—at least, I don’t think so. At any rate he did something for Ripaud, who was in trouble, military discipline probably, and Ripaud, who was mortally wounded in this same action, made a dying confession which Martin heard before he took a turn for the worse. The confession involved an almost unbelievable plot which concerned Lescaut, MacLaughlin and—Derosier.”

Her exclamation of comprehension told him that what he was saying fitted with what she had got from MacLaughlin.

“Derosier, it appears,” he went on, “was hard pressed for ready money and the plot was for Lescaut to rob the pay roll. From MacLaughlin’s own safe, mind you! Poor MacLaughlin was inveigled into it almost without knowing what it meant—though he must have known, after all, that Lescaut meant to do a robbery when he gave him that key—dropped it from the window above the door into Lescaut’s waiting hands!”

“He knew,” Gwen put in. “He is all broken up, willing to do anything. He is an honest man at heart. He had been corrupted. He was deeply in debt to Derosier. Since then he has paid it off, or at any rate he had saved the money to pay it and, when Derosier went to him last night and threatened to turn him out with a black mark against him, MacLaughlin fairly flung the money in his face and resigned from his service. That’s that!”

She drew a long breath.

“Miss Harris, forgive me! I have kept you standing!” Arthur exclaimed, and led her to the chair he had occupied. He walked a step or two, back and forth across the tiny recess.

“It means,” he said, at length, “that unless Derosier has somehow obtained a hold upon justice here, that Martin will go free!”

“And you?” she queried.

“I don’t know!” He fairly chuckled.

“I don’t care!” he added, with such joy in his face that Gwen gasped.

“Don’t you see that what Martin was trying to do was to keep this knowledge from me—the knowledge that there was an eyewitness—because he wanted to keep me from being put up again for the killing? He did not know what he was saying, to whom he was talking, at the hospital. What he said was rambling, sprinkled in among a lot of nonsense. Like what he said about you, for instance, and how I’d saved you from the river and—”

“There was nothing else—to that nonsense?” she broke in, with a catch in her voice. “You say you don’t care what happens to you now? There was nothing that Martin told you from me—that might make you—feel differently?”

He stared at her for a moment, then his eyes wavered and his face reddened. “There was a lot of nonsense,” he murmured, “to which I did not pay any attention—because it was nonsense. But what is this about you and your father being in trouble?” he hastened on, in a brisk manner. “Is it something about Derosier?” he demanded, with sudden suspicion.

“It is a matter of business,” she replied. “And it is something in which you can help us more than any one else in the world, I believe. You see, there was a very selfish reason for my wishing to keep you out of prison. Arthur, do you know what the success of father’s pine plantations means? Or their failure?”

He shook his head. “Only that Jim Harris was mightily interested and anxious for the pines to get a good start. Of course, he knew, and I knew, that the plantations could be of value only
in the distant future. I suppose—I suppose he planted them for you,” he added.

“Yes,” she said, “he did.”

Then she plunged into a brief, brisk sketch of the situation as it concerned the Thousand Acres, told him of the wager between Harris and Derosier and its coming consummation and ended with:

“There is a blight on the young trees—Derosier says—and he seems very confident of winning that bet when the time comes for the decision.”

“A blight? Derosier says so?” Arthur’s questions were shot out almost fiercely. His manner became as professional as that of a surgeon suddenly confronted with an interesting case appealing to his skill, in the midst of some other engrossing but relatively unimportant activity. “And what do you and your father know about it?”

“We have not seen the plantations this spring,” she responded.

“Derosier told you last night? Did he indicate what the blight might be? What had attacked the trees? How they looked?”

“No.”

“I see. Well,” he declared, in a tone that held her with its conviction, “there is no doubt at all that Derosier knows what that blight is—and where it came from.”

CHAPTER XXIX.
THE PINE-TREE BLIGHT.

CANADIAN justice, swift to punish crime and relentless in the prosecution of the guilty, is as swift to untangle the knots which involve the innocent. But Canadian justice is of human extraction. The story told to Judge Des Plaines by Angus MacLaughlin, self-confessed eyewitness to the killing of Bruno Lescaut, dragged in the name of a man so prominent in the politics of the Dominion that for a time justice delayed.

Martin Legrand was called from his cell in the Fortress before Judge Des Plaines. He was confronted with MacLaughlin’s presence and story. He was told that his brother, already adjudged innocent, had been instrumental in showing to the prosecution that he, Martin, could not possibly have committed the killing and that his silence would give Arthur no protection, only endanger his liberty.

Martin did the rest and justice no longer delayed. Martin had preserved a written statement of Ripaud’s confession, taken down at his deathbed by a brother officer, which exposed briefly the very plot to which MacLaughlin had testified.

The indictment against Martin Legrand was quashed without a formal trial being held. It would have been a farce—and it would have been damaging to the spotless reputation of a certain powerful political leader of Travy. His tool was dead. No robbery had ever been committed. And as for Arthur Legrand, in the eyes of the law, he was as one who had bought and paid for immunity, or as one who did not exist. He could not have been tried for a second time on the charge of murdering Lescaut had Judge Des Plaines desired him to be. Thus, again, did the twinship of the Two Reds of Travy operate to set both of them free. The case of the killing of Bruno Lescaut reverted to that obscurity in which it had been for a time following Arthur’s trail, but this time never to be revived.

Angus MacLaughlin had experienced a great change of heart. MacLaughlin was his own man now. His mental sufferings were relieved.

MacLaughlin sat between Martin and Arthur in the tonneau of Gwen Harris’ car on the ride back to Travy. He was in a state of physical collapse, as a result of the reaction from his experience. Like Arthur, he had gone
sleepless for many hours—but, unlike Arthur, he was an old man. He did not speak for a long time, not until they were well out on the road to Travoy.

The brothers talked over his head, as he shrank down in the seat between them, eyes closed, his face white and twitching. Briefly the twins exchanged experiences. They did not speak of those of the past three weeks, but those of the years they had been in uniform.

GWEN HARRIS, sitting in front beside George, turned and hung upon their words. It was not long before they became very merry, in the brilliant spring sunshine, but McLaughlin remained downcast, dour. He seemed to be brooding over things.

At last, when it seemed as if he had reached the limit of his capacity for silent suffering, he spoke up sharply:

"Martin, I'm asking you to forgive me!" he cried. "I was a coward. It's fear that makes a wretch of a man."

"If that's what's eating you, forget it!" came Martin's bluff response. "I don't hold anything against you, Mac."

"You don't know what the words mean to me, Martin Legrand!" was McLaughlin's fervent response, in a quivering voice. "There are things coming clear to me now which were dark before—because I had shut my eyes to them. Martin, it's my belief there was more to the plot than it seemed. It's my conviction now that it was intended to blame the robbery upon you, too, had it come to pass. Yes, my eyes are open."

"That would have been splendid!" Martin laughed dryly. "That would have made the whole thing perfect. Ripaud hinted at that, too. But it didn't seem important to me then. And I don't suppose it's important now—but I'm glad to know what you think of it, just the same. It all helps."

His lips set grimly. It was not hard to guess of whom he was thinking.

"Things will be different in Travoy, with you out of Derosier's service, Mac," he said. "What are you planning to do?"

Gwen spoke for McLaughlin and to him.

"Father wants your help, Mac," she said, "and so do I, if you'll give it. We are going to wind up affairs with Derosier this summer and plan—for the future. We need a man who knows about them and who knows the Travoy. Would you be willing to help us? I'm going to ask Mrs. McLaughlin to take charge at the lodge, as housekeeper, and we'd like to have you both come and live there."

McLaughlin choked when he started to reply, but he steeled himself.

"If there's anythin' honest I can do now, it will be a blessing," he said. "And particular to help keep what we can out of Derosier's clutches. The missus will say the same, I'm certain."

"You're going to have help, Mac," came Martin's dry, ironic voice.

Gwen looked in his eyes and knew he was not merely mouthing words to buck Mac up. There was something of the old, fierce, reckless fire in them. He looked at this moment like the old Martin—Mart, the Red.

"Martin!" she implored, putting out her hand and touching him on the arm. "Don't do anything violent—for us or for yourself!"

Martin grinned. "I've got a little score to settle," he said. "I ran out on you, on the drive, if you remember. I 'followed Sitka!' in a hurry, when I got that wire from 'G. Harris.' Well, maybe I can help Art a bit in this tree job you've got for him. Even if it's only to pull trees up by the roots, or something—violent."

He was still ironical, but the steady look in his eyes warmed Gwen's heart.

"Martin, you want to help us, too!"
she cried. “Three good men I’ve got already for dad’s new organization!”

“Of course I want to help!” declared Martin. “I’m not yellow. I was never called that color, at any rate. Red is the worst.”

The note of significant bitterness in his last remark Gwen ignored.

“Then you’re appointed assistant forester, with Arthur,” she declared soberly.

“One condition,” he put in, “is that the job draws no salary.”

“Oh, we’ll leave your salary to Arthur!” she laughed.

THE brothers asked to be set down at the travoy which branched off the main road near the village and led to the Legrand place. Gwen let them go without protest, remembering that they had yet to visit the old home for the first time since their return from the war.

Within a mile of the cabin, Arthur turned abruptly off into one of the numerous overgrown cross hauls.

“That isn’t right,” Martin objected, “if you’re looking for the short cut.”

“Oh, I haven’t forgotten,” Arthur said. “I want to take a look at the plantation over this way and see what I can see.”

Martin accompanied him. The cross haul led directly into the first tract Jim Harris had planted—a level, sandy area which had been a desolate waste ten years before, but which was now springing flush with the new life of the satin-skinned pines with their bright, flaring foliage.

“Well, this looks O. K. to me!” exclaimed Martin.

The trees had been planted, as “three-year transplants,” sturdy and healthy from the nurseries of New York State, in rows four feet wide, and the growing forest gave the appearance of a solid mass of thriving young saplings. Some rose twelve to fifteen feet high. Others, of slower growth, ranged up from six to ten. They had grown steadily, thriving in the sandy soil.

There seemed nothing wrong with them, so far as a casual glance could detect. But Arthur lunged into a row, until his expert eye caught something which sent him on his knees, his hands tearing away brush and grass from the base of a trunk. When he rose there was a look on his face which caused Martin to exclaim:

“The blight? You’ve found it?”

“Yes,” was Arthur’s dry-lipped comment. “What I expected.”

He was off up the row again and zigzagging through the rows, while Martin trailed him in perplexity. He knew the forest, but he did not know trees and still he could see nothing that looked like a blight. There were no indications in the foliage, no dead, brown needles hanging limp and lifeless among the bristling spikes.

After a time Arthur relaxed and, brushing the dirt from his knees, turned east, toward the clearing where their cabin stood.

“Very bad?” Martin asked.

“Looks rather bad, in spots,” Arthur responded. “How bad it is, in general, I can’t tell. We’ll find out to-morrow.”

That was all he would say and Martin did not press him. They had other things to talk about—and think about, as they broke through a hazel growth at the edge of the old clearing and stood, side by side for an instant, looking down the hill.

CHAPTER XXX.

SENWA’S SHADOW STAYS.

A BROODING silence clasped the little homestead clearing as The Two Reds of Travoy came home from the war. The brook murmured softly, for the water was low. No smoke rose from the chimney and the heavy plank
door stared at them with a blank and lifeless eye, as they rounded the cabin and came near. Always, in warm weather, that door had stood open, for William Legrand liked to sit and look out through it and the brothers, when they were home, could not bear a closed room. There was the feeling of desertion and loneliness. The cow had long since gone the way of all flesh. A scurrying fox scuttled away from an out-building and a jay scolded him and defied The Two Reds.

"Looks rather—all gone," muttered Martin. "The squaw can't be here. Somehow I can't hide her—though I learned in the village, before they took me, that she stuck to the old man to the last."

"Mac told me, last night, she was still here," Arthur said.

"Just as soon chuck her out if she was," grumbled Martin.

The cabin was empty. It was Arthur who discovered signs of Senwa's recent departure, indications she had gone for good, too, in the absence of all her clothing and gewgaws. He found, some food, however, cooked recently and he suggested a meal.

Martin had been silent since they entered. He stood before the empty old rocker which had been William Legrand's and stared at it thoughtfully for a moment.

Suddenly he turned and met Arthur's eyes upon him.

"I'm wondering what it was all about!" he burst out. "The way he used to rave over being English. I couldn't make it out at all. It used to make me sore and suspicious, too. One thing—every time he'd start muttering how English we were I'd look up and see that damn leather face behind his chair. That squaw. Like a shadow hanging over him. Humph! D'ye know, we never asked her anything about herself? Nor about him? I bet she could tell things if she would. Suppose she'll be back? Or think she's gone for good—up north to the tribe?"

"Funny she'd skip like this," Arthur was puzzled. "I left word with Mac, last night, I'd be home soon and, though he could scarcely have seen her before he started for Quebec, some one must have told her, in the village, that I was home."

"I didn't even get out here before they nabbed me," Martin said. "Like a fool I walked into Travoy and started looking for a job. Just what Derosier wanted."

"Broke?" queried Arthur.

"Flat."

"I've got some money belongs to you. Our salary for the Black River drive."

"Yours!" was Martin's explosive response. "I wouldn't touch it. I resigned as soon as I took the job, in your name. I've got to look up that fur buyer I consigned my last pack to and make him come across. Say, look here, Art, I'm going to get away from here soon as I can, after we've seen this tree thing through. Think I'll go back to England."

"England? You?"

"Sounds funny, for me, doesn't it? Oh, the English are all right. I wish I was sure I—" He broke off.

"D'you remember the girl who took care of me at Nice? She told me about your being there or I wouldn't have known it. Guess I was clean dotty."

"She was English," Arthur commented. "I remember her. She was fine to me—and to you."

"She was a dog-gone little angel!" declared Martin emphatically. "I told her, when I was all fixed up and had to leave, that when I got my war paint off I'd look her up—some time. They sent me blighty, to Surrey. That's where she lives. Heaven all right and she an angel out of it. Best part of it was that she told me she didn't care if I was part Indian, she'd—"

"Mart!" exclaimed Arthur, so
sharply that Martin stopped dead and with open lips. “Mart, what did you learn up North—from the Montagnais, that winter?”

“Oh! Nothing.” Martin’s tone was bitter. “They don’t talk much. Didn’t need to. I’m not all dumb. The way they took me in and gave me the village told me—enough. Might as well have crowned me chief. I dug out. No chiefing for me.”

Arthur was white-lipped, but his voice was steady.

“That was because they knew Senwa was—”

“Our shadow,” cut in Martin harshly. “Maybe so—but I doubt that was all. Something else.”

Arthur was silent before this strange, mysterious mood of Martin’s. He fell to arranging dishes on the table, cutting bread.

Martin wandered slowly about the main room. He stooped in front of the bulky old highboy, stared with a smile at the books ranged atop of it. Then his eyes roved to the reversed picture on the wall above. It seemed to repel him. He moved restlessly away, went to the rocker again, then caught sight of his father’s old rifle in a corner, picked it up and fingered it.

“The old man was always afraid of something—or suspicious of somebody,” he remarked. “I wonder if he was afraid somebody would pop up and explode his ‘pure English’ propaganda? Art, I wonder who our mother was?”

The question was like a challenge. It was something that neither of them had ever asked before, and Arthur turned toward Martin with his face suddenly gray and grim.

“Martin, what’s come over you?” he cried huskily, almost angrily. “She was an English school-teacher.”

“I hope so,” Martin rasped out. “That girl from Surrey—she’s too damn decent to marry a breed.”

Arthur’s face was white as paper. He breathed heavily, bit his lips, then choked out:

“Mart, if you know what you’re saying, let’s have it all! If you’re just moping—shut up! I can’t stand for that!”

“I’ve told you all I know!” was Martin’s savage response. “Soon as I entered this room I could feel—the shadow. Seemed to me I saw old Senwa’s face back of that chair, the way it used to be, with those black, staring eyes, that told you nothing—kept a secret of some kind—hers and the old man’s secret. Remember how she used to clap her hand over his mouth when he got excited and began to rattle on too much? If we can’t get hold of her soon—”

“Martin, you’re shooting blind!” cried Arthur, in a shaking voice. “You were away from home more than I was when father was most himself. And he told me once that our mother was an English school-teacher. From Surrey, Martin!”

“Oh, I know all about that, but—”

“And that he married her in England and they came to Canada before we were born. Said something about his family turning him out with a shilling. I guessed what that meant. They thought her beneath him. I suppose he hated ’em so, for that, he wouldn’t mention ’em—but he was proud of his family, just the same.

“Then mother’s death knocked him over completely—that and the accident,” he went on. “So twisted him up he couldn’t bear to speak of her—much. And it drove him out of his senses, after a while. He talked a lot of nonsense, Martin, but back of it was truth. And I think he meant to let us have the whole story some day.”

Martin stood with his face puckered into an obstinate expression. Well, Arthur knew this, for it was the expression of Martin’s temperament, his in-
ability to admit anything was so unless he could see it plainly.
"If you want to know who our mother was, Martin," he said softly, 
"turn that picture face out, over there."
He nodded at the dusty blank frame on the wall, with its rusty crape and folded British flag thrust in the knot.
"You ever—turn it over?" Martin asked tensely.
"Well—no. I—- Somehow I couldn't. It seemed to me it would be sort of—sacrilege, while he was alive. I guess it had got to be as much of a fixture as—as the old highboy and the old rocker and the rifle and dad sitting there staring out across the clearing—east."

Martin's face contracted in a frown. He made no move toward the picture. Arthur's face was alive with swift thought.
"I want to be sure," he said, "as much as you do because—- Mart, what was the message you had for me, off the Black River drive?"

The intensity of his question brought Martin's gaze to his face. He took a quick step forward and put his hand on his brother's shoulder.
"How did you know I had a message for you?" he demanded.

"She asked me yesterday," Arthur replied, "whether I'd got it." It did not seem necessary to mention Gwen's name, for both had her in mind at the mention of the Black River drive.
"You said something, at the hospital in Nice, that sounded like nonsense to me then. But now— What was it, Martin?"

"What did I say then?" Martin asked.

"Something about my saving her from the river, how grateful she was, stuff like that for a time, then you got to babbling about something you were not going to tell me, because, you said, I wouldn't care to know it."

Martin groaned.

"I'm an ass!" he cried. "You'll see how bad, when I tell you what happened. I don't know what was the matter with me, anyway. Dumb or—jealous because you were batty over her, probably. You see, I had a foolish idea I knew it all and that she was nothing but a silly little flapper. I've changed my mind. She's a brick—and it isn't just because she helped get me out of prison, either. I'm ashamed of myself for ever thinking—- Well, you listen and then shoot me or kick me or do——"  

He began wandering around the room, hands in his pockets, clenched, kicking at the fur rugs. His face grew very red and his gaze roved everywhere except to Arthur's face.

"Fact is," he exploded, "you're supposed to have pulled her out of the river the afternoon before you hit the trail for Ottawa! Get that? That's what made my clothes so wet that night."

"But how did she—-"

"She must have got out on the jam somehow and was carried down on a loose drift. She fell off at the tamarack run. I happened to be coming up the river trail to see you and find what you'd sent for me about and—I jumped in and yanked her out. Well, she seemed all right, except for a lot of river water in her. I was scared and mad, all at once. I didn't want her to know I was about. You see?"

Arthur nodded, gripping the table hard, as if it was an effort to sit silent and listen.

"Well, I tell you, I had the wrong idea about her," Martin went on. "You want to remember that when she came to, she thought it was you had saved her!"

"You mean to tell me she didn't know—the difference—even then?" Arthur's voice was incredulous.

"It was in the swamp. Dark and— I found, later that she'd got a bad bump
over the eyes and she couldn’t see much—and I was so much an ass I made her walk up the trail alone. Didn’t dare take her in—or didn’t want to. Anyway, she took me for you at the first and I sort of played up—I kissed her.”

“Martin! Martin!”

“Wait a minute! Hear the end. The message I was to give you, if I saw you, was this: ‘Tell him that I’m glad he kissed me good-by.’ Now what? Shoot!”

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE SHADOW DEEPENS.

THERE was little conversation during the frugal meal the brothers ate. For one thing, Arthur was engrossed, to all appearances, in close study of a big volume he got from the highboy, poring over a chapter on “Pinus Strobus,” in which, beneath the Latin label, was discussed in detail the nature and the weaknesses of the mighty white pine. Martin, when he finished eating, got up and resumed his restless pacing of the room.

Arthur knew that chapter too well to become absorbed in it as deeply as he seemed. He was reading to try to keep from thinking. His pulses throbbed and beat with the words Martin had given him, the message, four years old, yet so much alive it seemed as if no such words had ever been spoken before in the world: “Tell him that I’m glad he kissed me good-by.”

The words gleamed between the fine lines of his reading. It did not matter that his kiss had been given vicariously, given in half-rougish, half-jealous mood, by his brother “playing up.” The important thing was that she thought it was he had kissed her and, when she knew he had gone to the war, she had sent him the message.

“Tell him that I’m glad——”

The weird and startling whistle of a screech owl sounded close beneath a window. Martin halted abruptly in his walk with a muttered:

“Senwa’s pet owl hanging around yet. Sounds like old times, eh?”

Arthur did not answer. His face went suddenly gray with a piercing emotion. He got up from the table and began to look slowly, searchingly, about the room. He went to the old rocker and poked his fingers into the cushion. His glance went to the attic entrance, a hole in the ceiling, then to the highboy.

Martin was watching him. A look of comprehension came slowly over his face.

“I suppose the squaw took everything she wanted,” he said. “Looking for something—particular?”

“Yes. Martin, it just came to me that we’ve got to hunt for what father left us.”

“Think he left us something, eh? What?” Martin’s tone was almost mocking.

“He was always saying ‘When I’m dead and gone, then you’ll know.’ And about how—mother wanted us to know. You remember?”

“All of that.” muttered Martin wearily, and then with another glance at Arthur’s set, strained face he added: “Better wait till to-morrow. Then we’ll go through things. We’re both all keyed up to-night. We could stand it better in daylight if we found—anything.”

“I’m going to try to find out to-night!” Arthur declared, in an accent of desperation.

Again the screech owl shivered the air with its tremelo.

“Damn that owl!” Martin cried. “Wonder where Senwa did go to? She’d tell us, quick enough, if he left anything for us. If I could get hold of her——”

“I doubt he told her anything about—that.”
"Oh, I don’t know—and I guess she’d know about things, even if he tried to keep ’em from her, with those eyes of hers."

His voice trailed off. He suddenly seemed preoccupied. He had been pacing back and forth the length of the room, smoking cigarettes. Arthur had not noticed it, but every time Martin passed the highboy he shot a glance up at the pathetic, reversed picture, with its drooping crape and faded, worn-out flag.

ARTHUR had taken up the lamp and was peering into a wall cupboard beside the fireplace. Then he pulled out a quantity of drying herbs which crumbled to dust in his fingers. He straightened and set the lamp on the mantel, stood with his head on his hand, the fingers clutching the edge of the shelf, his brows contracted in a stare of painful concentration.

"If I could only remember!" he muttered. "It was a sort of box. I saw him holding it on his lap, but he put the corner of his shawl over it when I came in."

Martin had stopped pacing. He stood in front of the highboy, quite close to it. He said nothing. Arthur did not expect a comment, for he was talking to himself more than to Martin. Martin’s face had assumed a look of determination mingled with cynical unbelief.

For a moment the brothers stood with their backs to each other, on opposite sides of the room, each in his characteristic way, seeming to strive, by the concentration of their thoughts, to lift that shadow which hung over them, the shadow typified in the remembered coarse features of Senwa, the squaw. The shadow seemed to grow darker. The little owl lifted its quavering voice and called for the missing Montagnais who had used to feed him. A strange pet, this grayish night bird, with solemn, blank eyes and the voice of a lost soul.

Martin straightened as if the sound stung him and, with a sweep of his long arm, lifted the picture and turned it over. It fell back against the wall with a clatter. A shower of dust puffed out.

Martin’s action, the clatter and the hoarse exclamation that burst from his lips brought Arthur about. He stared at his brother’s broad back. Martin was clutching the highboy with both hands, looking up in a strained attitude.

"My God!" he cried out.

Arthur caught up the lamp and went swiftly across the room. He held the light high above his head. It illuminated with terrible distinctness the crude crayon portrait that stared out from the tarnished gilt frame—and the ornate gilded letters carved in the frame, at the bottom, directly under the portrait. The carving spelled out the single word "MOTHER," the sentimental conceit of some artistic manufacturer of picture molding.

Martin’s head bowed slowly. His whole frame shook with a tremor, so that the highboy rattled against the wall beneath his white-knuckled grip. Arthur’s face went whiter and whiter until his eyes shone glassily and his stare was of one in terror as he fixed his gaze on the portrait. No sound came from his lips.

There was a sudden crash and rattle of glass, then blackness. Martin felt himself jerked away from the highboy by an iron hand. The screech owl shrieked in fright and flapped swiftly away from the window toward the forest depths.

Arthur had hurled the lighted lamp full into the picture, smashing the glass, the chimney and the lamp itself. The flame went out with the sweep of his arm. But the face in the portrait seemed to stare out, even in the dark-
ness, into the eyes of The Two Reds of Travoy.

It was the face of Senwa, the Montagnais squaw.

CHAPTER XXXII.

TRACED BACK.

DAYLIGHT brought a visitor to The Two Reds. It was Angus MacLaughlin. Welcome as he was, he was not invited in to the big room. Arthur mumbled something through the closed front door about it sticking with dampness and admitted him to the lean-to room in the rear.

"I'll not be stopping," he said, with a glance to the two grim faces. "Mr. Harris and Miss Gwen are that anxious to go into the plantations they scarcely slept. They were up at an earthly hour and they are waiting now at the cross travoy near the big tract for you to come. I'm moving to-day and must hurry back to the store."

"We'll be there within half an hour," Arthur promised. "As soon as we can rustle a bite to eat."

"Senwa has gone to Lac Bleu—to be housekeeper," MacLaughlin informed them. "She was at the store last night with an order for goods and the missus got it out of her that Derosier sent for her yesterday."

"Didn't expect us back at all, eh?" Martin commented. "Well—he's welcome to his housekeeper. I've had enough of her."

MacLaughlin hastened off, holding himself erect as if a burden had been lifted from his habitually bent shoulders with his escape from Derosier's service.

The brothers looked at each other.

"Well, we'll go through with this thing first off," was Arthur's decision.

"Right!" responded Martin.

They ate in the lean-to, in constrained silence and hurriedly, grabbed some old clothes from the wall to cover their service trousers and sleeveless jerseys and got out of the cabin without entering the main room. It was as if neither of them could bear to be in the presence of that blasting mockery that stared from the wall, yellowed with the kerosene from the lamp which had dribbled all down the log surface. They strode swiftly up the meadow hill and plunged into the bush to the short-cut travoy and soon found the cross travoy where Jim Harris and Gwen waited.

"I just couldn't wait another hour," Gwen apologized, with a nervous laugh when they came up. "Sorry if I got you up too early, but——"

"Glad you sent for us," Martin broke in. "Arthur's got some blooming secret in his head about the pines. Hasn't even told me. We took a look-see yesterday, through here. I could not see much wrong."

His effort at gayety was rather terrible, but Gwen and Jim Harris, now, were too preoccupied to notice it. They followed the road to the edge of the plantation. There were approximately three hundred acres in this one plantation, which stretched between the eastern limits of the Derosier villa grounds and the Legrand homestead clearing with its fringe of woods.

To the south ran the village road and to the north a sizable stream into which the creek which cut through the Legrand property emptied. This had once been Derosier's land and it was the first piece of property Harris had bought for reforestation. There were no trees here of less than nine years' growth. For five years Harris had planted, averaging about one hundred acres a year, so that a total of five hundred acres of stripped timberland about Travoy village was in new pine, from five to nearly ten years' growth.

"There's no mystery about it," Arthur said, as they plunged into the thick-grown tract. "It's the white-pine blister rust. And here is the evidence."


He stooped to the trunk of a tree and, parting the undergrowth, showed them the peculiar, discolored humps which had ringed it, actually blistering the smooth skin from the base of the trunk for a foot upward. This particular tree had begun to show signs of decay in its foliage and limbs.

“This one’s a good—or a bad—example,” Arthur went on. “In fact, it’s the worst I’ve seen in here. Now I’ll take this row and follow it. Each of you take one and try to find the blister. We’ll go straight through on this side. Count the trees in the row and the infected trees. That will give us an idea of the average infection.”

Gwen took the row next to Arthur’s, as her father and Martín moved over to the next two rows.

Gwen kept pace with Arthur and began asking questions.

“White-pine blister rust—what does it mean?” she queried.

“It’s a blight, really,” he answered, “not unlike the chestnut blight which has killed off those magnificent trees down in the Eastern States.”

“What causes it? You hinted yesterday that you had an idea what this blight was—and even had expected it.”

“There is only one form of blight that attacks growing white pine,” he explained. “This is it. It is caused by infection from the spores of diseased plants carried to it by the wind, birds, men, perhaps. It lodges in the pines and germinates, causes this mushroom-like blister or swelling and kills the tree.”

“Diseased plants? What plants?” she persisted keenly. “Some particular kind?”

Arthur nodded. He was on his knees, parting the growth about a handsome young pine.

“Plants of the Ribes family,” he replied.

“In English, what?” She laughed. “Why don’t you tell me the worst?”

“I won’t know the worst myself, until we’ve gone through this patch. This would be the worst infected, because the prevailing winds are west and—”

“Ribes!” she cried, interrupting him.

“That means plants with an acid juice. I remember my botany a little, you see! Currants, particularly.”

She had got from her knees, where she had been crawling along, in imitation of Arthur, burrowing for the base of the tree trunks through weeds, brush and grass. She stood near him, as she spoke. He rocked back on the balls of his feet and looked up at her. A flash of memory which was not of botanical terms came to her.

It was the memory of having seen him and talked to him, once before, in this attitude. It brought back to her the picture of the drive into Derosier’s grounds, where Arthur one day had been planting a cedar hedge.

“Yes,” she said excitedly, “Ribes means currants—gooseberries, too—and the only plants of the Ribes family about here—are in Derosier’s fruit garden!”

“They are the only ones I know of,” he agreed slowly.

“And that’s why you questioned him, at your place, the day I came with him! What kind of work he wanted you to do? You refused to plant currants—in a white-pine country!”

He nodded, bending his head and trailing his fingers in the moist, sandy loam he had kicked up in crawling close to the tree.

The movement brought into view a long reddish scar at the base of his tanned neck. Looking down, she saw it plainly, extending almost to his throat, from a point beneath his left ear.

“Arthur!” she exclaimed, and the tips of her fingers touched the scar. “Is that where Lescaut knifed you?”

He started back as if her touch had hurt him, clutched his open collar with
one hand. His eyes, when he looked up at her, were dilated. His lips contorted into something like agonized alarm.

"Yes," he said. "Only a scratch—but it's tender. Please don't touch it again!" His voice was husky.

She drew away, flushing, bewildered. His very attitude, reminding her of that July day on Derosier's drive, brought back with it the sweep of emotion that had gripped her then. His reaction to her touch, too, reminded her that not once since that day had he spoken words of similar import with those he had uttered when he stood up and came close to her, as she sat the white horse above him.

SOMETHING had tempted her to run her fingers through his crop of curly hair. What, she had not known. But now she knew why her fingers had strayed to his throat. She knew, because she had grown from girl to woman—and she knew she had fallen in love with him on that very day and that she loved him now.

And he shrank from her touch!

Jim Harris and Martin came scrambling along their rows.

"Ten trees out of one hundred, I've found infected, so far!" Jim Harris called out. Then he came over into the row where Arthur and Gwen were.

"Not a bad percentage," Arthur said, in a curiously stiffed tone. "I've just been telling Gwen—I beg your pardon, Miss Harris—"

"Call us by our first names," broke in Harris. "Mine's Jim."

"I was telling Miss Harris that the cause of the white-pine blister rust is the proximity of currant or gooseberry bushes, or both. At least, we know that the blight is spread by them, when they are infected. The disease is transmitted by them. It cannot be carried from pine to pine. It goes from infected pine to currant or gooseberry, then back to the healthy pine and infects that. And I'm afraid we shall have to lay the blame for this infection here, to the fruit garden over there west of us."

"Derosier's!" Harris burst out. "Derosier's! I see! When did he plant that garden? Do you know?"

"In 1913, he started it."

Harris smote his palm with his fist. His haggard face held a look of anger.

"That's it!" he cried. "Five years after I began planting, to grow trees—he began planting poison to destroy them! He knew what would happen. He stacked the cards on me. Derosier was betting on a sure thing when he put up his pulp wood against my pine! The damn cheat!"

"But, father! Jimmy!" Gwen broke in. "It would destroy the Thousand Acres, too! Why should he want to destroy that timber if he expected to win it?"

"The rust will do little damage to adult pine," Arthur explained. "It's the young, growing trees it attacks and ruins. And to my certain knowledge Thousand Acres is free from the rust. It lies to the northwest, for one thing, where there is less chance of the wind carrying the spores. It's this tract that would be hit the hardest."

"Well—what's the remedy?" Harris was abrupt, belligerent.

"The only remedy, the only way we can stop this from spreading and spreading fast—this very summer—is to eradicate the Ribes—the currants and gooseberries. That's all."

"That will stop it?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll go to Derosier and—"

"That's our job," came a cool, calm voice from behind Harris. It was Martin.

Gwen whirled and looked at him. He was looking at Arthur and Arthur met his gaze and nodded.

"It's our job, Mr. Harris," Arthur
said, and though there was none of the dangerous fire in his eyes that shone in Martin’s, there was the same, cold, deadly determination in his tone.

Jim Harris was roused from the lethargy which the threat of financial failure had thrust upon him. He was girding his loins for another back-to-the-wall fight.

The inspection of the large plantation revealed that the tract was about fifteen per cent infected with rust, so far as a careful estimate of the visibly damaged trees could be depended upon. At Harris’ urgent insistence, Arthur consented to give him a more careful estimate, following inspection of the other plantations, including a conservatively figured statement of the average growth of the trees in each plantation upon which to base a valuation of them.

“I want to know just about where I stand now,” Harris explained, “so I can know whether it’s worth while making the fight.”

“It will be worth while,” Arthur said, “whether you win your wager or not. I mean that these plantations will eventually be worth a great deal. Provided—”

“What?”

“We can eradicate the Ribes from the Travoy.”

“Derosier’s got to get rid of ’em!” exclaimed Harris.

“He has,” put in Martin grimly.

Harris and Gwen returned to the lodge, while the Legrands took the travoy trails to another plantation across the creek.

CHAPTER XXXIII.
TRICKERY SUSPECTED.

THE exodus of the MacLaughlins from their quarters at the store was in progress—Mrs. MacLaughlin being as eager to abandon the roof of Derosier’s establishment as was her husband. She welcomed, too, the opportunity to do something for Gwen Harris, whom she had come to like very much.

“Anything we can do, Mac, to make up,” she told her husband, “will not be too much. And I’m thinkin’ that there’s nothing we can do that will show our feeling toward Arthur Legrand better than to help the Harrises with all our might.”

“You mean—what?”

“That Arthur Legrand is fairly eatin’ his heart out for her—and she’s doin’ the same for him and neither of them know what to do.”

“And why not?” demanded her spouse, halting in the packing of a trunk.

“Many a reason, many a reason! For one: Knowin’ Arthur Legrand as you do, can you see him making up to a girl of her character and situation without knowing his mother?”

“His mother? What’s she got to do with it? She’s dead.”

“Yes, the woman who was William Legrand’s wife is dead,” was Mrs. MacLaughlin’s canny retort. “The Indian squaw herself told me one day that William Legrand never confided anything to his boys about their mother. Seems like he’d be leavin’ somethin’ for them to go on. Yet the notary, and the other officials who had to do with his burying and straightening about, found nothing.”

“Humph! Why should they, with Derosier hovering about an’ giving orders—an’ Senwa fetching and carrying for him? And now she’s gone over to his place to stay.”

“There’s somethin’ peculiar in the wind.”

They talked a great deal over the affairs of the Harrises and the Legrands that day. And from the talk, MacLaughlin got to thinking hard. His whole habits of thought had to be reversed. He had been, for so many years, in the service of Derosier that his leaving it now threw him all out of
gear. It was necessary for him to go far back in his memory and think things all out from his new point of view. He was doing this as he separated his private papers from those which he was bound to turn over to Derosier or to the new manager who was coming up from Montreal.

MacLaughlin was politely requested to step out of the office for a few minutes by Derosier himself, a little later in the day. Jim Harris came to the store in the big car which he sent back carrying a load of the MacLaughlins' belongings to be taken to the lodge. MacLaughlin took with him an envelope which he had slipped in his coat pocket for later inspection. He forgot it, in the confusion of helping load the car, and it was not until long afterward that he discovered it there.

HARRIS had asked Derosier to meet him at the store for a conference which was to concern only their business agreement. Harris had agreed with the Legrands to say nothing at all concerning the blight and particularly not to mention Ribes.

Harris rode home, with MacLaughlin a passenger, late in the afternoon and, finding Gwen at the piano, went over and put his hands over her eyes.

"Guess who's Santa Claus?" he demanded. "Gwen, you're not going to lose your Thousand Acres!"

She crashed out a jangling discord and jumped up, ignoring Mrs. Harris' complaint of a headache, therefore her mother, in high dudgeon, left the room, muttering something about "utterly crazy over these terrible trees."

"What do you mean? The blight isn't——"

"Derosier has voluntarily agreed to waive the wager. Gwen, I'm afraid we've misjudged him. Not only will he call that silly bet off, but he is to extend my notes for six months, taking a lien on the pulp wood he will get out for me next winter. This was all voluntary."

"But the blight? The currant bushes and——"

Harris smiled.

"Don't you see that, even if we believed he had plotted to blight our pine, his action now puts that in the discard? Gwen, I'm afraid that Legrand has jumped us to a conclusion in which there is no foundation in fact. Derosier did not even know that these Ribes bushes caused rust. And it's funny that Steenrod, our forester, discovered no trace of it in Derosier's garden. He ought to know. I've wired him to come up."

Gwen sat down suddenly, her chin in her hand.

"Santa Claus!" she muttered. "It sounds too much like it to seem—right."

"Gwen, it won't do for us to pick flaws in this offer. Maybe it's repentance—and maybe it's——"

"Fear!" Gwen shot out. "Fear that he won't win his bet after all. Did you think of that?"

"I did, but with the rust fifteen per cent, if no worse, I'm afraid we wouldn't win."

"Did you accept this proposition—from Santa Claus?" she queried.

"No, I told him I'd consult you because after all, Gwen, Thousand Acres is yours. For that matter, I intended this whole stumpage up here to be yours, but to save myself I cut it into."

"And it isn't going to save you any more if you don't get hold of more pulp wood than there is left! Provided you hold Thousand Acres out of it, as belonging to me."

"I wouldn't touch that for anything, Gwen. Not if it meant me for the poorhouse. When I tied it up in this wager, it didn't seem to amount to much. I had money to burn and a few acres of wild woods didn't mean a great deal. However, one motive I had was
to tie it up safely, where I wouldn’t have a chance to gamble with it.” He laughed at this, but became serious again. “And now I’ve got the chance to keep it for you, certain——”

“I suppose you think I wouldn’t gamble!” was Gwen’s response.

She was sitting erect and in her dark eyes was a hint of daring.

“Jimmy, no man or girl, with the hunches as a disease, is anything but a gambler. I tell you I don’t believe in Santa Claus. I’ve got a hunch that Derosier’s afraid he’ll lose his fifteen hundred acres—and I want to win it from him. Do you understand, Jimmy? I want this wager to go through! For one thing, I’ve got confidence in Arthur Legrand. You remember the job he did for us on the Black River contract? He did it for us, not for Derosier. And when Martin took his place he’d have done the job for us, if he hadn’t been warned to skip out. I’ve been talking with Mrs. MacLaughlin and she thinks it’s funny about Senwa’s deserting the Legrands and going over to Derosier’s place. Another thing—did it ever occur to you, Jimmy, that Derosier must expect some return for his burst of Santa Claus spirit? It occurs to me.”

“Gwen—he’s given you up!”

“I suppose that’s why he was so ready to help me keep Arthur Legrand out of prison when he seemed to be running straight for it!”

“But he knew Arthur had killed Les-caut.”

“And he knew that Arthur knew something, too. I can’t tell you, Jimmy, what it is, because I’m sort of sworn to secrecy. But MacLaughlin——” She halted.

“Yes’m.”

It was MacLaughlin himself who was at the front door.

“Oh, come in, Mac!” Gwen hailed him.

The Scot entered, his face screwed into an expression of serious concern.

“Miss Harris,” he said, “I told you, on the way between Quebec an’ Travoy yesterday, that if there was anything honest I could do for you, I’d do it. I might have qualified that. I find that, unconsciouslike, I’ve stolen something that rightful belongs to Derosier.”

He advanced, with a manila envelope in his hand.

“Sorting over papers in the office, I slipped this in my pocket and just now remembered it. I find—— Tell me what’s the name of the man from New York, the forester that used to come up every three months to inspect your plantations?”

“Steenrod. That reminds me, I’ve not had an answer to my wire telling him of the rust and urging him to come up and look things over.”

“And I’m fearful you won’t have any answer,” MacLaughlin said, shaking his head. “Look here!”

He placed a packet in Harris’ hands, clipped with a rubber band.

“There’s fifty-five canceled checks made out to G. S. Steenrod by Derosier. That’s at the rate of one hundred dollars a month for almost five years. When you have looked at them I must have them back to restore to their owner.”

Harris glanced over the checks, his brow puckering as he noted the endorsements in the unmistakable hand of Steenrod, which he had seen on many a check signed by himself for much larger sums than these. Gwen looked at them and solved the problem with two words.

“Blight money!”

CHAPTER XXXIV.
DUST MISSING.

WELL, Art, we’ve got to face it—or cut and run,” said Martin, as he sat opposite his brother at the rude kitchen table where they had eaten sup-

per.
"Face what? Or run from what?" was Arthur's quick demand.

"You know what I mean. That picture. If she is what the picture tells us, she ought to be living with us or else——"

He choked off and over his face came a look of such savage agony that Arthur got swiftly to his feet.

"Martin, I've been doing a lot of thinking," he said. "I've been racking my head to try to remember things—and I can remember one thing that makes me believe that picture isn't the whole story by a good deal."

"'Pure English blood?'" Martin growled angrily.

"Don't talk like that, Martin! I'll tell you."

He sketched for Martin his memory of the scene he had recalled under the stress of the preceding night's events. His father, holding an object that looked like a small box on his knees, swiftly concealing it at Arthur's appearance.

"That's why I think there's something else for us to find," he added. "Something hidden in the cabin that will tell us the whole truth. Martin, I don't feel she can be anything to us—the Montagnais."

Martin caught up the kerosene lamp and turned toward the big room.

"Let's look and have it over with then!" he cried. "Not many places to hide things. But I don't feel very much like an Indian myself—though I do feel like using a tomahawk on——"

His voice trailed off as he entered the other room. Arthur followed him, with a candle he found in a cupboard. They began a systematic search, extending even to the attic.

At the end of their search they faced each other in silence, standing on the hearth and, by a common, irresistible impulse, their eyes were drawn to the oil-soaked picture above the highboy.

"It occurs to me," Arthur spoke first, "that father himself could not have hidden anything we could not have found easily. It would have to be in this room, where he could reach from his chair. There is nothing. That means only one thing."

"I know. Senwa must have hidden it for him."

Arthur nodded.

In the silence the little screech owl, which hung persistently near the cabin, twittered his call.

"Tell you what I'd do!" Martin burst out. "I'd touch a match to that picture! It's well soaked with oil. Burn this shack down and forget. Nobody knows what was in that picture frame."

"We know," Arthur responded.

"And Senwa."

"You think——"

"And perhaps one other. Derosier!"

As he spoke, Arthur went suddenly to the highboy and, lifting the candle high, regarded the picture closely.

"Look here!" he exclaimed, beckoning Martin closer. "Funny there isn't any dust inside that glass. There's a gap at the top and the cloth had fallen off. Mart, if that picture had been in that frame for as many years as we've seen it hanging there, it would be loaded with dust!"

Martin came over and began to show more than a hateful interest in the framed portrait.

"Well, what do you make of that?" he demanded.

"Just this—that the portrait itself was put in the frame recently. I'm sorry I splashed it with kerosene. It might tell us——"

"You think Senwa——" Martin's voice was hoarse and angry.

"No. Derosier?"

"What for?"

"Can't you see why he might wish to cast upon us the suspicion and the conviction that we are of Indian blood—breeds? Think what it means to you! That girl in Surrey."
“She said it didn’t matter—but—”
“But you know it does, now that you believe it’s more than a guess. Now, think back home and figure out the motive of the man who, we will suppose, wants to put the red blight on another.”

Arthur’s voice was shaking a bit, despite his effort to be coldly analytical. Martin looked at him and cried out an oath.

“He wants—It’s jealousy! He wants Gwen Harris!”

“Let’s not burn anything, Martin, until we are sure—of something,” muttered Arthur. “And now let’s turn in. We’ve got a roof over us, anyhow.”

NEXT morning MacLaughlin was an early visitor. He told the Legrands that Harris wished them to come to the lodge at noon. His eye was caught by the jumble of things left from their search of the night before.

“Moving?” he inquired anxiously.

“Moving everything we can—heaven and earth, we mean to move!” burst out Martin.

Arthur regarded MacLaughlin with a slowly growing inspiration.

“Mac, there’s something hidden from us,” he said. “Either it’s hidden here or else it’s been taken away.”

“Papers of some sort?” queried MacLaughlin shrewdly.

“Why do you ask that question?”

“Only because the missus and I was talking over the queer fact that your father left you nothing in the shape of writings when he died.”

“It’s more than queer, Mac. It means that unless we can find something—Mac, you know how we lived, with a squaw as one of the family, father all the time insisting that we were ‘pure English’ and yet not a word or a bit of proof to back that up. His ravings stimulated suspicion. You’ve heard the talk.”

MacLaughlin read more in their faces than they spoke in words.

“Well, I wouldn’t worry unduly,” he said comfortably. “I know The Two Reds are white men, deeper than skin deep and the Harrises know it, too. Whoever saw a red-headed Indian?”

“You have—and many of ’em!” snapped Martin. “You know that—half-Indian and half something else!”

“Ah, well! You don’t look it nor act it an’ for one, I don’t believe it!”

“Thank you, Mac,” said Arthur, “but it’s a case of proof, not mere belief, that we want. And the proof, I think, is in a little box that has disappeared.”

MacLaughlin talked over the incident with Mrs. MacLaughlin and she dribbled it out, in fits and starts, to Gwen, all how The Two Reds were all upset trying to find a missing box of papers they believed their father had left them.

There is nothing better than a woman to probe a mystery—unless it be two women. Of these two women, one had lingering on the border of her consciousness some shadowy trifle of memory which concerned a missing and prized little box. It seemed to Gwen Harris that some time, somewhere, she had been concerned over some sort of packet—not a box, something else. What was it? Something with an odd name.

Her train of thought was interrupted by the arrival of The Two Reds and the excitement of helping Mrs. MacLaughlin arrange for a luncheon to be served on the piazza, taking advantage of the first balmy day of the spring.

Mrs. MacLaughlin, at last, chased Gwen from the kitchen. One look at the faces of the Legrands—and a second look at Arthur’s face—and Gwen began to understand that there was something of vast importance in Mrs. MacLaughlin’s chatter about a lost box of papers.

“Arthur, I’d like to have you look at the little patch of pines we’ve got back of the lodge,” she said, in a mat-
ter-of-fact tone. "It's my own pet plantation."

But when she got Arthur into the pine patch, she ignored pines entirely. "There's something troubling you!" she charged Arthur. "And I want to know what it is!"

CHAPTER XXXV.
THE LOST CACHET.

FOR a second, Arthur Legrand's lips tightened a trifle, but he managed a smile that was not all false, for he was looking into Gwen's sympathetic face. "I've been worried," he said, "about the rust, but I'm finding it's not as bad as it looked to be at first. Now let's see what we can find here in this——"

"I don't mean the rust," she broke in. "Something else, and I think I can—I want to help you if you'll let me."

"You have already helped me—more than any man has a right to expect—or accept from a girl."

It was awkwardly put, but its sincerity was unmistakable and though it stabbed Gwen Harris sharply, she laughed.

"Just forget I'm a girl," she cried.

"I can't."

His tone and his look made her turn away.

"I'm sorry I said that," he went on, his voice so filled with pain that she turned back to him instantly, with a smile. "Because I've no right to think of you that way at all. No right in the world! I'll try to forget you're a girl," he finished lamely.

"I don't know, after all, that I want you to forget it," she returned, with the bewildering contrariness of woman.

His face was drawn and his lips tightly compressed.

"Please!" he half whispered. "It's hard enough for me now. Gwen, you must know how I feel toward you. Didn't—didn't I nearly frighten you to death one day telling you?"

"Four years ago this coming July," she supplied, with an accuracy that thrilled him, yet made him wince. "I've had time to get over the fright, anyway. And you to get over the way you felt. I don't think Martin would lie to me," she went on hurriedly. "When I gave him a message to take to you after you'd gone into the service—without saying good-by to you, he told me that you would not care to hear it. But I think he did give it to you—and that you did not care to hear it. Isn't that so?"

His response took her by surprise. "I did not want to hear any message from you that was based on a lie. Martin——" he began, speaking rapidly, as he saw how his speech shocked her, but there he stuck. Something forbade him to tell her it was Martin who had kissed her.

"Martin will tell you that!" he went on.

"Oh, must I ask Martin?" She laughed, so that he winced from it.

"I'll take your word for it. That settles one question, anyhow. Now, as to your real trouble——"

"The real trouble is that!" he broke out incoherently. "It's that I can't forget you are a girl—the only girl in the world worth looking at for me! And I don't—I can't look at you worthily, because——"

Here he was at another barrier to explanation. This time Gwen helped him, with the very thing she had brought him out here to talk about.

"Because," she said, "you cannot find a certain little box which your father kept things in. A—a cachet! That's it! I remember now. It's what he called it. It was offered to me once, to keep for you."

"You know? It was offered to you?"

"Yes, by your father."

"Then—you saw it?"

"No. But he wanted to give it to
me. It was in the spring you were on the Black River job. I visited him, with Derosier, when he was so ill. Senwa told him, when he demanded to know if I was English, that I was. Then he asked Senwa to get the cachet and give it to me. First, he insisted that Derosier leave the cabin and Derosier did. He called Derosier ‘the Frenchman’—and I’d hate to be called anything in the tone he used.

‘Give her the cachet,’ your father said to Senwa. ‘She is English and she will understand. Tell her to give it to them—so they will know.’ He spoke of your mother, saying it was her desire and that it was his wish to do as she wanted done.”

“He spoke—my mother’s name?” inquired Arthur breathlessly.

“No name. But the pronoun ‘she,’ as he spoke it, was enough. I was rather frightened. He wanted his rifle. In fact, he acted as if he feared Derosier.”

“Ah!” came Arthur’s explosive comment.

“Why should your father fear him?” Gwen asked. “I could not make head or tail of it all. The significance of that little scene didn’t penetrate. I’m just beginning to understand it a little bit, now.”

“I don’t believe father did fear Derosier—except for something he might try to do. I think it was the other way about. Derosier feared him. But—no matter. What else did father say or do? Do you remember anything?”

“Nothing else concerning me, but he refused to tell Senwa where to find the cachet. She seemed eager to have him tell—but she stopped his talk with her hand over his mouth at last and then told me his talk was nonsense, that there was no cachet at all. But, Arthur, while he talked, when he was asking her to get it, he seemed rational to me.”

“Did he give any indication, by a look, a gesture, where it might have been?”

“No. He seemed to be staring straight ahead as if he feared to look toward any place in the room. I am sure it was in that room. There was a cachet. I am sure of it!”

“So am I!” Arthur’s tone was steady, more hearty and hopeful than it had been. “But I am afraid it is too late. If he had only given it to you then!”

“Too late. You must search!”

“Martin and I spent most of the night doing that. We found nothing. I am convinced, and Martin, too, that Senwa did find it, after he died—and that she gave it to Derosier.”

“Well, after all, what does it matter?”

She was looking directly and bravely into his eyes. He could not avoid the question and the challenge in them.

“You must know,” he said. “You have heard the story that Martin and I are something other than pure English.”

“The story that you are part Indian?” she laughed breathlessly. “Is that what’s troubling you?”

“You have heard it—and when?”

“Why—the very first day I was in Travoy!” she exclaimed. “The day I came to your home. The—the person who told it—or rather suggested it, asked me a sort of hypothetical question—whether I had any prejudice against a man with mixed white and Indian blood.”

“He asked you that?”

“And I told him,” she went on, with a faint smile quivering on her lips as indication she admitted Arthur had hit the mark squarely, “that it would make no difference to me if I admired and respected—and loved a man.”

“He asked you that and—I see! I see! That was not a hypothetical question. It was personal. Derosier wanted to know—for himself!”
“Arthur! You don’t mean you think
he—”

“I am not spreading stories about
him,” Arthur broke in. “I am not in
that business. He asked you that ques-
tion as a test. You gave him an
answer that satisfied him—then. But
what would you say if I were to ask
you the same question now—for my-
self?”

“You do not need—to ask.” Her
voice was a whisper.

“Gwen! Gwen!”

“Beg pardon, Miss Harris,” came
another voice, “but they’re waiting
lunch for you.”

It was MacLaughlin, apologetic, but
apparently very sympathetic, too. He
turned his back and walked away
swiftly.

His interruption, however, had
served to give Arthur Legrand a hard
grip on himself again.

“I’ve got to forget that—and that
you are a girl—until I find the cachet,”
he said.

“Then I am going to help you find
it!” she declared.

“It is not in the cabin,” he told her.

“Oh, I know that!” she exclaimed.

CHAPTER XXXVI.
SENWA TAKES A RIDE.

A t luncheon Jim Harris announced
calmly that he had decided to break
off all relations with Derosier.

“I’m going to ask you and Mac-
Laughlin to take over my timber job
this fall—if I have any timber left,”
he said to the two Legrands. “Before
that time we’ll know whether our assets
consist of nothing but five hundred
acres of baby trees or twenty-five hun-
dred acres of pine and pulp-wood stand,
second to none in the Travoy. I’ve
made a lot of mistakes in handling this
timber proposition. I was and I am still
a greenhorn. I haven’t even the capital
to back you. Everything depends on
how bad the rust has hit the planta-
tions and whether we can check it this
summer. MacLaughlin has a little
money and a small tract of good tim-
ber which he wants to pool in with us.”

“I’m asking The Two Reds to sign
up with me,” put in MacLaughlin, “to
help save what we can from Derosier’s
clutches. We’ll need help.”

“Yes,” Harris went on, “Derosier of-
ered yesterday to waive this wager
I’ve got with him—which is the first big
mistake I made—but I’ve refused to
waive. Gwen is willing. She insists
upon taking the chance, for she believes
we can win it. Arthur, what do you
think?”

“If Martin and I do our job, you’ll
win,” said Arthur quietly. “The in-
festation is not more than twelve per
cent now. This is the best time fortu-
nately to detect the rust. It shows up
at its worst. As soon as the currants
and gooseberries are in leaf, new cases
will get under way. I have managed
to obtain a few currant leaves which
were preserved over the winter, under
straw, in Derosier’s garden. They
show plainly the characteristic yellow
spots of the rust as it appears on the
Ribes. Eradication of these infected
bushes, all Ribes bushes within wind
range of the plantations, will stop the
infection from spreading more. And
that’s our job.”

“Yes,” said Martin, “that’s our job
and we’ve got to get busy.”

G WEN HARRIS had a job to do,
also. In pursuance of this self-
imposed duty, she drove into the village
during the afternoon, after securing
some information from Mrs. Mac-
Laughlin concerning the habits and cus-
toms of the female of the species Mon-
tagnais.

Luck was with Gwen. She found
Senwa at the store, shopping. And this
time Senwa was shopping for herself,
lavishly purchasing bright-colored cloth,
ribs, lace, millinery articles. She was enjoying a very riot of spending, while Newman, the little man from Montreal imported to replace MacLaughlin danced attendance.

Gwen began by admiring some outrageously lurid silk he had dug from a corner and was displaying and it was not long before Gwen was assisting the absorbed Indian woman in selecting patterns for a dress.

"My, what a load you have!" Gwen exclaimed, when Senwa had finished. "Let me take you home in the car."

"Yes, yes. Me like to ride in car ver' much," Senwa grabbed eagerly at the bait. "Take long ride, eh?"

"A nice long ride," Gwen promised. Senwa's little black eyes sparkled with wonder and delight as she settled herself gingerly in the seat beside Gwen and watched her manipulate the mechanism which sent the purring machine plowing through the sand. Motionless and speechless she watched the quivering ammeter needle, the speedometer, oil gauge and gas gauge as if these were mysterious spirits which had to do with making the chariot go.

"You like it?" Gwen queried.

"Like ride in car. Calèche no good!"

Senwa responded, as a reminder of her first journey on wheels sans horse or cow.

"Mr. Derosier ought to have a car tor you to ride in," Gwen suggested sympathetically.

"I ask him," Senwa declared. "He give to me. He give me much money to-day. He ver' good to me."

"Well," remarked Gwen, forcing herself to speak casually, "he ought to be good to you. A man ought to be good to his own mother."

The words left her breathless with her own daring, but the thrill she got at Senwa's reaction rewarded her. In the polished nickel mirror of the dash-light hood, she saw Senwa's features freeze suddenly into a stolid mask.

"When you left the Legrand place," Gwen rattled on, "people thought you had done wrong. They did not understand. I did not understand—at first. But now I do—and it is good. It is good for him to send for you and give you a home with him. It is good for him to give you much money."

There was no word from Senwa. She sat like a graven image. Gwen conducted a monologue, praising Derosier, but all the time with the assumption that it was common knowledge Senwa was Derosier's mother. She was driving by a roundabout route toward the Legrand place. Beneath Gwen's barrage of words Senwa bore up bravely and when they reached the edge of the clearing she still sat silent.

"There is something in the Legrand cabin that belongs to you," Gwen declared, shooting in the dark for a reason for taking Senwa there. Then she stepped on the gas and shot the car down the slope to the brook, splashed through the ford and drew up in front of the cabin with a jerk that almost unseated Senwa.

"Goodness!" Gwen cried. "It almost ran away from me. It wanted to bring us here."

She jumped out, leaving the engine idling, though steam was hissing from the radiator from the hard run through the sand. She opened the door on Senwa's side and the squaw, with her eyes dilating as she saw the ammeter needle sway and jump, scrambled out.

She followed Gwen into the cabin. Gwen turned to her, with changed manner, severe and curt.

"Before I give you what is yours," she said, "I want the cachet that William Legrand was going to give me."

Senwa's eyes narrowed. She shook her head. "No cachet!" she declared. "He talk from top of head. No cachet at all."

The cabin was eloquent of the search the twins had made.
“You see, they looked for it,” Gwen went on. “They know there was a cachet. William Legrand wanted me to give it to them, when he died. You remember?”

“No. They no find um. No cachet.”

“Where was it hidden when he died?” Gwen persisted.

“No cachet when he die. No cachet.”

SENWA stood, rocklike, in the middle of the room. Her eyes roved sharply from side to side. But suddenly her gage fixed and Gwen’s followed. She gasped as she saw what it was Senwa was looking at with such intensity—the oil-splattered, glass-shattered portrait above the highboy. She stepped close to it. Things seemed to whirl about her as she got the full significance of the picture. She steadied herself, gritting her teeth, striving to think clearly, battling against the frightful depression that gripped her at the sinister meaning of this portrait.

She managed to find words at last, tried to speak with just the right inflection of surprise, without horror.

“Why, that is a picture of you!” she cried. “Good picture. Your son forgot to take it when he took you home. You see—it says—‘Mother!’”

Senwa’s eyes never left the portrait. She moved slowly toward it as if it were a powerful magnet that dragged her to it. Her features softened, but suddenly her lips curled in a savage grimace and her voice burst out: harshly guttural.

“I not their mother!” she declared. “No. They have no mother. I take picture home.”

She went to one side of the highboy, reached up and snatched the portrait from its nail and clasped it jealously to her as she faced Gwen.

“Now, where is the cachet?”

Gwen asked the question in a final, desperate hope that she might have penetrated the squaw’s armor. The response was as astonishing as Senwa’s reaction to the sight of the portrait had been.

She crossed to the hearth, stooped and dug at a brick with her finger nails, lifted it and beckoned Gwen close. Pointing into the shallow recess beneath the loosened brick, she said:

“No cachet. Cachet gone when he die. Senwa can’t find. Now you take me home.”

There was a tinge of triumph in Senwa’s tone which did not escape Gwen. As she fumbled in the shallow hole and found it empty, Senwa moved toward the door. Gwen rose to follow her, but both of them were frozen to immobility by a harsh voice at the door of the lean-to. Martin was framed in the door and Arthur stood behind him.

“Where are you going with that picture?” Martin demanded. “What does this mean?”

Gwen answered, her voice scarcely louder than a whisper.

“She is going—to take it home—to her son.”

CHAPTER XXXVII.

FIGHTING FIRE.

ARTHUR accompanied Gwen and her passenger to Lac Bleu—Gwen taking a detour to avoid the village. They unloaded Senwa’s purchases at the porte-cochère of the great log villa while Senwa stood by, jealously hugging the oil-soaked portrait. She had not removed the dusty crape, and the bedraggled, faded flag was still pinned to it.

Just as Gwen was putting the car in gear to drive away, Derosier came up the drive behind them. He was dressed roughly, in woolen shirt of Mackinaw pattern, overalls and moccasins, bareheaded, his pompadour straggled by the wind. It was the first time Gwen had ever seen him in any-
thing but conventional garb, either business clothes or smart riding habit. She was startled at the difference in his appearance. The thought flashed through her mind: "Why, he looks like an Indian now!"

Derosier, with a smile, came up to the car, apologizing for his appearance suavely. Ignoring Arthur, he began to thank Gwen for bringing Senwa back.

"She is going on a long journey," he explained, "to her own people up in the mountains. I gave her some money to buy clothes. It pleases her. I was just going to telephone Newman and ask if she had finished buying him out. I am deeply indebted to you for bringing her back. It has been a long time since she has enjoyed the extravagance of a blow-out like this."

"It was no trouble," Gwen responded, in a muffled tone. "No trouble at all. I am sure she deserves her blow-out. I think she has something to show you now. I'll drive on and then—"

She thrust in the clutch hurriedly. Senwa had picked up the portrait from the top of her heap of purchases. She was coming down the steps with it, gazing at it in admiration. Gwen did not want to see the rest. But in her nervous haste she stalled her engine and, before she could get it started again, Senwa had reached the ground.

She held the portrait up and called softly to Derosier.

"Little White Owl! See! They gave it to me. It is mine. It is broken, but you will fix. Little White Owl, I will take the picture into your room and hang it where you can see when I am away."

Derosier tensed like an animal about to spring. Over his face came a look of such passion that Gwen cried out, fearing that he was about to leap upon Senwa, but instead he snatched the portrait from her hand and with an oath flung it to the ground and planted his foot upon it and through it. He burst into rapid speech, but it was in a tongue that neither Gwen nor Arthur could understand. Senwa cowered beneath his verbal attack—but instead of retreating, she stooped and began to gather up the battered fragments of the portrait.

Gwen shot the car down the drive and drove back to the cabin, sinking her head at Arthur’s protest, he could walk just as well.

When they got to the cabin, Martin had gone.

"I should have asked Derosier," Arthur said, as they entered, "where the picture is that was originally in that frame—but somehow I couldn’t do it. Gwen, how did you happen to bring Senwa here?"

She told him of the encounter at the store.

"I had a hunch," she went on, "which came from your hunch this noon. I played it. I thought I could get her to tell me where the cachet was hidden. She showed me this empty hole." She indicated the hearth. "She said: 'When he died, it was gone,' I guess that means—"

Arthur smiled, but it was a ghastly effort. "That we'll never find it," he finished for her.

"Does that matter, so much, now that you know Senwa's secret?"

"I never believed she was anything to me," he replied, "but don't you see that I cannot be sure, even now that the Indian face was not a symbol, a hint that our mother was but some other—"

"She said, 'They have no mother!'" Gwen cried.

"Some other Indian squaw," he finished bitterly.

She stared at him. Then she shook her head sadly.

"What do I know?" he cried. "Nothing—about myself."
She was nonplused by this stubborn-ness. Then she changed the subject.

"I suppose, with my butting in," she said, "I’ve fixed it so that you will never be able to get Derosier to eradicate his fruit garden."

"Martin and I have taken the job," was all he would say.

She left him, staring moodily at the vacant cache in the hearth.

At ten o’clock that night Arthur Legrand was at the store, just about to start for home, when a telephone message sent Newman into a panic. Turning from the phone he began to shout at the top of his voice.

"Fire! Fire! Fire! Hurry quick to Mr. Derosier’s place. Everything is burning down. Big fire. Hurry! He wants everybody to help."

He began running up and down the aisle behind the counter, dragging things from the shelves. He acted as if the fire were under his coat tail. Arthur leaned over and caught his arm and stopped him in mid-flight.

"Wait a minute!" he said. "Where is the fire? What did Derosier say?"

Arthur’s grip quieted the excitable Newman. Likewise it sent a look of sudden recognition over his face.

"You are Arthur Legrand!" he said. "Good! You have an alibi. You are here; I recognize you. You had better stay here and not go near the fire."

Arthur laughed and dropped Newman’s arm. The manager began yelling again:

"Quick, to the fire! It is in back of the house on this side behind. Hurry, quick! I cannot go. I must protect my store."

Newman’s excitement was so ludicrous that the loungers began laughing. Nobody made a move to go. Arthur rallied them and sent two as messengers to go through the village and get others. He led the vanguard toward Lac Bleu.

The smell of smoke was in the northeast wind, but there was no blaze visible from Travoy to show that any buildings had caught fire. Accustomed to frequent brush and forest fires, none of the men that trudged the road toward Lac Bleu was excited. Arthur was most concerned, but this was because of Martin’s disappearance and continued absence. Martin had not appeared since Gwen took Arthur home. There seemed but one reason for his absence—the fire.

As soon as Arthur saw the blaze, he was convinced it was Martin’s work, for it came from a long window of brush along the bank of the creek at the north end of Derosier’s holdings at Lac Bleu. The wind was blowing it straight for the fruit garden. The extent of the line of fire told its story. It had not been started by chance. The whole line of brush had been kindled.

With a crackle and hiss the blaze burst through the cedar hedge at the end of the garden and swept swiftly into the straw with which the garden had been littered, in the fall, as fertilizer and protection for the roots from frost. Arthur recalled that Derosier, when he came up the drive that afternoon, had carried a wooden rake, with a few bits of straw clinging to the teeth.

But any thought that Derosier himself had fired the brush with intention of destroying his garden was dispelled by the sight of him, fighting like a fiend, directing a group of employees who had evidently been roused from sleep, for most of them were but half clothed.

Nothing could halt the sweep of the flame through that sun-and-wind-dried straw. While Derosier fought vainly to try to stop the broadside sweep of the fire, Arthur organized the villagers and lined them up along the hedges with shovels, green branches of hemlock and spruce, brooms and hoes. They confined the fire to the straw-lit-
tered garden, beat it out as it crept to the hedges on three sides. Within an hour the destroyer was beaten—but had done its work.

The fruit garden was a stretch of blackened cinders. Not a bush remained. The Ribes had been eradicated.

Arthur avoided the knot of men that clustered about Derosier and listened to his fierce threats of vengeance upon the incendiary who, he declared, had tried to burn his villa to the ground. Once he caught a word, on the wind, that increased his concern. It was "The Red." Arthur hastened home.

The cabin was empty. Arthur looked at his blackened face and hands and turned in without washing the grime from his skin. For a long time he lay sleepless, listening for the tread of feet. None came.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.
THE WAGER WON.

The hurrying thrum of a motor brought Arthur to the door the next morning, just as he was finishing breakfast. Gwen’s big eight splashed through the ford at a reckless speed and halted in front of the cabin. Her voice rang out, as the engine died, in a sobbing cry of anxiety and she leaped from the wheel and ran toward him as he stepped out onto the stone sill.

"Arthur!"

He had only to open his arms. A bird burst into a ringing salute to the rising sun. As if this were a signal, all the spring birds, returned from the south and lying in wait in the thickets all about the cabin, burst into a chorus that was like a poem. A little screech owl, wakened from its matutinal nap, whimpered and dashed blindly away from its roost in the lean-to loft with a pair of kingbirds in close pursuit.

For a long time words were useless and impossible things, but at last Gwen lifted her beautiful head and looked up at Arthur with shining, moist eyes.

"I was afraid you would be gone!" she gasped out. "I hurried so fast!"

His arms tightened about her.

"Why did you think I might be gone?" he asked. "Did you think——"

"Mac brought me this as soon as I was awake," she burst out, fumbling in her blouse and pulling out a crumpled, hastily opened envelope. "He got it at the post office late last night when he went down to see what the excitement was all about. I didn’t know anything about the fire until this morning. It frightened me—and this, too. It’s from Martin. Read it."

SHE watched his face as he read. It was well worth watching:

DEAR MISS HARRIS: I’ve cut and run for Surrey, where there’s a girl who doesn’t care whether I’m Mart the Red or just plain red—with white mixed in. Better get hold of Arthur before he runs, too. Sorry I couldn’t manage to kiss you good-bye as I did, once, for Arthur. I’ll take back all I said about you—to you—that morning up on the Black River. I want you to forgive me for that, and the cow and the calèche and pail of milk and nasty note and a heap of things. Be good to Art and that will be right with me. But hurry, before——

There it ended apparently, but Gwen made him turn the sheet over. There was scrawled a single line:

Tell him to look under the other end of the hearth.

They were on their knees, side by side, in a moment, prying up a brick opposite where the empty cache yawned with its mockery. A glint of white showed, lying atop a small strong box of thin japanned metal. With trembling fingers Arthur took the box from its hiding place and opened a letter addressed to him—a letter from Martin.

He read it aloud:

"This is your alibi, Art. Just time to scribble it before I burn my bushes behind me and skip for Le Quesne, the Montreal Limited,
and a boat for Liverpool. After you and Gwen left, I got to thinking and I remembered we were twins and—started digging. Simple, wasn’t it?

“I’ve left Derosier a little proclamation to sweat over. He won’t bother you after he learns what we know. But if you need me before time to start the fall cutting, you can reach me at Guildford-on-Wey, Surrey, England, care of Miss Beth Hastings—and I’m on my way with a whoop, because she’s the girl doesn’t give a whoop how red I am. If I didn’t know Gwen Harris is that same kind of a girl, you wouldn’t be reading this, now. The rest of the story is in the cachet—which, I guess, is the twin to the one Derosier got hold of. Luck!

MART.”

They took the cachet out into the sunlight and, sitting on the doorsill, lifted its rusty, hinged lid, as reverently as if they were opening a precious sarcophagus.

“Before you read that,” Gwen said, placing her soft hand over Arthur’s as he took up an old-fashioned, crested envelope of good English bond with the inscription, “To my son, Arthur,” in a delicate feminine hand, “I want to tell you my news. Father had a letter this morning, too. It was from the reforestation commission, telling him that you are special investigator for the commission—and giving an official statement based upon your reports on our pine plantations. And do you know what the commission’s valuation of the property is—for taxation purposes? It’s forty dollars an acre! And father bought that land for an average of three dollars an acre, ten years ago. And they’re going to abate the taxes, in accordance with the new law, to encourage private reforesting. It means we win the wager, Arthur—thanks to you!”

“Well, it was my job—mine and Martin’s. Martin’s done his share now. Yes,” he added, gripping her fingers tightly, “he’s done his job. The fire, last night—and you this morning.”

“Arthur, I would have come to you, anyway,” she breathed. “Even if it were not for this cachet. I—I didn’t—I don’t give a whoop.”

The cachet was the rest of the story, and a remarkable revelation to the pair that sat in the sun of a Canadian spring morning and perused the message, written a quarter of a century before, by the loving fingers of a dying mother.

IT told Arthur Legrand that his tenacious faith in his father’s claim to “pure English blood” had not been misplaced. William Legrand had been the third son of a good family, so “good” that his elopement with the daughter of a clergyman had precipitated a bitter break. William Legrand’s pride and anger had brought him to Canada with his bride. He had even changed his name, in his grim resolution to have nothing whatever to do with his family again.

His real name was William Grandel of Gresham House, Gresham Downs, Surrey. His struggle to make a place for himself in the new world, “this strange and hostile country, this new France of Quebec,” as the mother described it in her message to her son, Arthur, had been a terrible one:

We found our only real friends among the Indians—our best friend, an Indian woman who deserted her own people for the love of a white man—who proved black at heart. He is dead, but their son is living and she is sending him to Quebec to be educated as a white man. No one knows that this boy is her son, save your father and myself. I named him, when he was twelve years old, Raoul Derosier. His mother, Senwa, called him by a Montagnais name meaning Little White Owl, for she said he was full of the wisdom of the owl.

Treat Senwa kindly, my son, and her son, too, if you come to know him—but remember that he is of mixed blood and do not trust him too far. He has much of his father in him, I fear. He is already ashamed of his mother.

My son, be kind to your father. If you find him unreasonable, strange, moody, remember what he has suffered. He is really eating his heart out for England, which he
loves—but I fear his bitterness and hatred may affect his reason, that he may never obey
my injunction to reveal to you this secret and
assure you your birthright. There is no one
I can trust to give this to you save Senwa,
and I dare not tell her where your father is
going to conceal the cachets. I can only pray
that you will find it, somehow—and give you
my love.

**CECELIA GRANDEL.**

Two weeks later there came a long
cablegram from Martin announcing his
marriage to Miss Elizabeth Hastings
and the information that property held
in trust for the sole surviving heirs of
William Arthur Grandel would make
them wealthy:

> "**Swords Out for Spain,**" by Roy Norton, is the fascinating book-length novel in
> the next issue of **THE POPULAR.** You'll enjoy reading this yarn of
> an adventurous American who became entangled in the
> complex plottings of daring revolutionists.

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**USING HIS HEAD**

NOT the least valuable training received by the young men who showed
their good sense by attending the army's training camps for civilians last
summer came in the course on citizenship, originated by Doctor G. W.
Hoke. His lectures expressed high ideals in everyday language and had
a full seasoning of wit—a quality not too common in army lectures. Speaking of
leadership, Doctor Hoke told a story of how William the Conqueror stumbled
and fell sprawling as he first set foot on English soil. His followers were horrifed at this mishap, but William knew his head was for other purposes than
to be a parking place for iron millinery. Rising quickly he held forth a pair of
very muddy hands. "See," he cried, "I hold the soil of England in my grasp!"
Commenting on this incident, Doctor Hoke remarked that "William became king
by divine right, because in time of crisis he could divine the right thing to do."

Doctor Hoke's humor was intentional. We remember an army lecturer
whose humor was of another variety. He was speaking on the subject of courts-
martial and compared army and civil courts, to the disadvantage of the latter.
"The object of a court-martial," he proclaimed, "is to obtain justice—not to
decide a case by juggling legal technicalities." A little later, in reply to a ques-
tion, he said: "We never try a man unless we know that he is guilty."
Young Vincent Clernander had been accustomed to gambling—in fact his love for games of chance had brought him to a sorry state; yet never before had any one used him as a pawn in gambling, staked his manhood against his necessities.

THOUGH Fortano had a disagreeable task to perform, he smiled. He was as sleek and oily as ever. The words he must speak could not help but wound, and personally he had nothing against the man to whom the words must be addressed—rather liked him, in fact. He held his blood and his station in respect and covertly envied the man. Fortano had fawned on him. He’d continue to do that perhaps, but— Well, business is business and the proprietor of a gambling house must look to his affairs with extraordinary care.

Vincent Clernander, rather young, and presenting a tall, striking figure in evening dress, came into the reception hall from the salle de jeux. Fortano’s small eyes, embedded in puffy flesh, detected the movement at the portières and then the approaching guest. Fortano knew exactly what he intended saying, for he was well aware what young Clernander would say, and he had given some little thought to the matter. He had thought of scarcely anything else since a menial whispered that Vincent Clernander was plunging again at rouge et noir.

Fortano, who was usually to be found in the reception hall, where he acted as welcoming host and off which he had a small office, knew that he must say something unpleasant to Vincent Clernander, yet he smiled in his sleek and oily way. He took a step forward, perhaps to get farther away from the doorway of his little office—into which he would not invite Clernander to-night.

Clernander tapped a cigarette end against a silver case.
"The little ball," he said, "is stub-
born again to-night. I wonder—
Shall we step into your office?"

"I am sorry," Fortano returned, in
his usual pur, and evading the other's
gaze by keeping his eyes turned toward
the main portal of the gambling house,
"but I am expecting a friend. It is
necessary, Mr. Clernander, that I watch
for him here."

"Oh!" A glimmer of the truth
reached Clernander, "I see."

He lit his cigarette.

"I am sorry," Fortano repeated, "for
it would give me great pleasure to—"

"I understand." The bright excite-
ment induced by his recent play died
out of Clernander's eyes and a certain
haggardness crept into his countenance.
"You do not find it convenient to go
further with me. It's quite all right. I
had wished to play a little more to-
night." This expression measured only
mildly his eagerness to get back to the
game. "But I can't ask you—"

"Mr. Clernander," said Fortano,
fetching his eyes up at last, "I am hold-
ing at this moment two of your checks
dated ahead—for ten thousand dollars,
the two checks. You gave me checks,
but still it is a matter of credit extended
to you. As you know, the checks are
dated the first of next month. I shall
not deposit them even on that day un-
less you say the word. I do not wish
to embarrass you—but further credit
— You must pardon me, sir."

"Of course, to be sure!" Clernander
assured him. "I haven't the slightest
criticism to offer. You have been de-
cent about it all and I have lost fairly.
I can't ask you to go farther—though
that was the impulse I had when I came
in here. Shouldn't have thought of it,
really shouldn't impose on good nature.
But you know how it is—the game. It
gets a man. It's all right—home now.
I shall not forget the checks, Fortano,
you have my word for that. Good
night!"

Fortano watched his departure
thoughtfully.

"A gentleman," he said to himself,
"every moment. As much as he wanted
to play, he could not beg. If he had
begged just a little bit, maybe— But
his kind do not bend their necks. I
wonder what he will do. I wonder if
I am to be responsible for him, too."
He mused, as though doubting the wis-
dom of some plan he had in mind, and
then suddenly reached a decision. "I'll
do it."

He summoned then from a private
inner room a strange-looking creature,
compared with the men of fashion who
visited Fortano's, and whispered final
instructions in this man's ears. The
man departed.

VINCENT CLERNANDER, walk-
ing toward Broadway, wondered
what he would do. He had reached
the end of his rope. Scion of a one-
time wealthy family, he had nothing
left, no near relatives nor any of the
money they had bequeathed him. There
were loans to be had from social
friends, but he could offer no assurance
of repayment. That wasn't just the
thing to do, to sponge, to trade upon
the proud name of Clernander.

There were loans to be had, too,
from acquaintances glad to buy in that
fashion the prestige and social favors
that a Clernander could give. Cler-
nander was not a snob, yet he under-
stood what his name meant to many.
They were more conscious of his sta-
tion than he himself. Well, that wasn't
the thing to do either.

There was the market. Clernanders
from long ago had taken riches out of
the market—indeed, he'd taken consid-
erable himself—but that required cap-
tal, and was as hazardous as rouge et
oir.

It wasn't a livelihood that bothered
Vincent Clernander. For that, he had
merely to accept the salaried connection
with a brokerage house which had been offered him some few days previously. The salary was not meager either. The name of Clernder was worth something to a financial institution and Vincent had a certain gift for the business, if he would but settle down. On the salary he’d have to economize here and there—he’d certainly have to give up the bright lights and the gaming tables—but he could still live comfortably, in the bachelor’s apartments he now occupied, and he’d have to give up only a few clubs and social activities.

He’d have some left for safe and sane diversion and to satisfy in part his tastes for contacts which had become as necessary as food, tastes bred from a long line of clubmen and society favorites. In time of course, if he plugged, there’d be a partnership in the brokerage house. Oh, the future of Vincent Clernder was bright enough if it wasn’t for immediate pressure.

He had debts—pressing, urgent. Checks dated ahead at Fortano’s gambling house and similar checks held by others who wouldn’t be so easy as Fortano. Twenty-five thousand dollars in all—fifteen thousand of it imperative on the first of the month, if he were to escape disgrace and perhaps the toils of the law. Yes, he was—

“Mr. Clernder.”

Clernder looked at the man in amazement. How in the world had this man come by Clernder’s name? He was small, wiry and of uncertain age. A thin sly face lurked beneath the peak of a slouchy cap. They were in the lighted spaces of Columbus Circle and Clernder’s first idea was quickly dispelled: The man certainly was no beggar.

He was too well dressed for that—elaborately dressed in the manner of one who had more money than taste and who seemed to think that style lay in a mixture of colors. The cap was slouchy because it was big and baggy and not because it was ragged or had seen long service.

It was, Clernder supposed, a cap which would be regarded as just the thing by a man of the type here presented. It had color enough and rakishness enough to fit into the general scheme achieved by a scarf of pale blue, a necktie of orange, a mouse-colored overcoat equipped with a multitude of flaps and buttons and doo-dads, yellow shoes.

Clernder was not one who would retreat unceremoniously from one who spoke his name, no matter how unfa vorably an inspection impressed him. The idea of a holdup or anything of that sort never occurred to Clernder there in the light of Columbus Circle and in the crowds of ten thirty.

“Well,” he said quietly, “what can I do for you?”

The little man was businesslike. He wasted no words. He spoke softly, so that none but Clernder heard, yet his words came fast and certain.

“If yuh’ll walk over in the park,” he suggested, “I’ll tell yuh how yuh can make a barrel of money. Nuthin’ crooked, see—I mean it ain’t nuthin’ yuh’ll back away from ‘cause yuh ain’t a crook—an’ it’s quick money. Two-three days yuh’ll have plenty of dough, see? I ain’t playin’ no trick on yuh. I know yuh ain’t got no dough to speak of on yuh, see? Know yuh just went flat at Fortano’s. I ain’t tryin’ no stick-up, see? I’m on the square, as yuh’ll see if yuh take a walk in the park.”

It was mysterious—and, like most mysteries, attractive. A man in such a worried state as Clernder finds himself relying more and more on chance for a turn in his affairs. When the mind is groping for an outlet, trifles become portents and symbols. A man who doesn’t know which way to turn plays hunches.

This was no trifle, to be sure—a stranger calling him by name in the
street and reminding him that he’d just gone busted at the gaming table, when
the stranger, from the very looks of him, could never have gained entrance to such a fashionable place as Fortano’s; and this stranger offering him a chance to make “a barrel of money.”
No, it wasn’t a trifle. It was a signal that Fate had taken a hand in the af-
fairs of Vincent Clernander—and Vincent Clernander had better accept it.
“Nuthin’ crooked,” the man had said.
Clernander looked down and into the little man’s eyes. They were too close
together and too filled with subtle lights to be pleasant eyes, yet Clernander re-
turned:
“Very well. Let us walk in the
park.”

S
NOW lay in uneven patches along
the walks of Central Park. The
moon hung clearly in the sky, and the
air was not uncomfortable if one kept
in motion. By common consent they
passed up the benches and were some
little distance into the park before the
stranger mustered his proposal into the
form he wished to state it.
“Bunch of us fellas got a deal on—
big deal,” he said, “an’ need a guy like
you to help pull it off, see? I said it
wasn’t nuthin’ crooked—what I mean
is, it ain’t crooked to take sumpin’
away from another crook, is it?”
“That depends,” Clernander rejoined.
“Would you mind telling me your name
and how you came to know about me?”
“My name’s Horner—Marty Hor-
ner. Fella I’m talkin’ fer says yuh’re
a gentleman, see? An’ what he says,
too, is a guy don’t hafta worry about
what he tells a gentleman on the q. t.
See what I mean?”
“I—I think I understand you. You
mean that I’m a man who perhaps won’t
reveal confidences?”
“Yeh. That’s what this fella says. An’ I’ll bank on what he says—as he’s
a gentleman hisself.”

“Who is this mysterious gentleman?”
“He’ll tell yuh that hisself,” Marty
Horner informed Clernander, “An’
he’s the guy what’ll tell yuh the whole
works, see? On’y thing I’m to do is
kind of give yuh a few hints, see? An’
if yuh fall fer it, take yuh to see the
boss.”
“Well, drop your hints.”
“I’m Marty Horner, see? Ast any
cop yuh come acrost who’s Marty Hor-
er, an’ he’ll tell yuh Marty’s a crook.
There ain’t no ifs, ands er buts about it
—I’m a crook. Now d’yu’ still want to
talk to me?”
“Go on.”
They lit cigarettes, pausing in the
shadow of a tree. Marty Horner blew
puffs of smoke nervously into the air.
They walked along again in the winter
moonlight. Their path had led them
alongside the west auto highway of the
park, and a roar of after-theater traffic
made conversation difficult. They wan-
dered off along a more secluded path
and found themselves in a little bower,
with big rocks here and there and bare
tree limbs overhead. It seemed warmer
here. They sat on a bench.
“Now’t yuh know I’m a crook,” Mr.
Horner proceeded, “I can talk freer.”
He bundled the collar of his overcoat
around his chin. “Lots of crooked
stunts ain’t so crooked maybe. Stealin’
stealin’—that’s what some guys’ll say
maybe—but what I say is there’s some
stealin’ that ain’t wrong! That’s the
kind of a job this is, see—what we
want you in on. There’s a rich fam’ly
in this man’s town that stole ev’ry dol-
lar they got. You know ’em. Thing
is, we got a chanst to lift sumpin’ out
of their house, see? An’ you’re the
fella’t can lift it.”
“You say I know this family. What
is their name?”
“I’m comin’ to that. On’y thing is
we can’t git inside, see? Had the job
all rigged up, an’ then the maid we had
planted in the house got fired. We
ain't got nobody on the inside now, see? Guy like you can git inside—'at's what the boss says.'

"What is it you mean to steal?"
"Jew'ry."

"And you're proposing that I steal it, eh? Go there as a guest, perhaps, and rob my host?"

"Yuh better talk to the boss about it, 'fore yuh turn it down. He'll make it look better, see? He's a gentleman hiself, an' yuh can git it better from him."

"Where is your boss?"

Marty Horner hesitated. Each began to feel the chill of inactivity, and they got up and walked again.

"I'll take yuh to see the boss," said Marty Horner.

Vincent Clernder was not like the sound of the thing and had no idea that he'd accept the proposal, yet he didn't wish to drop it until he had heard all there was to hear. He wanted to meet the "boss." He still had a feeling that Fate was pointing a way out of his difficulties. It was an adventure. The proposed theft would have to be surrounded by highly mitigating circumstances if he were to engage in it—yet he couldn't resist the adventure of going to the boss, of catching a glimpse of the underworld.

"Well," he agreed, "I should like to meet your boss."

Marty Horner looked pointedly at Clernder's garb.

"That git-up," he said, "ain't just the thing fer the place I'm takin' yuh to."

"I understand," Clernder nodded. "Evening dress is a trifle conspicuous. Glimpses of it show even under this overcoat. Well, that can easily be remedied. I shall go home and change."

"Sure. Yuh don't live far from here."

Mystery piled on mystery. Marty Horner was even aware of Clernder's address.

They bore along a path leading to the western edge of the park and came into the avenue called Central Park West at Seventy-second Street. Marty Horner waited in the shadows along the park while Clernder went to his bachelor's apartment. Clernder dressed in dark, inconspicuous clothing. He went again to the street.

A TAXICAB bore them south to Columbus Circle, down Broadway, the driver following the directions of Marty Horner, bearing eastward, until they were far downtown. They got out at a street corner on the lower East Side. Marty Horner paid the taxi bill.

A narrow, dingy street, a dingier hallway, a rickety staircase, a knock and an opened door, a shabby room, two faces floating in the dim light—

Yet Vincent Clernder did not falter. He was still playing his hunch, and adventure had seized him. Thus he found himself in the underworld.

There was a swift exchange of introductions, in low voices. The faces that had been in motion came to rest, like objects suddenly swept into still water—and one of the faces, gaunt, haggard, spoke.

"It's a pleasure, I assure you, Mr. Clernder. Sit down, please!"

This man was different. He stifled a cough with a long, slim-fingered hand. He made no apology for the small, ill-furnished room and he had the quietly proud manner of a gentleman receiving his guest in a spacious drawing-room. Clernder understood that his name was Willerty. Vague memories stirred in Clernder's brain, but nothing came of them. He couldn't quite recall—

"No fictitious names," Willerty was saying in his strained, hollow voice. All were sitting, Willerty on the edge of his small bed. "Nothing to be gained by subterfuge. I am 'Steamboat' Willerty."
“Ah, yes,” Clernander nodded. “I understand.”

“Thought you would, when I mentioned the sobriquet. Yes, I am that notorious individual—I hope you won’t think me immodest if I refer to my notoriety. Steamboat Willerty! I presume you know how I came by the sobriquet. At any rate, you know that I am what they call an international crook—and because so many persons fancied that I operated mostly on liners at sea, they thought the nickname of ‘Steamboat’ quite appropriate.”

He coughed painfully, recovered and went on:

“Just got back a few days ago from Europe. You’ve probably observed, Mr. Clernander, that my lungs are not what they should be. I hurried back, with Arizona in mind. I have been compelled to stop in New York for expense money. My friends were kind enough to provide me with a little money, all they could rake and scrape together, in fact, so I’ve had a roof over my head and plenty of milk and eggs. I think that I shall take a turn for the better, if I can get out to Arizona within a week or so. We shall see.”

Clernander expressed his sympathy and his hope that Mr. Willerty would soon find himself in better shape.

“Thank you!” said Willerty. “Well, I shall not waste words. Words cost breath and I breathe none too easily. You understand, of course, how a man like me picks up information. We fellows trade a lot. We swap information. I learned, in Paris, about a certain job here in New York. It seemed to be my expense money. With the help of my friends, I dug into it, as soon as I landed. There is in a certain house a collection of jewels which I can turn over to certain parties here, within an hour after I get them, for sixty or seventy thousand dollars. I had a friend in the house, as a maid, but she was discharged. I was then compelled to find a man who might have social access to that house.

“I do not need to explain,” he continued, “that it is impossible to burglarize the house in the ordinary way. We would do that if we could. But conditions there make that impossible. It must be an inside job. It can be done in a few minutes, if we can get some one in the house, during a social function, or as a guest overnight. The jewels are not under lock and key. That is the simple part of it. I know exactly where they are kept and can direct any one to them. A man would have simply to stow the jewels away in his pockets and walk out with them. A man like you would never be suspected. I should turn over to you twenty-five thousand dollars of the proceeds.”

Clernander nodded with understanding, not in agreement.

“Simple, from your standpoint,” he said, “but you hadn’t thought how impossible a thing like that would be for me.”

“Ah, yes, I had thought of it. I have thought of all angles of it. One of my friends happens to be a croupier at Fortano’s. He gave me the necessary information about—pardon me—your financial affairs. At least, he told me enough to lead me to believe that you need money. Oh, I am speaking frankly! No other way to do this, you know. You are not the only man in your station who’s short of money, but I picked you for a particular reason, after one of my friends had made an investigation. I thought you might have, perhaps, a personal motive in accepting my proposal.”

“A personal motive?”

“My best explanation,” said the crook, “is to mention the name of Jeremiah Pengh.”

Clernander’s lips tightened. He gazed straight at his host. The two others in the room got out of their
chairs and walked about in tense, expectant attitudes.

"Jeremiah Pench," Clernder repeated. "Is it his home you propose to rob?"

"It is." Steamboat Willerty was seized with another coughing spell. Presently he explained: "I understand what Jeremiah Pench did to your father and your uncle. It has been my good fortune to meet at various times men and women who move in your circles. I merely recalled gossip that I heard many years ago. I am an older man than you—twenty years older perhaps. I know that Jeremiah Pench, through a crooked railroad deal, started the Clernder fortune on the down grade. I know also that the Clernders never talked about it except to their intimates. The Clernders are like that, if you'll pardon my saying it.

"It isn't likely," he continued, "that you have ever talked about it. The Pench family no doubt think you in ignorance of it. I also know the family. I know that Jeremiah Pench got his start in a crooked oil deal and escaped prosecution on a legal technicality. He has been in innumerable crooked deals. He's as thorough a crook as Steamboat Willerty, but he has clever lawyers. He's worth millions now. His family are social climbers. Don't you suppose they'd welcome a Clernder to their home?"

"No doubt they would," Clernder agreed. "I have been invited there numerous times."

"Just as I thought—knowing the ways of climbers. I know that Mrs. Pench would be mightily pleased to see the name of Vincent Clernder in her list of guests in the society columns. It would help her amazingly."

"I dare say."

"It isn't necessary for me to argue the point of ethics."

"I think not."

"You are a man of intelligence and can see things as clearly as I. I wish only to add that it is all extremely simple for any one who has access to the Pench home—and no doubt you have only to accept one of the many invitations that reach you from the Penches. They are very busy, as they have been for years, trying to get into the swim of things. I understand that Mrs. Pench is most persistent. Ah—may I inquire if they still ask you there?"

"Yes, they do. I occasionally meet the two daughters and the son. We are on good enough terms. An invitation isn't difficult."

"Just as I suspected," Willerty said. "An invitation can be had without apparent design and could be quite plausibly accepted. Pench himself might wonder, yet he'd understand things as we'd want him to. Sons often forget injuries done to their fathers. It wasn't a matter of extensive gossip anyway, as I understand it—and the Clernders were too proud to act. They let the crook get away with his steal, probably couldn't have helped it anyway. It isn't unreasonable for Jeremiah Pench to believe that you never heard of it—at least that you are unfamiliar with details. It is all extremely simple, if you care to listen to my plan."

Vincent Clernder had always held Jeremiah Pench in contempt and he had always felt a sense of personal injury in the crooked financial deal engineered by Pench against the Clernders. And something must be said, too, for Vincent Clernder's state of mind, due to what looked like insurmountable financial difficulties. Did Fate mean that he was to reclaim in this way a small share of the Clernder fortune stolen by Jeremiah Pench? Small, to be sure—but, in present circumstances, sufficient to lead Vincent Clernder into the light of day.

Clernder's hand was steady as he touched the flame of a match to another cigarette.
“What is your plan?” he asked.
The satisfaction occasioned by this question sent Steamboat Willerty into another coughing spell, but he quickly recovered. Marty Horner and the other crook resumed their chairs.

EVEN though Vincent Clernander had never before been in the Pench home; in Riverside Drive, yet he found it easy to follow the directions of Willerty, when he did go there. Willerty’s aid, the discharged maid, had the lay of the land and her reports had been accurate. There wasn’t much for Clernander to do.

“All so simple,” he said to himself, “a big thing like this. Read of such things in the newspapers—jewel thefts—but didn’t think they were so easy, like taking a match off a mantelpiece. It’s low and contemptible—here as a guest—but what am I to do? Those checks—And Pench stole hundreds of thousands from the Clernanders so—”

His chief difficulty lay in separating himself long enough from Mrs. Pench and Mrs. Pench’s daughters, who were so overjoyed by his presence that they wished their other guests to see them almost constantly in his company. It was a social conquest for the Penches, to get a Clernander into their house as a guest—and astute climbers know how to make the most of such an occasion as this.

Yet Vincent Clernander got his chance, a half hour or so before his departure. He distributed the Pench jewels—the Penches couldn’t hope to wear all their jewels even for the benefit of a Clernander—in various pockets. They were gems of high quality. The available pieces were of a form and nature easily transportable. He gathered his plunder from three adjoining rooms on the second floor, and the moment his fingers closed on the first piece something seemed to snap inside him—deep inside. Music floated through the house.

He felt limp and cold. Yet he proceeded with a kind of desperation. He was not expert, but the clammy fear and a certain terror of something he couldn’t define sent him blundering through to completion. He did in four or five minutes what a cautious thief might not have attempted in less than ten. There were no listening pauses, no protective measures, no waits. He searched and grabbed in desperation and got downstairs undiscovered.

There he put on a good face and, half an hour later, was able to depart calmly and without having left a single hint or clew, or memory of any mannerism, which would link him with the theft when it was discovered.

And certainly none would dare mention, hardly dare to think of, the name of Clernander in connection with the robbery.

Clernander proceeded according to plan, dreading his destination, yet seemingly powerless to resist. He could feel the weight and form of the stolen jewels at various points on his person. They repulsed him. He felt sick and dry-throated.

“It’s nervousness,” he thought.

He had walked to Broadway. He hailed a taxicab and proceeded to Fortano’s gambling house. There he was to turn the jewels over to the croupier whom he had come to know as a friend of Steamboat Willerty.

Clernander had never thought of the possibility of Willerty and his gang double crossing him, of their getting the jewels and fleeing without paying him the promised twenty-five thousand dollars. And he did not think of that now. He saw only the final outcome. Willerty would dispose of the gems through channels with which such a professional thief would be familiar. When the plunder had been turned into cash, word would be sent Clernander.
He'd go to an appointed place and get his twenty-five thousand dollars.

And now he dreaded the thought of that—of getting the actual returns from the robbery. It would be money hard for a Clernander to touch.

He stepped into Fortano's. He was moving relentlessly toward complete accomplishment of the crime. So long as the jewels were in his possession, there was a possibility of restitution. Curiously, it didn't appear yet as a theft. He had the Pench jewels, but they wouldn't become stolen property until he turned them over to the professional thieves. He hadn't yet burned all bridges between himself and respectability. He might get the jewels back into the Pench home before the robbery—

Fortano, all smiles, came forward to welcome him.

"Good evening, Mr. Clernander!"

An attendant took Clernander's hat and overcoat.

"You're not looking well," Fortano said gravely.

"Oh, no—no, I'm not," Clernander rejoined, as a man aroused from sleep might have said. "I mean I'm not feeling well—and I suppose I look it." He remembered his mission there and explained: "Didn't come to play, just to look on. Feel wide awake and rather dreaded to go to bed."

He soon passed into the familiar salle de jeux.

The croupier who was to receive the stolen jewels was busy at a roulette table. He was a cunning, sharp-eyed man, dark, foreign looking.

Their eyes met. Clernander looked away. There was no hurry, no hurry. Clernander couldn't bring himself to give the man the arranged signal, by which he would understand that the transfer could be made at any moment and take measures to meet Clernander in a portièred off room.

Clernander had to think. He had been unable to think since that curious something snapped inside at the moment his fingers closed on the first stolen object. He wandered across the room and looked on at chemin de fer.

Fortano occasionally parted the portières and peeped in at Clernander.

Clernander avoided the gaze of his confederate. He wandered around nervously.

"Friendless, alone—never felt so friendless in all my life," he thought. "A Clernander stealing—sneak thief— Wish I was a burglar. I'd break into the Pench home and put this stuff back exactly as I found it. Wonder if they've missed it yet! The police—"

Fortano's fat face appeared like the full moon between the portières. Their eyes met. Fortano's head jerked with a beckoning gesture. Clernander went into the reception hall and followed Fortano into the little office. Fortano shut the door.

"Mr. Clernander," he said, "you are in trouble. I like you. I have the greatest respect—"

"Don't use that word, please."

"And why not—respect? I say I have the greatest respect for you. You are a gentleman. It is a pleasure to see such a man at all times and I have often watched you. Blood, breeding— they tell. In my country we were taught to respect such things. I should take the greatest pleasure in advising you—if you are in trouble—and you would not be under the slightest obligation at—"

Clernander sank into a chair beside Fortano's desk and buried his face in his hands. Fortano sat down at his desk. A look of mingled pity, understanding and design crossed Fortano's countenance, but, when Clernander looked up, he saw only an inquiring expression.

"I am in trouble," Clernander said, "and I need advice."
The story came haltingly at first and then in a torrent. Clernander did not mention names and Fortano did not ask for names.

“Well,” Fortano inquired, “what do you wish to do?”

“Why, I can’t go through with it. I must get the jewels back. But how to do that—before morning—There is a chance that the thing won’t be discovered to-night. I don’t know the habits of these people, whether they look at their jewels before going to bed, to see that they are still there. I don’t know—but they seemed to be in places—Any one so careless as to leave them outside lock and key would hardly—Oh, I don’t know!” His face set grimly. “I only know that I’m going to get them back, if I have to go up there and toss them through a window.”

“I think it can be arranged,” said Fortano. “You see, Mr. Clernander, I am the conductor of an unlawful business. You perhaps have done me the honor never to think of me as a criminal. At least you have never treated me with contempt or disrespect. But of course I am a criminal. I am a criminal because I conduct a gambling establishment. It is impossible for a man in my position to avoid contacts with other classes of criminals. Shrewd, clever men come to me sometimes—But I need say no more. I only meant to tell you that perhaps I can get a man who has some skill in burglary—”

Clernander’s face brightened and then fell.

“But,” he said, “there’s the other side to consider.”

“I—I don’t understand.”

“Why, the crooks I told you of—my promise to them, my bargain with them! I gave my word. Don’t you see?”

“Yes—yes, I see. You are a man who wouldn’t forget that. Well, you said that one of these men, the man with whom you made the deal, is a gentleman—that he seemed to be a man of breeding. Wouldn’t he understand?”

“I don’t know.”

“Why not have a talk with him—explain, say the things to him that you’ve said to me?”

“I shall have to do that. I promised.”

“Yes, yes,” said Fontano eagerly, as though something he had much hoped for had come to pass, “you gave him your word—the word of a gentleman—one gentleman to another.”

WITHIN a few minutes Clernander departed for his apartment. Arriving there, he changed from evening dress into inconspicuous clothing. He stowed the Pencj jewels about him and returned to the street. He hailed a taxicab. It was a quarter of twelve and the night was windy, with heavy clouds.

Once again, he came to the narrow, dingy street, a dingier hallway, a rickety staircase, a knock and an opened door, and faces, disturbed by his arrival, floating in gas light.

Clernander was soon stating his case. “You see, Mr. Willerty, I can’t go through with it. I came here first in a desperate frame of mind—my debts. I saw no other way out. Your proposal struck me as an act of Providence for my relief. I wasn’t thinking—thinking right. There was absolutely no justification for it, none whatever. What Pencj stole from my family makes no difference. My mind is clearer now. I see just how I stand—a sneak thief. And, well, I am ready to take the consequences.”

Willerty’s gaunt eyes, luminous, flickering with the fever of his malady, had never left Clernander’s face. Marty Horner and another crook scowled in disapproval at this turn of affairs.
“Consequences?” Willerty demanded hollowly. “What do you mean?”

“I mean just this,” said Clernder. “You have a deck of cards here perhaps, in your baggage somewhere. We’ll play one cold hand of poker—you and I. The winner takes the Pench jewels. If I win, I shall take measures to restore the jewels to the Pench home. If you win, you may take them and sell them. I shall not claim a cent of the stake money. But consequences—

“A man who’s done what I’ve done to-night must pay a price,” he went on. “I shall confess to the crime, without incriminating any one here. I shall tell things exactly as they happened, without giving your name or address here—and after you have effected your escape. I made my bargain with you—I gave you my word and I shall keep it. I ask only a gentleman’s chance—a chance to win back what I have lost, my self-respect.”

Steamboat Willerty coughed painfully. He said to Marty Horner:

“In the bottom of my bag there you’ll find a deck of cards. Hand it to me, please.”

He got off the bed and sat down at the small table in the center of the room. Clernder drew his chair to the other side of the table. He heaped the Pench jewels in the center.

Marty Horner shuffled the cards and dealt them—one cold hand of poker to each man, five cards. Clernder looked at his cards.

He had a pair of eights. Not so bad, in a cold hand.

The wind howled dismally around that old house in the slums. A belated roozer dropped his shoes heavily on the floor overhead. The Pench jewels gleamed in the center of the shabby room. Marty Horner and the other crook stood breathlessly.

“I have a pair of eights,” Clernder said.

He laid his hand down, face upward.

“ Beats me,” said Willerty. “Two sixes.”

He exposed those two cards, in the quick, deft manner of the professional card player, and then thrust the whole hand into the deck. Clernder raked the Pench jewels into his pockets.

“I am sorry for you,” he said at the door. “You are ill and I shall try—I wish you would permit me to do something for you. Things are brighter for me than they appeared a few days ago. I have a position I intend to accept to-morrow, and I know now—I feel it—that I can borrow money enough on my note to settle my urgent debts. You know how it is—things that appear hopeless take a different aspect when a man finds himself in a deeper hole.

“I can pull out all right,” he continued. “I am grateful to you. It was mighty decent of you to give me a chance. You held my life in your hands—and I held yours in mine. The jewels meant life to me—the chance to return them. Money means life to you. If you will permit me, I shall regard it as an honor to arrange the Arizona trip—”

“Don’t worry about me,” Willerty interrupted impatiently. “I’ll make out some other way—friends. I have friends yet.” The crook’s face darkened. “Good night!” he said crisply.

“I wish—”

“Go—get out, man! Get out before I change my mind and set these fellows onto you!”

Clernder went back to Fortano.

In that shabby room Marty Horner was examining the deck. Painstakingly he sorted out the hand that Steamboat Willerty had held. He had studied Willerty’s movement and he knew by the shape of the deck just where the hand lay.
"You had three sixes," Marty said. Willerty's frame shook in another paroxysm. He said nothing.

"An' yuh let him git away with the stuff," said the third crook. "It ain't fair——"

"Shut up about it," Willerty commanded. "It was my job. I brought the Pench job to this country with me. You fellows didn't do much. I'll pay you some day, and——"

"All them jools!"

"What of it?" Willerty barked. "Way he checked it up to me—I had him in my hands, didn't I? I'm an old crook. He's young. Well, think I want to croak with that on—— What's the use of talking to you fellows?" His lean hands made a helpless gesture. "Don't you see? He'd turn crooked, or kill himself—that guy would. Well, it's different. I'll steal. Show me money that belongs to the rich, and I'll grab it. I never did trim the poor birds—big stuff. I've always gone after. But—this was different.

"Understand it now? I had him in my hands like a piece of putty. I can make him a crook or turn it so that he'll wreck himself—or I can let him put that stuff back and be clean, which is what he wants to do. It's the responsibility. I've got enough to answer for on my own hook, without—— See—the responsibility? I couldn't take it. Too close to the edge to drag another fellow in—— Shut up about it!" he cried, encountering only dazed incomprehension on the countenances of his companions. "I did what I wanted to do, for my own reasons. Drop it! Leave——"

He sank weakly onto the bed.

The croupier, who at the behest of Fortano had engaged to play whatever rôle might be necessary in this little game, was a man of understanding and enjoyed the confidence of his employer.

"Just why did you do that, Mr. Fortano?" he inquired.

"I don't know," said Fortano, with knitted brows. "We sometimes do things without clear reasons. Something moved me—something. It seems that I wished to avoid responsibility."

"You mean—you felt that your place here—young Clernander gambling—I think I see. You didn't want to be responsible for him, if he turned crooked?"

"Yes, I think that's it. I was afraid. The time will come, I said to myself, when he'll do something desperate—if he persists in playing, and I'll have another—I'm getting along in years. Willerty has caused me some worry. He used to play at my place in Twenty-third Street, when he was a young man. Comes from a fine family in Boston, I understand. He usually lost."

"And his losses made a crook of him?"

"I—— It's hard to think otherwise, though I try to. When I read in the newspapers about his crooked games I said to myself—— Well, you know, it hurts. He played here, too, up to a year or so ago—a hopeless crook. I often wondered if I—— Well, I didn't wish to take the responsibility for Clernander, too. As I say, I'm getting old. And then I thought I might perhaps square things partly if I did something for both of them."

There was a pause. Fortano was puzzled by his own emotions, as one would be perhaps who didn't discover his conscience until age made itself felt.

"Willerty," he explained, "sent word to me that he was sick and needed money to go to Arizona, sent word by a little crook named Marty Horner. It happened that I was worrying about Clernander at that moment.

"I pumped Marty, who trusts me, as many crooks do. I learned that Willerty had a jewel theft under way——"
learned everything. It seemed to offer a chance to show Clernder into what he was drifting. Crime and gambling losses—they go together so easily—and Willerty and Clernder—Clernder, a gentleman, seemed to offer the problem of Willerty over again—and I didn’t care to be accountable for him, too.

"I arranged things," Fortano continued. "I paid Marty Horner well and he deceived both of them. You see, I let Clernder find himself—and that is always best. He probably will not gamble again, certainly he will never steal. I arranged it so that the jewels were restored. Clernder will always remember how closely he came to disaster. And, you see, I’ve wiped him out of my mind. I haven’t got him to worry about."

"And Willerty?"

"Ah—I admire him! Gentlemen—both. They couldn’t escape their blood. Years of crime—and Willerty is still a gentleman. He deserves the help I’m giving him—Arizona, and the best of medical attention, comfort. It was enough for me that Willerty consented to gamble for the jewels, but when he deliberately concealed the third six in his hand—Ah, that was fine!

"Everything fitted in so nicely. Willerty’s jewel theft—Clernder on the brink of I don’t know what—the Penches. It was a stroke of luck. Oh, I’m selfish about it. I did it for my- self. A man who’s getting old will pay high for his peace of mind—" He added musingly: "But I’m sorry I missed that poker hand in Willerty’s room. I’ve never seen a man stake his life against another’s in a card game. It must have been exciting."

Other stories by Mr. Hinds will appear in later issues of The Popular.

CONSULTING AN EXPERT

GRAHAM B. NICHOL, publicity director for the United States Bureau of Internal Revenue, considers no days of his life well spent unless he gets a chance to guy, kid, spoof and otherwise put the laugh on Frederic J. Haskin, globe-trotting syndicate writer. In these derisive and merry encounters his favorite theme is the more or less mythical reluctance with which Haskin parts with coin of the realm.

Somebody recently presented Nichol with a Stone Mountain Memorial silver half dollar, which turned black after he had carried it in his pocket for only a few days. His problem then was how to restore its pristine shine. And the answer was easy. His friend Haskin conducted, along with many other literary undertakings, an information bureau guaranteed to answer any question that human ingenuity could frame. Mr. Nichol, summoning his stenographer, dictated:

"Dear Mr. Haskin: Regarding you, as I do, as the ablest, most practiced and most enthusiastic authority, from both study and experience, on the art of carrying coin, cash and moneys in the pants pocket for great and unbroken lengths of time without depreciation of the currency, I beg leave to ask how to restore the shine to a silver coin that has blackened in the pocket."

Promptly the information was forthcoming from Mr. Haskin’s bureau, thus:

"The silver coin that has become tarnished may be brightened by sticking in a potato and leaving overnight."

To this Nichol replied: "I know; but how do you persuade yourself to leave it overnight?"
Light of the West

By Ernest Haycox

The spirit of American democracy may have been born upon the battlefields of Concord and Lexington, but it grew to lusty manhood in those far reaches of the Columbia River, at the end of the Oregon Trail.

It was late afternoon when David Meriwether climbed off the brig *Morning Star*, twenty days from the Sandwich Isles, to face the singularly primitive aspects of Fort Vancouver which, surrounded by a tall stockade and girted by a heavy fir forest, looked for all the world like a beleaguered garrison. His rather over-commanding request for arrangements had preceded him and, as the bright summer's sun raced for the western ocean, a long, stanch cedar canoe, manned by four Chinooks, carried him across the majestic width of the Columbia and up the gentler Willamette with its never-ending succession of inlets and emerald points.

He slept miserably on the damp ground with one Hudson Bay blanket over him at Portland village, alternately praying for the dawn and hearing the maudlin shouts of some trapper crazed by the forbidden "blue ruin." Then at dawn his craft continued upward between the forbidding igneous capes and rolling beaches until, around midafternoon, he stepped with much relief on the wharf at Oregon City. He thought his tedious journey of seven thousand miles and five months ended, but in this he was mistaken.

He marched deliberately along the town's main street and in the helter-skelter mixture of white man and savage, linsey-woolsey and fringed buckskin, sedate overland emigrant and wild adventurer, he made an interesting figure. A high starched collar, which momentarily threatened to choke him, formed the lower boundary of a fair and ruddy honest face which, considering its youth, seemed unduly proud and sober. A high beaver hat perched on
his head. A plum-colored waistcoat fashionably held away the frontier breezes and a wool outer coat set off a respectable set of shoulders and biceps.

His trousers were as snug as Eastern fashion decreed for gentlemen of good blood. He swung a cane in the manner of one who had been born to it. And as he picked his way along the very dusty street he carried himself aloof; he seemed not to like the indiscriminate jostling and the hearty boisterousness of the throng.

It was Saturday afternoon in this new capital of western America. The settlers were in from the valley of the Willamette and from Tualatin plains; the roving, restless mountain men thracked at their fur-laden pack mules; United States dragoons lounged on the street's sunny side, pulling at their cavalry mustaches and severely eying the sullen, blanket-wrapped bucks crouched in the shade. Wagons rumbled by, raising the heavy dust.

The man from Iowa saluted the man from Sangamon Bottom, Illinois, whom he had not seen since the break-up of the emigrant train; Pike County brethren gathered in a tobacco-chewing fraternity and swapped news, drawling and whining through their noses. Burly men and bantam cocks: some bearing the ineradicable marks of the long, long journey, others haw-hawing at every rough-pointed jest and always ready to find some new unfortunate butt.

Ever and anon, a blessed leaven in the eternal harshness of a primitive, man-made society, the figure of a calico-dressed, bonnet-draped woman would pass. Always there was a sound of gunshots near by; the pit saws whined through the fir logs; the burl of the flower mills plainly announced their business. And above everything sounded the deep mutter of the falls.

David Meriwether took more than one good-humored bump from passing pedestrians; he saw many glances thrust upon him and heard carelessly spoken words upon his fine clothes which, in his own world, would have been inexcusably impolite. To all of it he remained gravely impervious, although the flush mounted to his face and he registered a plain distaste to such conduct in his mind. Meanwhile his eyes had been searching the roughly built frame houses along the street.

Most of them were private dwellings with their generous lawn in front, hedged by the inevitable white picket fence; but the false-fronted structures scattered between them announced their character in bold, black lettering, the spelling and abbreviation of which often displayed the ever-recurring frontier originality. "Hay & Feed," "Billmyer's Stable," "Elkey Jones' Store—Beaver Skins Legal Tender."

At the last named place he paused, stared at the crowd within and, after some mental reservation, pushed his way through to the dark interior. He had to skirt a sheet-iron stove and struggle toward a puncheon floor which, when he reached it, proved to be laden with a variety of articles: Beaver traps, molasses jugs, powder and lead, jerked venison, unbolted flour, rawhide, saddles and harness—everything available to the needs of so rough-and-tumble a society. Meriwether brushed the dust from a vacant spot on the counter and rested his elbow patiently until a sallow, bearded man got to him.

"Yas, young feller! What's yore need?"

"I am looking for a gentleman by the name of Elston Meriwether," said the newcomer. "It occurred to me that you might know where I'd find him."

"Huh!" grunted the storekeeper. "Too many emigrants pilin' in this town fer me to know 'em all any more. What year'd this feller come across?"

"I beg pardon?"

"Waal, now, I thought I put it plain
enough. What year'd yore friend mosey over the Oregon Trail?"

"That I cannot say. He left home nine years ago. Our last letter from him was dated from Fort Vancouver in '42. Evidently he came here around or before that time."

There was a crowd at his elbows and they freely inserted themselves into his affairs.

"Meriwether—Meriwether?" thus repeated one. "Now mebbe that'd be an Ohio Meriwether?"

"It would not," answered the newcomer, with no great graciousness.

"Waal," offered another, "if he came hyar that early, old Joe Mills would shore know about him. You ask Joe Mills. Or ef you can't find him, jest ask Doc Newell. They war hyar when Mount Hood wa'n't nuthin' but a hole in the ground."

The suggestion met with general approval and the self-appointed committee reéchoed the advice.

"Yep, you jest find old Joe Mills."

"And where would I find him?" queried the newcomer, striving to appear thankful.

"Waal, I reckon you'd find him war thar was a crowd. Powerful fond o' crowds is Joe. Likes to tell stories to the new emigrants. You jest track down this street unti you reach the meadow. Guess you'll find a lot of wagons and camp fires. Waal, jest inquiere fer Joe. The loudest voice you hear is him. He'll probly be tellin' the goldardest lie you could lay a tongue to."

"Powerful interestin' lies, though," interposed another. "When you git to roll 'em off yore mind like Joe does, it's plain downright genius!"

With this advice, Meriwether thanked his informer and set out, conscious of a low volley of critical appraisal. He retraced his way through the street amid a thinning crowd. The witness of much rifle firing was not far ahead of him and, after leaving the last scattering houses behind—a church and a granary—he entered a meadow clustered with white-topped schooners. He found himself wandering through a scene of much domesticity; fires dotted the open ground whereon was piled every kind and grade of furniture that had survived the long trip. Women had much to do with iron pots, bread boards and quarters of venison.

ONE man shaved by the aid of a mirror tacked to a tree, dipping his brush in a creek at his feet; another warped a new band of iron to a badly worn wheel. An old lady of seventy swayed to and fro in a rocking-chair, singing hymns in a querulous voice, while a band of half-wild dogs and nut-brown children darted around her. But the main body of men clustered at the far end of the meadow and, as Meriwether advanced, he saw a kind of tournament in session. One group shot at targets; another wildly applauded a wrestling match. Here again men had come to the two primitive tests of skill—of strength and of eye.

He found himself unaccountably attracted to one wing of this crowd where men stood with one eye to the gladiators and another to a broadly drawling reciter. Meriwether, remembering the advice of his informer, squared his shoulders and, somewhat reluctantly, shoudered a path through. It may have been his fastidious garb or it may have been the vigor of his progress; but, whatever the reason, many turned to stare and mutter. They were not timid individuals, these Argonauts, and they spoke brusquely when they believed their dignity injured. One such character, fashioned in the hard, sparring manner of a hickory ax handle, spluttered:

"Hyar, do'ee take care whar ye walk! I ain't no public road fer ye to step on!"
Meriwether turned and bent his head ceremoniously.

"I beg your pardon. The thing was wholly unintentional, I assure you."

This was strange speech for these parts. The crowd stared, pondered and burst into hilarious guffaws. Meriwether, brimming with anger, advanced upon the reciter. He was met by a pair of bold, roving eyes set in a resourceful and humorous face. The story had been told amid a broadside of laughter and its author seemed to be casting about for a new audience and new effects. So seeking, his attention was brought to the waiting Meriwether who promptly spoke up.

"I take it, sir, you are Joe Mills."

"Take what you please so long's you don't take my hawse and wagon," responded the man. "But I reckon I can't deny my name."

"I am looking for a gentleman by the name of Elston Meriwether. I have been told you would know him."

Some of the humor vanished from Mills' bold countenance.

"Now, young man, what'd you be wantin' with him? Don't figger to tell a man's wharabouts onless it's proper."

The newcomer tapped his cane impatiently, a move that did not go unnoticed by the listeners.

"Oh, I'm no legal bloodhound, I assure you. It is not my intention to take him away from the country if he choises not to go."

A murmur of amusement greeted this.

"Do'ee hear?" muttered the man who had objected to being used as a public road. "Take him away ef he choises not to go? Hell's fire, how c'd he take any one agin' that will? Tell old Sam Faulter that!"

Mills was attempting to be judicial.

"Waal, now, how'd I know what old Elt Meriwether's done? This air a free country and a man's past ain't no-wise got a right to come bobbin' up. Cuss me, ef I say a word! Let him tell you his wharabouts himself, ef he chooses."

This decision met with a unanimous and vocal approval. The Western credo had been perfectly expressed. "Thar's sayin' now!" said Sam Faulter. "Let the high-flyin' bird find his own nest, I say. Sech manners ain't fer these diggin's."

"I'm not anybody's past!" exploded the newcomer. "If you must know, I am the gentleman's brother and I come to him on a matter of very important concern." He swung to the crowd. "If any of you know his location, I should be greatly favored and you would be doing a very estimable service."

Mills pulled him around. If there was any glory to be had, he was the man to share it.

"Elt's brother, now? Waal, mebbe. Yes, dang me if you don't look a leetle like the stubbor cuss." And, once embarked upon a course which appealed to him as generous and flamboyant, the volatile Mills continued to soliloquize in the tones of an orator. "Thar's a man I set great store by—old Elt Meriwether. We've chawed mokkersins many the time and thought it mighty fine bull. Why, he's rubbed out purty near as many Injuns as I have—and that'd be scalps enough to make a good-sized tent."

The newcomer was restive under the barnstorming manner of his companion. He could not, although he made the effort, conceal his instinctive slight drawing away from the rough pleasantry and horseplay of the crowd. He resented the familiarity, the utter democracy of each and every one.

Most of all, he waxed more and more indignant at the too-frequent tone or look of patronization. It seemed as if they took a single glance at his clothing and, by common consent, placed him outside their fraternity. He was ac-
customed to belonging among the best of people; to be thought inferior by these frontier democrats was intolerable, to put it mildly.

"Let him find his own way!" advised Sam Faulter. "His fine airs don't shine with this child. Ain't we all ekal?"

There was a final shout from the crowd as the gladiators wound up their struggle; the defeated member dusted himself and limped away, leaving the victor the spoils of approval. The winner slapped his hands against his sides and crowed like a rooster.

"Old Missoura! Hooraw! I'm half a man and half an alligator!"

"Oh, don't you go to braggin!" muttered a sedate citizen. "Thar'll always be summun to take yore sails in. Guess thar's plenty from Ioway to do it."

Mills was talking.

"Waal, ef you want to see old Elt Meriwether, jest climb in my wagon t'-morrow bright an' early and I'll show you the road. It's a good half day's journey up the Molalla."

"I'm greatly in your service, sir. And where shall I find you?"

"Whar d'ye suppose?" Sam Faulter muttered. "Right hyar, of course."

Meriwether turned and stared at the man from top to bottom. In a more elegant circle—that is to say, in his own roster of friends—this passed for the deepest sign of annoyance.

"My friend," said he, "when I wish for your advice, I will ask it. Until then, would you kindly let the other gentleman tell me what I wish to know?"

"Waugh! Do'ee hear sech sayin's? Why, you cussed critter, old Sam Faulter don't need nobody's consent to talk! Chargin' me fer air to breathe? I'll jest gouge yore purty brown eyes out!"

Upon the moment a signal seemed to run through the crowd. The joshing died; the gossip dropped to a hum; and the nearest men backed away to form a circle. Meriwether, looking around him in surprise, found that, without any more pronounced effort than a polite rebuff, he had become the member of a new struggle.

"He was by no means lacking in courage. Indeed, he had some reason to value his own physical condition. But the idea of wallowing in the dust with the slatternly looking fellow opposite caused him to feel a genuine repugnance. He had been born and bred to regard common brawls as beneath the dignity of a gentleman."

Sam Faulter had cast off his coat. Although perhaps seven or eight years older than Meriwether, he stood out as a perfect product of the environment, lean to the point of being gaunt, with his clothes hanging loosely upon him; heavily bearded, tobacco-stained teeth and a sour, skeptical eye; a body fashioned to withstand great amounts of continuous labor and sudden, strenuous calls for exertion. The crowd sized the contestants up with a brief silence; then the common murmur and the bets went entirely in the older man's favor.

"Fair fight," announced Mills. "Stand up and take it. No holts barred, but nuthin' to be used 'cept the bar' hands."

"Fight to stop when one or t'other gits a belly full and says so," supplemented a voice.

"Take off yore nice clothes, sonny!" Meriwether threw up his chin. "I do not regard this as the proper occasion for a fist fight," said he, very slowly. "And when I do fight, I shall not let others pick it for me."

"Hey?" queried Sam Faulter. "Ain't goin' to stand up to me? Why, dang yore hide, I'll jar every teeth from yore haid! Sech high airs don't shine with Sam Faulter. I come away from Ohio jest to miss sech sassy manners and I don't propose to let another man claim I ain't ekal to him out in Oregon!"
"I have not said you were below me," said Meriwether. "That, however, does not matter. I claim the privilege of accepting or refusing a challenge. In this case I refuse it. I do not care to roll around in the dirt like a hog."

The crowd remained utterly silent, digesting this statement and advancing to the ugly conclusion it implied. For, by their code, a man could not in decency refuse to protect his own dignity.

Meriwether turned to Mills.

"I shall accept your very kind offer and ride to my brother's with you."

"Oh, shore!" said Mills, in a studiously disinterested voice. He turned away as if to address his neighbors.

A SINGULARLY crisp and brilliant morning found David Meriwether on the wagon box, cruising slowly through a forest of virgin fir. Upon his right, Mills cracked a whip and shouted at the oxen, seeming to enjoy the sound of his voice bounding down the rough and tortuous track; upon his left sat a girl. And it had been this unexpected company that had put gayety in the travel-weary man's voice.

She was Mills' daughter, a black-eyed, black-haired damsel of uncertain age. Meriwether, calculatingly with a certain measure of experience, judged her to be not more than twenty-two. Shortly afterward she had settled the question by saying:

"My folks think I'm doomed to be an old maid. I'm twenty-one."

"Turrible foolish to put off bein' married," interrupted Mills. "Proper age is 'round sixteen. But dummed if I c'n tell Sally that. She's powerful p'tickler."

"Spinster old!" sighed the girl. "Why, do you know, every one of my girl friends is married, with a family growing up around them? Mister Meriwether—Dave is your better name, isn't it?—are they as foolish in New York?"

"Oh, yes. They start early enough," responded Meriwether.

She was a creature of moods, inheriting the turbulent, restless spirit of her father. At times she bubbled over with whimsy and again was severely Puritan, staring at the vista of shadow and sun, arms folded and lips pursed. Meriwether remembered a line of some song which had been popular when he left the city and sang it to her; she clapped her hands in pleasure and bade him repeat it. Mills frowned in disapproval. It hardly seemed right for a man to have such a free-and-easy way with women. Certainly his passenger possessed a manner that was remote enough from the gruff, tongue-tied actions of the frontiersman when around females.

"Son," said Mills, "it ain't none of my business, but what ailed ye yesterday? Afeerd o' Sam Faulter? Shucks, mebbe you c'd have bent him over yore knee. Sam's an awful windbag."

"Afraid?" repeated Meriwether. "Sir, I have never been afraid of a man in my life, save my father."

"Then whut ailed you?"

"Bah! What cause for fighting did we have? He seemed anxious to speak out of turn. I asked him to refrain. Is that a thing to set men rolling in the dust and trying to bite off ears and gouge eyes? If a man is to fight let him have a good enough cause to do it with his whole heart."

"Cause enough you had," said Mills, shaking his head.

"And what was that?"

"He called yore bluff in front of the crowd. 'Twas up to you to hump yore back and show 'em the color of yore gizzard."

"I am not anxious to please the crowd. It is none of their affair."

Mills shook his head. His grandstand manner quite deserted him and he spoke like a shrewd, counseling uncle.

"Let me tell you suthin', young man.
It may be proper to scorn yore neighbors in the East. Thar’s so many people you c’n chose yore comp’ny to suit yore manners. Hyar’s a different world in Oregon. We live together, eat together, fight together. You’ve got the hull mountings to roam in, all by yoreself if it pleases you; but that’s powerful lonesome. Best to live sociable with the rest of us. And you got to show the boys you ain’t too good fer ’em and that you ain’t too measly low-down fer ’em.”

“And fight over nothing?”

“Oh, a fight ain’t nuthin’ to worry about! Shucks, it don’t cut no ice how many times you knock a man down er he knocks you down! No bones broken. Prove yore metal, shake hands and be friends until the ornery son of a gun wants to try it next time. Jest so they know you ain’t to be bluffed.”

Meriwether shook his head and relapsed to silence. The girl sent a quick, divining look at him, folded a pleat in her skirt and hummed the line of song he had taught her. They forded the crystal-clear Molalla and swung into the deeper forest. The road wound around stumps and deadfalls, seeming like an aisle through a tremendous cathedral.

OVERHEAD echoed the constant twittering of birds, the scolding of squirrels, the thump of the woodpecker; the pheasant drummed heavily out of his brush covert. In the loose earth of the road was a constant crossing of deer sign and less occasionally the broader print of brother bruin. It was that time of the year when the rank smell of skunk cabbage pervaded the air.

Mills grunted and pulled at the wagon brake. A swart, stocky Indian clothed in a half blanket tied about the hips stepped from the concealment of a tree trunk and raised his hand imperiously. He went through a ritual of motion, patted his stomach, thrust a thumb into his cheeks and spread his palms outward. Mills shook his head, frowning, and launched into a flight of jargon. Though he could not understand the words, Meriwether recognized the import. The pioneer was speaking unsympathetically to the red man’s evident request and in turn the latter scowled and repeated one word.

“Chickamin!”

“Git on, you varmint!” roared Mills. “Thar’s no chickamin in my pocket for a thievin’, sneakin’ renegade such as you! Cuss me, I’ve got a notion to give you a dose o’ lead! Vamose!”

“Chickamin!” repeated the buck stubbornly. His black, murky eyes turned to Meriwether and fastened themselves upon a gold-and-onyx charm suspended from the plum-colored waistcoat. He stretched his arms toward it. “Chickamin.”

“What’s chickamin?” queried Meriwether.

“Money—anything valuable in trade.”

“No,” said Meriwether, shaking his head. “No chickamin from me, my friend. You look quite healthy.”

The buck had come by the oxen and stood near the off wheel. He saw the refusal on Meriwether’s face. With his attention glued to the charm, he gave a cry of rage, sprang up to the hub of the wheel, leaned across the girl’s lap and fixed his hand around the charm and chain. Mills swore at him and reached for his gun. Meriwether stood up, got a grip on the intruding arm, wrenched it around and shoved the buck off the wagon. In the space of a moment the half blanket dropped from the copper figure and a rifle leaped to the Indian’s arm. He was not soon enough. Mills poked the muzzle of his gun past his passenger’s cheek and drawled more jargon, well larded with English.

“Now git, you pesky varmint! Next
time I set eyes on you I’ll shore ruin that brown hide.”

Meriwether turned to look at his host. The brush rustled and he returned his attention to the road. The buck had vanished in the timber. Mills grumbled something, set the rifle between his knees and urged the plodding oxen onward.

“Thar,” said he, “is a small dose o’ the West, son. Ain’t no time fer politeness. Only treatment he understands is a fist or a gun. Powerful number o’ white men jest like him.”

The girl had not so much as turned color during the scene. Now she was singing that provocative little tune.

“Dave, how do you like our Oregon?” she asked suddenly.

“I don’t know,” said he, with a puzzled look upon his face. “Last night I might have answered you. This morning—I don’t know.”

“You don’t like it,” said she. “I can tell. But wait just a while, Dave, and something will happen to you. I know.”

“What will happen? How do you know it will happen to me?”

“I know,” she repeated. “There are kinds of men, Dave—and other kinds.” She sang again.

Mills sent a halloo down the road that rang like a trumpet.

“Waal, son, yore about to see that no-account Elt Meriwether. Many is the time I’ve chawed mokkersins with him and thought it mighty fine bull.”

The road turned and without warning the trees halted in front of a small, round clearing. The traveler heard the ringing stroke of an ax and saw the spiral of smoke from some chimney. But not until the oxen had advanced another fifty yards did he come face to face with a log cabin whose interstices were plastered with mud and over the door of which hung a gigantic set of elk horns. Oiled deerskin made the windows and in the logs, at regular intervals, stretched loopholes. The traveler got stiffly down from the wagon.

A figure in buckskin ranged out of the woods with an upfiling of his arm.

“Hi, Joe! What’s news?” Then he saw his brother and stopped dead.

Dave set his cane in the ground and, sober faced, bowed ceremoniously.

“Elston, I am glad to find you again. I have sad news. The plague has taken our folks and you are now to assume control of our ships. I have traveled seven thousand miles to deliver this message.”

“Why, Dave!” said the brother, in an altered tone. “Why, Dave!”

“Death air a thing fer all to face,” rumbled Mills sympathetically. But for him the present hour and the present thought were things so vital that they crowded out any sustained thought of future. “What the Lord wills air goin’ to happen. So long, boys, and drop down afore long! Maw’ll make saleratus biscuits ef we have comp’ny.”

The girl, too, had a parting word.

“Remember, Dave, it is sometimes better to fight and forget than to be proud. And, Dave, I live just three miles farther on.”

The wagon creaked and jolted over the clearing and was swallowed by the forest again, leaving the two brothers facing each other.

“I knew they must go, sooner or later,” said Elston. “But I had no thought it would be so soon. I am sorry. Doubtless I gave them much grief and worry. Far better they had forgotten me. I meant it that way. Meant for every one to forget me, as I have forgotten every one else—very nearly.”

“We expected you back, Elston. Every year we expected you.”

The bronzed, bearded man smiled a little. There was a flashing of strong teeth.
made carpet and bedding alike. Above the mantelpiece, resting on tholepins, were three long guns and a brace of pistols. Side by side along the wall hung spare moccasins, fringed hunting shirts, a set of snowshoes and a long string of ioqua shells. A pile of traps sat in a corner. The younger brother surveyed these things with an undisguised attention. The place was redolent of mountain and plain, of one man’s sturdy search for essentials in a primitive country.

ELSTON was standing in front of the guns, his eyes following the blue-steel barrels and his fingers touching the scarred stocks with something near to affection. He kicked a brand back into the fire, shook his head in doubt, raised his arm again in that characteristic upthrust and swung around.

"Davie, my lad, go back and look after the family ships. I bequeath them to you in fee simple, to have and to hold as long as the breath is in your body. For me, I want none of them. I will not give up this life."

"Elston!"

"I will not, Dave, and that is an end to it. I made a sad mess of things back where people must have manners and observe ten thousand laws. Here, I am my own law so long as I keep in my own kingdom. I will not change for all the ships in creation. I could not be happier with all India’s wealth. The bed I made for myself is good to lie in. I shall not change."

"That is utter folly!"

"So they will say, my former friends. No, no, Davie! I’ve been eating raw meat too long to wish for New York’s jellied squab. Take the ships. I wish you good luck with them."

"That is absolutely impossible. I’ll have nothing to do with such a transaction."

"Then pass them on to Dick. He’s
the man of business in our family, anyway.”

The younger brother drew himself up.

“Elston, do you seriously mean to tell me you cannot find it in your mind or heart to assume your rightful place in the world? It is something quixotic, something you read of in story books, not the decision of a mature man with an education behind him. What can hold you here?”

“What can’t hold me here?” asked the elder. He swung his arm around him. “Is there anything in this life of mine I cannot have for the taking? Is there any set of rules I must observe, other than common decency? Ah, David, you haven’t slept long under the western sky, nor heard the wilderness speak to you.”

“No,” returned the younger, with a trace of bitterness, “I must admit you need respond only to your own free will.”

“Just so! Well, I have spoken. Your trip has been for nothing. Let’s think of something to eat.” He slapped his thigh and pointed to the guns. “I ate the last of my venison for breakfast. We shall have to run out and shoot our dinner. Come along?”

David felt a whetting of his interest. “So long as I’m in the wilderness, I suppose I might enjoy some of the pleasures,” said he. “But these clothes?”

The elder pointed to the buckskin on the wall. David changed into the stiff, fringed garments and experimented with the moccasins. Once fully attired he had the sudden and startling sensation of changing characters, of dropping inward restrictions and outward commandments. The suit was rent in places with jagged holes that suggested arrow or bullet marks and along the right arm was a dull crimson stain. The color rose in David’s face. He took down a gun and speculatively balanced it. He thought of Sally Mills’ black, critical eyes.

“The gun is loaded?” he inquired.

“All set for action. That’s my old baffle gun. When time comes to use it, pull back both triggers and let the right one slip halfway. Then the hammer’s ready to go at a touch. Come along. We’ll find game shortly.”

The elder led the way into the timber; Dave followed, feeling curiously unattached and irresponsible in his new garb. He had thought himself in good trim, but five minutes behind his brother left him out of wind and temper. They dodged; they ducked; and they climbed. They followed a draw to its head, traversed the slope of a hill and weaved between a thicket of ironwood and hazel. They discovered deer sign which, to David’s untrained eye, was no sign at all. And so long as they advanced there was no diminution of Elston’s pace.

Grouse shot out of covert; small game of every kind gave way reluctantly before them. The day droned with sultry sounds. Then they passed over the summit and saw water sparkling below. Elston dropped to his knees and threw up a warning arm.

“Come abreast me!” he whispered. “There’s a fat young fellow right by the creek. Hill’s full of them. Try your luck.”

David looked sharply. The dun-colored hide at first confused him. A more intent scrutiny revealed the animal standing immobile near the creek bed, half hidden by the profusion of foliage—a proud, alert figure with head well up and liquid eyes staring at something across the ravine. David sank to one knee and raised his weapon. Through the sights the animal appeared as big as the side of a barn.

“Just behind the shoulder, Davie!” whispered the elder brother.
It was his first kill and time and distance and perspective went sadly out of joint as the gun muzzle wavered along the plain target. He was oppressed by a fear that the deer would flee before the shot struck, that his marksmanship would be untrue. An impatience seized him and cried: “Pull the trigger!” But he could not find the will to obey the command. He was cast in a spell by the event. He had buck fever.

“Don’t tarry too long, Davie.”

Of a sudden his sight cleared. He felt a cool, deliberate joy steal through his veins and the sights swung into a true line a little behind and below the shoulder joint. He drew a breath and held it, thinking meanwhile of Sally Mills’ black eyes. The woods roared and flung a series of violent echoes in his face. He saw the deer spring high in the air, take one bounding leap and fall dead.

“Hi, Davie, that’s good work! Take my gun.”

The elder brought out his knife and David saw with fascinated eyes the procedure of cleaning, skinning and butchering. Into the loose skin the elder placed the hams, side meat, brisket and a few delicacies.

“Wolves will eat what I leave,” said he, shouldering the burden. “In three hours there won’t be a scrap left on the ground. Forward, my hunter. Here’s for dinner!”

The smell of blood assailed Dave’s nostrils as he ducked through the return trail, bearing the guns. It was a strange odor and not particularly pleasant. But he had made this kill by his own arm and eye! The power of life and death was in him; he had discovered an unknown ability, a new means of self-reliance. He wiped a hot palm against the buckskin and looked down at the gayly beaded moccasins on his feet. Here, by the grace of Providence, was another David Meriwether.

A GUNSHOT resounded near the cabin. A halloo burst through the trees. The brothers reached the clearing and dumped the burden. Elston sent back an answering cry and took up his gun.

A cavalcade of men rode into the clearing and at sight of them Elston relaxed the grip on his weapon and cheerily flung up his arm.

“Howdy, boys! Light and eat. Here’s fresh meat ready for you.”

“Waugh!” exclaimed a bitter, petulant voice from the rear of the band.

David raised his head quickly. Up forged the aggrieved Sam Faulter.

“Waal, I see yore packin’ a gun now. Ain’t you afeared it might go off?”

David passed the weapon to his suddenly sober-faced brother. He looked down at his clothes, ran his hand along the fringes, kicked the earth with his flexible moccasins. His ruddy complexion grew beet-red.

“Get down off that horse, you scurvy loafer, and I’ll break every bone in your body!”

The crowd yelled and gave way. Sam Faulter half fell out of his saddle and brought David Meriwether to the ground with him. A fist rose and fell; David rose to his knees, dragging Faulter with him. The discontented pioneer waved an arm and gagged at the dust. When Meriwether released his grip, he went back on the ground and there stayed.

“Boys,” said David, rising, “I guess I’ll be in this country for a good many years. Just want you to know a Meriwether can’t be bluffed.”

The crowd yelled again. David looked strangely pleased and passed a dusty hand across his buckskin shirt; he took his gun from the waiting brother and thought of Sally Mills’ black eyes.

“Elston,” said he, “let’s burn that damn suit of clothes I came here in!”
Circumstances often brand a man as a coward or enthrone him as a hero. And so Roy Martin remained a despised quantity aboard the United States warship Topeka, until one day the inevitable was thrust upon him and he stepped forth in his true colors.

I never knew whether Roy Martin was a brave man, deserving the praises he won as a hero, or whether he was an arrant coward. And I do not think any two men in the service ever agreed as to which he was. We all agreed, I think, that he was out of his element; but further than that we never got without the discussion growing violent.

He was one of these dry-land sailors that the navy gets sometimes. Prairied, with blue, dreamy eyes, light, sunburned hair and the sort of a dried skin you find in climes where the sun shines long and hot and the winds of winter seek and find all the cracks in the walls and blow indoors as much as out. He had never seen salt water until he reached Mare Island, unless it was in some parched puddle in the bottom of a cattle flick, and he thought the ocean was always blue.

He was about as much use on the old Topeka as a supercargo in crinolines would be on a windjammer. He was three weeks aboard before he could tell port from starboard if he was facing aft. He was not dumb; he learned some things rapidly enough. Splicing came to him as if he was born on the sea; holystoning decks he did not mind at all; he was inordinately quick to pick up such chanteys as he heard. Obedience, that first law of the service, he seemed to understand; but the traditions of the navy meant nothing to him at all.

At first he was the butt of the crew. The old hands soon singled him out for their jokes. Long after the others who had come to the old Topeka with him were regarded as having won the right to go unmolested about their tasks, Martin was still pestered and sent on fools’ errands. Yet he was
good natured about it and would, in
time, I believe, have been accepted by
the men had not an incident occurred
that put him under a cloud from which
he did not emerge for a good many
months.

It was one of those little things, one
of those infractions of the traditions.
When his own hammock was cut down,
he made no complaint. But one night
when some of the men came back from
shore leave still feeling boisterous and
cut down young MacGregor—another
dry-land sailor—Martin happened to
see the whole thing.

MacGregor had been doubled up like
a dog in his hammock and came down
on his head. The shock put him out
and, the men being unable to bring him
to, he had become the center of an an-
nious circle of whispering, half-afraid
seamen, whose debating as to what was
best to do attracted the attention of the
officer of the deck, who happened to be
passing on his rounds.

He broke into the group, ordered the
unfortunate MacGregor to sick bay and
then began questioning everybody. Of
course none knew anything about it.
His efforts foiled, the officer was turn-
ing away when he caught the gleam of
Roy Martin’s eyes, as he peeped out
over the edge of his hammock.

“You, there!” he snapped. “Know
anything about this?”

Martin hesitated.

“Who did it? Answer me!”

“Please, sir,” said the boy, “I’m a
new man aboard and I don’t—I don’t
know the names of the men.”

It was poor, very poor. The officer
of the deck reached out and touched a
man—it happened to be the very one
who had cut down MacGregor.

“This the man?” he snapped.

An older seaman would have lied
stubbornly. Martin was lost. He
gulped once or twice, while the whole
ship seemed suddenly quiet, waiting for
his answer.

“Please, sir—please, sir—it looks
like him; but it was very dark.”

That was all, but it was too much.

Next day there was a trial and
the rogue drew twenty days’ fine and
Martin drew the enmity of the whole
crew. Taunts, gibes, disdain and neg-
lect were his lot from then on and,
though he bore them meekly enough,
one could see he felt his position keenly.
When, on our cruise, we crossed the
Line, Neptune would have none of him
and he was left outside the circle of
roaring fun that marked the time-hon-
ored customs of the occasion.

The captain, however, was sorry for
him and passed the word down that
perhaps he had been punished enough
and should be given another chance.
So, when the sports followed and there
were boxing bouts, Martin was matched
against MacGregor—the only man on
the ship who would have anything at
all to do with him.

The two of them, stripped to the
waist, squared up. Martin was the
heavier of the two and the better man
by far, judging from looks. They
boxed warily a moment and then some-
boby in the deck crowd shouted:

“Come on, Roy! If you’ve got any
stuff in you, show it!”

Perhaps fearing that his opponent
would be thus encouraged, MacGregor
let go a swing. Everybody could see it
coming, Martin must have seen it. But
he made no move to guard and got the
blow fair upon the jaw. Yet at the
last minute, MacGregor, seeing that his
foe was not going to ward off the drive,
pulled his punch. It was a fair tap, but
light.

Martin, however, closed his eyes at
the impact and slumped to the deck and
lay there.

“Come on! Get up, man, and fight!”
said the mate, who was referee.

The men began to jeer and boo, to
hiss and to catcall. But Roy lay there.
“Ten! He’s out!” said the mate, disgust in his tones, and immediately Martin rose to his feet and hurried from the ring.

He was a pariah on the Topeka for a year after that. Even MacGregor would have nothing to do with him. What his life was, I leave you to imagine. Then came a day at Seattle, when there were water sports and races during the visit of the squadron. Martin was a husky lad; he was known to be good at the oars; and he was put in the Topeka’s cutter for the half-mile race. He was No. 3 and before the echoes of the starting gun had died away he lost his oar and sat like so much unwanted ballast in the boat for the rest of the race, the Topeka’s cutter finishing third.

When the boat came back alongside, Lieutenant Downing, who had been in charge of the sports, was raging. There was a hundred-yard swim yet on the program and Downing called the unfortunate man over.

“You go in this swim,” he said angrily. “And mind you make a showing, or I’ll have you keelhauled! Can’t you do anything for the honor of the old ship?”

Martin shook his head. I think Downing would have knocked it off his body had he not been on deck.

“Please, sir,” said Roy, “I can’t go in the race; I can’t swim, sir. There wasn’t time to teach me at Mare Island, and—”

I don’t think Downing did it, but I think he was blind while somebody else tripped Martin and he fell from the deck into the water, going neatly through the gangway. And he had told the truth, he couldn’t swim. Chips, the carpenter, got him with a boat hook when he came up the second time and somebody pulled him aboard and rolled the water out of him. He was in sick bay two days and after that the crew and officers gave him up utterly, praying only that he be transferred to shore duty. He was the disgrace of the ship.

Transfer papers were made out, in fact, if I recall rightly. Then plans were interrupted by The Powers That Be back in Washington. Some fool back at a desk in the navy department happened to see the old Topeka’s name in the papers or somewhere and decided the old ship was due for an endurance test. They do that, you know. Somebody has nothing to do, it seems, and so they issue orders. The word came in during the afternoon, for the next day. Four hours’ endurance run at full speed.

The old Topeka was more in need of four months in dry dock at Bremerton than anything else, but the captain had the orders and that was all there was to it. He passed the word to old Blackwell, the chief in the engine room, and sent that old martinet into a madman’s rage. And then he put out, through the straits for the open sea, where there would be room enough for the Topeka to steam four hours and not hit anything.

Next morning at eight bells, she was off. All of the old tub’s boilers were at popping point and her screws were kicking up foam aft. She was one of the first twin-screw ships of the navy, and up on the bridge you could feel her tremble as her shafts rattled in her worn bearings.

Down in the engine room Blackwell was a raving menace, the craziest Scotchman that ever cursed triple-expansion engines. He stood in the bulkhead door, between the engine room and the shaft leading down to the fireroom, alternately cursing the black gang for not giving her coal enough and shouting at the oilers to get in under the flying connecting rods and give the whirring cranks more oil.

Down on the forward deck was the off watch, waiting to go on duty when
the test was half over. Among them was Roy Martin. Lieutenant Downing, on the bridge, spotted him and turned to the captain.

"There's that man!" he said, pointing. "We ought to put him somewhere he can't jinx things. God knows it's bad enough as it is, sir!"

"Put him in the black gang," growled the skipper. "Maybe Blackwell will kill him."

Downing smiled hopefully, I think, and passed the word. At four bells the watch was changed and Martin went down to No. 2 boiler, in the stifling fireroom. Somebody shoved a scoop into his hand and pointed to a pile of dirty coal and then to the fire-box door, which a helper jerked open before him, revealing the yawning, fiery pit within. Roy braced himself against the roll of the ship and began shoveling; only to get a fresh cursing when the helper swung the fire-box door shut and sent the next shovelful of coal flying over the iron floor.

It was hell down there. It was nothing like it is to-day, when the ships burn oil and all the men have to do is to stand round and watch gauges and turn valves. In those days there were no fans; the speed of the ship was supposed to force enough air down the ventilators to keep the black gang alive. There were no clothes down there, only boots to keep the coal from cutting one's feet.

Men were falling all around. That was why the extra watch was on. A man would push coal till he dropped, then be dragged out, gulping for air, and another put in his place. A boy pattered back and forth on a grating overhead, dashing buckets of water on the slaves before the furnace doors.

The water tenders and helpers were watching Roy, waiting for him to funk or drop. But in some way he didn't. Whether it was because he was raised on the prairies and was used to heat, or whether it was that he determined, at last, to do something on the old Topeka of which he wouldn't be ashamed, I do not know—but he stuck. He stuck one hour and fifty-six minutes, and his trick was only two hours long.

There were but four minutes to go and the Topeka was still plowing ahead, shaking from stem to stern, but driving on, when the water tender on No. 2 boiler, who'd been waiting for Roy Martin to drop, took his eyes off the sweating man toiling before it and looked at the water glass. He gave a shout that brought the chief machinist's mate jumping over. The glass was nearly empty and dropping visibly each second.

The mate gave the gauge cocks beside the glass a twist, and all he got was a sputter of steam. His face went white, despite the grime upon it, and he darted aft to the ladder and up to the engine-room bulkhead where Blackwell was crouched, his eyes on the spining engines.

"Port feed line's clogged!" he shouted to Blackwell. "The boilers are nearly dry and ready to go. You'll stop her?"

The mate trembled as he waited for Blackwell's answer. He knew that at the rate the engines were sucking steam from the six port boilers it was only a matter of minutes before the crown sheets would be dry and buckle and the men in the black gang cooked to death, with probably a hole blown in the bottom of the old Topeka.

Blackwell looked up at the engine-room clock.

"Only three and a half minutes to go!" he said levelly. "I think they must have water enough to carry them. Can't fall down on a test run."

The mate waved his hands at the tubes.

"Call the bridge, sir!" he pleaded. "Tell 'em up there."
Blackwell’s eyes got a queer look in them.

“Back to your post!” he barked.

The chief machinist’s mate had spent his life in the service. He knew its traditions. Deathly pale, but firm as iron, he turned about and went down the ladder. He crossed to beside No. 2 boiler and looked at the water glass, in the bottom of which bubbles were already beginning to form. Then, dodging flying shovelfuls of coal, he walked down the row of boilers, ready to die with his ship. No other thought entered his head, not even a prayer.

The water tenders were like that, too. They had seen the mate go aloft the ladder, maybe had heard his shouted conservation with Blackwell; they had seen his face when he came back. But they knew the traditions of the navy and they knew their duty. Every man in the fireroom was like that, braving death for duty and honor—every man except Roy Martin.

I DO not know what he thought. Maybe he saw the mockery of tradition, the needless doom of men, the risk of losing the ship. Or maybe he was afraid, terribly afraid of the death that lurked just above his head within No. 2 boiler. He knew that if he ran from his post the stigma of cowardice would forever after stay with him, with no chance to wipe it away, and that his days in the navy would be over. And in spite of his misfortunes on the old Topeka, he had come to love the sea and to love his ship. Perhaps it was then that a paragraph he had read in “Regulations” when he was at Mare Island flashed into his mind with the suddenness of inspiration.

Throwing his shovel behind him, he leaped for the ladder down which the mate had just come and went up it like a monkey. The water tender reached for him, but might as well have tried to grasp a ghost. Old Blackwell saw him coming, as he dashed for the bulkhead door, and drew back his hairy fist.

“Back, you yellow-livered cur!” he roared, and aimed a blow to knock the running man from the opening.

But Roy Martin, who had taken the count at the first real blow in the boxing bouts, never slackened his rush. He crashed a blow at Blackwell that sent the chief reeling back, swung up another ladder like a soaring gull and dashed out of the main deck hatchway like a bullet. The momentum of his run carrying him in a leap over the rail that shot him twenty feet from the ship into the still water beyond the curling waves of the wake.

One of the crew on watch saw him hurtle over the side and raised the cry, “Man overboard!” at the same time running to the rail and casting off one of the flare buoys. The cry, “Man overboard!” echoed along the decks to the bridge, and the navigator, hearing it, waited not for orders but jerked the telegraph over from “Full ahead” to “Stop,” and then to “Half astern,” then to “Stop” again.

The old Topeka ceased her trembling and shaking and pitched leisurely and smoothly in the seas. Somewhere there was a rattling of blocks and the whining of pulleys, then a rushing of feet on the decks, and a boat went overside and pulled away into the spreading wake of the ship where a buoy, smoking in the daylight, bobbed up and down on the white water.

Downing, who had run out of the chart house at the first cry of “Man overboard!” stepped back as the captain came to the end of the bridge and leaned over the rail.

“It’s Martin, sir!” said Downing.

The captain’s face clouded and he was just opening his mouth when an orderly snapped into salute by his side.

“The chief engineer presents his compliments, sir, and will you please step to the tubes, sir?”
The skipper moved back into the chart house, to reappear a moment later.

"Lieutenant Downing," he said, "lower away another boat and take charge of it. Go get that man. When you get him, throw him overboard again. Keep on doing it till I tell you to stop."

"Yes, sir," said Downing.

"And take your time about it," added the skipper. "Blackwell tells me the port feed is clogged and in a moment more the boilers would have gone. He says give him fifteen minutes and he'll be able to proceed."

Martin was more dead than alive when they finally put him in sick bay and the old Topeka again nosed into the waves, her bow headed back for the straits. The surgeon worked over him for half an hour before his eyes began to flicker.

"You poor fool!" said the doctor.

"What did you do it for?"

The man mumbled something.

"What!" cried the doctor.

Pulling himself together by a great effort, Martin mumbled some more. The surgeon turned and beckoned an orderly.

"My compliments to the captain," he said. "Ask him to step down here."

By the time the skipper entered the sick bay, the surgeon had Martin propped up on pillows and had shot some brandy into him.

"Now," he said sternly, "tell the captain what you told me."

Martin's dreamy blue eyes looked up at the commanding officer, a beseeching expression in their depths.

"Please, sir," he said weakly, "it was the only way I could—save the ship, sir. Regulations, you know, sir—'Man overboard'—'immediate—except when in action, or proceeding into action.'"

The captain's hand went up to his chin, and he stroked his beard.

"Umph, and he couldn't swim! Huh! Take care of him, doctor."

And he turned and made his way to the chart house, where he took the transfer papers from his desk and tore them up.

ANOTHER PROBLEM SOLVED

WASHINGTON society was recently regaled with the performances of a millionaire, a man who was taken unexpectedly rich after he had passed middle age. His great hobby was giving big dinners in his big house and treating his guests to surprising amusements.

At one of these affairs two of the guests were a United States senator and a French diplomat of minor rank. When the dinner was nearly over, the host put on the big show of the evening which consisted of a Scotch bagpiper. The piper bounced into the banquet hall, cutting loose with his din the moment he was across the threshold, his cheeks swollen to bursting, his pipes wailing. The louder his music, the faster he pranced up and down the room behind the diners.

The Frenchman, who was the most surprised man there and evidently knew little of bagpipes, leaned over to the senator and inquired: "Why does he trot up and down when he does what he's doing? Does it increase the noise?"

"No," replied the senator; "I don't think it's that. I've an idea it's to prevent the listeners getting his range with a knife or a water bottle."
The Dumb- 

CHAPTER I. TWO GENTLEMEN IN NEED.

SLADE, at an obscure corner table in the "Elite Eat House," was doing himself rather well with a double order of "Adam and Eve on a raft" and "Beans and," instead of his solitary and customary "Beef on a white." A recent little affair at a Harlem athletic club had produced this all-too-infrequent gustatory splurge, for, to the knowing, even amateurism can be made to provide a living of a sort. Slade was knowing, and in those comparatively recent days the process did not require much knowledge.

On such occasions he preferred to be alone, hence the obscure corner and the slack hour of the day. He craved plenty of elbow room, the opportunity of eating as he chose unobserved. Nature had endowed him with a pleasing and even refined countenance, but there was nothing pleasing nor refined about his table manners. He ate greedily, voraciously, audibly.

An occasional customer entered the beanery, but, leaving him in peace, roosted wearily on one of the high stools before the counter dedicated to the modest five-and-ten-cent order. Flies buzzed, swore loudly as they were caught on the dangling strips of sticky paper; the rattle and roar of Fourteenth Street's alleged rapid transit came incessantly through the green screen door, followed by wave on wave of arid heat and odorous dust, while from the counter there sounded the monotonous order of "Draw one!" to the aproned minister of the big nickel coffee urn, the steady munching of jaws and occasional scraps of local and national gossip from the roosting file.

The concentrated heat and noise and smell of the place was enough to intimidate the most enterprising appetite, but to the solitary occupant of the stuffier back room it seemed to furnish an inspiration.

He was working up to his best form, carefully balancing on his knife a half slice of bread soaked in ham grease and
bell

In Five Parts—
Part I. :: :: ::

Ever since the salad days of the redoubtable John L. Sullivan, the fair land of America perennially presents the world, in her big, extravagant way, with a world’s champion boxer. Some of these gentlemen have been known to fight; most of them are familiar to us across the footlights of the stage, or on the silver screen of the movies. But “Babe” Armstrong is different; he is a king among cabbages—and this is his story.

Piled high with beans and eggs and catchup, when he saw that which caused him to frown. In one of the little wall mirrors tastefully festooned with scrolls fashioned from liquid whiting which, when dry, imparted that beautiful frosty look—so cooling on a hot day—he perceived a customer entering the back room.

His frown became a scowl when the intruder actually sat down opposite him at the white oilcloth-covered table. This was not merely an affront; it was an outrage! Why should this him, with the whole place to choose from, select his table? What right had he to interfere with the proper enjoyment of a guy’s victuals? Slade was so astonished and indignant that he dropped the poised titbit, which splattered his new suit.

“The trench tools in this joint don’t seem right,” remarked the newcomer indulgently. “They’d ought to have the knives broader.”

Slade made an inarticulate noise and his scowl deepened. Was this well-dressed stranger daring to kid him under the guise of sympathy? What right had the jobbie to talk to him anyway? He tried to stare him down, but failed. You might as well try to stare down a pair of shoe buttons. This man had eyes like that, also a prominent gold tooth. And Slade envied him his clothes.

That silk shirt must have set him back fifteen or twenty iron men; that Panama he had hung on the rack was the real silk elastic. So was the big lump of ice on his right hand. Slade looked at the hand from oblique eyes; even though obviously manicured, it was a much cruder object than his own. Nothing could improve that nor his ears, large, outstanding, red.

These were the ineradicable footnotes to low origin. What money could do superficially had been done; this man had been veneered and polished outwardly to the point of luminosity, but these things remained. They would always remain. And Slade, who happened to possess none of these custo-
mary hallmarks, recognized, even before the other spoke, a member of his own low caste.

This discovery, however, did not serve to put him at ease; rather it had the opposite effect. This visitor was no stray silk sock to be bounced and bullied. He must be a personage, perhaps a Tammany tag. He was young enough in years but venerable in experience, and middle-aged about the belt. No affluent retired leather pusher or even jockey; his build had never run to any such line of sport. Yes, he must be one of the bright boys of the Hall, used to living soft off politics. But what was he doing in a joint like the Elite?

SLADE dropped his gaze, wiped the plate with bread and guzzled his coffee almost defiantly. He made even more noise than usual, became acutely conscious of those shoe-button eyes opposite. What right had this cheery guy to keep sizing him up like that? And why couldn't he, Slade, have such glad rags, hook an easy graft like this bim? Why, he was far better looking, and he bet he had more brains, too! There was no justice in the world.

He nursed his sense of injury as the waiter appeared with a wedge of alleged custard pie and a glass of milk. Sweet mamma, what a meal for a grown man! And when you had the dough to buy the whole counter! But it mollified Slade somewhat to discover that the affluent stranger masticated almost as audibly as himself and that he also had no snobbish objection to using his knife as a fork. And then there followed the thought that, chance having thrown him in juxtaposition with such democratic affluence, he should endeavor to make the most of it.

He, Slade, was a comparative newcomer to the neighborhood and this guy must have a pretty good drag of some sort. He should try and scrape an acquaintance, leap into the opening the other had offered. He had been a boob to show the worst side of his really fascinating personality. His stomach was always getting him in wrong.

"Your name's Jack Slade, huh?"

Slade, searching for a fitting opening, almost swallowed his knife in pleased astonishment.

"Yeah, that's right." He nodded eagerly. "How'd you know?"

"A little boid told me," said the other, nodding sagely. "You figgered in the middleweight finals at the amachure fest up at the Star the other night, huh?"

Slade's chest expanded and he hitched his shoulders. This was fame. "Yeah, that's right. And, say, brother, I was robbed! What that ref done to me was a crime; the Germans would of been ashamed to of done it in Beljum. Was you there?"

The other shook his head, the gold tooth toy ing with the leathery pie.

"No, but I heard about your go. I hear a lot of things. Only started in the amachure game, ain't you? There ain't much pickings in expenses, huh?"

Slade, after another furtive glance at those shoe-button eyes, abandoned the virtuous retort that he was a strict amateur and that expenses were simply expenses.

"Not much," he agreed.

"And you ain't good enough for the professional prelims?"

"Who says I ain't?" demanded Slade. "It ain't that; it takes a pull to get staged."

"And hard work, too, huh?"

Slade shrugged. "You gotta have some one back of you. I ain't got nobody."

"No regular work neither, huh?"

"I'm lookin' for a job, but it ain't easy to find."

"Not in stuss parlors and pool rooms," agreed the other. "And you ain't gone blind with looking neither,
huh? Now don’t go up in smoke; you don’t have to tell me anything about yourself; I know, see? And mebbe I know more’n ever I’ll be wrote about you in the Hall of Fame. But supposing I was able to put you in the way of dragging down a good bunch of kale—say mebbe a hundred a week—or more?”

Slade’s mouth fell open and he filled it automatically from his plate. Sweet mamma, here was the angel he had been looking for all his young life! Experience and suspicion, however, were but momentarily obscured by avarice; if this was a real angel then people would be walking slow after him to-morrow and saying it with flowers.

“Ha, ha, mirthful laughter!” he sneered. “I should do a smole.’’

The other made an impatient movement with the beringed hand.

“I ain’t kidding; got no time for it. This is on the up and up.”

“Yeah? Well— But I get that for doing—what?”

“For doing as I tell you, see? You can keep a shut trap?”

“When I ain’t eating,” said Slade. And then, with a meaning look. “If it pays.”

“It’ll pay, all right—but not a kopeck if you don’t. Now listen here,” said the other, tapping out the words on the table with a stubby finger. “You beat it round to your joint on Third, pack your grip and pay for your room. You’re through there, see? If old man Costello wants to know what’s bit you—or anybody else does—you say you’ve landed a steady job in Philly at your old job of massaging horseshoes. You’ve found this burg a fizz and you’re going back to the honest blacksmith stuff, see? Then you beat it to the Pennsylvania Station. I’ll meet you there in an hour. You got that?”

“Sure! But, say—”

“There ain’t no buts; that’s the proposition and you can take it or leave it. Either you keep your mouth shut and do just like I’ve told you, no more and no less, or I’m offa you and you may live on sweepings for the rest of your life. Never mind what my name is or what you’re gonna do; I ain’t talking here. But I’m no con man looking for a fall guy, and you won’t be asked to do anything I wouldn’t do myself, see?”

He pulled a fat roll of bills from his pocket, wet a spatulate thumb, peeled off two fives and laid them on the table.

“For what you owe Costello,” he said. “That’s my bet that I’ll see you again where I said. If you ain’t there in an hour sharp, you needn’t look for me, see? And if you blab a word I’ll hear about it. Get that, too! I can come pretty near making you, Slade, if I’ve a mind to, but there’s plenty of other boys I can make just as easy. You won’t have another chance, see?” With a curt nod, he got up and walked out.

THE gold-toothed stranger won his bet, which may prove his knowledge of human nature, as exemplified particularly by Slade, or the fact that he generally gambled on a sure thing. At all events Slade was at the station before the appointed time, his curiosity, vanity and sense of acquisition on edge. This affluent stranger had virtually said he could make him, but if Slade’s vanity was quite equal to the task of believing that some expert had recognized his submerged pugilistic ability and was going to give him the chance he deserved, his experience of life was not.

Things never happened like that, except in books, at least not to him. And from the air of mystery about the business, it was sure to be something irregular, if not downright crooked. Maybe it was a job of beating up somebody on the quiet; he had officiated at more than one of those lucrative ceremonies and perhaps his fame had gone abroad in the land.
Well, providing the price was right, he didn't care very much what it was. Nor need he pretend to be overscrupulous to one who knew not only where he hung out but what he owed his landlord. This stranger had evidently been at pains to find out something about him.

The cities are full of Slades, vigorous young men too lazy to work at their proper trades; any easy money, however questionably acquired, is preferable to honest labor. But in a sense he was a victim of the materialism of the age, the blind following after false gods. Money appeared to be the be-all and end-all of existence, the sole symbol of success. Why work at the forge if he could grab a fortune in the prize ring?

"Well, boss," he said, as the gold-toothed stranger returned from the ticket window, "where do we go from here?"

"Milton Center."

"Huh? Where's that?"

"You may well inquire," said the other, in evident disgust. "You take the rattler to Red Bank on the suffering Jersey shore and then, in the words of somebody or other, go west, young man. You keep on going west, and if you shut your peepers for five seconds you'll bump into the Pacific without ever having the pleasure of meeting Mr. Milton Center. That's the kind of roaring metropolis it is."

"Aw!" said Slade, with all the imported New Yorker's profound contempt for everything not embraced in the island. "Say, what are you doing in a hick burg like that?"

"God knows and He won't tell—and I ain't either, just at present, see?"

"Well, I don't know, boss, about losing myself in the sticks. I was figgerring on running down to Coney—"

"Run on then. If not, shut up and make this train."

Slade "made" it, nor did the other speak again until at Manhattan Transfer they boarded the Bankers Special. The smoker was full of the usual shore crowd, settling down to play bridge or pinochle, and the gold-toothed man elbowed Slade into the isolated cross seat facing the water cooler. Then he produced an ornate cigar case, bit the end from a fat perfecto, replaced the case without offering it to Slade, lit the cigar properly by holding a flaming match a fractional inch from the end, sucked voraciously, blew fragrant smoke down his vulpine nose, leaned back so as to face the other, hooked spatulate thumbs in his armholes and, with the manner of Louis the Magnificent admitting his identity, said:

"My name's Joe Carp."

CHAPTER II.
A MAN WITH IDEAS.

THE announcement had all the effect on its auditor that the gentleman owning the piscatorial cognomen evidently expected. Slade's mouth promptly fell open and, there being nothing edible in sight, it remained so while, removing a sunburned straw hat, he ran a hand through his blond mane. So might an amateur street musician have acted on learning that a chance acquaintance was Sir Edward Elgar, though, to do Slade justice, he had never heard of the latter.

"Joe Carp!" he exclaimed, at length. "The manager of 'Babe' Armstrong? Say!"

His vanity was immediately off on high gear. Of course it was Joe Carp; why hadn't he known that? Even if it was hard to recognize anybody from press photos. Yes, it was Carp, and Carp had discovered him just as he had discovered Armstrong. Didn't great managers like that keep an eye on all the amateur talent, picking the comers from the goers?
So Slade had heard and doubted until now. Sure, that was what made them great—they didn’t wait for a star to rise; they went out and dug him up. It was the same with great men in every calling. Carp had seen him at the Harlem go; he was going to make him as he had made the present middle-weight champion. Sweet mamma, at last he had got the recognition he deserved! The world wasn’t such an unjust place after all. But, of course, had known all along that this was bound to happen sooner or later. You can’t keep a good man down forever, unless you put a tombstone over him.

But, of course, it wouldn’t do to let Carp see what this meant to him; Joe Carp had a name for driving a hard bargain. If popular report went for anything, he wouldn’t give you the sleeves off his vest, and he would skin a flea for its hide. As Armstrong’s manager, Carp had held out for terms and purses that made even the sporting press protest. Of course he would try and get him, Slade, dirt cheap, try and sew him up for life with a contract that gave Mr. Carp most of the gravy. Well, he should learn that here was one that knew his own value.

So Slade put on his hat at what he considered a truculent angle, produced a pack of cheap Virginias, leaned back like Carp and blew smoke.

“Well, sir,” he said, “pleased to meet you, Mr. Carp. Of course I knew you the minute I seen you; that’s why I’m here. I been waiting for one of you boys, who knows real talent when he sees it, to gimme a call. I’ll say right now I don’t mind joining your string if we can come to terms. But I come high, Mr. Carp.”

“Yeah?” said the other, displaying the gold tooth. “Say, you’d come high, all right, if I was on the other end of the string—and a good rope’s the only string of mine you’d have a chance of joining. Where do you think you get off, anyway?”

“That’s all right, Mr. Carp; business is business, of course, but I know my own value, none better. If I ain’t made a rep, it’s because they’re all jealous, afraid to gimme a fair break. If they didn’t fix the ref, I could lick—”

“Shut up!” snarled Mr. Carp, in a low voice. “Take that bull somewheres else; I ain’t a butcher. Whaddaya think I make my money at—judging primroses? You’re talking to Joe Carp, see? Any more of that kind of blah and I’m offa you. Why, you big ham, you couldn’t box a crate of eggs! Mebbe you thought I wanted to match you up with my boy, huh? Me manage you! Ha, ha! Say, you’re a riot; you’d ought to call the hurry-up wagon. That’s the best joke I heard since my mother-in-law died.”

The Carp eyes and manner, if not words, were enough to puncture even Slade’s hide and he looked as chapped as one of his hardihood, natural and acquired, possibly could.

“Well, I ain’t such a ham at that,” he mumbled. “I could of won more scraps if it hadn’t paid me better to lose. Mebbe you don’t believe it—”

“Sure I believe it—because I know! Ain’t I said I know all about you? Box fighting, even amachure stuff, ain’t a sport; it’s a business, Slade, and you’ve got sense enough to know that, huh?” Slade was gratified to hear this common-sense opinion of his methods from such a quarter. And he had no reason or desire to believe that even the professional game was above suspicion.

“Yeah, that’s right.” He nodded. “It’s a business and you gotta make a living the best way you can.”

“Sure!” agreed Carp, and, after an evident inward struggle, presented Slade with one of the fat perfectos. “And it ain’t our fault if things sometimes crop up that need—well, unusual handling. Things like that happen in
every business and you gotta take 'em as they come. I don't mind telling you, Slade, that I picked you for your head work, if not mitt work. And at that you mightn't be such a frost if you'd somebody to learn you right and make you work.

"But lay offa this idea that I think you're a world beater or that I want you for my string," he went on. "I ain't gotta string since I signed up Armstrong. One champ's plenty for anybody—mebbe too much sometimes—and I ain't no hog. I don't see no signs of my boy slipping or the guy good enough to step into his shoes. I guess now mebbe we understand each other, huh?"

Slade thought he did.

"Well, Mr. Carp," he said, in quite a different tone, "I'll be glad to join Armstrong's camp any way you like. If you even try me out as a sparring partner——"

"Nix! We got the best in the game, and Armstrong won't fight again for a year or more. He don't have to, so why should he? He's cleaned up all these white hopes and, no matter what howl they put up, he ain't gonna show without his price. Let 'em go dig up somebody with a rep that'll guarantee the gate before they start this cheap panning. Let this Maguire party get a rep, same as my boy got his, instead of trying to grab cheap advertising."

MR. CARP spoke with some warmth, evidently more with the desire to vent his feelings than impart stale information. For every fight fan knew how he had been criticized for keeping his "boy" in a glass case like a rare curio, trotting him out at intervals at so many fortunes a look. Carp fore-saw the day when a State boxing com-mission would compel a champion to defend his title at regular intervals or forfeit it automatically; compel him also to fight under his own name.

Such an astute individual as Carp saw that these and other reforms were inevitable if the game was to survive at all. Had he not done his share to make them inevitable? But meanwhile the long-suffering public worm had not turned and he meant to make the most of the abuses he had helped so generously to create. Moreover, he considered himself perfectly justified.

Why should he jeopardize his meal ticket by matching him against a dangerous unknown like "Spike" Maguire? A lucky punch and Armstrong's drawing capacity—for he had never been personally popular—would be knocked silly, his lucrative theatrical contracts canceled. There was everything to lose and what to gain? A comparatively small gate and maybe the big reputation for being a sport. A sport! What did he care for that! Box fighting was a business.

"Well, then, Mr. Carp," said Slade plaintively, his blue eyes bewildered, "what do you want me for? If I gotta head, it ain't just for you to try a hat on, huh?"

"I wanta engage you for mebbe a coupla months, Slade. We'll come to terms later, but, like I told you, I'll guarantee right now at least a hundred a week and expenses. I'll depend entirely on yourself if you're worth more. It'll be nice easy work; the hardest thing you'll have to do is to keep your face shut—when you ain't eating. Think you can manage it?"

"Say, just try me, Mr. Carp! I'd be willing almost to be a dumb murderer for that. You're right; I been living on sweepings since I hit the big town and I'm dog sick of it. I want some real coin. Lead me to it. I don't care what it is if you're backing me."

Mr. Carp nodded. He leaned forward and slid his shoe-button eyes round the edge of the compartment. The next seat was vacant and, moreover, the roar and rattle of the express
drowned all but the loudest conversation.

"It's nothing very terrible, Slade," he said, in a confidential undertone, a hand on the other's knee and the gold tooth in evidence. "Any guy would jump at it if he'd half a chance. But everybody ain't got your qualifications, such as they happen to be. The big idea is simply this: How'd you like to double for Babe Armstrong?"

Slade's lower jaw promptly dropped again. It always did when he registered astonishment. He was not without imagination, but he had never contemplated this.

"Dou-double for him?" he stammered.

"Sure!" Carp nodded complacently. "You know what I mean—what the stage calls an understudy. Every star has one. Why, even often on the screen when you think you're piping off the star, you ain't. They get somebody to double for 'em, pull off all the dirty work or stunts they can't do. Why shouldn't a champeen box fighter have one, too, huh?"

Slade pondered this illuminating idea, his eyes wide.

"But, say, Mr. Carp, this ain't the same a-tall. On the boards you know it ain't the star, and in the movies you don't get a close-up. But I'd be close up all the time—and I ain't no ringer for Babe Armstrong. Why, he ain't even a blond!"

"No," agreed Carp calmly, "but if you was to dye your hair black and wear it like his there wouldn't be such a hella difference. He ain't any raving beauty, hard to match, and you ain't either. Ever thought how many folks would look alike if their coloring was the same? Nature had to introjuce the coloring so's you could tell most of 'em apart. You're Armstrong's build and age and, barring the color, I tell you there ain't such a lot of difference."

"But, say, if there was any difference a-tall, how could I get by, Mr. Carp? I couldn't begin to. Anybody that knows Armstrong—and pretty near everybody does, from his pictures anyway—would know I wasn't him. And even if I could lick Maguire—"

"I ain't asking you to lick Maguire or anybody. D'you think I'd risk my boy's rep with a ham like you? And ain't I told you he won't fight for a year? You won't be asked to take the ring; it's the last thing I'd let you do."

Slade breathed easier. Neither his pugilistic ambition, nor faith in his own powers, went to the extent of meeting contenders for the professional middle-weight title.

"Now, listen here," pursued Carp. "They say every man in the world has his double; you ain't Armstrong's double, but you can be made to do. Everybody don't know Armstrong, except by his pictures, and you know how they can lie. He ain't a limelighter and never was, and I don't mind saying it near broke my heart to get him the advertising I done. He's an awful dumb-bell in ways. A champ don't have to pull the old John L. stuff, but neither should he go sidestepping popularity. It only makes it harder for his manager. The spotlight's a necessary part of the game and he should play up to it.

"But that dumb-bell of mine," he continued, "when he ain't training, would rather bum round the bush in his speed wagon than make himself solid with the public. If you're a spender, you'd ought to spend it in the right place and with the right people. All the coin he spends don't bring him a pennyworth of advertising. 'Cause why? Because his particular crowd don't even know he's the middleweight champ. It's truth. It ain't my fault if he ain't never made himself solid with the newspaper gang. I don't mind saying, between you and me, that managing a champ ain't all velvet. They've
got more kinks and curves than a primer donner.

Mr. Carp sighed, ruminated and then went on: "So Armstrong ain't even a popular Broadway sight, like any regular champ, and everybody don’t know him. You’d be hep to that, Slade, if you was traveling in the right circles. As for them that do know him—well, you’ll be going where they ain’t, see? What do the buckwheaters of Zanesville, Ohio, and points west, know of Babe Armstrong? The small-town sports know what he looks like—from his pictures, and that’s all. If you’re billed as Armstrong and I’m there to say you’re him and the papers say so, too, and your trainer Mullins, who’s to say you ain’t, huh?"

"Yeah, that’s all right maybe. But, Mr. Carp, if they wouldn’t know the difference by my face, they’d know it by my style. Every box fighter has one of his own, as you know and none better. I couldn’t pretend to be a wizard like the Babe. If I had his punch——"

"Lay offa that, can’t you? Ain’t I told you a million times already what I think of you as a mitt artist? D’you want me to write a pome about it? But a stage artist is different—and that’s all you’re gonna be. You’re gonna be a real play actor, Slade, and if you was the hummest that ever tripped the boards, you’d still have Babe Armstrong beat to a frazzle. What that bird don’t know about acting would fill a library."

"An actor?" Slade drew a long breath. "Say, that’s pie to me, Mr. Carp! I used to play a swell lead in our amateur troupe back home. Say, what sort of show is it?"

"A fine mellerdrammer specially wrote for Armstrong; it’s called, ‘The Red-blooded He-man.’ You ain’t got much talking to do, for it’s one of these strong silent parts. Didn’t I say it was wrote for him special? You just wear classy clothes, hand the villain a few good clouts and get off a line of gas about him daring to speak so brutal to a pure young American girl. It’s really hot stuff and should knock the hicks dead."

"Say, I could do it standing on my head, Mr. Carp! That’s right in my street. I’ve always wanted to be a real actor."

"Yeah? Well, I wish Armstrong did. I don’t mind saying I’ve had a helluva time getting him to pick up the easy coin on the road—not that he hates money, understand. Ain’t I said he was a dumb-bell in ways? Yeah, eighteen-carat cast iron, above the collar. Last season I had him fixed up with some frails—our own troupe—a nifty little box-fight sketch. And would he show? He would not. You couldn’t of got him on the boards with those cuties with dynamite.

"Nothing but stale sparring exhibitions, that’s all he’d do at the halls. And that stuff couldn’t draw flies if it was molasses. And now when I dig up a real classy play—— Of course if you take his name outa it, there ain’t much left. He’s the real drawing card. All the same it ain’t so worse—streets ahead of these here cheap vawderville turns. But did he like it? I’ll leave it to you."

"Maybe he ain’t got the ejication," said Slade. "Everybody can’t show on the boards like Jim Corbett. It takes ejication. And so because he turned it down, you want a double for him?"

"No," said Carp, "not that exactly. It ain’t that he won’t, but that he can’t. I get him all signed up for a trip through the sticks and what does he go and do on me? Say, if I didn’t think the world of that dumb-bell—— Well, never mind. Why, he goes and has a mix-up with his speed wagon, coming out with damages that nobody ever done to him in the ring and that’ll keep him laid up for months! He won’t be able to walk his room, let alone walk
the boards. And there I am with that juicy contract in my pocket. Are we gonna let that six months' easy money slide for want of a little intelligent pep? I should say not! I'm a man with ideas, Slade."

"But, say, Mr. Carp, if he's had an accident like that and everybody knows it——"

"Get intelligent, friend! I thought you was supposed to have a head! Everybody don't know it, and they ain't gonna know it. Nobody knows it, outside you and me and the Babe, but 'Pop' Mullins, his trainer. But here's where we get off—the thriving metropolis of Red Bank."

CHAPTER III.
BEING VERY CLASSY.

THE man with ideas and his companion alighted on the off side and, avoiding the line of waiting hacks, struck west from the town.

"It's about three miles," explained Carp, "and we'd best hooft it. Ain't no sense taking chances; we don't want no hack driver mebbe swearing some day that he drove you to Highview Farm—that's the name of the dump. Your name's Brown, see? And, if anybody should wanta know, you're traveling in leather goods for a New York house. You're a business friend of Armstrong's and, hearing of the accident, you've stopped off to see how he's making it."

They walked down a wide road of red clay from which the neighboring town took its name, a pretty road that wound to the uplands. A clean cool wind from the sea followed them, making a tonic of what had been a stifling, enervating day in Manhattan, and there was the song of birds and the smell of green growing things. Beauty walked with them, but neither saw it; they saw nothing but what aroused their contempt and derision. Slade was not in love with the idea of carrying a heavy suit case three miles, and Carp had not walked that distance since the days when he sold newspapers.

"Now I'll tell you how my boy come to be in an aching void like this here," said Carp, as he tucked a handkerchief inside his collar. "As it turns out, so long as he was gonna have a smash-up, it's all to the good that it happened where it did. Y' see, he's supposed to be anywhere but here. Of course he broke camp months ago and there ain't nobody but Mullins and me who stick along with him regular. Well, Mullins and him started out on an automobile trip, me having to stay in the big town and look after our business interests. I thought he was down in Atlantic City, resting up for his go with 'The Red-blooded He-man' like any regular guy. And then the first I knowed Mullins spills it over the wire about this here accident."

"How did it happen?"

"Well, night before last, the buzz wagon, with Mullins and Armstrong up, gets spilled right near this here Highview Farm, and, of course, there ain't a hospital nearer than a million miles. These here rubes that vegetate at the dump do the Samaritan stunt and cart the two of 'em in. There's only an old couple and a girl, name of For-gan, and, of course, they don't know Armstrong from a radio set. All the fight stuff they ever read was this here scuffle between David and that big mess Goliath, for they're strong on psalm singing and all that sorta holy rolling religious bunk.

"You know the kind. Why, say, the old geezer reads aloud a chapter outa the Bible every night! It's truth! That's all right, too, mebbe; it's no skin offa me what a man does so long as he keeps it to himself. But last night I had to set there an' listen in—— Say, it was plain murder. But it's the rule of the house and I didn't wanta queer
myself. There's funny people in the world, Slade."

Mr. Carp shook his head, produced another cigar, mopped his freckled neck and continued:

"And the Babe, y'see, couldn't say nothing about himself. He'd been knocked out cold. Thank Heaven for that, for it'd have been just like him to blab the works. Ain't I said he's an awful dumb-bell, in ways?

"By some miracle, Mullins was threw clear and got no worse than a shaking up. He was able to walk and he didn't. He had sense enough to say nothing particular until he heard from me. So we told them rubes that Armstrong's name is Stewart and that Mullins' is Ryan; that they're nephew and uncle and that they're in the leather business—which ain't such a lie at that, And, like you, I'm a business friend, see?"

SLADE saw, or thought he saw, a good deal. It is to be observed that if Mr. Carp claimed to think the world of his boy, he did not specify which one. It might be the nether world. And though Slade did not move and have his being in those rarified higher circles whereof Mr. Carp spoke, he knew that no reputable manager, between whom and his charge there exists the right sort of feeling, is given to talking or acting like Joseph Carp. It followed that if Mr. Carp was a first-rate manager in some respects, he was less than fourth-rate in others. Slade was pleased with the discovery. Carp and he understood each other and he believed they would get on famously. The man with ideas had ones similar to his own.

"But how did the accident happen if nobody was around?" persisted Slade. "Was Armstrong on the booze?" Then he added shrewdly and unveraciously: "I heard you'd hard enough work keeping him off the bottle. Of course it mayn't be true, but I overheard two newspaper birds saying you'd your hands full with him."

"Well, it's news to hear them doing me any sort of justice," replied Mr. Carp, managing to look gratified and injured at one and the same time. "So long as you heard that I don't mind saying, just between ourselves, that it's pretty near true. Of course I don't mean that Armstrong's a chronic souse—he wouldn't be champ if he was—but he ain't no white-ribbon boy either.

"As I said before," he went on, "I don't mind a man being a spender if he spends with the right crowd; and when a man's broke training I don't see no particular harm in having a ball or two with regular fellows. That's popularity and business. But where's the sense in lapping it up by your lonely or with a bunch of stiffs that can't give you a line of advertising? As I said, his idea of fun is bumming round in his wagon, hobnobbing with bims that don't know who he is and pretending he's a rah-rah boy or the son of a millionaire. He likes to pose as a regular silk sock, and he's ashamed of being middleweight champeen of the world."

"Say, you can't mean it, Mr. Carp! Ashamed?"

"Well, that's what it seems like," said Carp, with some bitterness. "That's about the size of it. I made him, brung him up from nothing, and just because his folks was never in jail—— Well, anyway, he passes up regular fellows for a lot of stiffs, and he does more boozing than is good for anybody. I've tried to get him to lay off the stuff, but I might as well holler myself dumb. "That's why Mullins went along with him, and then he gives Pop the slip and beats it up to Princeton to meet some of the old college chumps. Naw, he never seen the dump except from the outside, but he passes as a real he-Tiger—or thinks he does. That's the
dumb-bell in him. Well, Mullins fol-
Iers him up to cart him back and Arm-
strong, of course, takes the wheel. He
has one of these here quiet souses that
don’t show until you hit something—
and, believe me, he hit it all right!”
“If he’s been all smeared up like that,
Mr. Carp, he mayn’t never be as good
as he was, huh?”
“Oh, sure he will! A coupla months
or so had ought to see him right. By
that time he’ll be able to take your
place and nobody’ll ever know you dou-
bled for him. He can lay out here in
the sticks till he’s mended. This here
Highview Farm ain’t even in Milton
Center and it’s as lonely as the last hair
on a bald man’s head. Believe me, it
is! We couldn’t ask for a better place.
“A coupla months or so, that’s all
we’ll need you for, Slade,” the man-
ger went on. “But if you play up
right, well, I’ll put you in the way
of making a good living hencefor-
ward. Of course I gotta coach you a
bit for the part. For one thing you
gotta lay off eating with your knife;
I don’t mind it personally, but it ain’t
quite the thing, according to Hoyle.
Lay off the bum grammar, too. You
know Armstrong’s got a rep for pulling
the ‘Gentleman Jim’ stuff. You can do
it easy.”

THAT Mr. Carp was an optimist by
nature was evidenced by the fact
that Milton Center proved to be a long
three miles from Red Bank. But at
length the perspiring couple came
within sight of the inevitable church
spire and then a little village nestling
between two hills.
“We turn off here,” announced
Carp. “The Forgans live top of the
other dip and we can cut around. It’s
a bit longer, but we can do without
Main Street piping us off. Nothing
ever happens here but death and they
mightn’t never forget a handsome
stranger like you.”

“Say, Mr. Carp, how’d you know
where to look for me? How’d you
know I could pass for Armstrong if I
was fixed up?”
“And how’d I know you played in
amachure theatricals back in your home
town?” countered Carp. “It’s my busi-
ness, Slade, to know a lot of things. I
guess it goes without saying that this
wasn’t any sudden idea of mine, that
I didn’t take the air to-day hoping I’d
meet somebody who looked like Arm-
strong. No, I don’t do things that
way, and things don’t happen that way.
—outside books. It’s been on my mind
for some time back that Armstrong’d
get laid up, one way or another and
just when he hadn’t ought to, and that
we should have a double handy. And
so I been keeping my eyes open for the
right party. Of course it wasn’t no
cinch; I hadn’t only to get a man who’d
pass for the Babe and who’d be willing
to take the job on, but one I could
trust.”

“You can trust me, Mr. Carp.”

“Yeah, I guess I can.” The man-
ger nodded complacently. “It was a
fine idea and it’ll go with bells on.”

Slade considered it a particularly
fine idea. It was pleasant to reflect
that he should have men like Armstrong
and Carp virtually in his power. This
must be a nice juicy theatrical contract
that they didn’t want to lose, and a
double was worth more than a measly
hundred a week. When the proper
time came, a gentle hint should see him
nicely fixed. Joe Carp, like many an-
other vaunted Shylock, wasn’t quite so
clever as he thought.

As they topped the next hill, circling
in from what was little more than a
cowpath to the main highway, they
came within sight of a low rambling
house set in well from the road and al-
most smothered by trees. Honeysuckle
climbed the porch where sat a white-
bearded patriarch in a rocking-chair.
Dusk was falling and an oil lamp fick-
ered to golden life in one of the upper windows. A cow mooed softly and there came the tinkle of its bell; a dog barked and a perverse chanticleer began an ode to the departed sun.

"That's all you ever hear in this dump," said Carp. "Real invigorating, ain't it? 'The Old Homestead.' Don't it look like what you see in rural drama? Fancy it being within fifty miles of the big town and folks actually living here! At least, they think they're living. Now mind, Slade, you're Mr. Brown of New York, a tony leather drummer. And my name's Jones. Lay offa the bum grammar and get out your party manners. If these here Forgans are rubes they ain't quite fools, specially the young jane. Step your best."

As they walked up the winding path leading to the wide veranda, there broke suddenly on the sleepy silence a long-drawn-out sepulchral groan.

"What was that?" said Mr. Carp, starting back.

Slade stirred uneasily and peered into the gathering gloom. It was very lonely and eerie out here.

"Sounded kinda like somebody croaking," he said, in a low voice. "Mebbe old Father Abraham has been took sick — Say!"

They clutched each other, for the sepulchral groan had developed into a series of the most terrifying bloodcurdling sounds.

"Say, somebody's being murdered!" cried Carp. "C'me on!"

And, neither lacking in physical courage when it came to a case of the known, they hastened toward the house.

They found the patriarch behaving in the most alarming manner, the more so as the failing light prevented them from seeing clearly what ailed him. He seemed to be staggering about, grappling with some fearsome monstrosity like an octopus.

"It's got him by the throat and it's strangling him!" cried Carp, as they reached the steps and almost fell over an ancient horse block. "All right, Mr. Forgan! Hold on! We're coming!"

But a girl sped from the door and got there first.

"You are a naughty man," she said, wagging a reproofing finger at the patriarch. "This is the second time you've taken them when I had them locked away. No, please, granddad; not tonight. You must give them to me."

"Na, na!" piped the patriarch, resisting her gentle but determined attempt to acquire the monstrosity. "I've no had a good blaw syne —"

"But Mr. Stewart's sick, grandad."

"Hoots, then the pibroch's the verra thing tae mak' him weel. A grand chune like 'The Cam'ells are Comin', will —"

"But he's asleep. No, please, grandad. Give them to me like a good boy."

"Juist one wee skirt, lassie. I've no had a proper blaw —"

"No, not one! Besides here's Mr. Jones and—and another gentleman to see you."

The patriarch relinquished the instrument of torture with evident reluctance and turned to greet the visitors. He was not entirely sure. But they had never seen bagpipes, much less heard them in action. But they were not likely to forget their first experience.

Apparantly Mr. Carp's idea of gentility was to speak in a high mincing voice through his vulpine nose and to employ words of whose exact meaning he was not entirely sure. But they seemed all right and he meant to give Slade a proper lead.

"I have ventured to bring with me another old friend of Mr. Stewart's, Mr. Brown by name," the manager said, designating Slade with a gesture of the beringed hand. "It is such a
prehensile evening that we walked from the station. Charming in the extreme. After the moil and toil of a great city the rural beauty of such a scene is redundant, to say the least. I venture to entertain the hope that Mr. Brown’s uninvited presence does not seriously demodere you?”

“Hey?” inquired Mr. Forgan, making a trumpet of his skinny hand. “Na, na, we’ve invited naebody, young man. Awa’ wi’ ye; this is no’ a hotel.”

The girl, her full lips twitching slightly, remonstrated in low tones with her venerable relative.

“My grandfather is a little hard of hearing,” she explained, in an aside to Slade. “You are quite welcome. Of course you will stay for supper, at least? Doctor Willing has just been here and he says Mr. Stewart is getting on splendidly. Mr. Ryan returned to New York this morning.”

“Business demanded his presence,” Carp nodded, pursing his lips importantly. “And he has to proceed out West on an important contract. He will be absent at least two months. So shall Mr. Brown and I, though I may be able to make an occasional trip back here. I wonder if during this period of necessary absence my dear young friend Stewart could remain here? I presume it will take that time for him to recover fully.”

“Hey?” said Grandfather Forgan. “Na, na, we’re a private family, young man. We don’t want any washing machines to-day and you’ll find rooms over in Red Bank. Awa’ wi’ ye.”

The girl led them toward the door, plucking at her blue-check gingham dress.

“Of course,” added Carp, “you can name your own price.”

She looked up, flushing darkly.

“We don’t accept payment from guests, Mr. Jones, especially sick ones.”

“Oh!” said Carp, feeling that in spite of his knowledge of rubes he was rather out of his depth. “Sure—I mean, that is, as it were——” This was a fine-sounding, meaningless phrase that generally brought home the bacon. “As it were, you know.” He waved his beringed hand. “As it were. This sylvan abode is the place per excellence for my dear young friend’s complete recovery. But, as it were, we couldn’t tolerate graft—I mean, imposing on you, Miss Forgan.”

“There can be no question of imposition in cases of sickness,” she replied. “And, of course, Mr. Stewart isn’t able to go anywhere else at present. But to stay here two months—do you think he could put up with it? It is very much out of the way, very lonely if you’ve nothing to do, and we don’t entertain. Perhaps you’ve seen how things are; my mother is a semi-invalid, my grandfather very old and feeble. Apart from the help, there is no one else. To ask one accustomed to New York——”

“It’s the very place he needs!” exclaimed Carp enthusiastically. “A complete rest cure, even from his friends—or some of them. Not tried and true friends like his uncle and Mr. Brown and me, but those who only do him harm. You know how this automobile accident happened, Miss Forgan? You could smell the—I mean you detected the presence of King Alcohol, as it were? Ah, the demon rum!”

“Dear me!” exclaimed the girl, clasping her hands and looking quite distressed. “And so young!”

Mr. Carp nodded gloomily and sighed.

“These sons of millionaires! Not a bad boy, ma’am, but in a bad set. They’d forget all about him if they didn’t see him for two months. And he’d forget them, too. We don’t want them to know where he is.”

“I see.”

“If he was in a hospital or his paternal home they’d gather round him
like bloodsuckers," pursued Mr. Carp. 
"You couldn't keep them away. He has no mother, and now his uncle and two best friends will be absent. But this accident will prove a godsend in disguise if we use it right; it affords, as it were, an opportunity for his complete reformation. As the Bible says — Well, you know what it says. You have in your hands, Miss Forgan, the power to help save this young soul as you've already helped to save his young life."

Mr. Carp, rather astonished at his own eloquence, was so pleased with this peroration that he repeated it with emotion, while he glanced aside at the silent Slade for admiration and approval.

"Mr. Ryan, being a relative, had a natural delicacy about asking you," he added. "You don't know what it would mean to us to know that while we're so far away our dear young friend was safe, physically and spiritually, in this sylvan abode."

"Well," said the girl at length, looking up with a shy smile and twitching lips, "it all depends on Mr. Stewart. I'm sure, if he really wants to, he may remain here until he's entirely well. We couldn't think of turning him out. He is fortunate in having such friends as you."

Mr. Carp waved a hand modestly.
"A friend is a friend, and all the credit is yours, ma'am, I'm sure. And I'll go up and ascertain if he can see Mr. Brown. If he's still in the arms of Orpheus, I'll stay and wait until he awakes. You remain here, Brown."

Slade did not mind how long he might have to wait; he was pleasantly tired; it was quiet and cool on the veranda; and Miss Forgan wasn't so worse for a hick jake. Of course she didn't know how to dress and her mouth was too big, but her eyes and hair were real nice. Yes, and her feet, too. She wasn't a bad little bundle. Also there came a really magnificent smell from the back premises, a smell heralding fried chicken and trimmings. The big eats! Oh, boy!

Slade's mouth watered and he produced the pack of tobacco sweepings; and then remembering Carp's example and that he was shortly to play the lead in "The Red-blooded He-man," he said in his best manner: "You don't object to smoke, Miss Forgan? Thanks awfully. Such a relief it is, to be sure, to the tired business man to ponder this beautiful scene and communicate with Nature. We dwellers in great cities miss the pure and simple joys of Arabian life. And what a charming odor that is of honeysuckle and— and fried chicken. I was always very partial to chicken, Miss Forgan."

CHAPTER IV.
A BABE IN THE WOODS.

ARMSTRONG was awake; rather than being lulled in the arms of Morpheus, he had been aroused by the alarms of Orpheus. He could sleep through anything but the bagpipes as played by a short-winded gentleman of eighty something. But had he not been awake, Carp would have speedily roused him.

"Well, kid," he greeted with a certain grimness, "I done like I said I would! I got that bird Slade; he's downstairs."

Armstrong hitched himself up on an elbow and stared at his manager. An arm and leg were in splints, his head swathed in bandages. One could see little more than eyes, nose, mouth and chin. These, to the superficial observer, might have been Slade's own; the features were cast in the same mold even down to the cleft chin. And yet the face was not the same; the expression, that elusive something which makes no two faces in all the world exactly alike, was entirely different.

Armstrong's eyes were larger, a
deeper blue than Slade’s; nor did they have that somewhat furtive, predatory look born of the other’s oblique character and methods. This middleweight champion prize fighter of the world had the unsullied trusting eyes of a baby, which may explain how he acquired his nickname. The two men, more especially when Slade’s blond coloring was considered, did not even resemble each other sufficiently to arrest Miss Forgan’s attention, and certainly none who knew them intimately could have confused them for a moment.

Yet, with Armstrong’s hair, brow and ears thus covered with the bandages, the resemblance leaped into notice, became striking. Give Slade a pair of level black eyebrows like that—Yes, and the height and build were the same.

Mr. Carp nodded complacently. Of course a bosom friend, if he got a close-up, couldn’t be fooled, but then Slade wouldn’t be meeting any bosom friends. Precious good care would be taken of that! The scheme was dead easy. And yet Carp was not feeling so complacent as he appeared.

Armstrong irritated him in many ways, but never more so than when he looked at him like that. So might a child look on surprising a venerated mentor at some highly nefarious enterprise. The man with ideas had omitted to tell Slade, among his other confidences, that perhaps the most difficult part of the whole project would be the securing of Armstrong’s consent. He could do without his approval.

“You’ve brought him here?” echoed Armstrong. “Then you weren’t fooling about this crazy idea of yours? But, Joe, even if it were possible, I’d never stand for it for a minute. Never in the world! You know that.”

“You wouldn’t! How about me?”

“You wouldn’t either, of course. I told you——”

“Well, you needn’t tell the whole dump,” broke in Carp, crossing the wool-matted floor and locking the door. Then he returned to the bed, turned the oil lamp higher, sat down in a rocker and produced a cigar. “There’s nothing crazy about it,” he said, “except this holler you’re putting up. I guess I’ve never been crazy when it comes to raking in our share of the dough.”

This was quite true, though what made up Armstrong’s share and that of his manager was known only to these two—or perhaps one. In a world of perfect equity Mr. Carp would have been capable of earning perhaps ten dollars a week, providing the perfect society did not consider it the height of equity to clap him in jail, instead of what he now received. And what he actually received nobody really knew but Mr. Carp.

He had no affinity with the Billy Delaneys and other great figures of the past; he had no hampering traditions or code, no ties with the days when boxing was primarily a sport and conducted as such by sportsmen. Carp had no love for the squared circle, no veneration for its lore.

He would have marketed anything or anybody in which there was a thumping profit. But he lacked the education and knowledge necessary for other enterprises, and his training in the gutters of New York had given him a vast fund of low cunning, an invincible rapacity and insatiable avariciousness; equipped with these he found that in the modern field of pugilism a manager really needed little else. He was not only up to all the tricks of the trade but capable of inaugurating some of his own.

“I ain’t crazy enough to chuck that bunch of kale,” he continued. “That’s what it means. It ain’t only losing a grand or so a week until you’re able to show; the season can’t wait on you. They’ve got to book another feature ahead for the circuit and the whole
thing'll be scratched. I told you that and you know how we're fixed."

"How are we fixed, Joe?"

"Ain't I been telling you for the last hundred years? Apart from that oil fizz, if you've gotta play the bang tails you might at least try and pick a winner once in a year. That three-o'clock starter to-day come in on the gravel train as usual."

Armstrong whistled mildly.

"Another five hundred gone phut! But it was you, Joe, who said it was a winner—"

"Nothing of the kind! I said it was more likely to win than any other skate you picked. That's all I said. Don't go blaming me for your bonehead losses, Babe. If I been placing bets for you, it's only because I can get a better price, knowing Sol Bloom like I do. But I told you to lay off the ponies long ago, and you know it. I told you they'd flatten you sure."

"I'm not blaming you, Joe, said Armstrong earnestly, though he remembered no such advice. However, his head was hurting and he had never been famous for his memory at the best of times. "And this oil company?" he proceeded. "My head was so bad yesterday I didn't quite get what you said."

"I told you it had gone blooey," said Carp shortly. "There was no oil there except what they used on the machinery. I'm sorry, Babe, but I got nicked too and lost more'n you. I thought it was a good thing and so did Snelling. Of course, like I told you at the time, it was a gamble—"

"Sure it was, Joe. I'm not kicking. We might have hit a gusher, only we didn't. Well, better luck next time. Don't think I'm blaming you. And you got burned worse than I did. I guess the bang tails are cheaper, eh?"

"It set me back a year's savings and more," said Carp, with a bitter sigh. "I was in deeper than I let on to you. I wanted to make a killing that'd put us both in Millionaire Row. For, of course, I meant to cut the melon with you."

"That'd be just like you, Joe."

"Well, you gotta get it through that bone head of yours, Babe, that the old sock's pretty near flat; mine is, anyway, and you ain't been living exactly on grape nuts. How much you got in the bank right now?"

Armstrong considered, with a puzzled frown.

"I guess about a thousand— No, I remember giving Tony Whipple a couple of hundred the other day. Met him on Broadway and the poor old scout was bust to the blue."

"Gee!" said Carp. "There ain't even a grand between you and the poorhouse! That's all you've got after over two years of being champ! I wouldn't of believed it. Say, you've gone through a fortune in record time."

"Have I?" Armstrong looked mildly interested. "Well, ponies and oil and things like that seem to come high, Joe. What's the odds? It's meant to be spent and I've had a good time. We'll make another fortune just as easy. We should worry."

"Gee, it's time you did, boy! It'll be all of six months before you can take the ring again— Yes, it will. D'you think I'm gonna sign you up if there's a chance of you not being right? And if Maguire gets hep to you being bunged up like this, it'll give him the confidence he didn't ought to have. So this accident of yours has gotta to be kept under our hats anyway."

"Yes, I suppose so, if you look at it that way."

"There ain't no other way to look at it! And I ain't gonna cheapen your price by seeming anxious for a match or let you show for a penny under the last figger I named. Instead of that I'm gonna jack her up another notch. Now there's no use your starting on that old blah; what do we care what
the crabs say? They’re jealous, that’s all. I’m gonna soak ’em for all the freight’ll stand—same as any other line of business. You’re champ, and if they wanna see you show they gotta pay for it! Meanwhile, kid, we gotta get this easy coin; you need it and I need it. If we lose this contract, it’ll be too late to sign up anywhere else. All you gotta do is lay here and play babe in the woods while this bird Slade works for a change and a coupla months. I got the whole thing cut and dried. You needn’t to worry about it not working; I tell you it’ll go with bells on.”

“It’s not that, Joe. It wouldn’t be square.”

“Square? Why wouldn’t it? Whaddaya mean? Have you ever knowed me to do a crooked thing?”

“Of course not! But this would be —— The public would be paying to see me, Joe, while they’d be seeing somebody else.”

“Well, and ain’t that all to their benefit?” demanded Carp. “They ain’t paying to see you fight; they’re paying to see you act. And you can’t act.”

“You bet I can’t!” Armstrong sighed. “Every time I see the footlights I get the blind staggers. As for performing in a play like ‘The Red-blooded He-man’—I’ve almost sweated red blood thinking about it, Joe. And I bet if anybody saw me in it they’d sweat, too.”

“Well, there you are!” exclaimed Carp, a picture of virtue triumphant. “That’s where we benefit ’em. If we give the public a good actor—and it’ll be pie to Slade—instead of a bum one, what have they gotta Holler about? Ain’t we doing ’em a big benefit? And if they think Slade is you, ain’t they just as happy? Happier, in fact, because they ain’t seen your acting.”

“Yes, if you look at it that way.”

“There ain’t no other way to look at it!” declared Carp. “We give ’em more than their money’s worth; they see what they think is you, and they see good acting as well. All for the one price. What more could they want? We’re philanthropists, that’s what we are. And there ain’t no fraud about it. Lay off that idea. Why, say, this doubling game is as common as hives. And does the screen ever flash a line saying, ‘This ain’t the marvelous million-dollar-a-year Dolly Dimples diving offa that skyscraper; it’s only her double who gets a hundred bucks a week?’ No, of course they don’t. And nobody but a boob would ever think of calling it crooked.”

Armstrong was as intelligent as Slade, if no more so, and, if he lacked the other’s hard experience, his superior sense of equity made up for it. And so, like Slade, he proceeded to point out the fallacy of the specious argument.

“So you’re gonna throw me down?” demanded Carp at length, an ugly light in his little eyes. “You don’t care if I go bankrupt? I brung you up, I made you——” He went on in this strain to Armstrong’s visible distress. It was a favorite strain because Carp knew that loyalty was the keynote of the other’s character. “And anyway,” he concluded, “it ain’t no use beefing now, because Slade knows all about it. We gotta go through with it.”

Armstrong’s head was aching; he was tired talking, in no condition to argue. And what was the use? They needed the money, and the deception would be only for two months. If Carp was satisfied and had already confided in this man Slade——

“But, Joe,” he said, rousing himself with an effort, “we’d be in this fellow’s power. He could make any terms he liked, threatening to go to the papers with the whole story. And you know how they’d eat it up. Haven’t you thought of that?”

Carp regarded him in a pitying manner.
"Good old dumb-bell! Of course I thought of that. D’you think I went into this game with my eyes shut? Supposing he starts shouting, who’d believe him without any backing? How’s he gonna prove it? D’you think I’m gonna stick it on paper? Why, they’d put him in the booby hatch. And that ain’t all. I told you I knew all about him, didn’t I? Yeah, and more’n he thinks. I know so much that if he ever tried to get fussy with me I’d have him in the pen so quick it’d make his head swim."

"How do you mean?"

"Never mind how or what. I got his number, all right. But there ain’t gonna be no trouble; he’ll eat outa my hand. Eating’s his middle name. He must of been ejected at this here classy English school you read about. But d’you think I’d have sprung the works if I hadn’t been dead sure of him? You need’n’t to be afraid of any leak. And, of course, Mullins is fixed, too."

"Well, all right, Joe," said Armstrong wearily, at length. "You should know best. I’ve nothing more to say."

"Except to thank me for getting you outa another hole, kid. Don’t forget that. Well, I’ll go bring this bird up for a quiet spiel."

He found Slade hovering in the vicinity of the kitchen where a colored mountain was putting the finishing touches to chicken à la Maryland. This was Eliza, the cook who, with a man of all work, constituted the help. Miss Forgan was assisting, busy between kitchen and dining room, and Slade seemed to have assumed already the dashing rôle of "The Red-blooded He-man."

Or perhaps, while reveling in the odors of the coming feast, he thought it only fair to give the hick jane the benefit of his new suit and a few city compliments. At all events Miss Forgan did not appear to appreciate his attendance; whatever the precise cause, there was mounting color in her cheeks, an indignant sparkle in her eyes.

"Put the soft pedal on that stuff!" growled Carp, as he conducted Slade to Armstrong’s room. "We ain’t hiring you to play Rhubarb Vaseline except on the boards. Any sheikin’ that that little frail needs, I’m quite capable of attending to, see? Lay offa her."

CHAPTER V.
PROGRESS AND THE PAST.

A MONTH had passed and Carp’s brilliant idea, to use his own expression, was going with bells on. "The Red-blooded He-man" was on tour in the smaller towns of the Middle West and playing to crowded houses, the ease and success of the enterprise surpassing even Carp’s sanguine expectations. Yet, barring some totally unforeseen accident, there was no reason why the fraud should not succeed, circumstances and conditions being what they were. Apart from Armstrong’s mode of life, he had never appeared in a ring west of the Mississippi, while all his big fights had taken place in New York or New Jersey. And Carp and Mullins saw to it that Slade did not overact his part.

"This sort of stuff is just pie to him," wrote Carp, in a laborious letter to Armstrong. "He’s really making you a rep, Babe, and popular, too. But if I wasn’t on tap to see that he pulls the exclusive stuff, he’d be throwing bokays to the rubes from a hired hack led by the village band. That’s his style. He got awful chesty, as I knew he would, and tried to shake me down for another hundred per; but I ticked him off proper and he knows just where he stands—in the shadow of the pen.

"I'm sending you these local clippings so’s you can see what a great popular actor you are. You’d die laughing, kid, the way these hicks have eat it up. All the sports of Main Street
recognize you at a glance, and the fight experts of national organs like the *Hicksville Bladder* give a lot of swell inside info about you. They was all there at the Garden that night you knocked ‘Kid’ Cafferty for the championship, and they remember buckets of stuff that I don't. My pet nightmare is of Slade being caught out in a thunderstorm, surrounded by a lot of these here admirers and his black hair and eyebrows running down all over his shirt. But it ain't a fast dye like that. That ain't such a bum joke, huh?

"Say, it's funny what a rep does even if you only get the loan of it. You'll be stepping into a rep as an actor, kid, and it ought to help you a lot. The public believes you're one, so get into the idea of believing it yourself. Lay off the truth that you're a ham. It's working like a breeze with Slade; your rep as a scrubber has already helped him something wonderful.

"I guess he ain't so far off believing that he really is the middleweight champion. There's a lot in this sikology stuff the highbrows rave about. You'd ought to see Slade throw his weight about as if he could knock the whole town cold. And any rough handful who mixed it with him, thinking he was you, would be half dead of fright before he started. Yes, there's a lot in the sikology stuff.

"The buckwheaters are crazy to see you work out, and I don't know but what I may let them. Of course, between you and me, Slade ain't the ham I keep telling him he is. I've seen worse and so has Mullins. You're always in training, of course, and so he's working harder than he ever done in his life. I don't see no particular reason why we shouldn't grab off some extra easy kale by charging the rubes for seeing you spar a few rounds. Of course we don't want none of your old partners and I got a likely boy in mind, Mullins having gone so fat like he done. One of your old partners, 'Butch' Hamburg, showed up here the other day looking for a job, but I give him the gate in record time.

"I've panned you a lot, kid, for not playing the popularity game or flocking with the right crowd, but now it's turning out all to the good. If you'd a train of bosoms and bums follying you around, like most champs, we'd never have been able to get by.

"This is the only letter I'm going to write you and mind that you don't write me none. Most of the trouble in this world is made by putting things on paper. Do right and you'll be happy; don't write and you'll be happier—as the poet says. It goes against all my principles to write this one, but I got to let you know how things is going like I promised. You burn this the minute you've read it. Don't forget now, but do it first crack.

"Now that I got things working right and Slade knows just where he gets off, I'll be able pretty soon to leave Mullins in charge while I run back and see how you're making it. I ain't sending you your share of the gravy, kid, because you won't be needing it. This idea of the Forgans not charging you nothing is certainly one of the most encouraging I ever heard and you couldn't get board no cheaper. I've put you in soft all round.

"Of course these rubes know a gentleman when they see one, and I don't mind saying, between you and me, that I made quite a hit with that little Forgan dame. She wouldn't take no money because you was my friend, see? Well, you're welcome to it, kid, and I'll bring her a nice little present from the great outside world—the same being myself. You tell her that Mr. Jones ain't forgot her and that he'll see her soon."

On reading this letter Armstrong's first action was to put a match to it. Doing what Carp told him had become second nature and, if it took some time
for an idea to penetrate his mind, it remained there once it was in.

The public had no conception of Armstrong's real character, nor would they have believed it; granted that he was only twenty-one, one of the youngest champions who ever lived, still in a profession where a youth starts in his early teens and is practically through at thirty, he may be properly considered almost middle-aged. At least so he has come to be regarded by the man in the street, and it was only logical to infer that the picture of Armstrong, as conveyed by his experienced and grasping manager, was a true one.

But it was a caricature; Armstrong, if a man in body, skill and courage, was a child in heart, soul and mind. What the general public overlooked was the fact that a man may be a master of ringcraft and yet be an ignoramus in all affairs pertaining even to the squared circle, but not actually happening in it. Also that such skill and experience may be acquired elsewhere.

They also overlooked the fact, because they were told the opposite, that if Armstrong had been boxing since boyhood he had not become a professional at an early age, working his way up from the bantam class as his weight inevitably increased. He had come like the proverbial bolt from the blue, but it had suited Carp's policy to give out that Armstrong was an old protégé whom he had been nursing along down South under another name.

"You won't get a match," he had assured his charge, "if they think I just picked you off the street. The game's crawling with amachures trying to bust in anyhow and you'd never get the smell of a chance."

Whether right or wrong, Armstrong believed him as he believed all that Carp told him.

His trusting blue eyes did not belie his character and he believed also that he owed everything to Carp, as that gentleman constantly assured him. What he actually owed, however, was very little indeed, far less than any other shrewd and reputable judge of boxers would have been only too glad to give him, had they only had the luck to "discover" him, as Carp had. To prevent the encroachment of rivals he had "sewed up" Armstrong with a contract that the original Shylock himself might have envied.

Armstrong, in his trusting ignorance, was only too glad to part with the lion's share of the spoils for so lengthy a period because his own share represented more money than he had ever dreamed of earning. Hadn't Carp "made" him and wasn't he entitled to it? But the one who had really been made was Carp himself. To him, Armstrong represented merely a luckily discovered gold mine that, at the best, could only last for ten years or so.

It might peter out in half that time or less and, in one way or another, he meant to get out of it all he possibly could. The more he got, however, the more he wanted. He was handling big money for the first time in his life and he snatched at it with hungry, insatiable hands. He would do practically anything that promised, with a proper measure of safety, to add to his rapidly mounting hoard.

NOW Armstrong watched the letter turn to white ash in the old-fashioned grate in his bedroom, then across and hobbled to the mirror, where he regarded himself long and earnestly. He was not given to thus contemplating his appearance, but something had happened which the man with ideas had not taken into his careful calculations—the unforeseen accident that cannot be provided for.

The fact was that when Armstrong's facial bandages had been removed they disclosed an important alteration in his appearance; the skin had healed, but it
had left a scar running from the left temple to the corner of the mouth. It had been made by the glass of the shattered wind shield which had been followed by a facial skid on the hard road surface. This disfigurement was not only immediately arresting, but it altered Armstrong's whole expression, the puckered skin giving his mouth a peculiar though not unpleasing twist. Armstrong noted it with dismay and yet with a certain boyish humor.

"And the doc says it'll be permanent, that I was mighty lucky to get off even with that," he thought. "What's Carp going to say when he sees it? How can I take Slade's place now? What hero on the stage would ever dare to make love with a face like that? Why, I look like a—a pollywog!"

It was both comforting and disturbing: comforting the thought that he should never have to act in "The Red-blooded He-man;" disturbing that, so far as his appearance on the stage went, two months would not see the end of this fraud on the public. Of course something would have to be done, but what? There was no use informing his manager of what couldn't be helped and, anyway, he had been told not to write. There was nothing to do but wait until Carp arrived.

He sat down by the open window, with its vista of autumnal russet and gold and the blue haze of a late Indian summer, and gave himself up to unwanted thought. It was quiet and peaceful here after the hectic and silly life he had been leading. Silly, yes, that's what it was—silly and dumb. What was the sense in pretending to be what you weren't, in doing things you didn't really care much about? There was Miss Forgan; she didn't pretend to be what she wasn't, though, if it came to that, maybe she had better blood in her than these silk socks he liked to knock around with, pretending to be one of them. And if she did things she didn't really care about, it wasn't for the sake of being thought high-toned and fashionable, but from love and duty. No girl of her looks and accomplishments would prefer to stay in a backwater like this.

No, of course she hadn't said anything, but Eliza, the cook, had. The aged Eliza was talkative by nature and she had done the waiting on Armstrong during the period he was confined to bed. The family was of Scotch ancestry on the male side, as Grandpa Forgan's accent and predilection for the bagpipes testified; and though an American citizen for thirty years he had never lost either.

At best the old man had not so long to live and he would die if uprooted from the home he had known so long. This was also true of Mrs. Forgan, whose malady necessitated such a quiet environment. So when a series of calamities came, culminating in the death of her father and only brother, Anne Forgan gave up her studies at Bryn Mawr and came home to take the helm. And no one would ever suspect that she had sacrificed a life ambition on the altar of filial devotion. This was the girl whom Carp and Slade termed a hick jake.

Armstrong stirred uncomfortably as he thought of his own sidetracked scholastic career, dead-and-gone ambition. What a difference in motive! And what had he accomplished with all the money for which he had made the sacrifice? What good had it done him? How much had he spent since he had become champion and the gold had begun to flow? He didn't know, any more than he really knew how much he had earned.

It wasn't so much as people thought, because Carp's share and training expenses had to be deducted; even so, it was a big fortune. Most of it he had flung away with both hands, stupidly,
senselessly; he had lost a good deal on slow horses, and he had not even the doubtful pleasure of seeing how it had been lost. He didn't care for horse racing in itself and never frequented the track; it simply offered an opportunity for gambling and he placed all his bets through Carp.

Armstrong continued to sit and stare out of the window, but his mental eyes still looked inward through the window of his soul. It did a fellow good to be laid up like this, to be able to do little but think, to have little more than thoughts for his companions. He had done no mental stock taking for a long time. If Bunyan hadn't been put in jail, he might never have written "The Pilgrim's Progress." Well, what about the progress of this pilgrim? Where was it going to end?

What was to be done about this new face of his? They were in a bit of a jam and it served them right; he never should have let Carp work this rank fraud. Somehow at the time it hadn't seemed so bad, but it looked worse every day—or rather at night when Grandpa Forgan opened the big Bible and in a quavering voice read about all the things a fellow shouldn't do. Supposing that this girl knew of that? It was thieving, that's all it was; obtaining money under false pretenses. Why had Carp, who was so square, ever thought of it? Why could he not see it for what it was? If a man was really on the level—

Thus Armstrong returned to another of the thoughts that had been troubling him for days.

CHAPTER VI.

AS OTHERS SEE US.

It is not given to all of us to see ourselves as others see us, but that refreshing experience was accorded Armstrong on the day he took his first walk of any considerable length. Leaving the highroad he fell in eventually with two Nimrods bent on deadly combat with the first wild and ferocious rabbits of the season.

At least such was their expressed mission, though when Armstrong happened on them they were luxuriating in the warm sun while a baffled beagle yelped frantically and futilely somewhere in the distance. Armstrong was fagged after his cross-country ramble, his leg was not yet all it should be, and he was glad of the rest and the company. One of them asked him for a match and he sat down and shared their smoke.

He was not in training, of course, nor if he had been would it have mattered. He had his own ideas about training, which consisted mainly of doing in moderation what you have always been accustomed to do. This had been a source of irritation to Carp and Mullins who clung to the tried-and-true methods of sweating road work and dull laborious routine. They called Armstrong's methods self-indulgence and claimed that he succeeded in spite of them, predicting that a day should come when his splendid vitality would be glad to seek refuge in their methods. Meanwhile they had to bow to his. It was only in matters not pertaining to his actual training and fighting that Armstrong did blindly what Carp told him. Fighting was his business and he claimed to know it best, just as Carp knew his.

From the recently defunct baseball season the talk now drifted to the ring and it transpired that one of the Nimrods had seen Armstrong often, not only on that memorable night in Madison Square Garden, but at his training camp. He was an oldish man and he seemed to know what he was talking about.

"I was living near there at the time," he said, "and I saw him many a day doing some of these stunts of his."
Armstrong was amused. Here was another boaster of the type met with by Carp. If this man had actually seen him as often as he claimed—— But the man proceeded to recount certain trivial incidents connected with those training days, incidents not generally known, that Armstrong knew were true. This was more amusing; the man had actually seen him often and yet now, though looking him in the face, did not recognize him.

Human nature was funny; simply because he was supposed to be in the Middle West, because he had a scar on his cheek, because Babe Armstrong wouldn’t be roaming the New Jersey woods dressed in such togs, it never occurred to this man that it could possibly be he. Why, if he told these two who he was, they wouldn’t believe him! Yes, it was certainly funny. They would laugh and say he was crazy.

BUT Armstrong’s quiet amusement vanished as the causerie continued. It was one thing to discount or never read press criticism, but quite another to sit and listen to that of fellow citizens who had no sort of ax to grind. This was the real stuff and he was hearing it for the first time in his life.

“The fight game’s rotten and something ought to be done about it,” said the oldish man. “Of course Armstrong won’t fight Maguire or anybody else so long as he can rake in the easy money with that bum show of his. It’s the same old game.”

“I guess maybe,” said the second man, either more ignorant or more charitable, “Maguire’s hollering about this match because he knows Armstrong’s tied up with a theatrical contract. It’s just a cheap advertising stunt. I read——”

“Yes, you read what Carp says.”

“But Maguire ain’t really got a rep so——”

“A rep! Yes, go get a rep—meaning, leave me alone while I rake in the easy money. That wolf Carp isn’t looking for any of Maguire’s game; when they’re forced into the ring, they’ll pick something softer. How can you get a rep if they won’t give you a chance? Maguire’s cleaned up all he can. He’s so good that they’re all afraid of him, and he’ll come nearer licking Armstrong than anybody you can name.”

“Yes, I guess maybe that’s so,” agreed the second man. “The fight game ain’t what it used to be.”

“You bet it isn’t. This talk of getting a rep is all bunk, like drawing the color line. What right have you to call yourself champion of the world when maybe a coon can knock you hell-west-and-crooked? If there’s a color line, why not chinks and red Indians, too—anybody that’s liable to whip you? Either you’re champion of the world or you’re not. It’s all bunk.”

The florid-faced, gray-haired man snorted and continued:

“‘Pompadour’ Jim could stand up like a hero and go over sixty rounds to a draw with Peter Jackson. No talk of the color line then or that a white man shouldn’t fight a black. Was there ever a boxer better entitled to be called a gentleman than Corbett? And that goes for Jackson, too! But these modern boilermakers and professional tramps are too delicate to cross the color line. And sixty rounds? Why, they think twenty’s an outrage!

“I tell you the game’s in a bad way,” he went on, “and fighters aren’t fighters any more; they’re bum actors and pawnbrokers. You can’t drag them into the ring without first guaranteeing Rockefeller’s bank roll—win, lose, or draw. It’s a crying scandal, and the only wonder to me is that they’ve been able to get away with it so long.”

“They’ll get away with it so long as suckers are suckers,” said the second man. “And we’re the suckers. With all your hollering I bet you’d break
your neck to get a ringside seat if Armstrong was fighting Maguire to-night."

"I suppose I would," admitted the other. "We're used to being gouged by these fellows, wouldn't feel real comfortable if we weren't. And there's no getting out of it that Armstrong's the best middleweight since the days of 'Nonpareil' Jack Dempsey. I wish I was back in those days, the days of old Jawn L., Jim Corbett, Jack McAuliffe, Dixon, Joe Wolcott, 'Ruby' Robert—but what's the use of naming them? Those were the days when a boxer had guts and a conscience. They've got neither these days. As for managers——" He shrugged. "That huckster Carp ought to be a pushcart peddler in Hester Street—and I'll bet that's where he came from."

"I guess maybe Armstrong shouldn't be blamed for these slim deals of Joe Carp," said the second man. "If he was let alone——"

"Don't you believe it. He's just as bad, if not worse. Carp's only the jackal. Armstrong's scared of Maguire and out to make all the easy money he can. Why not? As you say, suckers are suckers. Bum acting's easier and safer than good fighting. But if there isn't really a popular boxer these days, it's their own fault. You can't make a popular hero out of a four-flusher, no matter how good he is in the ring."

Armstrong's ears were burning and he was sore at heart when at length he left his chance companions. He wondered how he had been able to keep his temper and take no interested part in the conversation. A four-flusher! And he was afraid of Maguire! So that's what people were saying about him? Was this the disinterested voice of public opinion? Instead of being an object of admiration, he was a thing of contempt. This was where Carp had landed him with his vaunted shrewd business methods. No, that wasn't fair; he was as much to blame as Carp; he had profited equally by the extortion.

But was there any blame, was there any extortion? Who asked these men or anybody to sit in judgment on him? In all likelihood they overcharged in their own business as much as they dared. Why were boxers supposed to be different from any professional or business man? Hadn't they, too, a right to sell in the highest market, and who but a fool wouldn't? The public didn't have to pay such prices if they didn't want to; nobody compelled them to see a fight. It was the popular stunt to take a slam at the boxers; for some occult reason they were supposed to sell their wares at cut rates, amuse the public for nothing.

Well, he should worry about what they said. Carp was right; fighting was a business and it was up to them to make it pay the biggest dividend it could. They were no worse than anybody else. Those two fellows were a couple of soreheads and not representative of public opinion. They didn't know what they were talking about.

"A four-flusher!" "Scared of Maguire" kept step with all the way home. Scared? Why, he wasn't afraid of anything that lived! He would fight Maguire or anybody at any time, winner take all. It was Carp who had sneered off the match, just as he had made him draw the color line. There was truth in the statement that a man was either champion of the world or he wasn't. He believed that, had always believed it, but Carp didn't. There was such a thing as having too shrewd and careful a manager.

Anne Forgan was on the veranda when at length he reached Highview Farm. This had come to mean the best hour of the day for him, this quiet hour alone with her when Grandpa and Mrs. Forgan were having a nap and the girl...
had her first break in the long day's work of trivial but exacting duties. Yet with all her activity she had a very restful effect on one; she suggested inexhaustible wells of strength, love, endurance, cheerfulness, courage, understanding.

"Isn't it wonderful how warm it keeps?" she greeted, looking up with her unfailing smile. Then her eyes clouded. "I'm afraid you've been overdoing it, Mr. Stewart. You look terribly fagged."

He took a chair by her side in the warm sun and, before he realized it, she had entered the house and returned with a glass of whisked egg and milk. He protested, but she made him drink it.

"It's one of the penalties of being here—like the bagpipes and the Bible," she said. "You've been awfully good about both. And I'm always fussing over somebody. You don't mind, though, do you?"

"Mind?" He looked up, his blue eyes wide. "You don't know how good it is to have somebody fuss over you. I haven't any folks—Oh, yes, my—my uncle, of course. But, I mean—You don't know how I've enjoyed it here, Miss Forgan. You've all been so good to me as if I was a relative or something. It's like what you read about, but never meet. And you won't let me pay a cent—"

"No, of course we won't. Don't start that old nonsense, but finish that milk."

"All right, Miss Forgan. But I'm not really fagged; if I look that way, it's only because I've been thinking. I'm capable of it sometimes, you know."

"Why, I should think you were! What a funny thing to say. A successful leather business—or any business—can't be run without brains. And Mr. Jones said that even though you were so young, you were very clever and that indeed the business really couldn't get on without you."

**ARMSTRONG** silently damned Carp and his jests. He longed to tell this girl who he was and what he was, put their acquaintance on an honest footing. Why should this stupid lie be between them, overshadowing and spoiling everything? And it was growing increasingly difficult to sustain. When she spoke of his alleged uncle and the mythical business, as she often did, it made him perspire freely. He was not a good liar. If he could manage to find out in a roundabout way what she thought of his real calling—

"What do you think of fighting for a living, Miss Forgan?" This was the best he could achieve in the way of obliquity.

"What sort?" She laughed. "Don't most of us have to fight for a living?"

"Yes, that's right. But I mean as a business. A boxer, ring artist, exponent of the manly art."

"Oh, you mean a prize fighter?"

"Ye—es. But somehow the other sounds better."

"I'm sure it does, just as that detestable phrase, 'a red-blooded he-man,' sounds better than, 'primitive brute.'"

He wriggled. This was striking too near home. It was a detestable phrase, he heartily agreed on that, but why chance on the name of his play?

"What suggested the question?" she pursued.

"Oh, I happened to meet a couple of men and we got arguing about it. They didn't seem to think much of boxers."

"And you do?"

"Well, there are a whole lot worse things, Miss Forgan."

"Yes, I suppose one could be a murderer—though prize fighters are occasionally that, too. And there are also many better things, Mr. Stewart. Of all the degrading, brutal, mercenary
and unmanly business masquerading under the name of sport, I think there is nothing to equal the so-called manly art."

He was staggered by this sweeping denunciation and the fervor with which it was uttered. This was no academic, impartial opinion.

"Unmanly? I've heard it called most everything but that, Miss Forgan. What's unmanly about it? Why, it's just the other way round. You have to have courage——"

"It doesn't require much courage to beat a helpless man into insensibility. But it does require a good deal of animal ferocity and brutality."

"But he isn't helpless when you first meet him, Miss Forgan, and he stands just as good a chance of knocking you unconscious. And it doesn't have to be brutal, not if you've got a punch and know how to use it. Why, he never knows what happens to him! A man suffers more in the dentist's chair—far more—than when he's knocked out in the ring. Honestly, Miss Forgan."

"Indeed. It's such a lofty ambition, knocking people unconscious, isn't it? Do you really know much about it?"

"Well, I've talked with a lot of boxers and—and seen a few bouts, too. A fellow has to live clean, Miss Forgan. And it teaches you to keep your temper and to be game and—and a whole lot of things. Aren't those good qualities?"

"Admittedly! But does prize fighting alone teach them? And does the world need physical courage so much as it needs moral courage? A little undersized, underpaid clerk, with an ungenial task to do and a family to support, may show more of those virtues, more real manhood than your champion prize fighter, Mr. Stewart."

"He wouldn't be undersized and underpaid if he was a boxer," said Armstrong. "He'd have to look after his body, and as for money——"

"Oh, money!" She made a gesture. "Yes, I believe they're paid—I can't say earn—a really fabulous amount. It seems to be an era of brawn, not brains. But it's only a passing phase. Let us hope so, anyway. The old Romans used to think that throwing people to the lions, and gladiatorial combats, were fine manly things to do, just as some countries still think that there's something peculiarly heroic about bullfighting. The days of the cestus are past, and bare knuckles, too. Some day we'll get past even the Marquis of Queensbury rules. We'll have a different idea of sport and amusement. Isn't it all a matter of education? Meanwhile, if a man isn't really fit for anything else and thinks only of money and——"

"All of us—I mean every boxer isn't a hopeless lobster—I mean lowbrow, Miss Forgan. Some of them can write. And the best men in the land are proud to know them."

"But do the best men introduce them to the best ladies?"

"Well, lots of ladies attend bouts. It's getting commoner every day."

"And the ladies, too, I expect. Lots of ladies also go slumming in Chinatown, but do they introduce the exhibits to the family circle? No, if brawn has the money nowadays, brains has still something it can never have. For money can buy everything only in certain circles. After all, Mr. Stewart, your richest and most popular prize fighter is only an exhibit like the joss house in Chinatown. We may even be proud of him in a way, but there are people who don't ask him to dinner. And those are the people who really matter."

"You think there can be nothing good in the game at all?"

"No, I wouldn't say that," she replied slowly. "But is there? Even the virtues that you say it demands and promotes, are they practiced out of
business hours? Is a boxer, once he has broken training, a model for any one to follow? When the enforced discipline and restraint are thrown off, don’t they indulge in excesses of all kinds? Aren’t even their amusements stupid and childish? And, for all the money they get, don’t most of them die in the gutter? What good do they do? Of what use are they?

“I can imagine,” she went on, “that a champion boxer, if boxing were properly controlled, could be a very great influence for good. It’s natural for all of us, especially the young, to admire physical prowess, to think that a fine man outside is a fine man inside. Boxing should be more than a business, and a champion should stand for more than brutality and the dollar sign. He has a very great responsibility, like all people in the public eye, but he doesn’t seem to realize it. He should represent the best national characteristics, not the worst.

“I can imagine a person of that type being one of the best forms of national propaganda,” she continued. “But as the game, as you call it, is played today—no, I can see nothing good in it. It is brutal, degrading, and not even honest. It has led young men to believe that it’s the best and quickest way to glory and wealth. Surely there is something very wrong with our national life and ideals when an ignorant brute is paid such enormous sums and hailed as a sort of demigod. No, it panders to the lowest passions, and it’s nothing but a business organized and performed by mercenary brutes for idle brutes.”

Armstrong drew a long breath.

“Well, that’s straight enough. You seem to know something about it, too. But you talk mighty hard against it, Miss Forgan.”

“I do, Mr. Stewart. I can’t talk any other way. You—you see, my brother was killed in the prize ring.”

“Why—Oh, I say, Miss Forgan, I—I’m awfully sorry. I’d no idea that—”

“No, of course you hadn’t—or had we until it happened. It’s what helped to make my mother so ill. My brother gave up the promise of a good career for the sake of this popular-hero idea and the lure of big money. He had always been fond of boxing and had won the intercollegiate championship. He turned professional under another name, without our knowledge. By a trick they got him into the ring under his proper weight and he was beaten to death by a big seasoned brute—That’s what it amounted to, though they called it an accident and a weak heart. So do you wonder if I’m prejudiced, if I hate and despise everything and every one connected with boxing?”

“No, of course I don’t. Even if that’s an exceptional case—that was a bad match. There are lots of matches that shouldn’t be made. And you can’t know too much about giving away weight. Of course your brother should have been examined by a doctor, and the referee should have interfered.”

“My brother was what you call game, and the ringside brutes were howling for their pound of flesh.”

“Yes, I know. They go crazy and want the knock-out. And if you haven’t got the punch or don’t know how to put it over right—”

Armstrong sighed and arose as Carp came quickly up the path.

To be continued in the next issue of The Popular, on the news stands February 20th.
Temescal

By Henry Herbert Knibbs

TEMESCAL the great ladrone,
   Crossed the border, now and then,
   On a mission never known,
   To his swarthy fighting men,
Who, encamped near Cabezon,
   On the slope of Sandoval,
Jested thus: "He hunts alone!
   In the distance, Temescal!
   A la lejos, Temescal!"

Filching from the friendly night,
   Safety grudged him in the day,
Temescal in easy flight
   Vanished down the darkening way.
Stars shone softly, silver white
   On a far, a dim corral;
Then La Luz, the doorway lights:
   "Fortune's favor, Temescal!
   Buena suerte, Temescal!"

Dawn drew shadows on the sand,
   Round the casa and the field;
Down the distant desert land,
   Rose the sun, a crimson shield;
When a mozo's warning hand,
   Tapped upon the hushed portal;
"El Vaqueros! Hardy's band!
   Hasten! Hasten, Temescal!
   Acelarar, Temescal!"

Playing fox to win a race,
   Temescal was at his best;
Tethered in the garden place,
   Stood a stallion sleek of crest,
Saddled, bridled for a chase
   Down the glimmering chaparral,
  Proud of eye and swift of pace;
    Ah, be wary, Temescal!
     Ai! Quidado, Temescal!

One approached the casa door,
     Thrust the trembling boy aside,
Bowed to mask the hate he bore,
     Faced La Luz, who, fearless eyed,
Answered, laughing: “Mi amor
     Walks within the manzanal . . .”
South, across the desert floor,
     In the distance, Temescal,
A la lejos, Temescal!

All along the border zone,
     To the quest of stranger men,
Folk have answer, ready grown:
     “Si! We view him, now and then,
Temescal the great ladrone,
     Of Sonora? Of Parral?
But not here in Cabezon!
     In the distance—Temescal!
A la lejos, Temescal!”
Mrs. Sweeny’s Speech

By Charles R. Barnes

Author of “Mrs. Sweeny’s Boss,” “The Power of the Street,” Etc.

Belle Sweeny, the widow of the famous race-track bookmaker, puts on the forensic robe, and while her speech is short and to the point, it is also sincere and from the heart.

Mrs. Sweeny was gathering up the Boarder’s laundry. She always did this for him, because he was a man and was wont to let the soiled clothing accumulate until there was a vast amount of it. Then there would come a day when a whopping big bundle found its way to a linen scrubbery. The bill with the returned garments would be whopping, also. The Boarder had wailed just once. Thereafter Mrs. Belle Sweeny had thrust her own dainty fingers into the situation, and the Boarder’s mind was at peace, in spots. The spots were those brain lobes that became agitated at the unexpected discovery of no clean collars, that fretted over the shirt-littered closet floor, that felt shock when the laundry bill came in and so on and so on.

Mrs. Sweeny usually talked whenever some one was about to listen, and now she was running true to form.

“Mister,” she suddenly remarked, “laundries is pests. They don’t send you back the right change out of your bundle. They mix things up like a succotash factory. The last time your wash come back there was half a dozen napkins in it—and what does a gent want of napkins? They musta thought you was a rest’rant.”

“I didn’t know about them,” the Boarder told her.

“No,” she said, “for I didn’t tell you. What was the use, I says to myself, muddlin’ a man’s mind with napkins? Why not, I thinks, give thanks that they wasn’t cheese sandwiches? There ain’t no tellin’ what you’ll get back as laundry these days. Once there was a wad
of gum in my poor dead husband’s package. And the time he got the silk stockings—gee!”

Almost any one could see a story coming, as Mrs. Sweeny paused for a moment of reflection. The Boarder did. And so he leaned back in his chair with a look of expectation on his face.

“I suppose some woman’s washing was mixed with your husband’s,” he observed.

“Yes,” she confirmed, “that was it. But when there’s two names, and only one way to spell ’em—and red at that—” She noted the Boarder’s perplexed gaze and stopped. Then she went at her narrative more deliberately.

“My Danny,” she explained, “bein’ a race-track bookmaker, was real fancy in his dress, like most gamblers is. When he lit hisself up he looked like a jewelry-shop window backed by the star-spangled banner. He liked fancy shirts and neckties and vests that wasn’t scared to speak above a whisper. Then he was a good fr’en’ of a silk sock, and all of his dry goods that could be of silk, was. There was sure some class to him, mister, some class!” Mrs. Sweeny spoke admiringly of the departed, and there was small approval in the glance she cast over the Boarder’s very ordinary raiment.

WHenever we changed laun- dries,” she went on, “the new one hired extra help, for my Danny wouldn’t wear nothin’ more’n five minutes b’fore he’d chuck it at a laundry. He got to be a crank on them wash houses and he’d change ’em at every little mistake they made. And, gee, didn’t they make ’em, though! It got so bad that Danny begun to figger out ways to get his clothes back. One day he says to me:

“‘Belle,’ he says, ‘I guess they must make them mistakes b’cause they can’t understand them marks they make on the collars and things. No human bein’
can,’ he says, ‘and I’ve concluded that the marks is just a stall, put there so’s us poor come-ons will believe them fellers is really intendin’ to give us back our rags,’ he says.

“I guess that ain’t far from the truth,” I says.

“Well,” he says, ‘I’m goin’ to write this here laundry that’s stealin’ our clothes off our backs, a letter. I’ll tell him to hire a Chinaman. Them chinks has the darnedest system I ever seen, of markin’. But you alwus get back what you sent. I’m goin’ to advise this feller to get a chink marker and then our troubles will be over,’ he says. And, mister, he was real happy over that idee and went and done what he said he would. But there wasn’t no attention paid to him, and things went on just the same as b’fore. This made Danny mad.

“We’ve got to beat that game,” he says. ‘They just got us on their list,’ he says, ‘and they pick out a few things from the pile that all the folks has sent ’em, and give ’em to us every week. They know we’re expectin’ somethin’,’ he says, ‘and they give it to us. If we get fussy, havin’ some one else’s shirts, they consider us pin-headed kickers, for we got somethin’ back and don’t appreciate it. Ain’t that about right?’

“‘Danny,’ I says, ‘I be-lieve you from the bottom of my heart. You alwus did have a way of gettin’ to the root of things,’ I says.

“Well, then, Belle,’ he says, ‘we got to beat their game. I’ll tell you what; this week we won’t send nothin’ out,’ he says, ‘and we’ll see what we get back. They’ll send somethin’—the usual amount—for fear of offendin’ us and losin’ our trade. What?’

“‘Danny,’ I says, ‘you’re a genius! You could of thought yourself off that there burnin’ deck, if you’d been that boy. Let’s follel ’out that idee,’ I says.

“We done it, mister, and what do you guess happened?”
The Boarder gave it up.
"Well," said Mrs. Sweeny solemnly, "we got back a waiter’s apron, a dozen barber towels and a pair of overalls. Can you beat it?"

"No," admitted the Boarder.

Mrs. Sweeny resumed:
"That made Danny madder than ever. He called up the laundry, and a man came and got the stuff. Then my husban’ thought up another idée and had me work it out. I sewed his name, Sweeny, on everything he had, in big red letters. They looked like the printin’ on a box car.

"I guess that will give ‘em somethin’ to think about,” he says. ‘They can’t help seein’ them signs and mebbe I’ll get back some of my stuff,’ he says.”

The Boarder became curious.
"Did it work?" he asked.

"Things was better," she answered. "But the trouble took a new turn. In the first batch that come back was a pair of silk stockings. And now, here’s a surprise for you. You couldn’t never guess what was on them stockings, could you?"

"Don’t make me try," he pleaded.

"All right, I won’t," she agreed. "But there was somethin’ on ’em that made us both sit up and take notice. For, across the tops of ’em was the name ‘Sweeny!’"

"Sweeny!" exclaimed the Boarder.
"Were they yours?"

"They were not," she informed him. "But that ain’t all. That name was wove in red letters!"

"Curious," commented the Boarder.
"I should say it was," Mrs. Sweeny declared. "There’s lots of Sweenys in New York, but Danny and me never knewed that they had the red-letter habit. You’d think they’d choose green. But they hadn’t done no such thing. Here was Danny and some doll, both with their laundry marked in red letters with their names. The girl was shy a pair of silk stockings and, for oncet, Danny had everything he had sent out. At first he didn’t know what to make of it all; but soon he sings out:

"‘Belle, somebody’s kiddin’ me!’"

"‘What you mean?’ I says.

"‘It’s clear to me,’ he says, ‘that some of the gang downtown has got hep to my laundry mark and is makin’ me look foolish by sendin’ in them things under my name. I bet I find out who done it and get back at him,’ he says.

"But, mister, he didn’t. He worried around for a week, makin’ inquiries about who sent them stockings, and he didn’t have no more success than the police tryin’ to clear up a killin’ case. Nobody knew nothin’, and so we concluded that there was really some one named Sweeny patronizin’ that laundry and that the mix-up was the real thing. We sent back the duds and forgot ’em.

"The next time we got back our laundry, though, Danny went clear up in the air. For, right on top of a stack of his shirts was one that wasn’t never intended to be wore by no man. It was crinkly and soft—silk—and on it was that name in red letters —‘Sweeny!’ This time, like the week b’fore, most of his stuff was in the bundle. You see, mister, Danny’s idee was workin’ all right, as far as holdin’ on to his property was concerned.”

The Boarder nodded assent.
"He was proud of it," Mrs. Sweeny went on, "kinda uppish proud, like a cloak model bein’ dined by a bootlegger. But the other Sweeny’s clothes happenin’ along that way bothered him. He thought it might be a sign.

"‘That’s twice it’s happened, Belle,’ he says. ‘If it comes across again, it’ll be three times. And three times of anything is either a hunch or a warnin’,” he says. ‘Lemme see.’ He took the Mornin’ Telegraph from the center table and begun readin’ race entries.
Pretty soon his face goes bright as a Fourteenth Street shine, and he says: ‘Belle, here’s Silk Stockings entered tomorrow. Now, what do you know about that?’

‘Danny,’ I says, ‘it’s a hunch!’

“But, mister, my Danny was a cautious man. He ain’t at all sure it was a hunch, bein’ that it hadn’t happened three times. And he pointed out, it couldn’t hardly happen three times b’fore the race comes off, bein’ as our next week’s laundry wasn’t sent out yet. So he made up his mind that he would wait. If it happened again, he’d decide if it was a good or bad sign; and if it was bad, he’d quit drinkin’ for a while. Then he got out the dream book and begun huntin’ up what dreams with silk in ’em meant. He was real sure that he’d have some silk dreams, after all what had happened.”

“Did he have them?” laughed the Boarder.

“No,” Mrs. Sweeny replied. “All he dreamed of was seein’ a lot of men fightin’ terrible—and, sure enough, the next day he was invited to a banquet of bookmakers and racin’ men, ‘Gold Dollar’ Cohen, Danny’s best fr’en’, bein’ guest of honor. My husband was down for a toast on Cohen, ‘The Man That Never Welshed.’ And, as it meant that he must make a speech, all dolled up in his dress suit, it kinda worried him. But he seen his duty toward his fr’en’ and he was goin’ to do it.

“I’ll make that speech, Belle,’ he says, ‘or drowned in the attempt.’

“Drowned?” I says.

“Yep,’ he says, ‘drowned. What do you s’pose dreamin’ of fightin’ meant, anyway? That banquet will be so damp that they’ll have to have a bouncer. And there ain’t no ordinary man can get up and hand out patter to a gang without nervin’ himself up. Yes, take it from me,’ he says, ‘if I ain’t drowned before they call on me, I let loose of that speech.’ And right away, mister, he set down and begun to make it up—real lovely thoughts about the Gold Dollar. The banquet knocked them silk laundry things all out of his mind, and he put in all the time he could get on that speech. It give him a chance to show his appreciation to his fr’en’, and he meant to do the thing up proper. The banquet was pretty near all he thought about.

WELL, mister, the days slipped by; Sattiday come. Danny worked awful hard at his speech, scratchin’ out words and makin’ new sentences, until finally it suited him. I had put some of his dress shirts in the laundry, so he’d sure have a clean one, and the man had promised to deliver ’em Sattiday afternoon. But six o’clock come and no shirts. Danny got worried. He telephoned the laundry. The man said that he’d send ’em over special. And about ten minutes afterward a boy brings the bundle. We undid it, and I wish, mister, that you could of saw that man of mine then—I just wish you could of saw him!”

“Why?” asked the Boarder.

“Because,” she answered, “there wasn’t no man’s shirts in that package. There was a half dozen silk stockings and a lot of other winnin’ suds. And all of ’em was marked in red, ‘Sweeny.’ Why, my Danny was the bestest man ever you seen. He just looked down at them things, with his jaw hangin’ and his arms loose at his sides. By and by he sort of whispered:

“A hunch!”

“I didn’t say nothin’.

“Belle,’ he says, makin’ for his racin’ paper, ‘there’s somethin’ back of this—and I can’t quit drinkin’ till after the banquet. So it ain’t a warnin’. It must be a hunch.’ He begun to read over race entries. But I remembered that he must have his clean shirts in a hurry, so I called him back.

“‘Danny,’ I says, ‘your shirts has
prob'ly been delivered to this here Sweeny lady,' I says, 'and as she sends her clothes to the same suds castle as us, she must live near. Call up the laundry and ask 'em where to find her. Then we'll take this bundle around there,' I says, 'and get ours.'

"That's a good idea," he says, and right away he calls up the man.

Sure enough, the Sweeny lady lived near, around the corner, toward Columbus Avenue. The man said that both Sweeny bundles had been delivered special and that we could get ours, he was sure, by callin' at the flat of Miss Irene Sweeny. So I wraps up her wash, and Danny and me starts out to find her.

"She prob'ly needs these things bad," I says, 'or she wouldn't have 'em delivered special,' I says.

"She's welcome to 'em," Danny says. Then he intimates that he could take 'em just as well alone. I needn't bother.

"Danny," I says, 'I ain't got no way of knowin' that Miss Sweeny is a old maid or cross-eyed,' I says, 'or a suffragette,' I says, 'and I ain't takin' no chances.'

"And he walked along as meek as a flat worker askin' to see the gas meter."

It is necessary, at this point, to take the telling of this story away from Mrs. Sweeny, in order that a certain state of affairs may be more quickly related. The good lady has a habit of rambling which she shall be allowed to do, later on, but not here. So let us leave her and her husband in the vestibule of Miss Sweeny's apartment house, while we consider other matters.

Miss Irene Sweeny was a girl of twenty, in whose cheeks the Celtic roses bloomed and in whose blue eyes were the dreams of Irish character. She was a trim little woman, with an atmosphere of daintiness about her that was quite alluring. All by herself she lived in a snug little flat, cooking her meals and doing her own housework. Her father, during his lifetime, had operated a profitable transfer business, and now Miss Irene had a small income—about one hundred dollars a month. This proved enough to support her, but there was very little over, for the girl had been well educated and had rather extravagant ideas.

In her heart was a spot, warm with sympathy for those less fortunate than herself. And it was this streak in her nature that had prompted her to work several evenings each week among the girls of the lower East Side. She taught a class of about a dozen girls—taught them the things they should know and which they had small chance of learning in their environment. And they were well along the path toward right living now. Miss Sweeny was proud of her work and its results. The little institution had been supported by a woman of wealth who had recently died. And the question of money for rent and other expense items had immediately loomed big.

Also, the girl was among those who have no respect whatever for laundries. Her experience with them had been one long chant of woe. And lately she had been vexed beyond measure at the contents of the parcels which were brought to her door. She believed that everything under the sun brings up, at some time, in a laundry, for many articles for which she had no use whatever were offered to her.

Take, for instance, a wildly disposed masculine shirt, frescoed with all the brilliance of Pompeian art and labeled "Sweeny." She did not want a thing like that. No girl would care to have it about the house. And now, see what had happened!

She was wrathfully contemplating Dan Sweeny's six evening shirts, each vividly impressed with his name in red letters, when her doorbell rang. A few
minutes before, she had indignantly telephoned to the laundry for her right-ful bundle and had been assured that it would be looked up and immediately sent to her. She informed the laundryman that he had better do that very thing, or she would take her trade elsewhere. Some of the articles in that package were absolutely necessary, for she was going out within an hour and meant to wear them. So, when the electric tinkle echoed in the little hall, Miss Irene concluded that her complaint had been given exceptionally prompt consideration. The laundryman wasn’t so bad, after all. She hurried to the door and opened it. And for a moment she merely stared blankly at the big man with a bundle under his arm and the erect, shapely young woman who accompanied him. This person was the first to speak.

"Are you Miss Irene Sweeny?" she asked.

"I am," the girl replied.

"We got the same name," the other went on. "I’m Mrs. Dan Sweeney, and this party that’s along is my husban’. Say, you don’t happen to have a couple of quarts of gents’ laundry that you’d like to trade for some of yours, do you?"

The girl gazed at the bundle, and then the light of understanding came into her eyes.

"Indeed, yes!" she exclaimed, opening the door wide. "Come right in and I’ll get it for you." She ushered them along the narrow hallway to her living room, a tiny place in which three people seemed a tremendous crowd. "Please seat yourselves and I’ll get my part of the trade."

W HEN they had done so, she went to another room where the red-lettered shirts lay on her bed, remade the package and reappeared with it.

"How did you happen to find me?" she inquired.

Mrs. Sweeney explained, adding: "My husban’, here, is goin’ to make a speech to-night at a feed, where a bunch of rums, belongin’ to his set, is celebratin’. He couldn’t go without some clean hard-shell backin’ for his open-face vest, and there we was. I tell you, Miss Sweeney, that speech he is goin’ to spout will make a congressman look like a boy speakin’ a piece that he can’t remember. Gee, it’s a three-star speech, Miss Sweeney!"

A quick expression of curiosity came into the girl’s eyes, but vanished immediately. She had never heard a woman speak like her visitor and, of course, she was unaware of the environment that had produced such conversational ability. However, she was too well bred to betray her feelings.

"I’m sure that the speech will be a brilliant one," she said, with a friendly smile at Danny.

He bowed and beamed so blandly under the flattery that Mrs. Sweeney looked at him with quick displeasure. How alike all men are! A pretty girl smiles, and they can see nothing else. But even as this quick little bit of drama was being enacted, Miss Irene was talking.

"I, also, needed my laundry for this evening," she said, "though I am not attending a banquet; it will be more like a funeral." She proceeded with a description of her educational work, and concluded: "We close the place to-night, on account of the rent. And I am very sorry indeed, for the girls’ sake."

Dan Sweeney’s hand was moving toward his hip pocket. Mrs. Sweeney knew what was there. It was what her husband called his bank roll, and there was usually a large amount of money in it. Immediately she anticipated his intentions. Rising, she said:

"Rully, Miss Sweeney, ain’t that the hard luck, though! I wisht we could stop here and comfort you, but I got to
get Danny home and dressed, or he
won't never get to where he's goin'.
Come on, Danny."

In the street, Mrs. Sweeny said:
"You was goin' to stake that doll
along, wasn't you?"

Danny promptly admitted it.
"Yes," he answered. "She was up
against it, and all dolls that is up against
it ought to be staked along. What can
a poor girl do?"

"It ain't none of your business, Dan
Sweeny," she reminded him.

And all the way home she pounded in
this simple truth until her husband had
it memorized more thoroughly than the
multiplication table. But, once there,
she gave over her harangue and valeted
the big man in the matter of seeing to
it that his tie was aright and that his
cloak hung on his wide shoulders like a
cloak of paint. She wanted him to do
himself proud, and there would be no
finer specimen of a man at the festivi-
ties than her Danny—that she knew.
When one comes to think about it, one
could scarcely blame that girl for
openly flirting with a married man. But
it was not a nice thing.

As Danny was about to go, she said:
"Forgive me for scoldin' you—and
leave me most of the bank roll.
There's no tellin' where you'll end up,
this evenin'—"

"Yes, indeed," agreed the Boarder.
"Well," she continued, "after Danny
had went, it didn't take me more'n two
minutes to get wise to myself. 'Belle
Sweeny,' I says, 'the green-eyed guy
has put one over on you,' I says. At
first I was for askin' the lady across the
hall to call me names, so I'd feel bad.
But I didn't do nothin' but walk up and
down and hate myself. Then, all of a
sudden, somethin' struck me like a
three-base hit, a foot from the bat, and
I bet you I wasn't two minutes orderin'
a taxi.

"'Drive,' I says to the feller, 'to
eighty-one, in the next street and, if
you get me there on time, I'll stake you
to a five-spot. You get me?' I says
sharplike.

"'Lady,' says the cabby, 'be-leave
me, I do!'

With that, we begun to fade out of
the vicinity like snow slidin' off a steep
roof. It wasn't more'n a minute before
I was ringin' Irene Sweeny's bell. And
when the door opener went click—click
—click, you can take it from me that I
was relieveder than a man gettin' rid
of a baby that he's been walkin' all
night. I ran up the stairs, and would
of took two steps at a time if my skirts
wasn't so tight. Miss Sweeny was just
goin' out, and she was the prettiest
pitcher ever! You'd never thought
she'd fix herself up so, just to go into
the tenements.

"'Dearie,' I says, 'I'm all alone to-
night, and I've come to ast you will you
let me go along and see them skirts of
yourn and the place you teach 'em in,' I
says. 'I got a taxi out here, and it's on
me. Be a sport,' I says, 'and take me
on,' I says.

"She kinda laughed.
"'I'm sure I'd like to have you go—
and my girls will be glad to meet you,' she
said. 'It's our funeral, but you can
get some idea of what I have been do-
ing. Shall we start?'

"I was all ready, so we goes down to
the taxi and is soon bein’ driv’ to
toward the East Side. When we got
there I found that Miss Sweeny’s
schoolhouse was a big room on the top
floor of a buildin’. One corner was
rigged up as a model kitchen, and in
another was a make-believe bedroom.
Then there was a couple of sewin’ ma-
chines and a lot of housekeepin’ stuff.
That there Irene had been a-learnin’
them girls how to keep a house clean
and what you do when there’s sick
folks in the fam’ly and such a line of
stuff. Then she taught things that al-
most everybody knows, but these girls
didn’t—writin’ letters and readin’
and how to figger so’s there thievin’
grocerymen and butchers can’t add up a
bill too strong on you.”

“That was settlement work,” the
Boarder told her.

“Yes,” Mrs. Sweeney laughed, “it
was. It was settle up that night or get
out. The outfit owed sixty-two dollars
for rent. They’d of been put out long
ago, only the landlord took a chance
on ‘em findin’ a angel and let ‘em stay
a while. And, I tell you, mister, a more
sorrown’ lot of girls I never seen in
my life. They was all of ‘em clean
and decent lookin’ and, if you’ve ever saw
the run of ‘em down there, you’ll un-
derstand what a quick-change artist the
Sweeney person was. Every one of
them girls thought more of Irene
Sweeney than they did of their gum, and
it was almost heartbreakin’ to see how
bad they felt, now that the curtain was
bein’ rung down on the best thing that
ever had come in their lives. It was
too much for me. Of course, my mind
had been made up all along, but it
seemed that I’d just got the idee when
I seen them girls lookin’ so sad and
down-and-outlike. I hops up on a
chair.

“‘Ladies and gents,’ I says, ‘come
across with a little listen,’ I says, ‘and
mebbe the thing won’t look so much
like the echo of a rubber heel,’ I says,
tryin’ to be easy and sociable. ‘My
name’s Sweeney,’ I says. ‘I’m the wife
of Dan Sweeney, the celebrated book-
maker,’ I says, ‘and, of course, you’ve
all heard of him.’

The girls was awful quiet, and Miss
Sweeney was lookin’ at me as if she
didn’t understand it. But I didn’t pay
no attention to her.

“‘Ladies,’ I says, ‘us Sweenys alwas
stick together. When one of us is in
wrong, we set her right.’

“I dug Danny’s bank roll out of my
—well, we was all ladies there, so there
wasn’t nothin’ to criticize about it—and
I peels off the money—I had to make
it seventy, for Danny wouldn’t never
have anything to do with aces, or twos,
or fives. Then I says: ‘Here’s the
rent; and God bless all of you, and
specially this dear little doll here that’s
stage-managin’ the piece.’

“And with that I shut up—and in
a minute I wished I never had came,
for them girls begun to laugh and sob
and hug me and such a doin’s as there
was!” She abruptly ended her narra-
tive.

“I believe,” ventured the Boarder,
“that your speech was more effective
than the one your husband made.”

“He didn’t make his,” was the unex-
pected information.

“Why?” asked the Boarder.

Mrs. Sweeney tied the laundry pack-
age together with the two sleeves of a
shirt. Then she explained:

“He drowned.”

COLLEGE AND CRIME

A superintendent of reformatories in the State of New York told a United
States senator last fall that of twenty-two thousand criminals whom he had in-
vestigated, only four per cent were college graduates and only seven per cent
had gone through high school.
Life is kind and unkind to men without seeming reason. To "Beak" it had been most unkind, but he had not spoiled; and when he sensed the changing of the wind of his particular fate he followed it, as he had before withstood its poisonous draughts.

All night the drove of wild horses pushed up the crooked mountain trail, a furtive cavalcade in the dim moonlight. At dawn they herded into a grassy cup of the hills. The drivers rode to a bluff, facing out over the wide sweep of Top Range. The leader pointed to black dots moving in haphazard pattern across the green plain.

"Still at it—the round-up. Bet they haven't even missed this bunch we got. They're a hell of a lot of greenhorns!" He paused, leaning forward suddenly. "Seems to me—I can't make out—Hi, where's Beak?" he called guardedly.

In quick obedience Beak rode up from his place in the rear. He had long since ceased to flare at the nickname. Yet to-day, riding into a circle of eyes, his hand moved to his face. His fingers slid along a curved mark, the scar from a horse's hoof that in healing had given to the lower part of his face the curious resemblance to a bird's beak. He drew in his horse at the rim and his sharp eyes studied the moving dots.

"Well, see anythin' new?" demanded the leader, after a moment.

Beak rose in his stirrups, stretching his lean neck eagerly. "Gosh, it's great!" he breathed. "Didn't know there was that many horses on Top Range! There's hundreds of 'em! A real round-up!"

"Aw, what the hell do we care about that!" the leader broke in. "What're they doin'?"

"They're roundin' 'em up in circles," returned Beak hurriedly. "An' the circles seem to be movin' toward a point over there. It's pretty far off."
"Kinda got down to business, eh? Who—do you suppose—You know there was talk o' the Mounties comin' to run things," suggested a voice uneasily.

"Aw, they're always talkin' about the Mounties comin' an' they ain't never been near here yet," retorted another.

"Anyhow, somebody's got hold of things that knows. No foolin' round like has been," added Beak, still watching the range.

"Let 'em come—damned redcoats!" blustered the leader. "We'll give 'em a bit o' merry hell—worse'n we been givin' them ranchers down there."

"Don't you worry! They've had fits like this before. It'll blow over. We'll winter down on Top Range yet," consoled a slant-eyed man. "An' with the best bunch o' horses we've ever had," he added, turning to view the band grazing in the grassy hollow.

"Yep, some of 'em's so good they got a brand on 'em," suggested another. as they rode back to the trail.

"That's easy," retorted the leader. "They'll have new brands on 'em soon's we get to them high pastures! Come on now! Let's make tracks!"

Beak fell to his place in the rear. Up, steadily up, over untrodden ways, here an overgrown cañon, there the edge of a swollen stream, with scarce a sound but the crack of whips and the thud of unshod hoofs, the fugitive drove moved. They worked quietly, these men, during the dark hours when within the circle of the law.

But Top Range lay high up above the pale of civilization. The last stand of the wild horse, it had drawn to its unclaimed ranges drifting gangs—outlaws, fugitives from justice, loafing horse traders. They lived somehow, easy and lax, pilfering from neighboring settlements, breaking and selling the most likely of the range herd. Settlers had been slow to venture in and many of them had been glad to move on. The few who remained had declared war on both the outlaws and the wild horses.

Once more the government had decided to clean up Top Range. This time the wild horses must go. Not only were they depleting the stock of the country, they encouraged the existence of the outlaw gang. A great round-up was ordered. Strays, scrubs, all to be gathered into a common herd and disposed of according to brand and other marks of legitimate ownership. The plan had been carried out in other parts of the Northwest. But Top Range! The gang had scoffed, laughed at the idea.

Even when a government official arrived and, with the aid of the few ranchers, attempted the round-up, the gang had managed to delay and defeat their efforts. Finally, securing a band of the best horses, they were moving to higher ranges still, belts and cups of green where water was plentiful and natural pasture abounded. Later, the round-up over and the official having departed, they would return to Top Range and resume the lax easy routine.

BEAK, bringing up the stragglers, kept watch of the trail behind. A dreaminess filmed the vigilance of his eyes. The sight of the hundreds of wild horses seething and circling the range had stirred memories of another round-up long ago. He had been the best rider that day, first choice with the boss. How masterly and gay he had felt, proud of himself, particular about every touch of his riding gear—spurs, chaps, sombrero! And there had been a girl, a pretty girl——

He cut savagely at a loitering mustang. He had hated horses ever since that day, for Red Devil had thrown him—Red Devil, a mean fiery sorrel he had thought tamed, conquered! Flung upon the rocky trail, a kick in the face
had all but finished him. Sometimes, even yet, he started up from his blankets to see the shining brute smashing through the wood, away, away to freedom, leaving him to—— No, no, he wouldn't think about the torture of the days he lay there! The fellows told him that when they found him there was only a breath now and then to keep him from being just a carcass.

He fooled them, though, got better slowly. For months he just sat and looked out over the plain. It was then that he developed such keenness of sight. But when the bandages were off and he saw his face in the mirror, he wished that he had been a carcass. He was shaky for a long time, seemed to have lost his nerve. Those long terrible days he lay on the trail! Never again could he ride as he once had. Then the girl had married somebody else. The fellows pitied him. He could feel it in the way they spoke to him.

ONE day he rode off without saying good-by. The cards were stacked against him a little too heavily this time. He had drifted to Top Range and into the band of outlaws. With the cruel candor of the plains they had dubbed him "Beak." Because they found his gift of sight useful, they tolerated him. At times he thought of breaking away, of beginning again in a new place. Well, the girl wouldn't think much of him now, trailing along behind this gang. His clothes! There wasn't a garment he wore that fitted his slimness. His chaps he had picked up at an empty cabin. It didn't matter so much on Top Range. But what might have happened if Red Devil hadn't thrown him!

The ring of shod hoofs broke the clear solitude. He swung sharply, hand on hip. Around a pine-screened boulder dashed a clean-limbed sorrel. For a moment Beak seemed to be dreaming. His hand shot out and gripped the swinging bridle reins. The drive wavered, halted. A ring of riders faced the back trail belligerently. The empty saddle bespoke trouble! Two scouts rode down in stealthy caution and posted themselves to watch. A few minutes of defensive quiet and the tension eased, flowed into talk of the new horse.

"Ain't he a beauty, though! New to these parts!" "Great wind, an' look at them legs fer speed!" "Where'd he come from?" "Somethin' doin', I'll betch'a!" "Had the devil scared outta him!" "Don't you never think it. I know them kind. 'E's a thoroughbred, 'e is!" "Thoroughbred!" "Yep. Seen 'em in cities—the gentry ridin' 'em."

"The gentry! Hear that, Beak? Some figger you'll cut ridin' that horse!"

Unmindful of the chaff, Beak held the tugging bridle that jerked his cayuse in cavorting circles. A beauty he was, a thing of fire and life, quivering, champing, tossing the shapely head with its trim silver mane while the flashing eyes sought the wild solitude. Beak's hold tightened. Here was a treasure that had come straight to his hand out of the hills. A man who had been scouting ahead rode back. With a single glance at the strange horse, he raised his voice:

"What the hell you-all doin' gawkin' here? Ain't you never seen a good-lookin' hoss before? Like's not he's a guv'ment hoss. Turn him in with the bunch!"

"Naw, you don't! He's Beak's. Finders is keepers!"

"Might be a Mountie's horse," jeered a voice.

The scout whirled angrily:

"You listen to me, you poor hill varmints, you! Them Mounties ain't never been up here yet, but when they do there'll be hell to pay. I've heard about 'em down country. An' lemme tell you this: When a Mountie gets his nose to a track, he'll follow it clean
across hell an' back again. If I thought 'twas the Mounties come I'd be fer turnin' them hosses loose an' huntin' holes so quick—I say we'd best be movin'!

THE band started forward on its difficult way. Streams swollen with freshets harried and delayed them. Here and there a mustang escaped, but no pistols were fired. Beak swung the stragglers ahead of him with deft touches of the whip. A force surged up his spine, squaring his shoulders, holding his head erect. Thoroughbred! He conned the term proudly, with appraising glances at the sorrel. It must be because he was such a beauty, such a grand stepper. Luck! First streak of good luck since Red Devil had thrown him! He would ride this horse, ride him if it was the last thing he ever did, yes, ride him and show this gang!

"He minds wonderful!" he commented, glowing at the swift obedience to the least tug of the reins.

But the ready compliance held in it something restless. There was yearning in the arch of the neck, in the slant of smooth muscles as the clear eyes searched the plains through breaks in the trees. He was fretting, fretting for what? The trail led across an open space that slanted ruggedly to the range. The drive threatened a dash for liberty.

A sudden jerk at the reins held Beak at a standstill. He glanced around. The sorrel stood poised, a thing of flight. Far down on the green plain something lured him, held him. A wild whinny, a rearing leap, and like a streak of flame he was gone down the mountainside. The ring of shod hoofs, the crash of falling debris, marked the terrific speed. Beak gripped his mustang's bridle, staring down where the shadow of the fleeing horse seemed to linger. Rage swept him, a nightmare fever of terror. It was Red Devil he saw, Red Devil tearing his mad way to freedom, leaving him to die like a dog on the trail.

He tore the vision aside. To part with this beauty now? Beak spurred his horse down the hill. It was easy for his keen eyes to follow the way—bent branches, torn shrubbery, fresh-turned rocks. Ride as he would, he knew he was far behind those flying hoofs. In all his wild riding of the old days nothing had equaled this. The wind rushed by, a streak of coolness.

He saw the tops of pines slip past, felt the bruise of pines slip past, felt the bruise of pines slip past, felt the bruise of pines slip past, felt the bruise of pines slip past, felt the bruise of pines slip past, felt the bruise of pines slip past, felt the bruise of pines slip past, felt the bruise of pines slip past, felt the bruise of pines slip past, felt the bruise of pines slip past, felt the bruise of tine sl
Aruptly the roughness eased to a brush-dotted valley. He was at the edge of the foothills. A line of trodden grass marked the sorrel's dash out toward the plain. Beak leaned forward, his Indian glance following the trail. Ah! Some distance out, the satin coat gleamed beneath a clump of cottonwoods. He edged forward stealthily. How again to capture that fiery shining beauty?

From behind a thicket he peered. He drew back quickly, his plans floundering in bewilderment. Under the cottonwoods, with lowered head and lathered flanks, stood the sorrel. Beside him, clinging to mane and stirrup, knelt the sagging figure of a man. Beak glanced swiftly about. Nothing stirred but the wind in the grasses.

He watched through the leaves. The fellow must be hurt, badly hurt. He was trying to mount, clambering weakly, slipping back to the ground again. He couldn't keep that up long. A fine big fellow, he looked, too. That horse! He was a wonder the way he turned his head to watch the man. He seemed to know how much was at stake, so quiet he stood, no dancing and prancing.

Now the fellow was half up to the saddle. It was sheer will power that got him there. He went down again
and lay so still beneath the mute touches of the horse’s nose that Beak thought he must have fainted. No—he stirred again, lifted himself to his elbow as though he would try again. Grit, pure grit! And the sorrel moved carefully.

Pals they were, these two. Beak’s friendlessness had him by the throat, pressed in upon him from the wide plain. He glanced down at his mustang, slumped in the indifference of fatigue. Was there any one, anything in the wide world to stand by him like that? When he had lain so, at the mercy of his horse—Red Devil.

He pressed his hand to the scar. Again he rode Red Devil up the mountain trail, again he felt the humiliation of a fall, the blinding agony of a kick in the face that sent him into oblivion. The slow return to consciousness—hot days on the burning trail, the maddening gurgle of a stream near by, the sniff of prowling coyotes, the sharp, far call that he weakly tried to answer, only to realize in a paralysis of terror that it was the cry of a mountain lion.

The cries grew louder, sharper. His dulled sensibilities realized the approach of a man-eating creature. That cursed stream! It seemed that he would willingly have died for one taste of water right from the snow. The fellows told him that when they found him there was just a breath now and then to keep him from being a carcass. If only they had left him there for the lion!

He peered through the underbrush. The man’s head had fallen back. His eyes were closed, his fine, clean-shaven face lay in full exposure to the sharp-shod hoofs. Beak shivered, his hands clenched. He leaped from his horse and started forward. Swiftly, yet with infinite care, the sorrel whirled to face him, every muscle of his magnificent body on guard above his prostrate master. The man’s eyes opened. Beak backed from the steady searching gaze.

“I was afraid—your horse—You were lying right in line with his hoofs,” he explained incoherently.

The man smiled faintly.

“That’s the last thing he’d do—hurt me or any man—that treated him half right,” he asserted weakly. “Help me to mount him, will you?”

Beak moved in involuntary obedience to the edge of authority in the voice.

“First see what you can do with the wound in my back,” went on the man. “I’ve tried to fix up the one in my leg. There was a gang. Lucky only two bullets hit me.”

Beak took the package the stranger handed him. Red flowed from an ugly wound in the back. He noted the drawn lips, the pallor of the face. Somebody had pretty nearly done for him!

“They must have taken my horse. He’d never have left me. Got away, though. Came right back to me.” The unsteady hand moved to the glossy neck. He leaned limply back again and closed his eyes.

“Best be quiet, sir,” advised Beak.

The man lifted his head resolutely.

“There’s no time to lose. Help me on my horse. We’ll manage to make the ranch across the range—me and him. Then—”

Beak gasped.

“You don’t know what a bad way you’re in,” he protested.

“He’ll get me there—start him on the trail—as safely as any human. But—” The man’s tremulous fingers sought an inside pocket and brought forth a long envelope. “Here’s something that must reach St. Morice just as soon as possible. I was trying to short cut across the hills—swim St. Morice River,” he added. “I’m Scarth of the Northwest Mounted Police—”

A rigidity gripped Beak, froze the kindness that had lain like a spell upon

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him. For a moment it seemed as though all the blood in his body was pounding through his brain. The Mounties! He might have known! Beneath the long dark cloak—a scarlet coat, stripes, all the rest. He could have killed the fellow with a single shot. What stayed his hand? Awe, perhaps, awe of the almost unearthly grit of the man, awe and the half superstition trailing the redcoats of the plains. They bore charmed lives; men obeyed them; thieves took to the hills when they came riding across the range. They passed, leaving law and order behind them.

STRAY sentences lingered in Beak's confused understanding: "for the jailer at St. Morice. A boy in jail there—Joe la Plante—seriously injured the factor's son. Threatening to Lynch him—his chance—law and justice—"

Law and justice! The Mounties, the dreaded Mounties come at last to Top Range! Once they got into a country there was no more easy living.

"There's not another member of the force in hundreds of miles," went on the voice anxiously. "Except the man in charge of the round-up. He had to go off somewhere. But—if you could deliver this letter—"

He looked at Beak with direct appeal. Beak shrank inwardly. It seemed as though this Mountie must see the furtive stained record behind him. Then the officer's eyes softened.

"I know it's a fierce undertaking," he said. "Twould take a powerful man. Anyhow, your horse—the way the creeks and rivers are now—No, you couldn't make it." He closed his eyes wearily.

Beak winced before the half-contemptuous kindness that seemed to include both himself and his mustang.

"I could make it, sir," he retorted roughly. "I know this whole country, every knoll and peak of her! Short cut the hills an' swim St. Morice River," he added, with swelling boldness.

"I was going that way." Scarth nodded. "First lost my guide, then this—You couldn't—that way."

Beak was silent, fighting the promise hovering on his lips. To get rid of those measuring eyes! Scarth started up, his face sharply anxious.

"Oh, why did this happen? My first commission! He's a human being—this Joe la Plante! While we're talking about it, his life's in danger! I've got to go on—get somebody!"

"I'll get the letter there, sir," Beak heard himself promise.

"In the name of law and justice then," murmured Scarth, as he gave the letter into the other's hands.

With the skill of the plainsman, Beak got the stalwart figure upon the horse, made him as secure and comfortable as he could. Then, with the trusting weakness of the Mountie's grip clinging to his hand, he watched the sorrel follow, with sure instinct, the trail toward the distant ranch.

"Grit!" he muttered. "Grit clear through! The two of 'em!"

Presently the brush closed in behind them. His eyes fell upon the letter in his hand. His mind leaped back over the incredulous hours. He looked at the hills climbing about Top Range. Was it a dream that as he rode behind the stragglers up there a marvelous horse had come rushing to his hand, had gone again down the mountainside? That he, Beak, had followed, that he had talked with a Mountie, had helped him start back to the ranch, had promised to go to St. Morice for him! St. Morice! It lay beyond the mountain, on the other side of the St. Morice River!

What had come over him? He pressed his hand to his face. He wasn't getting foolish, was he, from the old hurt? Hardly, after all these years!
He shook off the feeling with a shudder. To hell with the letter! He'd go back to the hills, catch up with the boys and finish the drive. They needn't know about all this. There was only one other Mountie. He couldn't do much.

Beak turned toward his horse. A red stain glittered on the blades of grass, scarlet as the coat of the Mountie. He stopped, staring at it. If they were all like this fellow, grit, grit right down to the ground! Think of what he was going through for that fellow over at St. Morice, a fellow he'd never seen! Joe la Plante—that was the name.

Something that had teased at his brain cleared in a rush of feeling. Joe la Plante! Why, that must be "Crazy Joe!" Beak remembered him with a stir of pain and pity. He had seen him on his one visit to St. Morice. A head injury had made him that way—the butt of all the loafing jokers in the place. He had pitied the boy, pitied him, the center of a teasing ring. He felt a thrill of satisfaction that at last Joe had turned on the factor's bullying son. But now he was in jail, they were threatening to lynch him.

Beak's head sagged; his shoulders hunched. Poor Joe! He had eyes like a scared dog when they all got around him, poking fun, laughing at his foaming rage. In jail! Even now his body might be dangling from a cottonwood. The factor's word was law in that place. What a hurt in the head could do to a fellow! There were people who vowed there was a devil inside Joe. Everything was against him!

It was as though the silent accusation of the letter drew Beak's thoughts, the letter he had promised the Mountie he would take to the jailer at St. Morice. If he could get there in time, Joe would be safe. The Mounties were behind it, the Mounties who were never known to give up. Yes, this letter could save Joe.

Beak's fingers pressed the curved scar on his face. Suppose he had been foolish, too. It was the one thing in all his miserable life he had to be thankful for. And a priest had said that all Crazy Joe needed was an operation to make him like other folks.

BEAK lifted his head. Beyond the mountains, snow-capped against the blue sky, rose Twin Peaks. At the foot of these lay St. Morice. His one thought was to take the shortest route. With the swift high vision of a bird his wilderness sense darted above a broken cut through the hills, a perilous crossing of St. Morice River, then steep and dangerous trails to the town. A hard trip; the Mountie had said it was one he could never make.

He made the letter safe inside his heavy shirt and swung upon his horse. From clump to clump of cottonwoods he dashed, keeping to the line of the valley. A hundred hidden eyes seemed to watch him from the hills. Once, as he crossed a bare space, a shot whistled by him. Some of the gang, perhaps, taking him for one of the round-up crew.

His horse was a lather of sweat when he turned up a steep ravine. He branched from it abruptly, following a pine-walled creek to where it emptied into a brush-grown cañon. Here, in one of his flights from popular favor, he had skulked for weeks among its creases and ledges. Its damp gloom led northward to St. Morice River.

His horse stopped short on the down trail, snorted and whirled. Water boiled down the cañon's rocky bed. He had not reckoned on this. Springing down, with reins drawn tight, he led the way on foot. He seemed to realize that reflection, reasoning, would be fatal to his purpose.

At times he walked on trails that were mere ledges above the stream. In shallow places he waded, leaped from
rock to rock. He was aware of life stirring, birds fluttering before him, squirrel eyes peering from jungle growth. Here and there the bushes moved with a circular swaying, as though brushed by some creature's cautious flight. On and on he pressed.

THE rough landmarks slipped behind. Here was the cave where he had hidden, there the rock upon which he had cooked his food. Well, he couldn't stop now, not even to eat. Then he reflected that in his sudden determination he had not thought of food. And he had not eaten since yesterday! He was beginning to feel shaky in the legs. Was it dusk that made the cañon so dark, or was it night? He stumbled on, hearing the hoof beats of his horse behind him.

He emerged from the cañon with a stagger of fatigue and leaned against a tree, blinking in the lustrous sunlight. It flashed on rugged peaks, on the turbulent sweep of St. Morice River where a thousand silver lights sparkled and leaped. He knew that he was face to face with the part he dreaded most. The very devil's river this was, a thing of terrific force roaring through the solitude. There was menace in the cold glitter of its current, in the boiling whirlpools that spewed the anger of its depth.

For the first time his resolution wavered, shrank before the enormity of what lay before him. Drifting logs swung swiftly and threateningly by; projecting trees held armfuls of débris—dead leaves, battered sticks all edged with spume. He shivered. The Mountie was right. He couldn't do it! He couldn't do it!

With an unconscious gesture of fear, his eyes lifted to the sky. The snowy peaks above St. Morice seemed to watch him pityingly. His mouth set; his eyes came back to the river. He measured the width carefully. He must allow for the down sweep of the current. To plunge from that bank higher up might land him at that rounded strip of clean beach. There was a huge gray rock above it to guide him. He rode up the bank, closing his ears to the danger warnings of the solitude. Chance! Luck! That was about all life amounted to, anyhow.

He plunged his horse, felt the waters rising about him. Its icy touch was like a spur to his shrinking senses. Down, down, with terrible swiftness they were borne. He fought to keep his horse's head turned toward that rock. They were doing all right, all right. If only an undertow didn't get them! His heart rose, swelled within him. Afraid? He was not afraid of anything!

They whirled, were drawn under as if by the strong pull of an evil hand. Even as the waters closed over him, he found himself wondering how that Mountie and his horse would have fared. They wouldn't have given up. Grit, the pair of them! With a swirling motion his face was above water. He gasped. He knew this was not reality, that he was still standing on the bank in the hesitation of fear, that he watched the current fling and toss and beat a puny creature who had dared its anger and its force.

The eddies played with that helpless thing, smothered it, flung it to the surface where it gasped hungrily for air. There was a terrible boiling, a roaring in his ears. He was going under, under! Something bristled in his face. He flung his arms about it. Shuddering he closed his eyes, sinking, sinking!

He woke with a sense of struggling and blinked about him confusedly. By degrees the feeling of reality returned. A bad dream he had had. He lifted his hand to his head. There was a burning numbness where the hair had matted. His arm was stiff. He was stiff all over. He sat up, dipping
drunkenly. He was on the bank of the river, his feet just above the water line. Yes, the river sweeping on with its threat of resistless strength! He stretched his long thin neck. No, it wasn’t just a bad dream. He had crossed the St. Morice River!

He looked up at the white peaks and there was a laugh in his throat. The Mountie had said he couldn’t do it! Beak seemed to rise on tiptoe with pride, with joy. Crazy Joe! He would save him yet. The letter! He fumbled feverishly for it. It was safe, safe under his heavy shirt. How long had he lain here? His horse! He searched the bank dazedly. He couldn’t remember. The river must have got him. But St. Morice lay just over the hills there. He would walk.

He ignored the queer trembling in his limbs. He staggered, at first, and the trail had a way of turning suddenly, of disappearing. Flowing streams glanced across his path. He stopped to drink, to lave his burning head. At times he opened his eyes with the feeling that he had lain there a long time. He would start on again. It seemed to be the letter that traveled, pushing steadily through the stillness. Suddenly he was on the crest of the range.

After that he dreamed, dreamed that he walked on feet that had lost all sense of feeling, that he crawled and edged along a sharp jagged trail. St. Morice! St. Morice! Somebody was whispering it beside him as he moved on and on. Then he was lying on the hill above it and the log houses danced and shimmered among the green trees. The uncertainty steadied. A squat ugly building rose, widened into his vision. The jail! He saw a face pressed against the mean little window, a face lifted to the blue sky. A man stood before the door, groups of people hung about, talking, gesticulating.

Beak got to his feet, he ran, he fell, he rose again, seemed to be running through empty space. Then he was at the feet of the jailer, tearing the letter from his tattered shirt. The jailer held it up to the crowd, saying something about the Mounties. His words were like the tones of a church bell. The voices hushed; the people melted away. The sky wavered, faded, and the green earth lifted a cool pillow beneath Beak’s dizzy head.

And in after years, when civilization followed the trail of the Northwest Mounted Police, and fought for the green plains of Top Range, there rode beside Scarth on many a solitary hazardous charge, a keen-eyed man whose knowledge of hidden places proved a resolving factor in the stern and bitter struggle. Beak he was, Beak he would always be, not an appellation, a name that left in its trail a stirring of respect for law and order.

MUSIC AMONG THE MIGHTY

NICHOLAS LONGWORTH of Cincinnati, the new Speaker of the House of Representatives, could have made his living as a musician. He is a wonder on the piano and a wizard with the violin. Senator Cummins of Iowa, is another statesman full of musical talent, but he gave up the art as a career when, in his young years, he discovered that he could not make it bring in enough revenue to buy flowers for his fiancée. Other lawmakers who took to politics in spite of decided talent for the piano or violin are Representative Martin B. Madden of Chicago, and Senator Morris Sheppard of Texas.
Footloose and Footlights

By Ralph D. Paine


When the characters in a play meet the very people whom they seek to portray, an amusing situation is inevitable. It was almost tragic when the Yale Glee Club was snowbound in the same town with the stock company of "For Dear Old Yale," but by apt presence of mind the impending disaster was converted into uproarious comedy.

SNOWBOUND in Altoona! There is a proposition to make a strong man burst into tears," declared Hector Alonzo McGrath. "The conductor says we will be lucky if we get that far before we stall up in these big drifts. Were you ever marooned in Altoona? That sounds like a good title for a song. Where is my guitar? I need some rhymes. Altoona—fair Luna? But she isn't doing business in the midst of this howling blizzard. Did you ever write poems for the Lit, Jim? Wake up and show some animation!"

Jim Stearns yawned, nodded a drowsy negative and continued to look out at the swirling clouds of snow which drove by the car window. The heavy express train was buffeting its slow way, with frequent halts and lurches, as though making a losing fight, against the storm which was blockading the passes of the Alleghenies.

Homeward bound from their winter concert tour in the West, the members of the Yale Glee Club, surfeited with a fortnight of receptions, dinners and smokers, organized by loyal alumni, were in a mood to enjoy repose and let the weather go hang. The melodious company of light-hearted undergraduates was luxuriously traveling in a special car; and the lamentation of the assistant manager, Hector McGrath, awakened no more than a languid interest among his thirty-odd companions. Some of them were asleep,
others seeking diversion in penny ante and a few nodding over books or magazines.

After trying in vain to interest his neighbors in his inspiration for a topical song, Hector voiced his disgusted opinion of them:

"And you are the bright-eyed college boys who line up on the stage and tell the audience, in tuneful numbers, that all you live for is 'mirth and jollity.' Oh, fudge! You are the deadliest lot of live stock this railroad ever handled, outside of a refrigerator car. Come on, Jim—let's wander through the train and find some real people. That Pittsburgh concert, last night, seems to have put this crowd all to the bad. They ought to have cut out that midnight supper at the club, but you and I are no weaklings. Don't be a paper sport."

WITH good-humored compliance, Jim Stearns arose lazily and followed toward the front of the train, grumbling as he forsook his comfortable quarters:

"You are as perniciously energetic as a terrier pup, Hector, and almost as much of a nuisance. If you could be safely marooned in Altoona, I might get some rest and sleep between here and New Haven. What for do you yearn to go charging up and down this train? Hasn't it troubles enough?"

"I want to find some interesting people, Jim. When I travel, I like to have something doing. My bump of curiosity is as big as an egg. An oyster has no curiosity, so he never gets anywhere. I don't want to be an oyster—do you? Now, here is this trainload of humanity, all sorts, from everywhere, stuck in a blizzard. They will probably keep fairly good-natured; but if they were cast away on a raft instead of in a train, they would begin eating each other, after a week or so. That's enough to make 'em interesting."

Jim Stearns, oarsman and football captain, looked down at his volatile classmate with a tolerant grin, as though it were not worth while to combat his odd theories. They passed through the sleepers into a crowded, stuffy day coach, where a motley assemblage of weary pilgrims was damning the blizzard and the railroad company in several languages.

"They look as if they might begin eating each other a good deal inside your time limit," said Jim. "Let's push on into the smoker. We may find the conductor and extract further information about the chance of buttling our way into Altoona before dark."

A very pretty girl, who looked travel-worn and disconsolate, turned to gaze, with obvious interest, at this pair of well-groomed, attractive youths. Jim Stearns brightened visibly as he returned the glance and appeared to waver in his course: but Hector pulled him by the sleeve and objected:

"Break away, old man. If you make eyes at that charming young passenger, it is at your peril. She belongs to the theatrical company that hems her in on every side. The heavy villain sits facing her, blue shave, fur-collared overcoat and all; while the leading man—the black-haired Romeo, just in front of her—is already transfixed you with a cold and glassy stare. I sized them up when they got on the train at Johnstown. I wonder if we could persuade the outfit to come back in our car and do a few stunts?"

"Oh, stop your nonsense! You needn't lecture me at the top of your voice," muttered Jim, as he stalked toward the smoker. "They look as if they had been playing in hard luck, don't they? Kind of seedy and fagged and sore on the world in general—and one-night stands in particular. You don't want to ask them back into our car, Hector. The ice box is almost empty and the fellows want to be let alone. Um-m! But that was a bully-
looking little girl! Something sweet and nice about her. She isn’t in the same class with those other barnstormers. I wish I knew——"

“You’re the same old sentimental drivel,” said Hector. “Have a cigar, and dream away. Maybe she is the long-lost daughter that was driven from her fireside by a cruel misunderstanding. They always wander back to the old homestead and fall fainting on the cold doorstep, in just such a snowstorm as this—slow, wailing music by the orchestra.”

THE train had stopped between eddying drifts topping the car windows. A gang of Italian section hands, who were shoveling alongside, came stampeding into the smoker, to seek a moment’s warmth and respite from their benumbing, blinding task. The icy wind whooped after them through the hastily opened door, as if eager to overtake them and finish the job of freezing them as soon as possible. Dropping their shovels in the aisle, they wrung their mittened hands and shrilly bewailed their misery between chattering teeth. With a dislocating jerk, the train got under way again; and the refugees caught up their shovels, stumbled from out this fleeting shelter and plunged, waist-deep, into the snow.

“Which shows that we might be a whole lot worse off,” observed Hector, the philosopher, with a sympathizing shiver. “Some people may think it a hardship to have to hear you sing baritone solos in a glee-club concert, Jim; but, honestly, they are not as much to be pitied as those dagoes shoveling snow. By Jove, where is Altoona? Maybe the engineer has frozen to death at his post and we have run past it.”

“Not much. If we are held up there to-night, I am for sidetracking our car and going to a hotel. Here comes a brakeman. Let’s ask him, while he is thawed out.”

“Five miles more, and every one of ’em a case of buckin’ and backin’ and shovelin’; but we’ll make it by dark, if the engine holds together,” growled the weary man in blue. “No, you won’t get out of Altoona to-night. The next division is worse balled up than this.”

As he passed on, pestered by questions on one hand and the other, Hector saw the “heavy villain” and the “black-haired Romeo” enter the car. They found a vacant seat within earshot of the two young collegians, who eyed them with lively curiosity. The elder Thespian—he of the blue gills and pompous front—was at no pains to soften his heavy voice, as he declaimed to the other, with an oracular flourish of a dingy forefinger:

“Don’t I know how the part should be played? In the campus scene, when the students discover that I tried to bribe the trainer to dope the football team, the speech in which I declared my innocence is one of the best bits I ever did. Look how it fetched ’em in Terre Haute. Two curtain calls, and the papers said it was great! And you have the gall to tell me to chop it—me, who was on Broadway with Mansfield before you carried a spear!”

“Oh, forget it,” wearily sighed the younger man. “What difference does it make? You and your art be damned! We play Altoona to-night, which means we go broke. There won’t be twenty people in the house. It’s been getting worse from Chicago east—you know that. And here’s where we smash. Play your part any old way, for all I care.”

The speaker was a morose-looking young man, clad in a loud plaid suit, which needed pressing. He lighted a stogie, pulled his soft hat over his eyes and paid no more attention to his indignant companion, who sonorously declaimed:

“Altoona will remember me as Sir
Hamilton Ashmead in ‘Her Ladyship’s Honor.’ The weather can’t keep ’em at home, when they see my name on the billboards. Business is sure to pick up, my boy. We are getting back East, where the public flocks to see a college play with a name like ‘For Dear Old Yale.’ How the devil could we expect to make a hit with it out West, unless we renamed it ‘For Dear Old Chicago,’ or ‘For Dear Old Indiana State University?’”

Jim Stearns and Hector McGrath were listening to every word of this colloquy, and their ingenuous young faces betrayed emotions of disgust and resentment.

“Cincinnati was plastered all up with the posters of their bum show,” whispered Hector. “You remember them, don’t you? The pictures were enough to make a Yale man sick—the cheapest kind of melodrama, a libel on the college. The Harvard coaches put up a job to drug our eleven, the night before the game and, when this plot is foiled, they kidnap the Yale captain—and stuff like that. I’ll bet the sore-headed young man with the stogie is the brave Jack Bruce, captain of the Yale team. How do you like the looks of your double, Jim? Better introduce yourself. If you don’t, I think I’ll have to tell him who you are.”

“I don’t want to meet the cheap actor,” growled the captain of the Yale eleven of the preceding season. “If he didn’t look as if he were on his uppers, I’d like to punch his head. That show will never dare to come to New Haven. The college would mob it.”

“There would be a riot, sure enough, if the fellows could see the poster of the campus scene,” chuckled Hector. “The chorus of ‘Yale men’ pretends to be soused and sings a drinking song, sitting on the fence at ten o’clock in the morning. Oh, it’s great—so true to college life! ‘For Dear Old Yale!’ Doesn’t the name make you gag?”

“If we lay over in Altoona to-night, I’m going to see the show, Hector. That pretty girl in the other car can’t be so bad. I suppose she is the heroine.”

“Yep, and the football captain makes love to her through three acts, Jim. Maybe you can pick up some useful hints. Let’s go back and tell the gang about it. Won’t they just whoop at the chance to turn loose and play horse with this show? Come on! We must get to the theater to-night, if we have to dig a tunnel through the snow.”

They passed from the smoker into the adjoining day coach and rapidly scanned the other members of the “For Dear Old Yale” company, who appeared to be even more unhappy and disheveled than were the young man of the plaid clothes and the self-satisfied person who had “fetched ’em in Terre Haute.” The pretty girl was asleep, her blond head pillowed upon an ulster.

JIM STEARNS was sorry for her. She ought not to be one of this poor, God-forsaken band of players, skirting the edge of financial disaster, he thought; and, with a chivalrous impulse, he said to Hector:

“Don’t put the crowd up to going to this show. If it is as bad as you picture it, they will raise Hades from the minute the curtain goes up. I know it is a great chance to take a fall out of one of these fake college plays, and the very name of it is a red rag. But we don’t want to spoil the record of the trip by kicking up a shindy.”

“Cherchez la femme,” laughed Hector McGrath. “If we put the garrison to the sword, the women shall be spared. I perceive that the girl has you sitting up and taking notice; but we can’t be balked of our prey. ‘For Dear Old Yale’ is fated to be ripped up the back, and Altoona will remember the show a good deal longer than
it did our friend, Sir Hamilton Ashmead. Don’t spoil the sport, Jim. You will thirst for your share of revenge, as soon as you see the Yale football captain on the stage."

Unwilling to expose himself to the ribald teasing of his comrades, yet inwardly uncomfortable because he did not take a firmer stand, Jim Stearns made another half-hearted protest, then decided to wait upon the tide of events. The young men of the glee club were in a more vivacious mood by this time and, amid a hubbub of talk and laughter, they betook themselves to make ready to invade Altoona for the night. The impetuous assistant manager, Hector McGrath, ever on the alert to find “something doing,” lost no time in shouting, at the top of his voice:

“Free tickets to the theater to-night! This is my personally conducted party. Front seats for all. We are bringing the company with us. Now, listen, and cheer like real ‘rah-rah boys.’ The name of the show is ‘For Dear Old Yale.’ Wouldn’t that jar you some?”

“We won’t do a thing to it.”

“Oh, what a cinch!”

“And they said Altoona was slow!”

“We’ll throw Jim Stearns on the stage and let him play the hero.”

“What do the girls look like?”

These, and other delighted rejoinders, were chorused from one end of the car to the other; while Hector beamed with the air of a dynamiter who, having lighted the fuse, awaits the explosion of the bomb with the most pleasurable anticipations. He was about to prod his friends to further uproar by outlining the heinous offenses of this foredoomed melodrama, when a brakeman pushed into the car and shouted:

“Altoona it is, and you’re welcome to dig your way out of the station whenever you like. Your car will be at the upper end of the train shed, if you want to find it again to-night.”

“Come along! Let’s make a break for a hotel and line up for supper,” exhorted Jim Stearns.

The afternoon had darkened into wind-swept dusk, as the collegians trooped through the station and plunged into the street, whose gleaming ramparts of snow were being attacked by brigades of shovelers. The pavement had been kept sufficiently clear to permit passage from one corner to the next and the Yale invaders plowed their way along in high spirits, careless of the nipping air and the pelting flurries of snow. The hotel in which they sought shelter and clambered for food was swamped by their patronage; but they stormed the dining room in relays and cajoled the waitresses into finding places for them.

Jim Stearns looked in vain for the luckless actors and the pretty leading lady. Apparently, they had sought quarters elsewhere. As his gaze roamed absently from one table to another, Hector McGrath nudged him and said:

“Eyes in the boat, Jim. She is not here. The troupe is probably munching snowballs out in the bitter night, while she pawns her diamonds to buy a hot meal.”

“Guy me as much as you like,” hotly replied Jim, “but don’t get gay with the girl when she comes on to-night! I wish you fellows would cut out going to the show. It won’t do to have any rough-house—you know that.”

“Why, we are going to help the show along, you blockhead! Thirty-five tickets will get ’em on to the next town. I’ll promise to try to keep things quiet, Jim, if you are really worried about it.”

Alas, for Hector’s praiseworthy resolution! He was in a mood for mischief and in hearty accord with him were all the other effervescent undergraduates, out for a lark in a strange town. They tramped down an aisle
of the almost empty theater and, with ominous decorum, sat in patience while the orchestra butchered a medley of Yale songs. A few townspeople trickled in behind them and the gallery began to fill with a noisy company of more or less roughly dressed young men and boys, who had defied the weather, lured by the flaming "three sheets," which promised an evening of hair-raising melodrama. It was a beggarly house to play to, when the curtain went up, and the glee club sat gloomily at the opening scene for "For Dear Old Yale."

Jim Stearns shut his eyes and groaned. According to the program, the first act took place in the "Yale training quarters." In a room, littered with boxing gloves, dumb-bells, bottles of liniment, rolls of bandages and so on, Jack Bruce, "captain of the varsity," was declaring to Mike McCann, the trainer, in a mock-heroic, blustering voice:

"If the Harvards beat us to-morrow, dear old Yale is disgraced and the girl I have loved for three long years will never speak to me again. The team is fit to fight for its life, but I fear foul play. Are you sure no spies are lurking about the quarters?"

"We'll eat 'em alive. I've bet me last dollar on you," said Mike McCann, who was an evil-looking person to be put in charge of young men sent to college from Christian homes. "The tip is straight. There is a plot on foot to cripple our team before the game, but the place is guarded night and day. S-s-sh! Here comes the boys. Not a word!"

"The boys" entered, to the number of four low-browed young men, monstrosely padded in football clothes and armored with nose guards and metal head protectors. Without the slightest excuse, they grouped themselves about their captain, and sang a song entitled: "We Are the Pride of Dear Old Yale."

With the greatest difficulty, the glee club held its emotions in check.

"Time for practice, boys," cried Jack Bruce, whose football make-up could not hide the fact that he was round-shouldered and a trifle knock-kneed. "It is the last practice, remember. The college expects you to do your duty. Three cheers for Yale!"

The boys brayed dutifully and clinched their fists, as though sighting "the Harvards" from afar off. It was such a wretched, scandalous caricature of a cheer that Hector McGrath could keep still no longer. Jumping upon his chair and waving his arms, he yelled:

"Show 'em how! Three times three! Now!"

Rhythmic, stentorian, explosive, a genuine Yale cheer was volleyed from almost twoscore lusty throats. It filled the theater with a reëchoing din and startled the actors, as though a battery of field pieces had been fired at them from the orchestra. Jack Bruce forgot his lines and stood staring from the shambling group of his comrades. So taken aback were they by the vocal eruption, that it was plain to see that they were not aware of the presence of the Yale Glee Club. As suddenly as the interruption had occurred, it subsided, and the two rows of youths down in front sat in demure silence, waiting for the play to go on. Jack Bruce blinked across the footlights, stammered, wavered and then made his exit, his nerves considerably shaken.

"Be good. Here comes the girl," commanded Jim Stearns, as Nelly Hemmingway, daughter of the Greek professor, entered timidly, made sure that she was alone with Mike McCann and confided the details of the Harvard conspiracy, which she had learned by a singular chance.

In a simple white gown, she looked so fresh and girlish and her demeanor was so unaffected that Jim Stearns
sighed like a furnace and thought her far more attractive even than when he had seen her in the train. He felt a pang of mild, yet genuine, jealousy, when she told the trainer:

"Not a word to your captain—promise me that. It would never do to excite him just before the great game. But I shall not sleep to-night unless you can promise me that no harm will befall him."

"The pie-faced, pigeon-toed mucker! She ought not to waste a minute on him," muttered Jim, to himself. "But, unless I have this gang of ours sized up wrong, he will get what is coming to him, before the show ends."

So long as Nelly Hemmingway was on the stage, or when her bevy of "school friends" and her comedy "maiden aunt" appeared, the behavior of the collegians was flawless and their applause unstinted. Trouble began to brew, however, when Bob Nolan, the bookmaker, took a hand in the plot. He was the egotistical gentleman who had aroused the ire of Stearns and McGrath in the smoker, and he persuaded the play as the villain subsidized by the Harvard coaches to "do up" the Yale captain and his team. The glee club disliked Bob Nolan with unanimous enthusiasm. His rôle was a grotesque slander upon the fair name of Yale's ancient and honorable foe, and his swollen vanity was an added provocation.

He was in the midst of a calcium-lighted scene with Mike McCann, the loyal trainer who refused to be bribed, when, at a signal, the glee club arose as one man and chanted solemnly, in unison:

"Where did you get that face? If it hurts you, why not take it off, Mr. Robert Nolan!"

Refusing to finish the scene, Nolan carried his obnoxious face into the wings and clamorously demanded that the manager of the theater quell the rioters by calling in the police. The gallery gods were siding with the collegians to the extent of yelling that the play proceed, and the manager, after surveying the scene, preferred to try diplomacy before resorting to arms. His persuasions, and the reappearance of fair Nelly Hemmingway, helped to preserve order until the second act.

When the Yale campus, sacred fence and all, was profaned by a band of alleged students, who sang: "Bright College Years" in various stages of maudlin intoxication, and the football captain openly bet on his own team, even Jim Stearns was moved to righteous wrath.

THAT Altoona audience never knew how Jack Bruce was taken by "the Harvards" and how he escaped, in the nick of time, to win the game. It was Hector McGrath who cut the melodrama short by seizing the dramatic moment and shouting to his allies:

"Come on, fellows! Let's chase those muckers off the campus. It's a howling disgrace to let them sit on the fence. Up, guards, and at 'em!"

In any other circumstances, this insane suggestion would have been hooted down. The place and the motive conspired to make these usually reputable young men ripe for any folly, and they ardently desired satisfaction for what they viewed as an insult to their college. With a gleeful war cry, they followed Hector McGrath over the front row of seats, pell-mell among the amazed musicians, who dropped their instruments and scuttled beneath the stage for cover. Turning to one side, to skirt the end of the footlights, Hector vaulted upon the stage and after him streamed the Yale Glee Club, Jim Stearns lagging in the rear, much concerned for the fate of Nelly Hemmingway.

The hero, villain and lesser lights of "For Dear Old Yale" tarried not. Out-
numbered as they were, flight was no disgrace. Heavy-footed Bob Nolan, pompous to the last, stood his ground and would fain have stayed the onslaught with a burst of extempore eloquence, but he, too, gave way and fled, leaving a coat tail in the grasp of Hector McGrath. Halting at the fence, the attacking column turned to face the audience and cheered with spectacular effort.

Hector was at a loss to know what to do next, when Jim Stearns, who had been making a sally behind the scenery, ran back to announce:

"The manager is telephoning for a wagonload of police. Get out of this—quick!"

The triumphant undergraduates started to retreat by the route of their advance; but by this time the emotional horde in the gallery had decided that matters were going entirely too far. They were willing to permit a certain amount of foolery, as so much added entertainment; but when it came to spoiling the show entirely, something had to be done about it. Whereupon, they came clattering downstairs, en masse, with the intention of clearing the stage as promptly as possible. Hector McGrath's punitive expedition found its retreat cut off by a buzzing mob of very determined-looking railroad hands and other muscular patrons of the drama, who showed great willingness to engage at close quarters—the closer, the better, in the present circumstances:

Jim Stearns, no longer a laggard, was looked to as the natural leader in this awkward situation. He was spoiling for a fight; but he had: no seasoned band of picked football players to follow him in a hammer-and-tongs rush to gain the front exit. A glee club, however plucky, was hardly a match for these embattled sons of Altoona, who were no more than a dozen yards away, when he yelled to his friends to run for the stage door and escape as best they could.

There was a helter-skelter scramble back upon the stage, and the glee club sifted into the wings and scampered hither and yon to find the exits. Jim Stearns, disgusted with the situation, doggedly hung back, from a sense of duty, to act as a rear guard. Hector McGrath ran to him and insisted on sharing the post of danger.

"Make a sneak, you little fool!" said Jim. "One of those big huskies would make two bites of you."

Just then, a brawny miner leaped over a chair and swung a fist, which Jim Stearns parried, while Hector ducked behind him. Anxious to protect his comrade, whose courage far outmatched his physique, Jim closed with his assailant, floored him with two Herculean punches and began stubbornly to retreat. Catching up a heavy stool, he whirled it viciously and kept a path clear, while Hector scurried on ahead.

WHEN they stumbled out into an alleyway, Jim was dizzy from a blow behind the ear and nursing a set of bleeding knuckles. In silence, they ran heavily through soft snow until they were sure that pursuit had ceased. Then Stearns observed bitterly:

"I hope I never get mixed up with such a pack of idiots again! You and the whole crowd make me tired. A fine, sandy lot you are! It took a lot of nerve to chase a bunch of bum actors off the stage, didn't it? What if they did give a rotten show? They couldn't help it. Now where is that hotel? I'm going to bed and forget it."

Hector was silent. Perhaps these reproaches were deserved. He had been the ringleader. In the light of Jim's censure, it didn't seem like such good sport, after all. However, there was no mending matters and sulkily the two trudged along, until Jim said:
“You had better find Moffett and collect the crowd and steer them down to the car for the night. If you don’t, they will be racketing around town till all hours and stirring up trouble in the hotel and, most likely, getting into rows with some of those toughs who come after our scalps in the theater. Altoona looks like a hornets’ nest to me, thanks to your asinine conduct.”

They found Moffett, the glee-club manager, in the hotel office, and he promptly agreed with Jim Stearns. With much difficulty, the exuberant college songbirds were corralled and herded toward the railroad station, after one or two minor collisions with irate groups of homeward-bound gallery gods. Having driven the unruly flock into the car, Moffett and Hector McGrath counted noses and discovered that two freshmen were missing.

Fearing lest they might have fallen foul of the police, Jim Stearns suggested: “You stay here, Moffett, and take charge of things and Hector and I will run uptown and look for the fellows.”

As the searching party of two sallied into the night, Hector said, with returning cheerfulness:

“We ought to have a Saint Bernard dog, with a neat little rum cask strapped under his chin, Jim. That’s the proper way to rescue lost pilgrims in snowdrifts like this. I move we investigate the restaurants. Those two freshmen don’t drink, but they are confirmed victims of the eating habit.”

For Hector, the advice was unusually sane; and after two “cafés” and an “oyster house” had been investigated, the missing freshmen were discovered in an alcove of the “Little Delmonico,” playing havoc with a platter of steak and onions. Demanding an extra plate, Jim calmly helped himself. Hector followed suit, and the baffled freshmen meekly ordered more provender. Loath to leave this warm and cozy retreat and face the bitter cold, the quartet lingered, to smoke and talk about the evening’s episodes.

Jim Stearns commanded a view of the front door, from which his companions were screened by the partition of the alcove in the rear of the room and, while he chatted, he idly watched the patrons of the place drift in and out. The two freshmen were matching coins to decide who should foot the bill, when Jim looked up from this diverting gamble and saw the luckless Jack Bruce push back the door and hold it open for Neity Hemmingway and the comedy maiden aunt, who was down on the bills as Miss Agatha Trumbull. Behind them stalked ponderous Bob Nolan, grand even in disaster, frowning as though lost in thought.

They sought a table near the stove and, with some perturbation, Jim Stearns whispered to his friends:

“For Dear Old Yale” is getting ready to feed, just beyond the partition. If you want to introduce yourselves, go ahead. They’ll be delighted to meet you—not. I wouldn’t blame them if they put you in jail. I don’t want them to see me in such disgraceful company.”

“Is the pretty girl out there?” murmured Hector. “Now is your chance to make a grand-stand play and repudiate us. Go ahead. We won’t butt in.”

Jim flushed, scowled and put a finger to his lips.

Bob Nolan was saying, in his declamatory fashion: “Youth is cruel and thoughtless, my boy. One does not learn to feel for others until he himself has lived and suffered. Those college lads, who ruined our performance, did not regard us as human beings, seeking honestly to earn our bed and board under conditions of the most damnable adversity. We were material
for a joke, nothing more. Our play was not true to life as they knew it. But you and I neither wrote nor staged the wretched play."

"Which balderdash doesn't hide the fact that they acted like hoodlums and that it was the climax of our infernal luck to have a crowd of Yale cubs stranded in Altoona to-night," grumbled Jack Bruce. "How are we going to get out of town to-morrow? That's the real issue. This town isn't a frost—it's an iceberg."

"Such nice-looking boys, too. Wasn't it a shame!" said Miss Agatha Trumbull, smiling in spite of herself; and Nelly Hemmingway added, with a musical giggle which delighted Jim Stearns:

"It was funny when they cheered and guyed our friend the villain. They were courteous to me; so I can't be very angry with them."

This was, indeed, heaping coals of fire upon the scampish heads of the eavesdroppers beyond the partition and Hector McGrath, already uneasy in the region of his conscience, whispered to Jim:

"Do you really suppose they are flat broke? They don't seem to bank on their manager pulling them out of the hole. And they certainly are white and decent, to talk about us that way."

"You are the head devil of the lot. I'm glad you do feel mean about it," was Jim's unsatisfactory reply. "What hurts me is to hear that absurd old bag of wind, the villain, excuse us on the ground that we didn't treat them as human beings. He's right, Hector. I wish you fellows had had the sand to do the square thing and walk right up and apologize for the crowd. Hanged if I don't do it alone, if you won't back me."

"Couldn't we pass around the hat in our car?" queried an abashed freshman, who took his cue from the great Jim Stearns, captain of the eleven. If this demigod of the campus wished to make reparation, he was ready to chip in his last dollar.

"No, I can find a better way. These people are not beggars," snorted Jim, in high dudgeon; whereupon the freshman felt himself unutterably squelched.

Hector stared at the table and was evidently wrestling with a painful problem. Jim glowered at the wall, and the other freshman, who had not been annihilated, waited timorously to side with the majority.

The deciding voice was that of Nelly Hemmingway, who quavered, with a forlorn little sigh: "So the show is going to pieces in Altoona, of all places—and in a blizzard, at that! It's very bad walking to New York, isn't it?"

"Well, it isn't going to pieces, and I'm going to apologize for what we did to it!" declared Jim Stearns, in a voice that could have been heard across the street. With that, he kicked his chair aside, strode from the alcove and confronted the downhearted derelicts of "For Dear Old Yale."

Poor Bob Nolan gaped like a fish, threw up an arm, as if to fend off an assault, and sat staring up at the tall, commanding figure of the real Yale football captain, who felt awkward and hesitant as he stammered:

"I beg your pardon, but my name is Stearns. I am awfully sorry about the row in the theater to-night. So are the rest of the fellows. That is"—honest Jim blushed, fidgeted, and went on—"I hope they are. We didn't realize—I mean, they didn't know how unsuccessful your tour had been, and—and—the play is pretty bad, you know. It gives a wrong idea of Yale, and the fellows took it as a personal insult."

Jack Bruce looked up, with sullen anger in his tired eyes; but he was disarmed by the frank demeanor of this humble pleader for forgiveness and checked the hot words that were at his tongue's end. Bob Nolan, ever the-
atrial, was pleased with the “situation” and, gathering his wits, arose, with a courtly bow, and extended his hand to Jim, with the orotund greet-
ing:

“The quality of mercy is not strained, my dear boy. Far be it from me to spurn the impulse of an honest heart. Bygones are bygones.”

Jim grinned as he shook the veteran actor’s hand; but his eyes were for Nelly Hemmingway, who may have been moved to forget any grudges of her own by the fact that Jim Stearns was considered the best-looking man of his class. With a kindling interest mirrored in her fine eyes, she said:

“But why are you the scapegoat, Mr. Stearns? I saw you trying to quiet the others and make them behave them-
selves.”

Jim looked behind him, as though expecting a real culprit or two to re-enforce him. Hector McGrath could play the laggard no longer, and with a shamefaced demeanor he emerged from hiding, followed by the two fresh-
men. Inasmuch as Hector’s emotions and convictions were ever impatient of halfway measures, he was volubly re-
pellant and ready to eat any amount of humble pie, as he announced to the company:

“Here is the real villain of the plot, the blackest sinner of the crowd. I thoroughly dislike myself; and you are welcome to throw dishes at me, put me to the torture, or ring up a patrol wagon. As for these two freshmen with me, spanking is too good for them, and you may begin whenever you like. What else do you want me to say, Jim?”

Jack Bruce smiled in a sickly way and said: “It is very decent of you, I’m sure. Mr. Stearns looks strong enough to do the spanking. I’m willing to leave it to him.”

“He is captain of the Yale eleven and stroke oar of the crew,” cheerily

returned Hector, with the light of mis-
chief in his eye.

“Oh-h!” said Jack Bruce, who looked as if he would like to crawl under the table; while the girl was wicked enough to laugh at his obvious discom-
iture.

Jim Stearns put his hands in his pockets and shifted his feet, as though he did not know what to do next; but Hector was boiling with eagerness to express some kind of concrete sympathy and spoke up:

“I have an idea. When one of those things hits me, it cries for action. There must be something doing. Sit down, freshmen, and twirl your thumbs. Thank you—I will have a chair, if you don’t mind. Ho, waiter! Fetch me the menu. Now, as a repellant black-
guard and disturber of the peace, it is distinctly up to me to get busy and organize a strategy board. We put your company out of business and ‘For Dear Old Yale’ has something coming to it. What I propose doing, in behalf of the Yale Glee Club, is——”

Hector stopped in full flight; for the front door was banged open, and there entered Mr. Mike McCann, followed by a red-faced, truculent-looking gentle-
man in a long gray ulster, and a massive-looking individual, conspicuous for a blue uniform, many brass buttons and a cap lettered “Chief.” As they tramped toward the table, the good-
hearted Bob Nolan whispered to Jim Stearns:

“The beefy party is Hoskins, the manager of the show. He is bad medi-
cine, my boy. You’d better duck up-
stage.”

There was no time for “ducking.” Mr. Hoskins and Mike McCann, ex-
ploding simultaneously, mingled their denunciations, as follows:

“Here’s the very lad that put the show on the bum!”

“You thought you’d bluff it out, you gay little Willie boys, did you?”
“What do you think of the gall of ’em, anyhow?”

“Here, chief—do your duty. Pinch the lot, and I’ll appear against them in the morning. What the hell are our people doing with ’em? You can count on ’em as witnesses.”

The chief of police of Altoona was hanging back, as though in doubt. He pulled at his gray mustache, and Jim Stearns could have sworn that he winked at him. However, his duty was plain enough; the offenders had been guilty of disorderly conduct, riot and attempted assault and there was no lack of complainants.

Hector McGrath was flabbergasted by this tragic shift of events, and it was the more mature and masterful Jim Stearns who pulled himself together to meet the crisis. Even the belligerent manager subsided as the square-jawed football leader towered above him and said:

“This won’t do. You look to me like a rank four-flusher. You’re sore because your show is no good. We haven’t made you lose a dollar, and you know it. You ought to be jailed for putting such a cheap and nasty counterfeit of Yale College on the road. Your own people, here, will tell you that we have apologized and are ready to do the square thing—not because we have to, but because we are sorry for failing to be gentlemen to-night. Now, if you will shut up and cool off, I will talk it over with the rest of our crowd and persuade them to help your show, somehow, before we leave town. We can’t run away. You will find our car in the station, first thing in the morning. If you want to fight it to a finish, I guess we can hire lawyers enough to give you a run for your money.”

The chief of police laid hold of Mr. Hoskins and led him into an alcove, as though desirous of arranging a truce. Nelly Hemmingway softly clapped her hands and bestowed upon the valiant Jim so brilliant a glance of admiration that he forgot to watch for the dimple when she smiled. Bob Nolan thumped himself on the chest and hoarsely assured Jim:

“You were right in the spotlight that time, my boy! I couldn’t have carried it off better myself. It would have done credit to my rôle of Sir Hamilton Ashmead, when he defies The Duke. Unless I sadly err, you have put a crimp in our unpleasant friend Hoskins.”

Hector McGrath was sagaciously eying the chief of police, who was nodding a series of emphatic negatives to the protestations of the manager, as though unwilling to lug the miscreants off to jail. Mike McCann had been unable to resist the enticement of food and a cigar not made in Pittsburgh and was beginning to temper his wrath. It was the psychological moment for making a swift retreat, and Hector pointed at the door. Jim Stearns muttered assent and kicked the freshmen’s legs. As one man, the quartet clattered from the restaurant with fleeting farewells, in dumb show, to their friends of “For Dear Old Yale.”

LOSING no time in a forced march to the club’s car, they found Moffett their manager, and a wakeful group of comrades most melodiously declaring, in long-drawn close harmony: “I am Selling Kindling Wood To Get Along.”

They were about to assert their melodious praise of a certain “Little Old Red Shawl,” when Jim Stearns rudely ended the concert by delivering a concise narrative of the adventure in the restaurant, Hector chiming in with sun-dry lively embellishments. Finally, Jim declared, with much earnestness:

“I’ve called off the manager and the police, and we can make a sneak in the morning, if the snow blockade is broken. But the row is going to get
into the newspapers and it will be copied far and wide and it will queer the glee club. But, more than that, we owe these people something. They have acted like trumps. You ought to have seen them, broke and discouraged, yet trying to excuse us for behaving like young ruffians. It put a lump in my throat—honest, it did!—to hear that seedy, pompous old Bob Nolan telling me, as brave and fine as he could be, that ‘bygones were bygones,’ because we were not old enough to know better.”

“Well, what about it? I think you are dead right,” said Moffett; and the other singers murmured in concert: “Same here.”

Hector, who had been fidgeting with impatience, made haste to answer: “If you will agree to stay here to-morrow, I will tell you what I want to do. And it is a corker of a scheme! The club has made a pile of money on the trip. We planned to lay over in New York for Sunday and it means paying for the car only another day. If the crowd won’t stand for that, hanged if I won’t dig it up out of my own pocket.”

“We won’t kick about that part of it, if your campaign looks good, Hector,” said Moffett. “Fire away.”

Thus encouraged, Hector began to talk with great animation and, one by one, the sleeping songsters awoke, and crawled from their berths, to furnish an applauding chorus, clad in pajamas of many vivid hues. Hector’s eloquence took them by storm, and his program was so singularly entertaining and original that indorsement was noisily unanimous. At length, he turned to Jim Stearns and said, in conclusion:

“It’s only one o’clock, and I’m going to chase up to find the morning newspaper offices. We can catch the editors in time to tone down the story of the ruction and give them a red-hot sensation to take its place. Of course, we haven’t consulted the ‘For Dear Old Yale’ people; but they will fall over themselves to agree to it.”

NEXT day, Altoona, released from the grip of the storm, found something to talk about in the theatrical news. After reading the newspaper announcements, they found further diversion in scanning the emblazoned posters, which shouted from every store window and billboard. The mayor, the chief of police and other prominent citizens were personally interviewed by the indefatigable Hector Alonzo McGrath and given tickets for boxes. The editors had so tactfully glossed over the account of the riot in the theater that it appeared to be part of the bold and novel undertaking. As a result of the combined endeavors of the pacified Mr. Hoskins and the enterprising young men of the Yale Glee Club, the house was packed, and the “Standing Room Only” sign hung out, shortly after eight o’clock in the evening.

The curious audience found the first page of the program filled with the following announcement:

FOR ONE NIGHT ONLY!

The Great College Melodrama, FOR DEAR OLD YALE, is presented by its own company, supported by the Yale Glee Club and the real athletic heroes of the Yale campus. Captain James Montgomery Stearns, of the championship eleven which defeated Harvard and Princeton last season, will make a special appearance in one scene as Jack Bruce, who takes this part in the play.

In the great scene depicting the Yale campus and the famous fence, the chorus of college students will be played by the full strength of the genuine Yale Glee Club, nearly forty in number, who will sing the famous songs with which they have delighted splendid audiences during their present tour of thousands of miles in their own private car.

In the realistic football scene of the last act, when the students carry the victorious heroes from the field upon their shoulders, the players will be genuine Yale gladiators of the gridiron arena, who have worn the dark blue in battling for the fame of their college.
"That last statement is a bit strong," said Hector to Jim Stearns, as they waited in a dingy dressing room under the stage. "But I played football for a week in junior year, before the varsity captain fired me from the squad. Williamson was a substitute on your team and McArthur captained the freshman eleven. How is your nerve? Your final rehearsal this afternoon was all to the good. Lucky you don't have any lines to speak when you have the desperate struggle with the kidnappers. Too bad you can't do the final scene with Nelly Hemmingway, where she throws her arms around Jack Bruce's manly neck and kisses him—bing!—right on his noble countenance."

"You're too fresh," said Jim, and no make-up was needed to give his cheek a ruddy glow. "Say, Hector, this is more fun than a barrel of monkeys. Old Bob Nolan had tears in his eyes when he grabbed me by both hands, after sizing up the audience."

"They will have no tears to spare after seeing you act, Jim. Come along. There goes the curtain bell. I hope our gang of Indians won't get funny and try too many original stunts."

To this day, Altoona talks about the "all-star" staging of "For Dear Old Yale." What mattered it if the actors jumbled their lines and mislaid their cues? The crudely exaggerated melodrama was brought into focus, made genuine in its appeal and pervaded with the spirit of youth, by the presence of these rampant undergraduates, who did not try to act, but were merely themselves. They appeared on the stage when least expected and made a shifting background.

"Specialties" were introduced as the humor prompted. A sophomore who had won fame in college theatricals came on as an "old-clo' man," whose Hebraic personality and extraordinary dialect had been familiar to the Yale campus for a dozen years. He drove Bob Nolan to distraction by dogging his steps, in a vain effort to buy his flashy raiment for: "Two fifty—not a cent more, so help me!"

Moffett, the glee-club manager, shuffled on as Julius Caesar Jones, the venerable colored mascot of Yale athletics, and insisted on playing a scene from "Uncle Tom's Cabin," with Nellie Hemmingway as Little Eva. Now and then, the glee club strolled in, sang a rollicking chorus or two and called the villain names.

The action somehow proceeded, without a breakdown, until two freshmen and a junior proposed to Nellie Hemmingway while Jack Bruce was trying to tell her the story of his love. The long-suffering hero became peeved, and Jim Stearns came to the rescue by leading a party which grabbed the suitors bodily and hurled them off the stage.

The gallery was as friendly as it had been hostile the night before. There were such clamorous cries for the "real football captain" that Jim Stearns was compelled to share the curtain calls with Jack Bruce. In the kidnaping scene, his prowess was so formidable that, when the villain's henchmen tried to overpower him, he made a headlong diving tackle, caught the nearest assailant above the knees and propelled him, smash! into the footlights—and together they slid down among the musicians, with a discordant crash. The kidnaper was plucked from the ruins of the bass drum and welcomed to the stage amid frantic cheers by the delighted glee club.

"You're due to be kidnapped, you lunatic!" yelled Hector McGrath, as Jim was about to sail into the terrified conspirators with ardor renewed.

"Give 'em hell! You can lick the pack of 'em!" roared the top gallery. "You're the real thing!"

Jim surrendered, was neatly bound
and gagged and carted off to “a lonely barn on the outskirts of Bridgeport,” while his comrades sang:

“I don’t know where I’m goin’,
But I’m on my way.”

When the little group of students were disclosed, lounging along the wooden fence, with a row of ivy-clad dormitories on the back drop, the audience was quick to respond to the unique appeal of the scene. These were unmistakably undergraduates—a careless, wholesome, boyish company, with never a care in the world.

After the tangles had been unraveled and virtue was triumphant, the glee club added a tableau of its own. Crowding around Nelly Hemmingway, they pelted her with roses, for which Jim Stearns had scouted far and wide and sang to her alone:

“How can I bear to leave thee?
One parting kiss I give thee,
And then, whate’er befals me,
I’ll go where duty calls me.
Farewell, farewell, my own true love—
Farewell, farewell, my own true love!”

In genuine confusion, the girlish actress escaped as soon as she could; but, turning as she fled, she wafted kisses with both hands to her gallant admirers. The curtain fell, and the collegians trooped toward the stage-door exit.

Jim Stearns and Hector McGrath lingered to look for the jubilant Hoskins, who fairly fell upon their necks and bellowed:

“It was the greatest ever! Box-office receipts broke all records for Altoona. You’re thoroughbreds—God bless you! ‘For Dear Old Yale’ is on velvet, and we all feel like blubbering for joy. You’ve made some friends that’ll never forget you.”

“It wasn’t so much what you did for us, as the way you did it,” tremulously observed Bob Nolan, feeling for a handkerchief.

Jim Stearns smiled, with an emotion of honest affection for these grateful actor folks, and said, as he shook hands:

“It was the best we could do, but no more than we ought to do. Our car will be hitched to the New York express that goes through at midnight; so I guess this is good-by. If you come to New Haven, we will give you another good time.”

He moved toward the door, reluctant to depart without saying good-by to Nelly Hemmingway. Perhaps she desired to see the Yale football captain again; for she happened to be standing at the top of the stairs that led down to the dressing rooms.

“I—I don’t know your right name, Miss Hemmingway,” said Jim. “Anyway, I want to say good-by—and, if it isn’t too cheeky, I’ll say something else. I wish I were the stage football captain, instead of the real Yale captain. My scene on the stage wasn’t nearly long enough. It was a blessing of a blizzard that gave me a chance to meet you.”

She gazed up at his clean-cut, resolute face, and smiled—a little wistfully. Honest and tender were those frank gray eyes of his; alight with a passing fancy, perhaps, but nevertheless disquieting. Her slim fingers toyed nervously with a ribbon of the white frock in which she had played the part of a professor’s daughter.

“It has given me sincere pleasure to know you, Mr. Stearns,” she said, with feeling in her voice to make the reply more than a commonplace. “You will have a better opinion of us player folk, won’t you? Thanks to you and your friends, Altoona will stay bright in my memory. Tell them good-by for me, please.”

“But I don’t want it to be good-by for me,” murmured Jim. “I can’t let it be good-by. Won’t you let me write to you, and——”
She started and bade him hush, with a quick, appealing gesture. Jim turned, to follow her gaze. Jack Bruce was coming toward them—by no means a heroic figure, even in his football make-up. Jim stole a glance at the girl and fancied that her mobile face had clouded. Before Jack Bruce, the stage lover, had addressed them, she said quickly to Jim, as if it were better to have done with what must be told him:

“My husband will want to thank you, too. I am Mrs. Walter Jeffrey, off the stage.”

“Jack Bruce is your husband!” gasped Jim. “I'll be—Oh, certainly, Mrs. Jeffrey! I shall be delighted to say good-by to him, too.”

As one in a trance, Jim Stearns managed to speak a few words of perfunctory greeting and, not daring to look at the silent girl, he clasped her offered hand, which lingered in his for an instant, and bowed gravely, as he murmured:

“I beg your pardon. But what is said—is said!”

As he hurried from the theater, Hector McGrath overtook him and remarked, as they turned into the street:

“I was watching you from the door-way, Jim. Did you do anything foolish? When will the wedding bells ring out? I thought I was going to carry you back to New Haven, unscathed, this trip.”

“She is married to that actor, Jack Bruce,” gloomily replied the other.

“Um-m! By jingo, she did look sorry to have me go! I'll swear to it!”

“I don’t doubt it, Jim. They all do. But that isn't what we have tarried in Altoona for, after all. Think of the fun we have had and the good we've done. Now, it's back to the good old campus and hurrah for dear old Yale. 'Ships that pass in the night, my boy,' as Bob Nolan would say.”

Jim strode onward, in meditative silence, while Hector hummed aloud:

“When I was a student at Cadiz, I played on the Spanish guitar; I used to make love to the ladies—”

Jim Stearns flung his arm across his companion's shoulder and cried, with his old heartiness:

“Right you are! And aren’t you glad we were marooned in Altoona? We have played square and helped some folks that were down and out. And, after all, that is a good deal more worth while than the girl proposition.”

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**HIS LIMITATIONS**

An Eastern senator of the United States, like many another father, has a son whose fondness for absorbing an education is neither great nor constant. For a while the eloquent maker of laws was patient, paying the boy's bills without a protest and saying nothing about the derelictions in study. But the time came when suffering paternal solicitude could no longer keep silent.

“My dear boy,” he wrote on the impressive looking Senate stationery, “I am delighted to know from your enthusiastic letters that you are such a hero on the gridiron. I am proud of your success and your popularity. Still, I think you ought to remember that there are other things in college than football.”

In three days he received a respectful and acquiescent answer.

“What you say is all right, of course, dad,” the son wrote, “but, darn it all! I'm too light for the crew, and I'm kept off the baseball team because I can't hit .049!”
A Chat With You

HERE we are, writing or talking to you every two weeks! And how often do you write to us? We do not adopt the vain pose of those who say they receive too many letters and simply cannot attend to their correspondence. Setting aside bills—which are inevitable, just like death and taxes—we never have had letters enough. We are still young enough to slit open each envelope with a pleasing anticipation. Perhaps it is some rich, but hitherto unknown uncle, who has decided to remember us in his will. Perhaps it is from an interesting girl. Perhaps from a pleased reader of the magazine. Anyway, there is nothing more romantic than a stamped, sealed envelope with our name on it. Until we open it, it contains all the mysterious potency, all the unspoiled charm of the beginning of things. It is like a ring at the doorbell in a lonely house on a dark night. Who can be on the other side? Perhaps it is the fiend, Beelzebub. Perhaps, on the other hand, it is the Angel Gabriel.

* * * * *

THERE is much of value in what Roy Norton says. A magazine, if it amounts to anything, must have the cooperation of authors, editors and readers. Do you like this magazine? Do you read it regularly? Do you disapprove of everything in it? Hardly, or you would not be reading it now. Do you like everything in it? We hope so, but when we say "everything"—perhaps that is too much to hope or ask for. Do you like some things better than others? Undoubtedly you must, if you are a person of taste, for all taste is individual. So then, if you please, may we hear from you?

* * * * *

IF you want to praise an author it is not necessary to praise him to his face. One author said to us the other day:

"The darned thing about it is this: If they want to praise my work, they write to me; if they want to roast it, they write to the editor."
They Hardly Know Themselves Today

They conquered constipation, corrected skin and stomach disorders, renewed youthful optimism . . . . with the aid of One Food

NOT a “cure-all,” not a medicine in any sense—Fleischmann’s Yeast is simply a remarkable fresh food.

The millions of tiny active yeast plants in every cake invigorate the whole system. They aid digestion. Where cathartics give only temporary relief, yeast strengthens the intestinal muscles and makes them healthy and active. And day by day it releases new stores of energy.

Eat two or three cakes regularly every day before meals: on crackers—in fruit juices or milk—or just plain. For constipation especially, dissolve one cake in hot water (not scalding) before breakfast and at bedtime. Buy several cakes at a time—they will keep fresh in a cool dry place for two or three days. All grocers have Fleischmann’s Yeast. Start eating it today!


"The spring of 1924 is memorable to me for what I suffered through loss of sleep, nervousness—general run-down condition; for six continuous weeks I endured boil after boil on neck and back, and naturally I looked a ‘wreck.’ Kind people recommended Yeast, but it took a well-known physician to convince me. I can truly say that before I had finished one week’s treatment of two yeast cakes a day, I felt a change in my system. Every boil disappeared, my skin cleared, my strength increased. I feel different and look it. Life seems to hold more ‘pep.’"

Roberta O’Brien, Montreal, Can.

"I was afflicted with chronic constipation for years. My attention was drawn to a lecture given by a doctor who spoke on Constipation and advised as a cure Fleischmann’s Yeast, together with other proper foods. On my way home, I went into a grocery and asked for Yeast. After I had taken the Yeast for a period of three weeks, my condition improved remarkably. My outward appearance had a decided change for the better, and I still continue to take my Fleischmann’s Yeast." ALEXANDRA GAINE, New York City.

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Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements
I had an old lather brush. It was worn and weary. Its bristles were down to less than an inch. It was an antique, and had that kind of odor.

A new brush seemed indicated. I bought one. I bought some more. Home-make and import. From $2.50 up—way up. My ambition was not to make a collection, but I succeeded. None of 'em would do.

Then we developed the Mennen Lather Brush. Oh, man! It's the real thing. Soft and silky. Won't prick the skin. Works up the lather quickly, richly and plenty. I never knew there was so much lather in the world. Spreads smoothly over the cheek area and snuggles into the corners, too. Easily the equal of any $4-priced brush—if not better. I buried the old brush, with tears in my eyes.

I got Mr. Mennen to let me sell 100,000 at the special price of $1.25. They'll sell like Mennen Shaving Cream.

Send me a section of a Mennen Shaving Cream carton showing the trade-mark and $1.25 and I'll mail you yours. Your money back if you don't think it's a bargain.

You've been using Mennen Shaving Cream and Mennen Talcum for Men ever since they captured the preference of millions.

But have you tried Mennen Skin Balm—after shaving? Gives a tingle, then cooling comfort—brisk, refreshing, antiseptic.

JIM HENRY
(Mennen Salesman)

THE MENNEN COMPANY
377 Central Ave., Newark, N.J., U.S.A.

4 out of 5
see him too late

Don't let carelessness or a false feeling of security give dangerous pyorrhea a chance to fasten itself in your mouth. Four out of five have this dread infection at forty, and many younger, according to dental statistics.

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The entire family should brush with Forhan's. It's a pleasant tasting dentifrice that firms the gums and keeps them pink and healthy. It gives the teeth a thorough cleansing and keeps them white and clean.

You can't begin using Forhan's too soon. Delay may exact a heavy toll. It's unwise to take chances with pyorrhea. Get your tube of Forhan's today. All druggists: 35c and 60c in tubes.

Formula of R. J. Forhan, D.D.S.
Forhan Company, New York

FORHAN'S
FOR THE GUMS
More than a tooth paste—it checks pyorrhea

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements
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