

20 CENTS

ROMANCE

JANUARY
1920



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MARY HEATON VORSE
JAMES FRANCIS DWYER
JACK HINES
CHARLES NEVILLE BUCK
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ROMANCE

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Adventure

ROMANCE, by printing the work of the best known American and English writers, and side by side with it the work of less known and unknowns, is giving new writers the best and quickest possible chance to be measured and recognized. It gives its readers the chance to be the first to welcome the coming big ones. A new writer usually has to toil his way up through the pages of magazines which the discriminating reader seldom sees, and general endorsement of his work comes long after it is deserved. A good story is often underestimated because it appears in poor company. Romance wipes out both these disadvantages. Its readers—and the aim of Romance, fundamentally and throughout, is to reach readers who make their judgments for themselves—will have the pleasure not only of giving recognition to good work that deserves it, but of discovering new talent and, by their encouragement, helping it to develop. Which is the biggest possible service to contemporary fiction. In addition to that is the fun of investing in the future—giving one's self the chance to say, "I told you so" about the names all the world will some day recognize.

Will you—the readers—tell the editor what you think of our authors? Especially the new ones—how do they compare with the old, and what promise have they of being great when they are old themselves?

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JOSEPH CONRAD

CHARLES NEVILLE BUCK

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And these short stories:

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"The Incident of the Pump-Room".....	Agnes and Egerton Castle
"Ruby Red".....	Chester L. Lyman
"The Playboy of the Back Street".....	Patrick and Terence Casey
"Ginger".....	Oliver Sandys
"Mrs. Barton and Samuel Trainor".....	Marion Delcomyn
"All There Is".....	Caroline Simmons



Tiger Lure

BY T. S. STRIBLING

A Complete Novelette

THE United Rubber Company has a post at Taos, a structure in old Spanish mission style built of cemented shells. It was once a mission, I believe, then a fort and now a post. It stands naked in a furnace of sunshine in the center of what the *mestizos* are pleased to call their plaza; that is a space of ground some fifty yards wide beaten perfectly bare and hard by naked feet instead of beaten dusty by shod ones. Beyond the plaza the jungle sets in like the hair on a woman's head, glossy, lush and fragrant.

On the down-river side of the post is an arcade that used to be a cloister, but now the natives rent little trading stalls between the columns and this forms the village market. An odor of stale fish, onions, shrimp and chilli pervades the plaza, yet somehow it is not so very disagreeable. It is a kind of scraped-clean, dried-out smell that one meets anywhere in Venezuela.

Only three persons were in sight when I piled my traps off the *bolunga*. A ponderous Chinese in a flapping shirt concocted chilli in one of the stalls. Near him his brown Arawak wife stretched like a cat on some bags of beans; the girl's hips were nearly vertical while her torso was twisted to a horizontal with the svelt flexibility of youth. The celestial understood, perhaps, a dozen words of her Arawak. She was part of his furniture, a little more or a little less dear than his pipe.

The third person in the plaza was a

half-breed called Jesu Diabolo, although that could hardly have been his name. The first thing one noticed about Jesu was his one good eye, and a dirty bluish flap over the shrunken socket of the other. This flap he evidently meant to accord in color with his single pale protruding ball. It produced a queer effect, that pale eye against his leather-colored face gleaming at me from the shadow of his sombrero. Add to this bow legs and the wide black mustache of a *ranchero* and there stands Jesu Diabolo insultingly to the life.

When he saw my traps put out of the *bolunga*, he loitered down, inspecting them with his one eye, then he shifted it to my khaki, evidently trying to connect me with my baggage. He removed his sombrero with a grace of which no misfortune deprives a South American.

"Pardon, *señor*, do you sell traps?" he inquired in Spanish.

I shook my head.

"*Señor Americano* is not a trapper himself?" he asked in surprise.

"I trap birds," I replied in his tongue.

"Then we are brothers, *señor*." He swept his broad hat in a bow so low that his bluish flap hung perpendicularly from his swart face. "I am a fur-trapper and a trader. I compose an animal scent, *señor*, absolute kill—" these two words he said in English with a show of pride—"and if I could serve you—"

I followed his smooth Spanish with aversion. At that first sight there was

something so repellent about Jesu Diabolo that I felt a nervous impatience to be rid of the fellow as quickly as possible.

"If you would direct me to the alcalde," I suggested, "it would be more than I can repay."

Jesu Diabolo indicated the old mission with another sweep and bow and, to my distaste, preceded me.

The alcalde was a small dapper man who sat dozing at a baized table in the cool dark interior of the mission. The place was a hotchpotch. Near the desk in a small cabinet was the *officina correos*, or that is, the Taos post-office. Big pear-shaped balls of caoutchouc heaped in one end of the room was the warehouse of the rubber company. On the desk before the mayor were some yellow blanks which represented the company's office. Here and there were a few writs and summonses which he used in his civil capacity. On top of this litter, a carafe of water, a flask of spirits, some oranges and a battered guitar garnished the alcalde's desk.

The man himself proved a very friendly and a very curious little body. In answer to a string of brisk questions, I told my name and business, offered my passport and inquired for lodgings with a family who could speak English.

The alcalde picked up a cigaret stub from the edge of the table.

"The only linguist in Taos is Señor Monan."

Jesu Diabolo who had picked up the guitar and touched its strings, now muted them abruptly.

"You do not fancy Señor Monan would accept a lodger?" he commented.

The alcalde seemed amused:

"All Señor LeFever can do is to try, is it not, Jesu? Señor Monan's hacienda seems to encourage perseverance, eh?"

He winked at me to mark some unknown joke, took a last puff at his cigaret, tossed away the stub and laughed.

"You will waste your time, *señor*," discouraged Jesu, shifting his one good eye to me.

The alcalde reached for pen and paper.

"I'll write a little note of introduction. It may help. You present this, Señor LeFever."

He blotted, folded and handed it to me.

Jesu plainly disapproved, but he took himself off the corner of the table, slung the

guitar cord around his neck and indicated a willingness to direct me to Señor Monan's. We left the alcalde preparing a drink with his liquor and oranges and smiling to himself.

As we stepped from the gloomy interior, the intense sunshine dazzled my eyes. Heat reflected from the plaza filtered through my khaki with a feeling of vermiculation. It was the hour of siesta and everything in the square slept. The lithe Arawak woman lay motionless, face down on the beans; her ponderous Chinese owner sat supine amid his pots and blinked at her through dozing eyes. On the side of the wall a green lizard slept in an ecstasy of heat. In this land of ascians, we trod on our shadows, splotches of ultramarine, which dyed our feet and legs in its color.

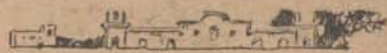
Jesu lead the way, his bare soles made no sound on the hard paths that meandered from hut to hut in the jungle. We passed perhaps a dozen thatched cabins. Here and there a dog or a child slept. Of all Taos, only we two moved.

THE half-breed talked at first, but presently swung his guitar about and began strumming its strings. From simple chords he evolved a plaintive melody that presently shaded off into the beat and insistence of negroid music; then he embroidered his theme with Spanish flourish and bolero. His aria, I think, suggested words, for he began singing softly at first; then after a phrase or two, his voice arose to a silver power that astonished me. He appeared to forget that I followed.

A fancy came to me that perhaps he was singing so loudly and so passionately to reach the ears of some sleeping girl in one of the huts. The music distressed me; it was too suggestive, too lickerish to be sung by one man in the presence of another. It gave my distaste for the fellow a greasy flavor.

After a while the song stopped suddenly. We had come to an open space in the rank vegetation and now Jesu swung his guitar out of the way and stepped aside to let me pass.

"Señor Monan lives yonder," he pointed toward a copse of palms. "You will see his house when you pass into the cleared space." He looked at me queerly, then added, "I hope, *señor*, you catch your bird."



I paused, hardly knowing whether to offer pay or not. When I made a slight movement toward my pocket he stiffened visibly, and I let it pass. I thanked him briefly, ungraciously, perhaps, glad to be rid of him. Jesu, like his song, was too chromatic for a white man's taste.

I moved into the open field with a relieved feeling and paused to look at Señor Monan's house. It was a sprawling sequence of adobes, sun-washed, with walls punctured here and there by narrow barred windows. The field around about was planted with aisles of moriche palms, which furnish the natives with wine, bread, rope, cloth, what not.

As I stood observing my prospective lodgings a queer thing happened. I heard an insect-like drone and something tipped my sun-helmet. I reached up to brush away some beetle or other and discovered a little nick in the rim of my helmet. I removed the hat and looked at the place, puzzled.

I still stood with my finger in the nick when in the distance Diabolo began singing again. I listened and looked until his voice faded to nothing and the vast silence of the siesta once more comprehended Taos. Then I walked down a wide palm aisle toward the adobe.

When I pulled the bronze lion's foot in Señor Monan's iron-grilled door, a gong clashed inside and lost itself in a vibrating hum. After a period of lifelessness, came a shuffling approach from the inside and the clatter of bars lowered. Then a panel in the heavy door slid back and discovered an ancient shriveled negress with a huge key which she applied to a corresponding section of the grille.

As she opened it, I drew out the alcalde's note to her master. To my surprise she did not even glance at me or my letter, but began exerting her feeble strength to re-close the iron bars. Apparently her duty began and ended with the opening and shutting of the panels. I stepped inside with a queer sense of swinging aboard a passing train. Even then the ancient appeared not to observe my entrance, which brushed her dirty skirt, but continued automatically relocking the bars.

For a moment I watched her and then turned to my surroundings. The hall was large, cool and poverty-stricken, with time-stained touches here and there remi-

niscant of luxury. A portière of faded silk half curtained one end of the passage; a painting in a tarnished gilt frame hung from the wall. A rose jar with fresh roses perfumed the passage and suggested a woman. Two silver-chased dueling swords crossed above a door which I guessed led into some ancient *Salle des Armes*.

This last surmise was verified by a man stepping out from under the weapons holding in his hands a carbine which he appeared to be cleaning. He was a thin nervous man with a worn-out face in which burned inquisitorial eyes. For a moment he regarded me with an embarrassing scrutiny. I held out my note a little awkwardly, I am afraid, and began an explanation in English. I told him I wanted to trap birds in Taos for an ornithological institution and that I had been directed to him as the only English-speaking citizen in Taos.

The señor smiled dryly, then deprecated accepting a guest in what he called his poverty-stricken ruins. He used English without accent, but with that rigid grammatical structure noticeable among cultivated foreigners.

I insisted that his thick adobe walls would be a great boon to a man from Northern latitudes if he could spare me a room.

He interrupted with a gesture. It was not lack of rooms. He could offer me a suite of rooms, but—he paused with some serious objection, I believe, on his lips, but finally turned it into a fear that I would find time dull on my hands among his sprawling adobes. I assured him I had not come to Venezuela for distraction; then our conversation drifted to birds, and finally he asked me how I had found my way to the hacienda. I told him a half-breed called Jesu Diabolo had guided me.

For some reason this seemed to allay a faint suspicion of me that still lingered in the back of my host's mind. He nodded.

"Yes, I heard Jesu Diabolo singing when you entered my clearing, and from this distance I thought you were he. However, as you did not dodge back into the jungle, I knew I was mistaken."

"When I did not dodge back?" I accented, mystified.

"When you did not dodge back," returned the don noncommittally.

He replaced the carbine in a stand of



arms. A barred window just above the stand was as narrow as a loop-hole. As he put back the firearm, I observed a Maxim silencer affixed to the carbine's muzzle.

Then a tentative and ghastly connection played through my mind between the fact that Jesu had some cause to dodge and the silencer and the droning buzz that had nicked my helmet. I looked at Señor Monan curiously but found a difficulty in opening the topic. A moment later he led the way for me to make choice of what rooms I would occupy.

II

I HAVE no object in making of Señor Monan a mystery, although for several days he was a mystery to me. But no man, I take it, can remain permanently without a confidant. Men have been gregarious for too many millions of years; he has communicated his thoughts and emotions for too many epochs for any individual in this era of grace to place a seal upon his heart.

During the evenings, Señor Monan and I played at cribbage or dominoes and sometimes his daughter L'wanna sat in our games or made lace near us at another table. Very slowly the *señor* began to unfold himself, a little bit at a time, until within perhaps a week of evenings, I discovered why he had hesitated to receive me into his home—an extraordinary thing amid the uniform hospitality of Venezuela.

Señor Monan was implicated in some sort of political trouble in Caracas, an *emeute*, an uprising, I never understood the details. His followers had lost, and now any day he was expecting arrest and a long imprisonment or even severer punishment. I had known that Venezuela was one of the most unquiet of South American states, but it seemed odd in this somnolent village to find an insurrectionist. Before this fiasco, it seemed, he once held a consulship to England. Now he confined himself to this plantation of moriche walks which belonged to a friend in Caracas and where he hoped to escape suspicion and elude arrest.

The *señor* explained all this with the detachment of a third person, but L'wanna, after the manner of weeping girls, wiped her black eyes on the least possible corner of

her handkerchief that would serve, then silently went on with her lace-making.

At other times I saw L'wanna in the patio snipping roses for her jar or trying to make friends with the butterflies. An endless variety of these insects floated over the adobe into the flower plot; heliconias, silver-wings, and half a dozen other species I did not know. Once I saw her persuade a brilliant blue Morphos to poise on the tip of her finger and suck a drop of honey.

She was but a child on the dewy side of sixteen, and her face! Sometimes I think Catholic mothers, when praying to the Holy Virgin with their tiny ones asleep beneath their hearts—I think, maybe, the grace of Our Lady of Sorrows must be kissed upon those dawning features. I don't know, but standing in my window, I have laid down the snares and gins of my profession and tried to explain so vivid and so pure a loveliness.

The avi-fauna of Venezuela opened a larger field to me than I had expected. It contains fifty-odd species of humming-birds alone. One day as I was constructing some close-meshed cages to receive my catch of these exquisite little creatures, Señor Monan and L'wanna came into my workshop.

The girl watched me curiously and finally asked me how I caught the birds. I explained the different traps, snares, limes and nooses. As she considered each article, she pressed her full lips together and with a little shudder declared that they reminded her of the racks and thumbscrews and pillories in the museum at Caracas and that she would look at them no more.

She would have left the room, but her father reminded her that she was my hostess and I her guest. She remained a few moments longer, looking about my shop with such an air of repressed horror that it embarrassed me in my work. Finally she made some excuse and went out into the patio.

Señor Monan was distressed over the slight occurrence.

"I suppose I am to blame for it," he told me. "When L'wanna was a tiny thing, she wanted a bird and a cage. I explained to her the cruelty—I mean the cruelty it would have been for pleasure," he corrected tactfully, "not cruelty for scientific purposes. I suppose she remembers it." Then he added, "Her great grandfather on my

mother's side was Simon Bolivar. Somehow our family have never been able to endure prisons or prisoners."

With the completion of the cages I began collecting specimens. A remarkable trapping-ground lay before me in the jungle around Señor Monan's palm walks. Birds were everywhere. They ranged from little tyrant fly-catchers that snapped mosquitoes along the pathside to flocks of flamingoes moving in a red line against the green wall of the distant jungle. Yellow cassiques and lavender jays glinted among the palm crests; macaws, toucans, parakeets screamed through the forest. Yet with this fullness of life I was strangely unfortunate.

I laid a course of traps extending from the Rio Tigre some mile and a half back into the jungle. Twice a day I made the round—in the cool mornings and afternoons. After trapping two days without a specimen, I began to wonder seriously what was wrong with my gins. One morning I reset them very carefully and determined to revisit them at noon notwithstanding the oppressive heat.

SO AFTER luncheon, during siesta, I slipped away from the sleeping household and set out for the river. I was almost to the water's edge when I saw something brilliantly red moving slowly through the undergrowth. I hurried forward as quietly as possible, slipping through lianas, bamboo and saw grass, when I saw through an interstice that it was Jesu Diabolo carrying in his hand the wings of a scarlet ibis. He was just stepping into a native *bungo* to put out into the river, but at my call he looked about and waited.

When he caught sight of me struggling through the vines he lifted his sombrero.

"I was just thinking of you, *señor*."

"You ought to be," I declared, suddenly understanding the disappearance of my catch.

"How go the birds?" he asked impudently.

"Fast enough," I returned, looking pointedly at the flaming wings in his hands.

"Do you catch a great many?" His assurance made me angrier every moment.

"More than I collect!" I snapped.

"Perhaps something robs your traps, *señor*," he suggested with composure.

I looked at the fellow wondering how much further he would carry his effrontery.

"What price do you get for ibis wings?" I asked, trying to keep the temper out of my voice.

He glanced negligently at the beauties in his hand.

"Five pesos."

"To me," I said smoothly, "they are worth twenty-five pesos, and a living scarlet ibis is worth a hundred pesos. In the future, my good Jesu, if you will kindly leave my birds in my traps, I'll pay you your five pesos as a bounty or tax or blackmail, whatever you please to call it—but let my birds alone!"

I hardly know what I expected Jesu Diabolo to do, but he surprised me by laughing immoderately until tears dripped down the side of his nose from his one good eye.

"Ah, you American wits!" he gasped. "Such dry jokes! Such droll sayings! I have heard how amusing you were, but I never thought, I n-never d-dreamed—"

He sputtered into laughter again, then presently sobered and continued:

"Unfortunately, *señor*, it would do you no good to pay me blackmail or tariff or tax. I cut these wings from a bird which I used to bait a camoudie trap." By this time he had become entirely sober and now looked at me with his habitual craft. "Suppose I go around with you. I might suggest something. A skunk or a sloth or a lynx may rob your traps. A tree-trap might stop them."

Now I did not want the fellow with me at all, but that lying amenity which society instills into all of us caused me to stay my steps for him, and we went on together.

As we pushed our way through the steaming undergrowth he told me that for some time he had intended to call upon me.

"It would be agreeable to you," he proceeded delicately, "if I should take the liberty of calling?"

"Charmed," I agreed out of custom.

Diabolo turned to look at me with his one pale eye.

"Will you really admit me, *señor*?"

"Why—y-yes," I assented in surprise.

"And say nothing about it?"

"Why not?" I asked still—

"Is it possible you—flowers fallen from a happiness?" cried some clods of fresh earth. one in Taos—of the sticks which some liana "I have had bound to another in a rude "The" and stirred the clay with it. He

away some gnats that gathered about his dirty flap. "Señor Monan fires at me point-blank the moment I appear within range of his mansion. He is an unsocial fellow. Bah!"

The half-breed shrugged his shoulders with Latin carelessness.

With a crawly feeling I recalled the Maxim silencer and the little nick in my helmet. I wondered if on my first day in Taos, Jesu had led me deliberately under fire? I turned and stared at the man's queer face with its detestable bluish flap. It reminded me of a rattlesnake that had moulted everything except an eye-scale.

"Why is Monan so pointed in his discouragement of your society?" I inquired at last.

The Diabolo shrugged again.

"Merely because I tried to steal his daughter, *señor*, that is all. It is a custom among my mother's people, the Arawaks. We steal our wives. And a fine custom it is, *señor*, swift, dramatic, the ambush, the sudden rush."

"You—tried to steal L'wanna?" I cried with a slack jaw.

"Such a voice!" exclaimed the half-breed impatiently. "I was not trying to steal a dog or a pig or a bird wing, *señor*, nothing of value!" he defended sharply.

"But L'wanna!" I cried with a sinking heart. "Why, man, she's but a child!"

"Child!" scoffed Jesu. "*Madre de Dios!* What would you call a woman—one in the grave? She is sixteen—" He whistled. "She ought to be a grandmother."

There was an ophidian fascination in the half-breed's face as he went on.

"I would be a good husband to the little pantheress, but no—this proud don—no, he is angry if I woo her as the Arawaks, and behold he will not allow me to woo her as Spaniards do. If I sing a song in her hearing, out he jumps with his rifle like a jack-in-the-box! As to talking through the bars of her window, I might as well talk to the stars!" He clenched his slender brown hands in nervous tension. "Unless—unless—"

He bent upon me such a pale evil look he hoped to arrest.

The *señor* explained all and admit me to detachment of a third person, but ing. Leave after the manner of weeping girls, wif. If you black eyes on the least possible corn.

His voice retreated to a dry whisper even in the silence of the sleeping jungle.

IT SUDDENLY struck me, as I stared at him, that a serpent crawling toward a dove's nest is moved by no immoral impulse. It acts from a simple powerful desire without any complication of conscience. To Jesu Diabolo, obtaining L'wanna was no more a question of morals than plucking a mango. She was difficult to reach, that was all.

Yet queer to say his unmorality filled me with a greater loathing than if he had shown a comprehending contumacy. But he was as innocent as a dagger.

I don't know what—perhaps something about the pallor of my face, my unsteady breathing, suggested to the half-breed that I sympathized with him in his mania. Or perhaps Jesu Diabolo, like Señor Monan, was a lonely man, isolated from his kind by the ridicule of the village. At any rate, through clay-colored lips, the Indian began a molten outpouring in my ear.

"*Dios*, one mistake, *señor*, one little mistake and a man regrets it forever. I lie awake all night when the moon is full, thinking of what might be if I only had her, if only I had clung to her when I gripped her in my arms! Oh, she could spit in my face, stab me, burn me with fire—"

Little drops of sweat stood out on Jesu's face and moistened the edge of his bluish flap so that he had to shake off the gnats. His face was gray.

"*Señor*," he went on, and the force of his heart-beats shook his tones, "when a man loses the greatest quarry of all, he thinks of it forever. He thinks how he might have saved his game, might have won. Over and over I think just how I did it—how I ought to have done it.

"Every night as I lie staring into the moon, I creep again into Señor Monan's house. The *señor* is gone, but she is there in the patio cutting flowers. Oh, *señor*, lifting her white arms this way and that! I creep, creep—leap upon her! I grip her in my arms, soft, writhing, a tiger's cub smelling of roses!

"Oh *Madre de Dios!* I am drunk! I rush for the outside! The old negro woman blocks my way with an ax! Then I make my terrible mistake, I lift an arm to parry the edge. Like a flash she is out of my arms, gone—gone—gone—into a door

that locks when it slams, then another, slamming, locking, slamming, locking—no end of rooms in the cursed place!"

Sweat poured off Jesu Diabolo. He gripped a tembuse vine and shook it in a fury of despair, crying:

"Fool! Fool! Fool! To lose her in an instant! The old woman could only have split a shoulder or a few ribs——"

As I watched his outburst, never have I felt such violent hatred for any of the spawn of the earth. A furious impulse to murder him seized me. I searched my pockets with shaking fingers. I found my pocket-knife; it was sizable. I had it out. I fumbled open the blade.

Suddenly Jesu, who was looking at me intently, gave a queer laugh. Then he laughed more. He sat down by the tembuse vine and laughed loudly and sardonically.

Quite suddenly he checked his uproar and asked—

"What are you going to trim, *señor*?"

I made no reply.

"That was an Arawak joke, *señor*," he explained looking at my knife. "I am half Arawak and half Spanish. This time I jest like the Arawaks about a woman—the woman *señor* loves, eh?"

He winked his good eye at me with monstrous effect.

I stared at him with hammering heart.

"Did you not jest with me about stealing these wings?" he inquired placidly. "Very funny, very droll. Now I give you my Arawak jest about your woman, eh?" He stood up, shrugged, took a deep breath and said, "Now where are the traps, *señor*?"

His lie was so absurd, I thought before I killed him, I would show it to him to his teeth.

"Why does Señor Monan fire on you at sight, Jesu Diabolo?" I whipped out.

Jesu opened his single pale eye in astonishment.

"He does not shoot, Señor LeFever!"

I jerked off my sun-helmet and thrust it into his hands.

"How came that nick in the straw?" I could scarcely keep from leaping on him.

He examined the chipped place with passing interest, ran a finger over the raw edge, then observed carelessly——

"Moths, *señor*. Camphor and pepper are good."

"That's a bullet-hole from Señor Monan's carbine, Jesu Diabolo!" I cried, growing more angry at his flimsy tissue of lies. "And you did attempt to kidnap L'wanna!"

"How absurd!" defended the half-breed. "He would have the law on me in a moment. Kidnap—why, I should be garroted!"

"The *señor* has good enough reasons for keeping away from the law," I replied hotly, "or he would have——"

"I know very little of Señor Monan," declared Jesu, "if he is criminal—is he criminal?"

I could have bit my tongue for giving the information. Now I had more incentive than ever to stab him, but for that very reason—it is difficult to explain—because my motives were mixed and so in a way were selfish; because I now had two impulses, one weighing against the other, my vengeance became impossible.

I think Jesu sensed the dilemma goring in my brain, for he whistled a phrase of his detestable song, shrugged his shoulder again and at last made a placating movement and said in a commonplace tone—

"If the *señor* will show me his snares, I will set my traps and protect him."

I MARVELED at the lightness with which he came back to easy footing. We stood in the edge of a little savanna near a pau d'arco tree in which I had set a number of fine cat-gut snares. The trunk of the giant with its network of vines and shoots formed an easy climb. I indicated a tree, caught hold of a liana and began working my way up through the furry leaves.

Odd to say the last of my snares were unset. I reformed their loops with an irritated thought of monkeys. Below, I could hear Jesu carelessly jingling his traps or breaking little twigs, awaiting my descent. After a bit he hushed these slight noises. A thought of treachery fluttered through my brain. I maneuvered for an opening in the leaves and peered down.

The half-breed knelt intently studying the choked area around the base of the pau d'arco. As I looked he pressed apart some vines and exhibited a few sticks, a handful of withered flowers fallen from a stalk above and some clods of fresh earth. He lifted one of the sticks which some liana tendril had bound to another in a rude cross and stirred the clay with it. He

squatted, stuffing, stirring, brushing automatically at the gnats around his flap with the ibis wings.

By this time I was descending, not ten feet above his head.

"What is it?" I inquired, looking down suspiciously.

"Nothing, *señor*," he jingled his traps again.

I swung to the ground and reached the spot he had been examining. With vague distrust, I thrust my toe into the fresh earth and upturned it. There exposed lay the turquoise and ruby body of a peacock heron.

"What sort of scamp are you!" I snapped, out of temper. "You've ruined the feathers. Now it will do neither of us any good!"

"*Señor!*" the half-breed deprecated my anger.

At that instant a tremendous black beetle with formidable trefoil pincers scuttled out of the disturbed earth with a dry rustling.

"Ah, that explains it, *señor*, a coroner beetle!" he cried. "Whatever robbed your snares dropped this dead bird and the beetle buried it. A pity to lose it—" he stared at it in a deep reverie—"a great pity—such bright feathers."

With a trapper's instinct to leave no sign, he musingly recovered the body with earth and tossed back the withered blossoms and crossed sticks. He picked up his traps again and began climbing the *pau d'arco*.

"I'll stop this robber for you, *Señor LeFever*. Tomorrow you may expect your gins full of birds, and perhaps some minx or monkey will be in my trap. You take your game and I mine, eh? We work well together."

I nodded and *Jesu* went up as nimbly as a chinchilla. In a short time he came down, wished me luck and took himself off toward the river.

For some reason I had little heart to go further on my rounds. An unwonted depression crept over me. Perhaps it was a nervous reaction after my anger. At any rate I was disgusted with myself and my traps. Indeed, all at once, my very occupation seemed puerile and ridiculous—a trapper! What difference between me

and the half-breed? He pandered to the vanity of women, and I to the intellectual vanity of men. Both appeared utterly futile. Why this endless, empty study of birds? Did a slowly accumulating catalog of facts lead anywhere? Indeed, did man's whole life and works have any significance at all? The thought stretched out and out.

What excuse had man for all his tremendous pride? What real difference was there between me and *Jesu Diabolo* and the gaudy heron in the mold, or even the coroner beetle, laying its eggs in the dead meat? Were we not all little vital mechanisms, evolved with prodigal purposelessness by the steaming painted jungle around us?

A prodigious golden note clanged against my ears. It filled the humid air, the endless aisles of the trees and the wide reach of the sky with solemn reverberations. Slowly, argently, came the sound, chime on chime, billows of euphony! It suggested a solemn carillon in gothic spire, a solitary worshiper in the fevered jungle.

The first sound turned me into a keen ornithologist again. I followed the sound, searching everywhere with eyes and ears. For half a mile I stumbled, crawled and climbed; then I saw a sight which set my heart pounding.

On a branch of a Brazil tree perched a snow-white bell-bird, or as the natives call it, the *arapunga*. This was the eagerly sought object of my whole adventure. I did not disturb the singer, but marked its location. Then with endless labor, I retraced my steps to the *pau d'arco*, carried all of *Jesu's* traps to the Brazil tree, set them and spread a thick lime on every limb in my reach. After that I dragged myself home utterly exhausted but filled with a new professional enthusiasm.

III

THAT night, all night long, thoughts of *Jesu Diabolo* scurried through my brain like rats. I lay in a half sleep. At one moment I could see him creeping upon *L'wanna* while I sweated, helpless, in the grip of a nightmare. At another time we would stand quarreling furiously whether she were woman or child. Then I would twitch wide awake with the question still in my mind.

Was *Señor Monán's* daughter a woman?

After all, was she—was she? Some profound interest seemed to balance on the answer.

At last in hope of shaking off such fancies, I got up and walked across the chill tiled floor to the window. From the patio a smell of damp earth and flowers drifted through the bars. Outside in a faint starlight, two lunar moths spiraled monotonously about each other, appearing and vanishing in the gloom of a geranium tree. For several minutes I stood inhaling deeply, hoping to induce sleep when a light glowed in a window across the patio. I blinked at it, wondering sleepily who had lighted it when the shadow of a woman's arm crossed the curtain.

It was odd how that hint of a woman brought me wide awake, alert, in an instant. Indeed, I found myself waiting almost breathlessly for its reappearance.

As I waited, I became sure for no reason in the world that the light came from L'wanna's chamber. A dozen queries besieged my heart. Was she ill or lonely or unhappy that she arose at such an hour? Did the languid night tease her into restlessness as it did me? Or did she keep some vigil of her faith?

A sudden strange impulse, a sympathy—yes, a sympathy moved me to call across the patio and acquaint the girl with my own wakefulness. I hardly knew what I would say. My heart beat with queer excitement. I drew a trembling breath and framed her name on my lips. At that moment the candle was snuffed out.

A hazy purple spotch floated before my eyes where the light had been. Then I heard a grating door across the patio softly open and close.

An extraordinary impulse sent me flying without second thought to my own bedroom door which gave upon the court. My hand bungled a nervous interval at the latch. I swung the door open in silent violence and stepped outside. Some one half-crouched in the opposite entry. I was well across the court, my heart knocking at my ribs when I recognized the crooked form of the negress, Angela.

So strong upon me was the impression of L'wanna's passing, I came near seizing the ancient and demanding where her mistress had gone, when I realized Angela was alone. It was the old crone who had opened

the grating; it was the shadow of her withered arm I had marked upon the curtain.

The revulsion set me shivering; then, somehow, the irony of the thing brought relief to my overwrought nerves. I laughed sardonically, but the wrinkled creature paid not the slightest attention to my mirth. Then I stood smiling and at last musing on the hag to whom I had poured my emotion. And yet, I reflected, in her time, in her little flash of youth, no doubt, my grimalkin had her quota of lovers, dancing attendance upon her, spending white nights outside her hut, perhaps fighting for her favor—if only they could rise now and see this huddling rack of bones. . . .

A morning chill sent a shiver over my body, then I noticed a pale illumination filled the patio. Somewhere a cock broke into a shrill crowing. It was too late for bed again, so with a yawn and a somewhat ironic "good morning" to Angela, I set out for my traps in the breaking dawn.

When I made my way through the palm walks and reached the edge of the river, I was not surprized in the least to see Jesu's *bungo* lying in the reeds.

As I stood looking at the clumsy boat, I grew ashamed that I had contracted the slightest partnership with L'wanna's attempted abductor. I promised myself the next time we met I would break off all intercourse with him. As I thought on it my wrath grew, and I vowed if he overstepped the least form I would kill him outright. It was a queer twist of civilization that I must wait for some petty second offense before I could kill him for his first inflamed attack.

I was chewing on this formality when a noise ahead brought me up sharply. By way of jungle caution I stepped behind a huge caladium and stood peering between the leaves in an effort to locate the disturbance.

What I saw astounded me. Jesu Diabolo tramped amid the undergrowth, bending low to search the ground and making short casts back and forth like a hound at fault. Apparently he was trailing something.

For a full minute I stood quite at loss to account for his actions when I suddenly remembered having moved the fellow's traps. No doubt he had gone to the *pau d'arco*, had missed the traps and, according to his



nature, had leaped at the conclusion that I had stolen them. Now he was trying to follow my yesterday's trail and recover his property.

His suspicions filled me with disgusted amusement and, at the same time, offered me an opportunity to insult the fellow and have done with him at once. I was on the eve of discovering myself when he paused, drew an old brass watch from his pocket and consulted it. He stood a moment chewing his black mustache and calculating the time painfully, then took himself off toward the river.

I was so surprised at this dénouement I did not hail him at all. Never before had I seen an Indian carry a watch or pay the slightest attention to the flight of time. I could not fancy why he should give up looking for his traps on a certain hour. If there were a mortal unhurried by the fewness of minutes to the hour, that mortal surely was Jesu Diabolo.

PRESENTLY I gave up the slight conundrum and made my way to the Brazil tree. All along the course I saw signs of Jesu's reckless search, trampled undergrowth, crushed clumps, even to the tree where I had placed his traps.

When I observed this, I stood smiling at how close he had come to his quest and yet had missed it, when my ear caught a fluttering high up in the boughs. My limed twigs had snared something.

I craned my neck and moved about under the branches trying to locate my captive. Above me the Brazil tree stretched skyward chamber on chamber. The nearer leaves looked dark and polished, but far above they shaded into bluish-green masses. At last I glimpsed the tremulous wings of my catch. They were white wings. I peered more closely, almost incredulously. It was a bell-bird—no—yes. My heart began to thump. It really was a bell-bird!

I counted the limbs upward to my bird, for a man can get lost in one of those huge trees as easily as in a skyscraper, then I set about my climb. By good fortune a Spanish arbor made a long reach from the ground to the first branches and beyond that my way was easy.

Spanish arbor is a species of morning glory and at this hour its pied goblets formed a flowery mass just above the first

branches. I gripped the vine, tested it with my weight, which set all the glories in a stir. Then I started up, hand over hand.

Beneath the first branch I paused a moment for breath, when I observed a continued stirring in the flowers above me. It was near my trap. I paused, thinking perhaps a bush-master or a sloth was in Jesu's trunk-trap and I had no stomach for a nipped finger. I climbed on cautiously when out of the blossoms arose a head, a girl's head—it was L'wanna.

I came within a squeak of loosing all holds and falling twenty feet to the ground.

The girl stared at me with horror-widened eyes; then slowly she seemed to recognize me. She gave a wavering cry.

"Oh *señor*, is it you? Is it you?" and she fell to sobbing convulsively with her arms thrust up awkwardly among the flowers.

For full ten seconds I hung dazed, staring at her, listening to her sobs, the vine making slow half-revolutions under my weight.

"*Señorita!*" I finally gasped.

"S-*señor*, won't you p-please let me out?" she swallowed her tears.

"Let you out?" I echoed blankly.

"*Señor*, if you only will, I never, never, never will turn your birds loose again!"

"What are you in?" I cried in amazement.

"Oh, you know!" she cried with a despairing face and tried to pull her arms from the tree.

With a shock I remembered my traps.

"You don't mean you're caught!" I cried, scrambling up on the limb.

"*Sí, señor*," she quavered, pulling with an agonized movement.

And she was, indeed, caught in the trap. Her arms were chafed, and contusions ringed her wrists where the teeth bit. Oh, it was pitiful—pitiful even for a man, but for a woman—such a woman!

What amazed, what terrified me was Jesu Diabolo's infernal cunning. The moment he had seen the dead peacock heron with the little cross and flowers over its grave, he knew L'wanna had buried it. From this he guessed the girl must make the round of my snares before I did, liberating my captives, so he had planned instantly to set his tree-trap and catch her. That was the secret of his beating about in the jungle

like a madman. He was searching for L'wanna. That was why he had timed my arrival with his disreputable watch, allowing himself time to escape before my regular appearance in order to avoid me.

When I thought if, on the preceding day, I had not heard the arapunga belling and had not moved his traps to another tree . . . if he had found her. . . .

I moved down the limb to her, slid my hands down her arms among the flowers and wrenched open the steel jaws; then I picked her up as if she had been a child.

In my arms the girl seemed to have no weight at all; indeed, she seemed scarcely flesh and blood but all lightness, flowers, and perfume and something infinitely dear.

Her hair came unbound and fell over my shoulder and breast in a jetty, rose-scented torrent. She was dizzying. When I realized what I was doing, I found myself caressing, comforting, kissing her lips, begging her not to think I had set traps for her.

And with it all, something in the back of my head, a fragment of sanity, I think, seemed to stand off in profound surprize, for it had discovered that Jesu Diabolo was right in his argument after all. It was no child clinging passionately and breathlessly to me, pressing her lips to mine, pressing her bursting heart to mine.

It seemed to me all the loneliness and craving of my whole life was concentrated and satisfied in an instant. I believe if heaven should have opened—but there is no use talking over such things between men. She said she had loved me ever since I walked to her barred door against the muzzle of her father's gun. It was foolish, drunken ecstatic talk.

We were almost frightened at the web of coincidences that had woven our lives together. What if a single strand had broken? If I had not been sent from New York to Taos; if her father had not been exiled from Caracas; if I had not met Jesu Diabolo and the alcade; if her father had aimed an inch truer; even if she had not been caught in the trap. It is amazing to think on what frail chances men and women meet and mate and people the world.

THE broad branches of the Brazil tree tempted L'wanna and me to stay aloft long after her arms had recovered from the bite of the trap. The vines made

a natural hammock where we could loll and watch the butterflies and birds float in and out among the foliage. Somewhere above us a woodpecker gave a long joyful roll. A wild sow, followed by four little striped pigs, came grunting under our retreat.

It was strange that the jungle, which only the day before had seemed a sort of hideous gorgeous mill grinding out vital machines, now appeared suffused with a delirious joy of living. I think the very plants had their loves. The vines embraced the trees; the winds caressed the grass; the orchid trembled for the bee. With L'wanna in my arms, I sensed why blossoms burst in perfume and fruited.

I found the girl oddly intimate with the jungle about her. Near the ground she pointed out a sort of bane that would keep ferrets from stealing chickens. A little later an agouti hopped out of the vines at the base of our Brazil tree, and she assured me our sky-scraper must be hollow, for these little animals only lived in hollow trees. By way of experiment I pushed a stick into the vines where we sat and really found a cavity up there.

The agouti stared up at us with black inquisitive eyes and, perhaps, decided we were harmless, for it paid no further attention but nipped grass and girdled a little sapling quite unconcerned about its audience. Presently it left off its play or labor, stared bright-eyed into a thick bank of ferns. After a moment it stamped its hind foot on the ground, popped into the Spanish vines and disappeared.

"Something alarmed it," smiled L'wanna.

I glanced into the ferns, looking perhaps for a lynx or a python and indeed caught the glint of an eye.

I pointed it out and we both looked in warm carelessness, trying to decipher the rest of the animal against the gloom, when close beside the eye, I made out a dirty bluish flap.

There are no words for the fury that swept over me. I shouted Jesu Diabolo's name, flung myself on the vine and to the earth. When I touched ground, I saw him crashing through the bushes and tangle. I charged after him. As I rushed, I roared:

"You hell-hound! You dog of a devil! Set a trap for a girl."

Thorns stabbed me and broke off in my

flesh; I burst through lianas. The half-breed was a brown shadow. It seemed he must get away when his foot turned on an oozy lily-pad. I was nearly eight feet behind. He was struggling to get up when I jumped headlong through a screen of air vines. One hand caught his shirt. He tore loose. My other grabbed a flying ankle. He fell full length, kicking furiously.

Somehow I pushed my head and shoulders up into his threshing legs. When I got my head past his buttock, he twisted up and looked at me. I thought the man's eye would pop out. He wriggled, beat, squirmed to keep my hand from his neck. I crawled up over him as powerfully as if I had eaten strychnine. When my fingers closed about his glottis he screamed and ended in a queer squawk. He flung out his arms, seized two handfuls of weeds and struck me in the face.

Instantly a fiery blindness blanketed me. Nettles blistered my face and flamed in my eyes. Swords darted through my head. For a moment I was stunned out of action. In that moment he slipped out of my arms. Next instant I was up, my head in flames, blindly chasing his sounds. I stormed through thorns, briars, rebounded from boles. Always I could hear his feet just in front of me. Then I plunged into water up to my waist, fell down, got up dripping and perforce came to a stand. Then I heard Jesu's voice some little distance further out, pant:

"Señor, how absurd. I set a trap for the *señorita*? I did not even know where it was. You put it up the Brazil tree yourself."

Jesu Diabolo sat his *bungo* some thirty feet from the bank quite out of danger. His boat drifted gradually in the slow current.

"You knew she buried that heron. You knew if you——"

The utter futility of upbraiding such a creature stopped me. I looked at him through clearing eyes.

"I am going to kill you, Jesu Diabolo," I said soberly.

"Why, *señor*?" he asked almost politely.

"For setting that trap! For spying on me and Miss Monan!" I shouted.

"Señor, does not a man visit his traps twice a day?" inquired Diabolo with a certain righteousness of defense.

At that moment I observed something that looked like the knotty end of a log

drifting down the current in toward where I stood.

I quietly backed out of the water to safety among the reeds on the edge of the river. The nose of the cayman sank silently and disappeared.

No change of expression came over Jesu's face, but his eyes watched the ripple where the crocodile's snout had disappeared as if in meditation. With some little effort, I tried to show no concern and pulled my mind back to the last thing Jesu had said.

"A man may visit his traps twice a day, naturally," I agreed grimly, "but not twice in one morning."

For some reason my simple assertion flung Jesu into a surprising transport.

"One morning!" he yelled. "One morning! *Dios mios*, the *señor* has lived in paradise today—one morning—it is sundown this moment!"

I stared up and down the yellowing river. It really was sundown.

That is how I forgot the arapunga I had limed.

IV

FOR three long minutes after my formal request, Señor Monan sat consuming his cigaret in silence. At last he made a little movement and flicked the ash.

"I suppose you have already asked L'wanna—the American custom, I believe."

I agreed, wondering how that would affect his Spanish code.

He became reflective and I anticipated L'wanna's youth as an objection, but he did not mention it.

"If you were a Venezuelan, Señor LeFever," he began again, "I would impress it upon you that my social standing is gone. If you were a Spaniard, I would say that my fortune is confiscated, but as you are an American——"

I got to my feet. This could mean only assent. I began to burble a confusion of thanks and relief when Señor Monan stopped me.

"As you are an American, I must tell you that I have killed a man. I am a murderer, Señor LeFever."

I paused blankly. He looked at me searchingly.

"Ah, that does make a difference, I see."

"Not in the least in my desire to marry

your daughter," I said, "but still—a mur—"

I looked at my host. I could scarcely believe it, but still those burned-out eyes must have seen many things.

Señor Monan dropped his stub in the ash-holder.

"I knew you would say that if you were perfectly frank. The Anglo-Saxon world has a quaint indirection in moral affairs and an admirable direction in money matters—the exact opposite of our Latin races. For instance, if I had made my money by speculating in stocks and had driven half a dozen men to suicide, you would feel no such qualms as when I tell you I cut a man down in the performance of my duty—my duty, mind you."

"It does make a difference," I admitted. Monan nodded.

"Because moral indirection conforms to the genius of your race. Take your Anglo-Saxon marriage customs. Young men and young women go about freely together during courtship."

I agreed, wondering how this could bear on the topic.

"That is because of an assumption the lover seeks in his sweetheart something other than sex."

"Certainly we assume that."

"You personally?"

"I personally, Señor Monan!"

"What?"

"A man can admire a womanly soul," I stated warmly.

My host pulled down his lips slightly.

"Your adjective suggests sex to me."

"Well, a woman's soul," I corrected tartly.

"Neuter gender?"

"Yes—if there be such a thing."

"Did you ever find yourself reveling in any man's society on account of his soul?" he inquired.

It would have been easy enough for me to have said "yes," and for a moment I thought "yes" the true answer, but when I tried to lay my finger on some specific instance in my own life, I could not do it. I shifted my ground and declared that many times I had admired a woman for her intellect.

Señor Monan paid no attention to this whatever, but finished his own argument by saying that the Spaniard accepts sex

directly as the nexus between men and women, and such being the case, the two sexes are kept apart until marriage.

This discussion, at such a time, nettled me. It seemed a sort of profanation of L'wanna.

"That may be logical," I agreed shortly, "but I don't care for argument when I know and feel something is true."

Señor Monan made a placating gesture; there was even a look of satisfaction on his worn face.

"Pardon me, Señor LeFever, for trying you on these points. What you feel and believe on it will be of vital interest to your wife, and L'wanna is all I have on earth." He paused sadly, then said, "I hope you will be very tender with her, Señor LeFever."

I jumped up and grabbed his hand.

"Then what you have just said doesn't represent your heart!" I cried in great relief.

"Only my brain, and that doesn't influence a man's belief." He paused, then added: "A tiger caught one of my goats last night. Angela was greatly excited over it."

I was surprised at this break in the conversation, when it occurred to me that there might be a symbolic connection between the tiger catching the goat and some man marrying his daughter.

After this our talk shifted to my approaching wedding. This would require more servants in the house, and both Señor Monan and I thought it best that I should go to the village and employ them in order that my host might not expose himself to unnecessary publicity. Then another topic pressed forward in our conversation—L'wanna's dislike for my profession.

For some time we sat talking over this problem when Señor Monan suggested that instead of collecting specimens I might write a descriptive ornithology. The idea attracted me. Ever since boyhood I have felt the lure of authorship; in fact I had begun two or three abortive romances, but it never occurred to me to write on the familiar topic of my own occupation. When I told L'wanna of my plan, her reception of it removed the last quibble from my mind.

On the Sunday after our conversation our bans of marriage were published by a *padre* from Ciudad Bolívar, who made monthly



visitations to Taos. The following weeks were the happiest of my life. Thanks to our isolation, Señor Monan disregarded strict Spanish convention, and nearly every day L'wanna and I set out into the jungle armed with camera, note-book and binoculars to advance our great work.

ONE morning, just as we had started on an expedition, a native woman met us among the moriche palms and to my surprise handed me a note written on a cigaret shuck.

I took it curiously, and a second look at the girl showed me the Arawak wife of the Chinese chilli-maker. I wondered what business the celestial could have with me, when at the bottom of the note, I saw the signature—

JESU ERCOLE BAVENO.

"Is this from Jesu Diabolo?" I inquired.

The woman was scrutinizing L'wanna's face with such intensity I was forced to repeat my question, and she nodded.

I looked at the shuck again and found the text almost illegible, although the name was signed with great flourishes.

"What does he want?" I asked bruskiy.

"He wants not to be killed, *señor*."

"How came he to send you?" I proceeded with some curiosity.

"I happened to be there, *señor*."

She shifted her polished black eyes toward L'wanna again.

At that moment an oven-bird broke covert like a young zeppelin not a hundred yards from us and went booming toward the river.

"Come on, L'wanna!" I cried in excitement. "A new species—mark him down!"

The Arawak girl hung trotting on our rear. "Will you kill him, *señor*? Will you kill him?"

"No," I cried impatiently, "tell him as long as he stays in Taos I won't touch his knavish hide."

"But, *señor*," argued the girl still trotting, "he wishes to trap here along the river. He knows the runs here, but you stay in the jungle all the time and perhaps you shoot him?"

"We can do without him over here," I tossed back as I hurried on.

"But, *señor*," whimpered the girl, "Jesu says he will be a bad half-breed no more.

Maybe he will catch the tiger that kills your goats?"

I wondered how the news of the tiger's attack had seeped into the village. Perhaps through old Angela. This gave me a feeling of discomfort, and I was about to turn on the girl and order her out of the palm walks when L'wanna took the girl's part. She said we were happy and we should not give unhappiness to others.

At that moment I glimpsed the spatulate bill of my oven-bird stiffly upright among some creepers. I knew three words more would send it booming off again. As I manipulated my camera, I whispered bruskiy to the girl that Jesu could trap all over the place if she would only hold her tongue and creep off without noise. This last she did very adroitly, for I never knew when she left us.

With L'wanna at my elbow, the ornithology grew like a weed in the Springtime. Señor Monan suggested that I write the book in English, that L'wanna turn it into Spanish, while he attempted a French and a Portuguese translation. Thus we hoped to publish the book simultaneously in Venezuela, Brazil and the United States, and in three European capitals.

To accomplish this, Señor Monan put me in touch with several foreign publishers, and so considerable mail accumulated for me in Taos.

I made a number of trips to the village and the alcalde, who was also postmaster, became tremendously interested in my venture, and through this we became good friends.

I always found him at his baize table, with his official blanks, his liquor, oranges and glasses. When I entered, he would blow out a delicate smoke ring through the part in his mustache, put his feet down from the table top, push glass and carafe toward me and exclaim in a long marveling breath:

"Drink, Señor LeFever! How little did I fancy I should ever drink with a writer of books in Taos! How lonely I was until you came. You may confide in me, *señor*; we are brothers. I, too, am a writer of books—poems. As yet they have never been published, but Doña Isabella Vitellia, who lives on the esplanade in Caracas, has done me the honor to compare my poems favorably with those of Mombello."

Then he would tell me with shining eyes of his relations with Doña Isabella Vitellia. I never found out what he meant for me to confide in him, and after a time or two I looked upon it as rhetorical.

He always had my mail at hand in a neat package on his desk, and there was a certain uniform frayedness about the seal flaps which I fancied must be caused by the long journey from civilization to Taos. However I learned the real reason in a very naïve fashion one afternoon when I entered the post and found the alcalde fairly palpitant with excitement.

"*Señor!*" he cried out on sight of me. "Make haste quickly, you have a great deal of mail."

I hurried, but to my surprise only a few letters lay on the desk.

I picked up the package, puzzled, when the alcalde made an impatient gesture—

"Why don't you read them?"

"I wouldn't be impolite," I told him.

"Take no notice of your friend. Here, read this one!"

He chose a flimsy envelope of French design from Paris.

I broke it open under the alcalde. It was an outright acceptance of my manuscript by Lestrade & Company.

"Isn't that glorious?" cried the alcalde, seizing my hand. "*Señor*, you can not fancy how uneasy I was—getting some one to print a manuscript is so difficult. I know my own poetry, *señor*, the poems Doña Isabella Vitellia praised so—"

My face doubtless betrayed me for he broke off, staring at me; then he clapped my hand again in the utmost good spirit.

"Think nothing of it," he declared, "I grew so impatient for my good friend LeFever—I, too, am an author—I know the pangs. You may confide in me! But what do I mean chattering like this—" seized his bottle—"this deserves a glorious round. Here's to the fame and fortune of the ornithology of Venezuela—widely, widely may it circulate!"

It was impossible to be offended. I believe I even gave him formal permission to open any future letters of mine that came under his hands.

FOR an hour or so we sat drinking and smoking and talking like schoolboys. Only those who have disposed of a first

manuscript can sympathize with our elation. After a bit the alcalde began speculating on my royalties, mentioning absurdly large amounts. In the midst of our castle-building, he put his glass down and caught my arm impulsively.

"By the way, *señor*, I have a capital anecdote when you write another book about the animals of Venezuela."

I begged him to believe that I was solely an ornithologist, and my field did not extend to mammals.

"But to a writer like you, *Señor LeFever*, what is the difference, birds or beasts? Now listen, only this afternoon, a negro named Sammu Tenko brought a dead tiger into Taos. He killed it with a stroke of his club. He is a giant, *señor*, this Sammu Tenko. He brought it in on his back. You should have seen that mottled beauty hanging over his huge dark shoulders—a picture!"

"What did he do with it?" I inquired.

"He gave it to Jesu Diabolo to skin for the glands. I believe the half-breed is down at the river now. You might go see."

"Skinning it for the glands?" I repeated curiously.

"Yes, to make his animal scent—his lure. The fellow is uncanny at it. He can drive an animal mad. One sniff dispels all caution, all timorousness—why, I know a dozen marvelous anecdotes." The alcalde meditated a moment. "Did I ever tell you how a capybara stole *Señor Monan's* watch out of his pocket one day when he fell asleep in his moriche walks? Yes, indeed, really! You see the *señor* had accidentally touched his watch with this animal scent and—" I began to laugh—"Señor Monan got his lure from Jesu, of course."

"Naturally."

"So the *señor* and Jesu were once friends," I observed.

"One could hardly say friends. The half-breed trapped on the *señor's* plantation because the capybaras gnawed the young palms. They disagreed about—they disagreed—" he paused a moment, then observed irrelevantly—"your future wife is a lovely girl, *señor*, such beauty, such breeding. If I were a rich author now—" He inhaled deeply of his cigaret and breathed forth a hazy sigh, then said brightly, "Don't forget to see the tiger."

I promised and bade the alcalde *adios*, and as I passed through the heated plaza I debated languidly the propriety of such a visit. I had little desire to go near Jesu Diabolo, but Taos held such a deadly monotony and a jaguar was such a novelty. I decided I would go see it. At the corner of the cloister I was about to step into the path leading to the river when I saw a huge jet-black negro, naked to the waist, leaning on the Chinaman's counter eating chilli.

Above a wide undulating back, a thick neck peaked off into a trivial head. The negro sprawled about the bowl, and the muscles of his black arms swelled and slumped at each slight lift of the spoon to his gross mouth. As I looked I thoroughly regretted that I had not seen Sammu Tenko march into Taos with the tiger on his back.

Sin Fan the chilli-maker regarded the voracious belly-god as intently as I. Under his flowing shirt the Chinaman's bulk spread over his bean bags. His eyes gleamed at Sammu Tenko like slits of jet in the yellow expanse of his face.

After a while my prolonged standing demanded either conversation or trade. I cast about for a remark and observed that the chilli-maker's stock of beans was running low.

"Go was fo' long," grunted Sin Fan.

"Going to leave Taos?"

I was somewhat surprized. I knew Chinese moved about, but no one had ever heard or seen one of them in transit. Sin Fan and his kind simply appeared and disappeared.

"Yes—want chilli?"

The flatness of the answer made a purchase imperative. I leased my place at the counter by taking a bowl.

"Your wife's not in this morning?" I pursued with intent to please.

Sin Fan made a clucking in his enormous bag of a throat, but to my astonishment Tammu Tenko snapped his fingers like fire crackers and bellowed with mirth. His yawping fascinated me. What I had said to amuse him I could not guess. I watched him attentively until he subsided into a wide grin. When he finished his chilli he straightened with a yawn of comfort, patted his belly, ran a huge fist into his pocket with a—

"*Quantí, señor?*"

"*Nada* (Nothing)," grunted Sin Fan,

deftly hooking in the dish and refilling and replacing it before the giant.

Sammu stared at the bowl, then at the chilli-maker with surprize and delight caricatured on his uncouth face.

"*Nada?*"

"*Nada.*"

"*Nada!*"

Sin Fan returned no answer except a faint and, I thought, a sarcastic gesture toward the bowl with pudgy yellow finger.

With a rumbled "*Gracias*" and the look of a grateful dog, Tenko hunkered once more about the heaping bowl and fell to sucking it into his pendulous lips.

His voracity filled me with a faint nausea. I pushed my own chilli aside. What a prodigious animal! I attempted no more conversation with either of them. The three of us differed racially from one another until we were almost of different species. By what epochs of culture I surpassed the negro! As for Sin Fan.

I studied that inscrutable off-shoot of the world's oldest civilization. Was he far down the road my own race would one day tread? Would my great, great grandsons sit as this fat chilli-maker, indifferentists, ultimate pacifists, husks of dead souls waiting for extinction?

WITH a shudder I turned from the grotesque extremes and walked across the fish-scented plaza toward the river. The river front at Taos is a bare bank piled with hides, rubber, caripe, copra and the like. A number of stakes extend out into the water where the fishermen hitch their boats during high and low flood. The harbor is choked with reeds and lily-pads which grow faster than the indolent boatmen can, or do, cut them out. Here and there these water-plants moved sinuously as a crocodile or a manatee glided among them.

For several minutes I squinted my eyes against the sun-baked scene, hunting Jesu's camp. At last some hundred yards up the river I saw a thread of smoke climbing the sky.

When I started for it, I meant only to walk within eye-shot of the half-breed's concocting, see the tiger and return. However, when I entered the jungle I found it difficult to judge the distance of the smoke through the bamboo tops.

I blundered on until at last I pushed aside a screen of leaves and stepped unexpectedly into a little circular opening. There Jesu and the Arawak wife of the chilli-maker lay dozing on a bamboo mat with their arms about each other. At my entrance neither moved, but both lifted their eyes to me from a fathomless content.

With much embarrassment and many "pardons" I attempted to back out again, but the half-breed called:

"Stay, *señor*, you have come to see the tiger. Sit down and look. The animal lure is boiling in the pot. You do not disturb me or Pechita, eh, does he *carissima*?"

He pressed the girl's lithe symmetry with lazy amorous questioning.

I saw the two were amid their irregular *luna de miel*, their honeymoon, and somehow, I could not repress a certain admiration for a man so unashamed of his loves.

The woman looked at me through half-open eyes, yawned luxuriously and murmured something in Arawak.

Jesu Diabolo laughed, pulled her ear, then turned to me with the duty of host written large upon him. He pointed with his free arm.

"There is where Sammu Tenko hit the tiger, just at the joint back of the head. He broke its neck, *señor*, but did not even scratch its skin. What a giant he is!"

I looked at the yellow and black glory stretched on bamboos at the end of the oval clearing.

"It's a wonderful pelt," I admired.

"Pechita tells me that I may trap for the tiger that disturbs *Señor Monan's* goats. Very well. I prepare this lure: he is mine. Then I shall have another pelt as grand as that *probablemente*."

I hesitated. There was no oven-bird now to hasten my answer. I looked at the lickerish fellow. He had become a benedict in a way, and only the night before the jaguar had renewed his depredations. As for getting it with a rifle, one might as well chase a flicker of sunshine and shadow.

Jesu regarded me intently with his pale protruding eye; he pressed the Indian girl's form slightly and said:

"You can hardly object to my trapping for it now, *señor*. When men are married, they should forgive each other their bachelor deeds, eh?"

A mirthless smile twisted the half-breed's

lips. I knew quite well he was thinking of our chase through the jungle. My reluctance was unconcealed.

"We do need a skilful trapper over there——"

"*Señor*," said Jesu disengaging his arm and lifting himself slightly, "I understand now that Arawaks are not Spaniards. I, who am both, could not realize that—there is a line. Now I understand where *Señorita Monan* would be miserable where Pechita is happy. The *señorita* with her softness and her white skin out here in the jungle——"

The fellow's face went that peculiar ashen gray again. His pale eye stared at me.

"May I say I was wrong, *señor*, insane—mad—a dog with the rabies, and—shake your hand?"

"Jesu," said I, "I know that men are mad mixtures. Today I am a supremely happy man and I believe you are, too. When our quarrel's gone I see no reason for holding a grudge. Trap where and when you like, and I wish you luck."

Then Diabolo patted the girl's smooth coffee-colored skin.

"One *momento, dulce*," he whispered.

They kissed clingingly as if for a lifelong separation, and he arose and took my hand.

"And, *señor*," he said, "you will need servants at the hacienda for your approaching marriage. If you would speak a word for Pechita?"

I recalled my commission to hire a girl. Then as I looked at the girl the thought of this lithe pantheress serving L'wanna filled my mind like a picture. They would be worthy the palet of an Alma Tadema. Without more ado, I engaged Pechita as a maid for my fiancée.

The girl turned her polished black eyes on me and somehow they resembled the eyes in the tiger's pelt that lay stretched on the bamboo.

V

NONE of us at the hacienda, I believe, ever quite grew accustomed to Pechita. She was a capable maid; she kept our clothes pressed, our footgear polished, our study bright with flowers. She even assisted L'wanna in designing her wedding gowns.

The trouble was I had selected Pechita

for her comeliness and that out in the jungle where women look their worst. Now that we had the girl inside she was symmetrical to a disconcerting degree. I say disconcerting, because no ordinary man, I take it, feels quite at ease when a Venus in sard fits house-slippers on his feet or brings morning coffee to his bedside.

I continually had to strangle impulses to offer her my chair and to retrieve any little article she dropped. It was hard to remember she was the maid. The fact is I never saw Pechita move about the place but what I heard the ghost of cymbals and castinets and thought of Salome's dance before Herod for the head of John the Baptist.

A trivial incident brought about the girl's discharge. One morning I entered the dining-room and saw Pechita taking an impression of the Monan coat of arms by rubbing charcoal over a paper pressed upon the design. She worked so intently I was at her shoulder before she observed me. Then she started, dropped the platter with a crash and the paper fluttered to the floor. Both of us stooped for it and our heads bumped together in an embarrassing fashion. I handed her the paper and asked her what she wanted with the impression.

She stammered and finally said that she loved beautiful things. I was surprised that she admired the escutcheon which was of severe design. I mentioned this.

"The simpler the design is," said the girl, still embarrassed, "the more easily I can tell what makes it beautiful."

I stared at the comely brown creature, astonished at such untaught analysis. She had stated instinctively a major canon of esthetics in its clearest form. I was about to follow this up with other questions when I heard a little gasp behind me. I turned and saw L'wanna staring at us with quite a pale face. She dismissed the maid with a gesture.

"Jean," she began in a queer tone, paused, then went on, "what were you saying to Pechita about beauty?"

With a tinge of embarrassment, I saw she had given the whole affair a personal turn it in no way deserved, yet I found it a little difficult to say to my fiancée that I was not making love to her maid. However, I managed to explain it.

L'wanna seemed to understand at once,

then, perhaps three minutes later, to my great surprise, she began talking breathlessly.

She said she had heard of Pechita's conduct in the village, first living with the Chinaman, then with Jesu Diabolo, "and now here she is talking to you about b-beauty. I—I don't see how she can h-have the b-boldness—" Here L'wanna began sobbing.

It nonplussed me. In the first place I wondered what gossip had spread such greasy village news. Then I was shocked at the quickness with which L'wanna connected Pechita's change of husbands and our conversation concerning beauty.

I reexplained the whole matter very carefully to my fiancée, and this time she really understood my interview with Pechita had been as impersonal as beauty itself. Nevertheless that evening Pechita was discharged, and on the whole I can not say that I regretted it.

During the following weeks we had several other girls at the hacienda, but not one suited. They were either lazy or incompetent or both. As our wedding day drew near and as sewing and baking piled up on these incompetents, I think L'wanna went to her father and through him sent me word to hire Pechita again. It was odd how we avoided all reference to the girl between ourselves.

At the time Señor Monan delivered the message we were alone in a goat lot where old Angela milked. Only the night before something had killed one of these animals, and my host and I had gone down to look over the scene. The señor stood leaning against the fence where we had found some big feline tracks. He seemed amused that L'wanna should recall the Arawak girl.

"The droll part to me is the objection that L'wanna presses against Pechita's morals," said I.

"Most men are ready to condone women," observed my host slyly.

"What I mean is," I explained, "the very thing that makes Pechita a good servant is the fact that she has lived with Sin Fan. Otherwise she would never have developed that silence and deftness and that sense of beauty that now makes her invaluable."

This led us into a long discussion as to which was the more educative, virtue or vice. Under Señor Monan's artful sophis-

try I saw a dozen facets of the subject and reached no conclusion whatever. A few days later, Pechita once more glided like a dryad about the hacienda.

During this period I saw nothing of Jesu Diabolo. I almost wished for him because pumas or ocelots or some carnivore really were ravaging the *señor's* goats. It grew to be a sort of habit for me and the *señor* to go down and look at the tracks left by the marauders, and I believe in his heart he, too, thought of Jesu Diabolo, and desired the half-breed back again.

ONE waning afternoon as we returned to the hacienda after our futile inspection, I found L'wanna on the front steps of the adobe waiting for me. In her hand she held a letter sent to me by the alcalde. It had just come up from Taos by a native boy. In fact a very odd correspondence had sprung up between me and the agent for the rubber company.

It began by a note penciled on the margin of one of my incoming letters that showed me the postmaster had read it. Later a quatrain of the alcalde's verse slipped out of a letter from my Brazilian publisher. Then bits of village gossip sifted into my mail as it came through the post-office at Taos. After a while these lengthened into regular epistles. At first L'wanna was angry at such liberties, but after a bit she began to look forward to what the alcalde had to say. In reality, I suppose the poor fellow was very lonely down there among the *mestizos*, Caribs and Arawaks.

This particular letter seemed to amuse L'wanna, for she was smiling over it when she handed it to me. It began:

HONORED SENOR:

The village is all agog over your wedding, and well may it be for never again will Taos be honored by the hymenial celebrations of a great litterateur. Your maid Pechita reports all your magnificent preparations to Jesu, and he to me.

Sammu Tenko came to me today so full of chilli that positively he was filmed with grease. Apparently our giant has replaced Pechita with Sin Fan. Yesterday I saw Sammu pick up an enormous pot of boiling chilli in his bare hands, move it ten or fifteen feet for the Chinaman and sip it on the way. When he put it down he slapped his palms together as one does when one has handled a too hot poker. I do not ask you to believe this, friend of my soul. It is quite impossible, but it is true.

There was a great wailing among the *mestizos* last night. Martilino, the boy who fished with a spear, was devoured by a cayman at the wharf. The boatmen succeeded in recovering an arm and a foot. Dona Maria, his mother, is begging for money to have a mass said for her son. There is much discussion whether it will cost as much to get an arm and a foot into heaven as a whole boy. I believe the *padre* was puzzled, but as their alcalde, I silenced them. I told them with God a day was as a thousand years, and a mere toe-nail as a whole boy and that the price would be the same. I believe I am correct.

Your admiring friend,

JUAN MALAR, Alcalde of Taos.

P. S. When you receive this letter come to me and let us talk over life and death. J. M.

It was near sundown when L'wanna and I finished the alcalde's gossipy letter.

"Are you going to see him?" she asked.

"I dare say I'll drop in some time."

"What does he mean by 'talk over life and death'?"

I pinched my sweetheart's chin.

"What you are to me, Doña Isabella Vitellia is to the alcalde."

I said it lightly enough, but L'wanna opened her eyes.

"Is she a *doña*?" There was tragedy in her tone.

For several minutes we sat discussing the unfortunate love of the alcalde for another man's wife. Against that tragic background our own love stood in warm belief.

Presently L'wanna declared it would be night before we reached the jungle, and she called Pechita to bring our tramping boots. When the maid appeared, L'wanna retired to change her footgear and to bring my flashlight and camera.

I continued on the steps filled with vague pleasant thoughts such as the evening brings when I heard a guarded voice call my name. I glanced out through the palm walks and saw the figure of a man leaning against a tree.

I was not at all averse now to seeing and speaking with Jesu Diabolo. In fact I desired to give him some instructions. However, I knew the half-breed was still afraid to show himself before Señor Monan, so I arose and walked toward the palms, thinking I would direct him to lay traps around the goat lot.

As I approached, peering through the dusk, mainly, I believe, to discover Diabolo's detestable eye-flap, I was surprised to see the expected face melt into that of the alcalde. A few steps nearer I

was not only surprized, I was perplexed to see the alcalde labored under some strong emotion.

"What brought you out of your hole?" I laughed, out of Yankee habit to avoid the emotional.

"Ah, *señor*," he caressed his mustache, put a hand on his hip and dropped into a romantic attitude, "what a happy man you are—the beautiful L'wanna—what delicate sentiment, what poetry!"

He cast up his eyes at the fading sky and sighed deeply.

By this I knew the alcalde had heard L'wanna's sympathy that he was in such amorous despair. Ordinarily I would have changed the subject, but there was something in the evening, the drift of perfume through the air, the palms, the fading light—I made an awkward effort to sympathize in words. I even tried to fancy I had lost L'wanna in an effort to feel with him. I succeeded only too well. I became choked instead of eloquent. We English-speaking races have such maladroitness emotions.

After a bit the alcalde asked me if I had received his note.

"At that moment," I assured him, "and I meant to come and see you."

"I was afraid the boy had lost it or—" my friend drew out his cigaret-case and offered me one—"or had been robbed," he finished.

"Who should rob my mail-boy in Taos?" I questioned.

The alcalde shrugged and spread his hands apart, one of which held a little cigar-lighter.

"There you are. I don't know. It is a mystery. Ah, *señor*, before you came to Taos, how monotonous life was, nothing but vain regrets, vain longings—"

If the alcalde thought I would hark back to his lament about Doña Isabella Vitellia he was mistaken.

"But what about the mystery?" I interposed.

"I know it is a mystery, that is all," repeated the postmaster. "Eight days ago a letter was posted in my office, at night, so I could not see the writer. Well, naturally, any one would have a curiosity about a man who chooses to come creeping around at night with his letters. Why at night? Why should he not bring it in the light

of open day if his heart is clean? Ah, *Señor LeFever*, no matter how evil you think of men, you err on the side of charity."

"Did the letter concern me in any way?"

IT WAS directed to the chief of police in Caracas?"

There was a certain inflexion in the alcalde's voice as if he questioned me delicately concerning my relations with that official.

"Don't be alarmed for me, *Señor Malar*," I smiled. "I have no quarrel whatever with the *jefe de policia* in Caracas. I am just what I seem, a bird-catcher, and nothing more."

"Oh, I did not mean that at all," protested the alcalde, "but *Señor LeFever*, the envelope was thin, very thin, indeed, and I distinctly saw the impression of a coat of arms on a bit of paper, and with it a letter, in barbarous handwriting saying:

In Taos, in the department of Rio Tigre, there hides a man who calls himself Monan, who is wanted for some crime. Here is his coat of arms. I know any one who bears a coat of arms must come from Caracas. There will be a wedding in the house of this Monan on the twentieth of this month. It will be easy for officers to enter among the guests and arrest this *Señor Monan*. The writer will guide the officers.

The postmaster paused, then added blandly:

"I saw that through the envelope. It had no name—perhaps the name was folded out of sight."

"Then *Señor Monan's* retirement is betrayed!" I ejaculated blankly.

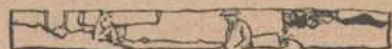
"I don't know," said the alcalde. "Perhaps the *jefe de policia* never received that letter." He inhaled a deep breath of smoke and blew it out thoughtfully. "Our mails are so uncertain."

I seized the alcalde's hand in a glow of relief.

"*Señor*, I appreciate your friendship more than I can say."

"It is nothing," he protested quickly; "we intellectuals must stand together. When I looked at that letter I thought, shall I allow a brother author's bridal bed to be disturbed by the thought of a convict for a father-in-law? Shall the *hoi polloi* triumph over genius?"

"Then there is no danger—no immediate danger?" I said in relief.



"None, unless the writer has posted some other communication. I thought I would mention it to you. The twentieth comes on Thursday."

"Well, the cat's out of the bag anyway," I worried. "We'll have to leave here; perhaps we'll go—but there's no use my planning——"

"You might stay here and finish your book, Señor LeFever," suggested the alcalde, "and follow the *señor* later."

"Oh, I couldn't do that. I couldn't leave L'wanna in uncertainty. Suppose they should capture her father? Leave that child among enemies without a protector?" the thought filled me with dismay.

"*Mios Dios* no!" ejaculated the alcalde, seizing my hand and gripping it. "I was a fool to suggest it! I understand—how well I understand, *amigo de alma* (friend of my soul)." He paused a moment and then asked delicately, "Would you mind telling me what the *señor* did?"

"He killed a man," I said somberly enough.

The alcalde shrugged.

"Bah, what a fuss over nothing. There must be some political end to it."

"It was a political murder, I believe."

"I thought so. A mere man—we have too many men at best. The fewer the men, the greater the plenty. He took my lapel. "Do you know what I say? I say the murderer is the real patriot and the police are the real enemies of a country."

I suppose he meant to pay a sort of compliment to my future father-in-law.

At that moment I heard L'wanna calling from the entrance of the *estancia* where she had missed me on her return.

The alcalde squeezed my hand.

"*Adios*, I did not want to disturb the *señorita* with my news. If you go, I shall think of you."

He touched his small urban hat and hurried away through the palms.

As L'wanna came up she glimpsed his retreating figure and asked me who it was. I told her and she was greatly surprised at the alcalde's visit. She inquired if he had come to talk of the Doña Vitellia.

At her innocent question a tenderness flooded me for the girl. I should not tell her the real reason of the alcalde's visit. She held the purity of a spider-lily sprung from the bosom of a marsh. I took her in

my arms, and in my heart I vowed no matter what befell the Monan house, nothing should happen to her. She returned my embrace and kisses ardently, and as I felt her soft lips against mine I knew she was thinking of the alcalde and the Doña Vitellia.

After a little pause, I said—

"Now let us hurry on; we want to snap all the photographs possible tonight."

"Why tonight?" she asked curiously.

"Well, we don't know how long we'll be here."

She looked at me.

"You are not thinking of going away, Jean?"

"One never knows," I answered impersonally. "Your father came here from Caracas; he may decide to go back—or somewhere else. One never knows."

I tried to put it casually, but she must have caught the worried overtones in my voice.

"I wish he could go back to Caracas, Jean—my poor father."

She said no more, and we moved silently with our arms about each other toward the jungle.

By this time day had faded and given place to a pale moonlight. A breeze arose among the palms and set their leaves a-clacking. For some reason, whether for nerves or cold, I can not say, I shivered as the shadows darkened.

The murder to which Señor Monan confessed had been till now little more than an abstraction to me; with the alcalde's warning it had crystallized into a grim enough reality. Now disquieting thoughts of pursuing officers clung to my mind. I put them away as illogical. I assured myself the earliest moment pursuers could arrive was two days distant, but the feeling remained with me. Perhaps it was not so much any actual officer that I dreaded, as—I hardly know how to express it—a sense of guilt sprung up within me. The very crime itself seemed to creep along in the moonlight behind me.

Once or twice I even glanced back through the hazy palms. They lay quite empty. I repeated to myself that we were not criminals. Till a month ago, I had never even heard of the murder. If the officers were on the trail, they would never follow me, an ornithologist, nor this innocent girl.

I shook my shoulders and attempted to throw off my apprehensions; nevertheless, for the first time since I came to Taos, I was filled with misgivings.

BY THIS time the last glimmer of day had faded and the moonlight had strengthened into brilliancy. Everywhere lay dense shadows and placid high lights. Ahead of us the jungle arose sheer as a wall. It loomed, a black mystery, filled with strange noises that did not add to my composure.

I had heard those sounds over and over, but tonight the bubbling of the hervidores, those strange birds that moan like the boiling of a kettle, brushed my nerves with a sense of fear. Even familiar sounds, as the bellowing of alligators from the distant river and the demoniacal laughter of a loon, filled me with a queer eeriness. Only the categorical knowledge that nothing in the Venezuelan wilderness, not even the jaguar or the boa, would attack man persuaded me to enter.

Inside, however, the place was not so black as it appeared. Spangles of light and shadow lay over the ground like a leopard's skin. However, the impression that something followed me persisted to such an extent that I made some pretext and paused in the warm dank gloom to watch the palms and convince myself they were indeed quite empty. We stood in our covert five, perhaps ten minutes. The long walks lay silent in the moonlight, crisscrossed with shadows. The only moving thing I saw was a bat that flickered this way and that on sudden impossible tacks. Its evolutions reminded me of some desperate fugitive pursued by invisible foes.

I still watched it when an impression grew on me that my own pursuer, whatever it was, had quitted the moriche walks and was creeping up behind me through the jungle. So strong it became, I glanced around in the spangled light. What I saw startled me. A specter monkey with enormous eyes stared at me from a low branch. The creature was harmless, but, odd to say, my apprehension increased rather than diminished.

However, the incident proved that my whole trouble was nerves. No human pursuer could shift so suddenly from grove to jungle. My jumpiness was caused, no

doubt, solely from Señor Monan's danger. So I went on, at least fortified if not calmed by this intellectual assurance, to the Brazil tree, where L'wanna and I did most of our photographic work.

As I have said the Brazil tree was shrouded with vines, and night blossoms filled the warm gloom with a peculiar sweetness. L'wanna was a better climber than I. She still retained the agility of early girlhood. She used the vines as ratlines and I could dimly see her slender form climbing the perfumed tangle. I was about to hand up the camera to her when her foot slipped and she would have fallen if I had not caught her.

I was surprised at the mischance. Usually she was as sure-footed as a monkey. Still, it was nothing. We swung up on the broad first limb and settled ourselves to wait for a subject worthy our lense.

Once we were quiet the jungle noises stood out plainly in the night. Far aloft in our green giant came sleepy whisperings of birds. Then a cicada that had been frightened out of his song by our climb, began a tentative whirring. A little later a mousing owl dropped by us like a shadow and struck at some prey invisible to us on the ground.

At some distance away a firefly patrolled the crest of a fern tree, rising and falling among the fronds, brilliant in shadow and pale in moonlight. Afar off the loon laughed again, and the alligators bellowed in Rio Tigre.

The glooms and sheens of the mysterious tropical night were filled with a warm green smell, as of a gigantic hothouse. Its languid air drifted sweet or spicy or rank of mold. Yet through the changing bouquet, I thought there persisted a flavor, a tang, that I had known at another time and place. In its stronger gusts I sniffed at it curiously, trying to place it; then I would forget it for other things. It was a warm, a fleshly odor, oddly insistent. Instead of memories, it seemed to stir emotions. As it drifted in and out my lungs, a feeling of langour trickled through my body as enervating as too many roses or the dawn of opium.

As we sat I sensed some kindred emotion in L'wanna. I reached out and touched her arm. She was trembling. I swung my camera aside and drew her close.

"You are not afraid," I whispered.

She lifted her arms about my neck.

"Ah no, *Amidinor!*" her voice trembled.

"It is the night—and the moon. See how it streams down. Oh, it pours through me!"

She stretched out her arms and shuddered in a sort of ecstasy.

I have thought, on that strange tropical night, some motiving of ancient arboreal ancestors, epochs past, revisited our brains. That murmuring moon-shot jungle crooned over us as some passionate mother over her babes. I held L'wanna close, couched among the vines, filled with a vast restfulness.

As we lay, a sloth inched up the Spanish arbor, a dull black body amid the glimmer of the flowers. We watched it with dreamy indifference as it crept topsy-turvy under the bottom of a limb between us and the moon. Presently I saw its prey, some sort of large bird perched like a black ball. I watched them intently, sloth and bird. Somehow I felt a feeling of fellowship for the sloth, as if his word were not utterly insulated from my own. He was a citizen of the tree, like me.

L'wanna stirred in my arms and lifted herself slightly.

"That is a very strange picture," she whispered; "we ought to take it for our book."

The thought of our ornithology came to my mind as unimportant as the rustle of a leaf. It was nothing whatever. I caressed my betrothed's soft body; kissed her lips, but she would stir and make the picture. She took the camera and moved to her feet. Again her foot slipped, and she would have fallen had I not caught her. The noise sent the sloth swinging silently to the tree-trunk.

L'wanna almost wept over her awkwardness.

"My slipper feels greased," she complained, and sat down and took off her slippers.

I told her to go in stocking feet and reached to take the slippers.

When I touched them my fingers really felt some sort of grease on their instep soles. It had the same pungent, peculiar odor that I had observed before.

Still, even this suggested nothing to me. In fact I thought little about it but rearranged my position along the limb with

the luxury of a man coming out of sleep, when I heard my companion give a gasp.

I looked at her curiously.

L'WANNA stooped, peering down through the gloom. When she sensed my unspoken question, she pointed silently downward with her free arm. I looked with rising apprehension but saw nothing except the moon-spangled undergrowth. Again I thought of officers, and again a brush of unreasonable fear went over me. I moistened my lips and scrutinized every tree-trunk near-by for a hidden man. Then I became aware of a sudden silence fallen over the jungle.

I turned to L'wanna and barely framed the word—

"Where?"

"Wait till it moves again," she breathed.

"It?" I repeated, staring below and trying to follow her finger.

Apparently she was pointing at a blank patch of spangled moonlight when she drew a little intake of breath and said—

"There!"

And it seemed to me that a patch, an undefined portion of that moonlight moved nearer the bole of our tree. It was barely discernible, a mere outline gliding along the mottled ground. The outline had the form of a huge cat.

I felt a shock, but a moment's reflection told me that jaguars never stalked human beings. Then I sat up on the limb with a sensation of actual pleasure that I might see this jungle tragedy. I was sharply excited but not afraid. I even hoped that the dénouement might be within hearing, if not within sight of our eyrie.

As I watched my mind became oddly attentive to details. I noted the nervous flicker of the tip of the carnivore's tail, the gradual silent advance; then out of the spangled shadows below appeared two coals of greenish fire.

As I looked at the lambent eyes, I suddenly recalled that a cat never looks away from the game it is stalking. It would be difficult to describe the thrill that went over me when I realized I was not the spectator, but the protagonist of the drama staged in this silent jungle. I almost stopped breathing as I stared down at the faint mottled outline and the two greenish coals.

A dozen plans flashed through my head.

Should I move? I felt sure any movement would be visited by an immediate charge from the big cat below. If we remained motionless our fate was even more certain. I whispered the danger to L'wanna without shifting my eyes.

She made some reply, but her whisper faded into silence, for at the faint sound the jaguar had come sharply ahead as noiselessly as the moving of a shadow. A crawly feeling went over my body. At the same time, even in the midst of our imminent danger, I suddenly understood and realized the fantastic deviltry of *Jesu Diabolo*.

He had spread his lure all about the Brazil tree, which he knew was our photographic field. The very grease on L'wanna's slippers must have been animal scent, plastered there by the Arawak girl at the bidding of her lover. Then if we escaped this the whole *estancia* was to be raided by officers. It was like walking through a phantasmagoria. As I beat my brain for some way out of our present trap I wondered about other pitfalls. I glanced up the tree—but any tree-traps set above us to stop our upward flight would be masked.

A sweat broke out on me. My fiancée was on the outside of the limb.

"L'wanna," I whispered, "slip around me; climb up the tree carefully."

"Let's both make a start together," she planned hurriedly. "You go first."

"Give me the flashlight."

A wild scheme darted through my head.

"Oh, look—climb, climb, climb!"

The monster below made a sudden bound of horrifying height. It was not ten feet below us. I leaped for the branch above and by good luck caught it. As I jerked up on the limb I heard the rasp of huge claws in bark, then a loud report and a blinding flare in the night. L'wanna had exploded the flashlight.

I looked back. As soon as my eyes could see I made out L'wanna on the first branch staring below. The cat was gone.

"Come on!" I shouted reaching down.

"Go higher! Quick! Get out of my way! I can climb faster than you!"

Such urgency in her cry sent me scrambling up the trunk. I had penetrated a mass of foliage when suddenly L'wanna screamed my name twice, first from a bursting throat, then muffled—strangled.

"What is it? What's the matter?" My mouth was so dry I could hardly speak. "L'wanna? L'wanna!"

At the silence below a weakness came over me. My legs turned to water. I clung to the limb to keep from falling; then climbed back down, sliding from branch to branch and peered below.

The first limb was empty. The whole tree, the ground below was void, a vacant patchwork of moonlight and shadow. Not a trace of L'wanna or of the tiger was anywhere. Both might have melted into the spangled sheen.

Then I knew that to save me, L'wanna had stood on that first limb and had deliberately allowed the monster to reach her while I climbed to safety.

Standing there shaking I called her name; I screamed it out. I don't know how many times. Between screams I held my breath and listened open-mouthed. I heard a vagrant breath of night-wind rustle through the trees and die away in the clammy stillness.

After a while a physical nausea filled me. I lay down on the limb and closed my eyes. I don't know how long I lay, perhaps ten minutes, perhaps an hour. I remember I kept twisting my head from side to side, because a vision of L'wanna shrinking before the tiger tortured my eyes. I could still hear her screaming my name. I grew deathly sick, dizzy. I almost fell. I clutched the vines with a swimming head, but a moment later I decided I would fall deliberately. A moment's stunned thought, however, told me I should climb higher, as high as possible, and crush myself.

The Brazil tree offered dizzy heights. I got myself together like a man weakened from long sickness. I lifted myself very carefully and took the branch above me. I went up several branches higher. Then, when I contrasted my own shaking efforts to reach an easy death with L'wanna's immolation, a hideous contempt for myself burned me.

I stopped climbing. I would drop from where I was. My fingers were loosening when far off through the night I heard the laughter of a loon.

For some reason its irony brought *Jesu Diabolo* to my mind. Thought of the half-breed seemed to rouse some question in my numb brain, some impulse toward action.

I scarcely knew what. I stood clinging to the vines trying to think.

What could I do to Jesu Diabolo?

After painful study my duty clarified into a very simple thing. I felt before I could have any right to join L'wanna, I must first go to Jesu Diabolo's camp and kill him. After that I might come back to the Brazil tree and to the woman who had called my name.

I lowered myself like a palsied man. The vines where L'wanna had stood were torn and dragged.

VI

AS I stumbled through the moriche walks, following the path to the hacienda I heard prolonged shrieks ahead of me. In my mental state I was not surprized. I was not even curious at the outcry. It seemed but natural for the whole world to be shrieking for the death of L'wanna.

Presently a crooked figure appeared in the moonlight tottering toward me from the direction of the Monan adobe. The screams grew louder and louder, and then between shrieks I heard a mumbling.

"Oh Holy Mother!" Shriek. "*Pecavi-mus.*" Shriek.

"Mother of God!". Shriek. "*Dominus nosotros.*" Shriek.

Yet so bludgeoned was my brain that it seemed commonplace, usual, that old Angela should totter toward me venting screams of despair, Spanish and patristic Latin.

"Oh, Señor LeFever! Oh, my God! The soldiers have come—for my *maestro*! Oh, gentle Mary! Run, Señor LeFever! Shoot, kill, oh——"

I put my hand on the old wench's shoulder and turned her about. I remember repeating several times:

"It makes no difference, Angela! L'wanna is dead! Go back to the casa! L'wanna is dead! Don't shriek so. She is dead! Dead! Oh, merciful God, L'wanna is dead!"

Hysterics shook the old woman. She wrung her claws and continued her screeching as she turned back toward the adobe. But such was the hammering in my head as I hurried toward Taos, I forgot her before her outcries died in distance.

My mind was in chaos as I jogged on to kill Jesu Diabolo. The moonlight looked reddish. As I passed a hut in the jungle a dog deserted its home and ran yelping into the undergrowth. Queer disconnected flashes went through my brain. I remember thinking this hell on earth was the aftermath of Señor Monan's murder. As I ran past the mission the hoary age of the pile suddenly shrunk my own life to the beat of a bird's wing. I saw myself as I was, a hurrying, hating shadow of flesh that would fade to carrion before morning.

In one of the mission stalls burned a dim light. As I drew near a huge man bearing an enormous bundle moved out of the shadows and turned toward the river. Behind this giant came the ponderous baggy body of the chilli-maker. As the two crept slowly toward the landing, each bearing a great weight, I overhauled and passed them. Nobody spoke. I recalled for a second Sin Fan's intention to leave Taos. Now he was going.

Fifty yards further I smelled the dampness of the river. I checked my speed and went on more cautiously. To my right, as I turned down the river, lay the bamboo brake which guarded Jesu's camp. The trail through the brake was more distinct now than when I had first seen it. An inky path it lay until it lost itself in the moon-washed bamboo. By way of caution I glanced back before I entered. Only the two slow enormous figures were in sight and they were half-way toward the wharf.

As I entered I heard a sound, a pulsing sound. As I threaded the brake it grew and grew until a gust of furious music beat in my ears. It held the rhythm and timbre of a viol or 'cello in the hands of a bacchante. The music whirled and leaped through the brake with impish zest. It conjured up maenads and corybantes in some Walpurgis night.

The nearer I crept, the louder it grew, and presently I heard with it the rhythm of feet and a woman's panting breath. Another turn and I saw the half-breed and the Arawak girl whirling about each other in a mad fandango.

I crouched in the shadow of a clump and watched them. As they spun in the full moon, I caught glimpses of their faces in rapid sequence. Diabolo wore the ecstatic smile of a dancer. His eye-flap

beat his cheek, and there was a flame in Pechita's face. She held her heart up to this brown Pan as a tigress might to its mate. He pursued her; she eluded. Now he caught her in his arms only for her to wheel away. At certain rhythmic intervals she flung her torso back wildly in his arms and on the upswing spun over his shoulder, then danced away.

Both were without weight; they were flickering flames of joy in the moonlight. They were delirious at the Monan destruction, and yet somehow through it all, they preserved a sort of innocence—children dancing around a tortured frog—there is no explanation for it.

The music was Jesu's own humming. No viol could have been more vibrant. Where he picked up the air or improvisation, God knows. Perhaps the ruin he had wrought inspired him.

As I crouched in the bamboo a feeling almost of peace came over me. My pain of life would soon be over, and so would Jesu's frothy dance. The two of us would no doubt rest quietly enough beside L'wana, underground.

I waited till the whirling figures were quite near me when I stepped into the moonlight.

The dancers stopped so suddenly that my eyes swung onward with their rhythm. Pechita gave a little gasp. Jesu stared a moment. His face was in shadow. Then he began a bland "*Buenos noches, señor,*" when I leaped at him. The girl shrieked, he reeled back; then we went to the ground struggling in each other's arms.

The half-breed fought with the sudden fury of a cat, beating my head with his open palms, Latin fashion. I think his race does not know what a fist is for, but the hard cushions of his palms jarred fire into my eyes and rang like a bell in my ears.

My arms were under his and I kept struggling to reach up around back of his shoulders and across his throat for a reverse Nelson. With such a leverage I could have choked him instantly, perhaps have broken his neck.

THE Indian knew nothing of wrestling; his frantic beating told that. He kicked my shins, knocked and shoved my head. Sweat broke out over him. Then just as my fingers clawed up around his

damp neck the Arawak girl locked her hands under my chin and began pulling and shrieking. It brought us to a deadlock. I lunged forward with all my might. Two inches more and my fingers would have met over Diabolo's gorge. The half-breed writhed and doubled like a worm; he butted me in the face. Somehow he drew up his knees and kicked with all his might into the pit of my stomach.

Nausea and spasms of pain shot through me. I flung myself sideways, gripped him again and wrapped a leg around his. He stretched his neck forward to avoid my crawling fingers until his eye-flap fanned my face.

He screamed Pechita's name. At that moment my fingers closed about his glottis. With a terrible effort of the muscles under my grip, he wheezed out—"Knife!"

Instantly the woman loosened my throat. I gulped a great breath. I heard her rush for a weapon to stab me in the back. But in that interim I flung my whole strength against the breed's gullet.

He doubled backward, his one pale eye protruding beyond its socket in the moonlight. He made queer gagging noises. His fingers fluttered over my hands as if he were begging dumbly. I hated him because he begged. I prayed I could kill him before the girl stabbed. I prayed God she would stab straight in, not cut across my back muscles and stop the pressure that was garrotting her lover.

I heard steps behind me. I flung my last ounce of fury against his throat to kill before I went, when two big fingers pressed into my clutching hands and opened them. A vise grip took my shoulder and separated me from Jesu Diabolo as if we had been manikins. Jesu rolled over on his back with a hard rasping breath.

A terrible despair filled me that my murder was balked when I realized Jesu Diabolo would live. I sprang at the prostrate man from all-fours, but bumped head and shoulders into Sammu Tenko's big naked calves which stopped me like pads of rubber. I tried to switch around them. The legs moved and blocked me and finally with a little fillip kicked me a couple of yards away. I gave up hope in my strength and began begging desperately.

"Sammu, let me to him! For God's sake, Sammu, don't stop me!"

I charged again, imploring the black man to let me pass, but he swung his hip around and knocked me sprawling. I lay sobbing and cursing and begging. I think I screamed that Jesu had killed L'wanna—I don't know what I said.

Presently I saw one hand of the negro held Pechita by her two wrists. She still grasped a knife but it was immobile. By this time the half-breed was on his knees and began in a shocking asperate—

"Sammu—Sammu—dear friends, I will repay—my soul's brother—Sammu—all I have is yours—that madman—" he pointed toward me, then choked suddenly and spat a dark stain in the moonlight.

To my amazement Sammu reached his free arm under Diabolo's waist and straightened up, shouldering him. Jesu caught his breath but said nothing as he rose in air.

I stopped my babble of curses and looked at the negro with the trapper on his shoulder and the girl in his hand. The ebony animal stood a moment, then moved quite simply out of the cleared space down the path. Jesu's legs dragged along the bamboo walls.

As they moved up I got up and followed.

Once I said shakily—

"I—I want to kill him, Sammu."

But it sounded so puerile I said no more.

After a while Jesu said—

"Sammu, my heart's friend, I can walk now."

The negro moved along silently. Apparently he did not hear. To tell the truth my own anger and frustration were slipping into amazement. I followed perhaps a yard behind Pechita.

Presently Jesu said again with a queer quality coming into his voice—

"Sammu, if you will put me down we can get along faster—good Sammu."

The negro might have been stone deaf as he strode on with his two captives. What he meant to do with them I had not the slightest idea. Pechita made no sound, but presently with a wrist movement she tossed the knife into the bamboos. I felt the impulse that moved her. To carry a knife around Sammu Tenko was an absurdity. Every moment my wonder grew stronger and stronger. I was about to question the negro myself when we passed out of the brake. Diabolo, I think, felt his legs quit dragging the big canes, for he

said with apprehension creeping into his tones:

"Sammu! What are you going to do with us, Sammu? Where are we going?"

At the continued silence the Indian began squirming, trying to twist off the shoulder, but a moment later he gave a sharp grunt and lay still, and I knew that Sammu's black arm had given him a warning squeeze. I saw Jesu twist his head trying to locate himself, but his face was toward the sky, and he could see, perhaps, little more than the tree-tops on each side.

We really turned up the river-bank, the four of us, and in the distance I saw the bloated form of the chilli-maker. Pechita saw him, too, for suddenly she began swinging against the black hand with all her might. Her slight resistance did not cause the giant even to lean forward or throw his step out of rhythm. She doubled over his big fist, and I saw the gleam of white teeth as she bit. Sammu gave a little push with his fingers. Her head bobbed back and she began sobbing out:

"Sammu! Sammu! What are you going to do with me? Let me go, Sammu! Sammu, please, ple-a-s-e——"

Then she tried to kick his legs and begged between kicks. She stared up the river and grew wilder. She screamed, implored in desperate babbling haste. At last she pushed close to his side and whispered up:

"Sammu! Sammu! Look at me!"

To my surprise the giant did look around. There was a kind of grin on his pendulous lips. Pechita peered up into his eyes.

"Sammu!" she whispered shakily. "Let me go, Sammu—I—I'll be your—woman—Sammu!"

I don't know why I trailed on behind the three. God knows all thought of vengeance was frozen from my heart by the growing menace of Sammu's silence. I am sure Sin Fan had warned him neither to talk nor to argue. One word and without question he would have fallen victim to Jesu's tongue or to Pechita's lures.

WHEN we reached the wharf the belying Chinaman received the girl's wrists in his hand, then stood impassive. As far as I could see his wide face looked exactly as it did when I first saw him sitting by his pots, brooding over his young wife.

A number of leathern straps lay at his feet. Sammu picked up three of these, lowered Jesu, bound the half-breed's hands and feet and placed a gag in his mouth. Then the negro hesitated the fraction of a second and looked toward his master. Sin Fan barely nodded.

I believe at the nodding of that expressionless face I would have done something to help even Jesu Diabolo had it been in my power. I drew long breaths and sat staring at the actors.

From the wharf a series of stakes led into the river where boatmen moored their craft as the water rose and fell. Beyond these stakes were a sprinkling of reeds. In the moonlight I could see the reeds move in sinuous ripples as some manatee or crocodile browsed among them.

Sammu picked up his burden and waded gingerly to a stake that was perhaps thigh-deep to an ordinary man. Here he bound Diabolo in a sitting posture. Only the half-breed's head was exposed above the surface. It was a queer sight. The gag across the head was a black mark; a high light on the bluish flap looked like a clean round hole straight through Jesu's skull. The good eye stared; once I saw it bat.

Sammu splattered the water three times with his palm, then waded ashore with a certain haste.

A sick feeling came over me. I looked away. It happened my eyes fell on Pechita. The girl's face was clayey even to the lips. Sin Fan watched Jesu calmly, his oblique eyes batting at regular intervals.

For a full minute I stared at the Chinaman and his recovered woman. Suddenly a horrible look came into Pechita's face; I thought her eyes would start from her head. I heard a splash in the river, then a bubbling.

Sin Fan watched the stakes for upward of a minute and a half with a nerveless attention, then turned and waddled toward the water, leading the girl.

I stopped breathing, not knowing what to expect.

A *balandra* lay moored at the wharf piled with pots and a few bags of beans. He drew the girl aboard and put her among the beans. She might have been another bag.

Sammu Tenko cast off the line, stepped aboard, picked up the pole and leaned his

weight against it. The *balandra* moved away from the wharf into the current. They drifted out into the placid moonlight, the negro poling, Sin Fan sitting motionless among his pots and Pechita lying limp across the bean bags as if she were dead.

I sat staring until the boat grew indistinct and finally faded into the luminous water. I sat with even my own thirst for death deadened.

At last when I gained the courage I looked around at the boat-stakes. They were quite empty.

I DO not know how long I sat, nor could I chronicle my thoughts if I would. At length I heard footsteps behind me; some one laid a hand on my shoulder and I saw it was the *alcalde*.

He told me Señor Monan and the soldiers were inquiring for me at the mission. It seemed the soldiers were of Señor Monan's political party and had come to escort their leader into Peru. In a roundabout way the *alcalde* explained that he had redirected Jesu's letter to a man in Caracas—a man with whom Señor Monan had been corresponding. As a result Monan's friends had come and Jesu had directed them to the hacienda.

L'wanna was with the party. Old Angela had found the men and had told them of L'wanna's supposed death. The whole group then hurried to the Brazil tree and had found the girl where she had fallen into the hollow bole when the jaguar leaped. Like all the cat family, the big feline had given up its game when the first charge failed.

The men found L'wanna stunned from her fall. They were guided in their search by young capybaras on the inside creaking their distress.

Some two years later when L'wanna and I were writing our "Birds of Brazil," we found a Chinaman and a gigantic negro running a chilli-shop in one of the upper Amazon towns, Tefie, I believe the place was called. However, we were never sure they were the men we had known in Taos. They gave no sign of recognition when we purchased a bowl at their stand. Opium had reduced them to mere skeletons of their former selves.

No woman was with them.



The Wooing of Posie Grubb

BY JANE HICKS

YES, POSIE had had a hard life, although she was still in her early thirties. And it was a lonely life because she made it lonely. Also, one wondered how much of the hardness was of her own responsibility. For she was born flowerlike—posie-like, with the blue eyes and exquisite skin that usually come with dark-red hair like hers.

The "Grubb" of her name was of her own choosing; it carried the suggestion that that of her life might have been, too. Nor was she one of those much bewritten persons who radiate the more cheer the more trouble they have. She did not emit cheer. She emitted the atmosphere of the kitchen of her South Carolina mill hotel, where she spent sixteen of her waking hours out of seventeen.

That kitchen was dark and smoky and disorderly because Posie had not time, she said, "to fool with cleaning it up." She did not connect her disposition with her kitchen, though it had a lot to do with it, for Posie, despite her armor of hardness, was sensitive. One might imagine that could she have spent her waking hours in a flower garden she would have been gay, almost frivolous.

But it was the kitchen for Mrs. Posie Grubb! Her boarders sought her there if they cared to run the risk it involved, for Posie didn't have time, she said, "to fool with being polite!" She didn't always "cuss a feller out," but you could never tell when she would or why. Her inconsistency was her only consistency. The uncertainty of her was her attraction. Yes,

she had a certain attraction. She could be really pleasant when she felt "right good," but apparently that was not often.

One time, however, was the Summer morning in 1918 when the labor shortage first made itself felt at White's mill. As "Tek" Bullard, the mill foreman, came and stood in the doorway leading from the kitchen to the dining-room, Posie only glanced up, but saw that the man's shaggy, gray brows were lower over his eyes than usual. She waited for him to speak.

"Peeling your spuds, eh?" he asked, his tongue pushing his chew into his cheek.

"Seems like to me I don't never do nothin' else. I says sometimes, if I was to go to heaven—I don't speck to go there—but if I did and I seen a potato and I had to peel it, I'd turn around and walk out. What's the matter with you, home this time o' day? Ain't the mill a-runnin'?"

"'Bout half runnin'. Got no men." He scratched his head, pushing his hat over his eyes.

"What's the matter, ain't got no men? Draft ain't take no more yet, is it?"

"No, 'tain't the draft. They're over to the West Carolina."

"Jim Massey's got 'em, is he? Reckon they're 'fraid of a kick from them long legs o' his. Did you see such a stretch! His step's the only thing he ain't stingy about. How'd he get 'em? You can't never count on a nigger. I wisht they would all go up north to Richmond or to the war or somewheres. How'd he get 'em?"



"'Link' Dorsey's tellin' me that Massey come down town Saturday night and offered 'em more money."

"How come he didn't offer Link more, too?"

"Did. But Link said if I'd give him more, he'd stay. He'd rather; been with me a long time, and Lily here and all."

Lily was Link's very black wife and Posie Grubb's "help." She was putting the breakfast dishes through a greasy, gray water and then touching them lightly with a soiled, gray cloth. Posie glanced quickly and almost angrily toward Lily.

"He'd better not be goin' takin' Lily 'way from me! Hard as help is to get now! Can't you give him what Massey's offered?"

"I just stopped by the office to tell Mr. White. He told me to go ahead and get 'em back. We've got to have men."

"What's the matter with Massey, anyhow?" Posie suddenly asked, pushing her white cap up from over her small, sharp eyes. "Didn't he say nothin' 'bout it yesterday? Here with you all day to 'way long in the night. You ail orter be 'shamed o' yourselves, playin' poker all day Sundays."

He had no answer for this. He let his chew drop from his cheek on to his tongue and, turning, walked slowly through the bare, white-plastered dining-room and barer hallway out on to the dusty, screened porch. For a few minutes he stood thinking; then opened the door and went back through the baking sunshine to the mill. Posie watched him through the vista of doorways till he was out of sight, then resumed her scraping. It meant nothing to her that he had come to tell her.

"Comin' here stoppin' me with my work," she grumbled. "What'a I care 'bout his men? 'Tain't none o' my business. I got all I can do to fill their stomachs. I bet if Jim Massey comes here takin' my boarders 'way from me, he'll hear from me. How many you s'pose I'll lose?"

Lily walked airily to the stove for some hot water and reckoned she'd lose ten.

Posie Grubb did not hesitate to fill black stomachs as well as white, as she expressed it. The white men ate in the dining-room, so much per month on credit; the black ones ate in the kitchen, so much per plate, prepaid. Business was business. One

man's money was as good as another's.

"All the use I got for menfolks, anyhow, is to get their money," she often said.

And all the use the menfolks had for her was to have a place convenient to the mill where they could eat and sleep. At least that was the only way any of them had thought of her till one Saturday evening about six months before. It was when Jim Massey was assistant foreman at White's mill, and lived at Mrs. Grubb's.

Every one in the camp—that is, all the men and some of the women—walked to town, two miles away, every Saturday night to spend and to deposit their money. Bullard and Massey had come back early that night about nine o'clock. As they came up on the porch they saw, through the glass in the door, Mrs. Grubb sitting at the dining-room table, her head on her arms, her shoulders shaking. Both men stopped. Posie Grubb crying?

"Lord, no," Bullard said. "'Tain't in her! Coughing!"

As they opened the door and went in, Posie jumped up and went into the dark kitchen and began rattling the pans. Massey was curious. And being curious and also being a man open and straightforward, he went to satisfy his curiosity. He strode across the hall to the dining-room doorway.

"Mrs. Grubb?" he called her.

Bullard had started toward his room door, but he joined Massey as the woman answered.

"What you want? I'm busy. I can't come there. You got no business back here, anyhow, this time o' night," mumbling on.

Massey's large, wide open blue eyes turned to Bullard, whose small, shrewd ones seemed to be listening to the unusual, thick quality of the woman's voice. Bullard nodded. It was tears.

"Mrs. Grubb," Massey called, parting his long, brown mustache, "are you sick? If you are, I'll go back to town to get you some medicine."

"No, I ain't sick!"

She came to the kitchen door. Her glorious mass of dark-red hair was uncovered and tumbled. Her cheeks had an unusual, slight flush, and her blue service dress with its sleeves rolled up was becoming.

"No, I ain't sick," she said, "and I don't



want no pityin'. But I'm mad! I'm mad with everybody round here. All go runnin' off to town—don't nobody ever ask me to go. Lord knows I don't want 'em to. And these women round here! Don't none of 'em speak to me and I don't want 'em to. I ain't never spoke to none o' them. Give 'em no chanct to pass me by. I got no time to be foolin' round with them if I was to speak to 'em. I ain't poison! I'm just as good as them, every darned one of 'em.

"'Tain't no disgrace to keep no hotel, white or black, and if they think I ain't as good as them cause I'm divorced, I'd like to know what one o' them would 'a' lived with Timothy Grubb, drinkin' up every cent I made and him, too. Work myself to death in this old hole to make a little to put by and he'd take it and drink it all up and come back for more. 'Tain't no fit place to live, nohow. State that's got laws that holds a woman to a man like that.

"I'd a-stayed in Reno cookin' for them rich fellers if it hadn't a-been I wanted to be near my sister and her two children, even if she don't never come near me. If I do have to work like a man hoeing potatoes and beans and doin' what these worthless niggers won't do, I got more respect for myself than if—I don't know what I would do if I couldn't take care o' myself.

"My sister says I'm hard. Yes, I'm hard! I know I'm hard! I got to be hard! Anybody's got to be hard when they got to fight the whole world to get along. I fight the men to keep 'em from cheatin' me; I fight the women 'cause I hate 'em. I don't want nobody to be kind to me. If they was I couldn't fight 'em. I wanta fight 'em! I like to fight 'em. I don't wanta do nobody no harm no more'n they do me, but they ain't nobody in the world that's doin' nothin' for me, and I don't want 'em to. What I get, I'll leave to my two nieces. They ain't struck me yet."

She turned abruptly back into the dark kitchen and went outside to the woodpile. The men looked at each other seriously for a minute, then turned and went to their rooms. Massey's high, heavy wood's boots made less noise than usual going up the steps; almost softly Bullard closed his door. Each man lighted a fire in his little

trash burner and sat down by it to think.

They had seen something new. They had seen Posie Grubb. They had seen her as a human being with feelings, not like iron, but like flesh—flesh that shrank from hurts and stabs, flesh that quivered and bled at cruelties, flesh that grew callous in self-protection. Yes, she was hard, but she hadn't hardened all the way to the aching, sobbing heart of her; she had hardened outside, but not so that human beings with their sharpness and their cruelties couldn't hurt her.

And because she was hurt and bleeding and raw she had let the steely surface of her break and show her humanity to these two rough men just because they happened to come near her at that minute. Had they been tough instead of only rough they would have laughed and forgotten. But pity was aroused in them because, like the stately pines with which they worked, their roughness was only of the outside, and their hearts were strong and true, though with a difference in their grain.

Bullard, in his shrewdness and even against his will, followed his pity with a wonder if she could have had a reason for her outburst, having planned it and executed it well. And then came a little admiration of the fiber of a woman who would grit her teeth and go on hoeing her row when it was as hard and stony as Posie Grubb's. And mixed with the pity and the admiration was a subtle enjoyment of Tim Grubb's "soft game." And then because, like all things that grow, some feelings are the issue of many elements, Tek Bullard suddenly found himself wanting Posie Grubb.

And up in his room over his trash burner, Tom Massey, with his good heart and less intricate grain than Bullard's, was facing the fact that he felt sorry for this woman and wanted to fight for her, damn it, and make the rest a little easier for her—make her feel that ignorant little children were not the only ones whose hands were not turned against her and whose faces were not turned from her.

And be it said that not till later did he think of the expense of a wife. For Massey was not extravagant.

So, from that Winter night, Massey and his friend, Tek Bullard, had been unconscious rivals for Posie Grubb. The desire

for her was not keen enough in either of them to drive him to court her or even to be any different toward her outwardly; but both of them were on the balance, ready to respond to the weight of a propitious happening or a responsive mood in Mrs. Grubb. A tender mood in her, however, seemed to be the remotest possibility, for since her "damned softness in front of them men," as she called it to herself, she had been harder and ruder than ever to them.

She felt sure that they had laughed but not forgotten and that she had only brought another hurt on herself. It would have taken a very brave man indeed, impelled by an irresistible and fiery force, to ask Posie Grubb to stop hoeing and scraping potatoes for the mill force and to hoe and scrape them for him alone. So, it seemed that each man waited rather unconcernedly for the propitious happening, if anything ever was to disturb his romantic balance. And they waited for six months or more, when the labor situation became serious.

WHEN Tek Bullard walked back to the mill that Monday morning after he had gone to tell Mrs. Grubb that he had no crew, he immediately found Link Dorsey and increased his wages to twenty-five cents a day more than Massey had offered him, remarking in an offhand way that that was what he was going to do for every man working for him. Then he waited! And sure enough, in just a few days, he had all his old crew back and happy.

He chuckled when he heard that the West Carolina would probably have to shut down on account of labor. In a week or so, however, the chuckling was on the other side, for Massey had the men again. And thus it went, battledore and shuttlecock. But though the two foremen played their poker in Bullard's room every Sunday, neither mentioned the labor subject for several weeks. Then on Sunday, the minute Massey strode on to the porch where Bullard was waiting for him, Bullard rose; led the way to his room and had no sooner closed the door than he opened his subject.

"Look here, Massey, we've got to come to some understanding about this nigger question."

Massey's large eyes stretched in surprise.

"Well, it's been fair, ain't it?"

"Sure, it's been fair, but you've got to think about more'n that. Where'll it end? These niggers know what's up and they're working it for all it's worth."

"Sure, they're working it!"

"But tain't right. We can't, neither one o' our mills, afford to pay labor ten dollars a day, but they'll push us to that," Bullard argued. "We'll have to shut down or else run at a loss."

"My orders are to get 'em, no matter," Massey drawled.

Bullard thought for a minute; his small eyes squinted till the lashes touched.

"Tell you what," he said. "We'll play for the last shot. Which one wins can make these men we've got the last offer. The loser will have to go out o' town for more."

"It's a go. Settle it when you say," Massey agreed, striking the table with the palm of his hand and lifting a chair lightly to place.

He swung one leg over the back of it, pulled his hat over his eyes and picked up the deck as Bullard came slowly and deliberately to his place opposite.

That night, as Massey strode home in the moonlight past the fields of cotton and tobacco, he felt triumphant. Bullard and not he had to go labor-hunting. He felt so good that he even grew slightly sentimental when he passed a couple of dusky lovers on the road. Posie had looked pretty fine that day in a white dress and she had smiled at him a new way. He didn't know exactly what her smile had meant, but it showed that she felt good, for Posie usually fussed at meal-time, either at her boarders in the dining-room or those in the kitchen or at Lily.

He turned and looked back at the white hotel standing out in the moonlight against the black swamp. He believed, yes, he believed he'd ask Posie to marry him the next time he saw her. He had always heard that two could live cheaper than one. She could mend his clothes and save him the price of new ones. She was used to economy. He could think of no reason for crushing his desire for her. They were too old to court like those kids he'd just passed, but he believed he'd get her.

In his simplicity and his good humor, it did not occur to him that Posie's smile had been the outward expression of a re-



vengeful joy because he had had no men the week before and Bullard had, with the consequence that she had had her full quota of boarders.

As Massey passed the negro church he stopped among the young bucks who always stood in a large semicircle, like a paling fence, about the front door. He saw several mill-hands whom he had not seen Saturday night.

"My last chance," he thought. "I'd better clean 'em up."

He made his offer. It was enticing. That West Carolina mill must be a fine place to work. As Massey started on, out from the shadows on the dark side of the church slouched a man. It was Link Dorsey.

"Say, Cap'n, what's you payin' now?" Massey told him.

"And besides," he ended, "if you work every day in the week, you'll get an extra dollar free on Saturday night. A bonus, it's called."

Link was caught. Massey laughed aloud to himself as he strode on. Luck had certainly been with him that day.

"Take it all in all, I reckon I ain't got nothin' to kick about. There's Mrs. Grubb, now, thinks the whole world's against her. I reckon there's a whole lot in the way you feel about it. She 'spec's everybody to be against her, and they are. And hang it all, she won't let you tell her when you're not."

He mused on, remembering that Saturday night six months before, hearing again the hard, bitter note in her voice, feeling again the pity and the desire to make things easier for her, ending with the speculation on the economy of marriage with a woman with a past like Posie Grubb's.

Such was the tone of his thoughts through the week. He laughed when he heard that Bullard was out of town and that White's mill was shut down. He met the train Saturday night, saw Bullard get off with a number of laborers, so was on hand for their game Sunday morning. As they talked for a few minutes on the porch, Massey stood in line with the vista of doorways from the kitchen. His feet far apart, his hands behind his back, he rocked contentedly and with admirable balance, heel and toe. His blue shirt was ironed. His felt hat was brushed, his suspenders were new, for every day of happy

thought since last Sunday had strengthened his resolve to ask Posie today. He heard her coming.

"Yes," she said as she came through the hall, "I just been waitin' to see you. I'd like to know what in the devil I've ever done to you that you should come over here and take all my boarders away from me. You been workin' to get 'em for a month. Now I reckon you're satisfied. You'll take the bread right out o' my mouth. I s'pose next you'll try to get all the white ones I got."

"And you wasn't satisfied to take my boarders, but you worked and worked till you got my help away from me. I s'pose you think I didn't work hard enough before, gettin' up at five o'clock in the mornin' and never stoppin' till ten o'clock at night. Now you've took Lily away from me, I s'pose you want me to work all night, too."

"Yes you did take her, and you needn't say you didn't. She come here tellin' me she didn't have to work no more now, Link's makin' more'n I was, she reckoned. And I reckon so, too. Makin' six times's much as he's worth, just to get him and Lily away from me. I know you. You're all alike. Needn't tell me you got 'em for your mill. If your mill needed men why couldn't you go off and get 'em like Mr. Bullard done?"

"No, you had to come tryin' to break me up, and you pretty near done it, too. But you wait. I'll get you. If the Lord don't gimme a chanct, the devil will. I don't know which is worse, you or Tim Grubb—or the old boy himself. You'll all work against me every chanct you get. I'd get the law on you if I could. It's the same's stealing from me. You'd better go. Come hangin' round here after you done me thataway."

Poor Massey was making for the mill. His stride was less buoyant than it had been when he came, but no slower. His balloon had burst. A woman's sharpness.

"You reckon he'll be back to dinner?" Posie asked Bullard. "He'd better had come back here and pay me that fifty cents after I got enough dinner for him—if I ever get it ready. It likes to work me to death cookin' for you-all men and tryin' to keep your rooms and all. You-all think I'm just fussin' cause I'm mad, but I declare I can't keep on without no help."

And I can't get a soul to come out here and help me. Wages is so high, won't none o' these women work. It's awful. I don't know what we're comin' to. I reckon I'll have to give it up soon, cause I can't do it all."

"Give it up?" Bullard asked. "What, the hotel?"

"Cert'n'y, the hotel. It'll kill me if I don't!"

"Then, where'll we eat, us unmarried men?"

"I don't care where you eat. I know I don't want you eatin' off my grave, and that's what it'll be if I keep on."

Bullard thought a minute. There was no one else on the porch; the only windows that opened on to it were those of his own and Mrs. Grubb's bedrooms.

"Well," he began in a low tone, scratching the back of his head, "you could stand cookin' for one, couldn't you? How 'bout cookin' for just me? House number four is vacant."

"What you mean? You mean me marry you? I wouldn't marry no man on earth, not one of 'em. You're all alike. You'd a taken my boarders away, too—treated me just like Massey done—if you'd a been at another mill. No, sir, first thing I knowd, you'd be walkin' off with every cent I made since I got rid o' that other man. I know you. You ain't thinkin' 'bout me. All you're thinkin' 'bout is havin' somebody to cook for you so you won't have to walk to town for your meals. You ain't foolin' me."

"No, I ain't gunter cook for no man, onct I get outer this. It's all I done all my life. I think's sometimes that's why my name's Grubb. I ain't never done nothin' but cook stuff for men to eat. Always meat an' potatoes! I wisht there wasn't another potato in the whole world. Got so much to do now, I don't reckon I ever will get dinner ready. Got no wood in the woodbox, even. Got to stop my other work to chop that and bring it in. And got to get all these rooms done up."

Tek Bullard smoked his cigar—a nice one it was, for he made "good money"—and sat thinking as Posie went noisily up the steps. He heard her rushing around pulling beds away from the wall, pushing them back in a few minutes and going on to the next room.

"She's crazy. She'll never get another

chance like that," he thought as he slid the band of his cigar nearer the end. "Not many women could'a' held out this week, choppin' wood and all. Maybe another week'll make her glad to get me. She ain't tired enough yet."

Meanwhile, Massey was walking about the mill-yard, stopping to look at the sloping piles, but seeing nothing but a pair of hurt and fighting eyes under a mass of wonderful auburn hair. Maybe now she'd listen to him. A woman had to have her say out. It beat all the way she always saw things wrong. When he reached the hotel, he passed Bullard on the porch and went through to the kitchen. Mrs. Grubb was not there. The unwashed breakfast dishes were piled on the small pine table. A large pan of potatoes—the symbol of her drudgery—was on a chair. The woodbox was empty.

Massey deliberated for a minute. Then he rolled up his clean, blue sleeves, and he peeled the potatoes. He'd done it many a time for his mother and in lumber-camps. He reckoned he could do it again. There was no hot water because the fire was low. He went outside and found enough small wood to keep it going until he could chop more. Just as he was putting it into the stove, Posie, her housework finished, came hurrying back to the kitchen. She stopped.

"What—what you doin' here? Get outer here. I don't want—" She sat down on the chair where the potatoes had been. "What you doin' that for? I don't want you to do that. I don't want nobody to do nothin' for me; then I won't have to do—" Her voice seemed to break.

She got up quickly and began fixing the drafts of the stove.

"I just put some wood in," Massey said. "I'm gunter chop some now and fill the box."

"No you ain't! I don't want you to." Her voice was thick as on that Saturday night in the Winter.

Massey went outside and began swinging the ax as only a woodsman can. When he took in his first armful, Posie turned and faced him. Her eyes were red; she was dabbing her nose with the corner of her apron.

"What you doin' that for—them potatoes and all?"

"I just thought I'd help you a little. 'Taint right for a woman to have to work

so hard. My mother like to killed herself doing it. You'd orter give up this place. It's too much for you. It's too much for any woman."

"How'd I take care o' myself, I'd like to know, if I give it up? Cookin's all I know how to do."

"'Twouldn't be so hard if you cooked for just you and—and one other, would it?"

Posie did not expect what was coming, even after his kindness. Habit is strong. She looked only for blows, open or covert.

"I reckon Tek Bullard's put you up to this, 'cause he don't wanten have to walk—you're workin' for him, now you've took his men. You think you'll—aw, I know you!"

Massey rocked on his feet for a minute, looking at her seriously.

"I ain't workin' for nobody but Jim Massey," he said. "I want you for myself. Little children ain't the only ones that ain't against you."

"You mean you want me to marry you? No, sir. I wouldn't marry—" In her pause for a convincing phrase her eyes fell on the woodbox, the peeled potatoes. She looked at him sharply.

"You mean it?" she asked.

He nodded.

"Well, I'm gunter take you, man, right now while I got a chanct! They ain't nobody else done nothin' for me, and I reckon—I reckon nobody ain't gunter."

"Now mebbe you don't look at things

right," he said. "Now about the men, and 'bout the women folks round here—"

"I know it! I'm always 'speckin' folks to do me dirty. But mebbe now—I'll see things different."

He stood looking at her. He reckoned he ought to kiss her—or something.

"I'll tell you," he said, rocking heel and toe, and with a little, twinkling smile; "to show you 'taint all for myself, I won't eat a spud for a year. Only it's with spuds like everything else—they're good or bad 'cordin' to how you look at 'em. They're cheap and they're good eatin'."

"I reckon 'tis," she said with a softer expression. Then as he started toward the door she said, "Wait a minute. There's something I reckon I'd orter tell you. I ain't never told nobody else, 'cause they'd call me a fool. It's 'bout that man, Tim Grubb. He never was no 'count; he ain't as much now as he was. He drank himself to pieces. He can't do nothin' and he ain't got no folks. Didn't look right to let the State look after him. Even if I did divorce him, I married him. 'Taint much I send him—just a little, but—but I ain't gunter quit on him!" She looked at Massey bravely, almost defiantly. "And you ain't no spender," she ended.

He didn't speak at once.

He'd pitied her before; now:

"I reckon," he drawled, "you're worth that to me." He stood looking at her. Then, "I'll bring in the wood."

Definition

THESE are eternal mysteries:
The breath of wind upon the seas,
The flare of saffron in the sky,
The cadence of a child's first cry,
And, chief of all, the moment's grace
That let me gaze into your face.

These are eternal verities:
The healing wrought by streams and trees,
The sway of beauty over might,
The madness born of moonlit night,
And, true as soaring lark soars true,
My love for you, my love for you!

Ruth Lambert Jones



The Dream Killers

BY MARY HEATON VORSE

A Complete Novelette

WHAT the matter was he couldn't imagine, for his mind went back to the days of his boyhood.

He saw himself barefoot, driving pigs in the rain, talking to a little girl, with eyes as blue as corn flowers, and a crown of red hair, haloed by mist. He saw the very gestures with which he had run his hand through his hair, made conscious of its wetness because of the damp standing like strings of pearls on hers. His eyes seemed to him to be smarting again with the smoke from the peat fire.

He jogged himself awake, for the eyes of his body were looking out through the translucent air over the Sound, that today was as shining as a blue jewel. The edges of things and their surfaces seemed cruelly hard, and McDermott longed for the soft outlines of Ireland. He saw it drenched with mist and blurred with smoke, and he longed to feel the damp of it.

"Now this is queer," he thought. "What can it be that ails me?"

The obsession was so strong on him that his sons, as they walked past, seemed strange to him.

They were many years apart in age: Dennis, the son of his youth; Lynn, the child of his maturity, the space between them bridged by Betty. Between Betty and Dennis were graves—little graves in raw western towns.

Hard living it had been. Hard for him and harder for Lucy with her Irish gaiety and her Irish despair. How many years

lay between him and those desolate, meager graves! He could see himself, and Lucy weeping beside him, their black clothes like blots against the red, yawning grave, red like a wound. The cemetery itself was red and raw, picked out with black railings and white crosses. He remembered how he hated the row of arrogant marble tombs, for he was poor and could buy only a cheap wooden cross to mark the grave of his child. He had sworn then that he would be rich enough to be buried under as fine a marble as any there. Well, now he could buy all the tombs and the cemetery, too, if he was a-minded.

He looked around. All this was his—the green acres that led to the shining waters of the Sound—the great house and its appendages of greenhouses and garage, and those handsome children. Who would think now that the father and mother of them were Irish from the bogs? They looked like something you might read of in a book, McDermott thought, and his pride was shot with disquiet as he contrasted himself as a lad with them.

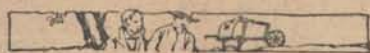
"You're quiet today, Shayne?" His wife's voice drifted to him afar off.

"Do you ever think of the old days?" he returned.

"That's a strange thing for you to ask."

"How, strange for me?"

"Why, from your talk, it's as if you were born new every day. Are you growing old that you're looking all of a sudden in the face of the past?"



"My days have always been so crowded and full, I've had no time for the past but I don't know how it is tonight. It is as if I could smell the peat burning again. We've come a long road, Lucy."

"I often think it."

"And much of it's been hard."

"None of it was bitter."

"You worked hard in your back lashes"

"There's times I'm wearied. She was work to do."

"You're busy all the time of a magazine."

"I'm not idle, but the innocent and rage comes over me to do worse as clearly as hand what others do ill."

He started to walk away. The song had seeking an explanation for the motor cars, mood.

"Do you remember how you used to see the fires ablaze in North Dakota?"

"The long Winter? I swore to you then."

"When I got rich I'd have gardens for you."

"So full of flowers you couldn't put your foot down, and here it's come true. Why is it that there should be a discontent on me this night—that I'd like to feel the turf between the bare toes of me and my hair wet with the mist and look up into the purple night at the stars? How is it the past has come to me like the wind blowing the smell of flowers?"

She looked at him curiously.

"I never saw you like this before. I thought your past was full of what you'd forgotten."

II

HE WALKED down over the lawn and paused to talk to a gardener.

"You're the new man, I'm thinking?"

"Yes, I'm the one."

"We've been looking for a steady man."

"Mr. Sanders told me so. I'm here only till you find what you need."

The man looked at him with eyes that were like pale, glancing flames, clear and penetrating and strange. He had the face of a saint and a satyr. There was sweetness in his face and goodness, wisdom and sensuality. His skin was weathered until it had the texture of old vellum, and as he talked he worked deftly with his long powerful fingers.

"You work with experience," said Shayne. "You like the work, I can tell that. It's a pity you're moving on."

was singing, and the words came to Shayne like a wind of the past.

The windy ways of all the world are calling to my feet.

Shayne found himself taking up the melody. Then, as in a dream, he heard himself speaking.

"I mind the last time I sang that song."

The pale flaming eyes of the man were fixed on Shayne.

"And when was that?" he asked, hardly above a breath.

"The last time I sang that song," Shayne said, "was thirty-five years ago, the day I parted with my brother Neill McDermott in the streets of Boston, and each of us turned our way, and we were to meet in a month's time, and never did I hear of my brother again."

"Shayne McDermott, look at me!" said the man.

"Neill!" he cried. "I've known you all my life. I've known you since your father."

"You know me! Well, the windy ways you would have brought you back to me, yourself, and you've been walking down the road."

"I'll give you the last I did a."

And now that I have my back ached eyes, Shayne, and see

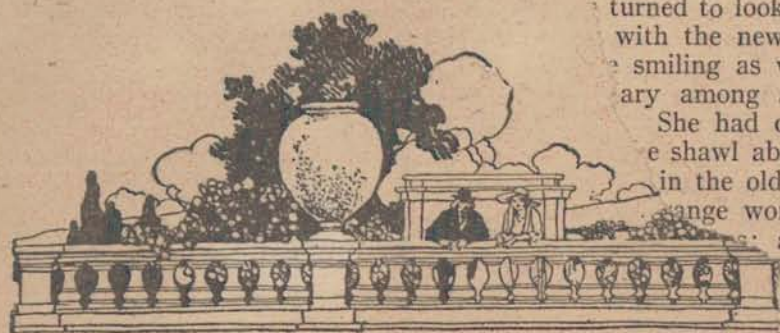
"Yet you have gone on my way has swung a pick in his hand. Down the road"

"And I have, too; but I use, and his They both glanced to where in the McDermott sat in the shade. She there and watchful, her hands on her knees. She had the air of some powerful idol, there was dignity and impressiveness in her size. Her eyes rested on her sons with a fierce tenderness. For all she was quiet, there was intensity and power in her pose.

"She's not soft!" said the new man.

Shayne walked to the end of the terrace. He paused before the fountain to look at the goldfish, for he liked the movement of bright, sparkling things. All the things in the world that had color on them pleased him. He liked the glitter of jewels, but better he liked swift-moving fish. He had seen plenty of gardeners come and go, and liked to talk with them, being a man of sociability. He had a fancy, too, that he envied Sanders, his head gardener, his job. When things in the works went wrong:

"Well, Sanders," he'd say, as he walked



The Dream Killers

BY MARY HEATON

III

A Complete Novel

WHAT the matter was he couldn't imagine, for his mind went back to the days of his boyhood. He saw himself barefooted, picking up pigs in the rain, talking to a lady with eyes as blue as corn flowers, as Miss Deane, with her crown of red hair, haloed by a law. She saw the very gestures with which he ran his hand through his hair in the garden this morning, conscious of its wetness beneath the strings of his coat, standing like strings of his coat. His eyes seemed to always be working again with the "you." "daughter?" the new man He jogged of his head and threw back his head and translated.

"My daughter, is it?" he replied. "My daughter? Is it that I'm growing old or that Mary Deane is growing young of a sudden? It's my wife's sister, the young lady is!"

As if drawn by the magnet of their laughter Mary Deane approached them slowly. She was gentle and maidenly, and had a look of remoteness and innocence that was like youth's heart.

As if drawn by the magnet of their youth slipped slowly from her; her slenderness sharpened itself to spareness. Her fair skin disclosed itself to be marred by fine wrinkles. She had a smiling mouth, but it was from some inner, hard-won discipline that she smiled. Her eyes were young and held no experience.

Shayne walked down the terrace again.

turned to look at Mary, who was talking with the new gardener, and her eyes smiling as well as her mouth.

among all of them had stayed

She had only, thought Shayne, to

the shawl about the head of her, and

in the old country would take her

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an odd thought came to

What has this to do with

if the person he called

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have been working too

ined it.

and came walking up in their white flannels. Dennis was a dark Irishman; swift moving, good looking, with flashing eyes and a swift bright smile, and the gaiety of him was often veiled. He had been moving now for some weeks sullen-faced through life.

Shayne stopped the boys. Some instinct in his heart went out to Lynn.

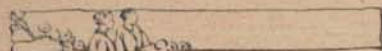
"Who beat?" he asked for the sake of making talk.

"I did for once," Lynn answered.

He was a tall awkward boy, and his pendulous red hands hung helplessly by his side and his ears stuck out and were quick to flush red. There was about the youngster something that reminded Shayne of his early days.

"Did you ever think you 'uld like to go to Ireland one day?" he asked. "At your age I was an adventurous lad."

There was a question in Shayne's voice. He was trying hard to establish the current of comprehension between himself and the lad. But his questions plunged softly into the illimitable depths of Lynn's shyness. Shayne could not reach him. Lynn stood there before him stooping over, his ears crimson, the half-grown features of his face vaguely promising good looks. He was a boy that always buttoned his sweater up wrong. There was always something adrift about his clothes. Now a spot of green marred the whiteness of his flannels; his shoe was untied and his cravat, also. The boy's disorder was appealing, like the loose ends of things



in the old country, and Shayne was the more thwarted that he had been able to get no nearer the lad who so reminded him of his youth. He felt lonely and cold.

Betty in white with a silk peach-colored sweater over her arm, ran down the path making toward the boat-landing. She had Irish blue eyes with long black lashes and dark curling chestnut hair. She was as pretty a girl, her father thought, as was ever seen on the cover of a magazine. She was his own daughter, innocent and unscrupulous. Her edges were as clearly defined as the sail of a yacht against the blue of the water. Her cradle song had been the purring of high-power motor cars, and she had grown up with the echo of great guns in her ears.

"Where are you off to, Betty?" he asked.

"I'm going out on the Sound."

"You seem to be in a hurry."

"You guessed it," she said.

"What's wrong that you're running so fast?"

For a moment he could see anger welling in her eyes like a bubbling spring. It enraged her to be stopped in one of her long-sweeping flights.

"It's running away from the old woman I am," she said in the brogue that was the *lingua franca* between them. With her clever sleight of hand, she changed him from her enemy to her accomplice. "Tis meeting my beau by the edge of the water that I'm after doing." She winked at him and left him, to be gone about her own affairs till tea-time.

IV

AGAIN the memories of the past beat round his head with soft dark wings. He seemed to be groping in the dark for some door. He was on the edge of some discovery which forever eluded him. The pergolas, the garden, the lawns, the great houses receded from him. They became as small as if he saw them reflected in an eye. He heard the past like the humming of bees, like the murmur of distant voices. He had turned to those he loved, one after the other, for help and for understanding, and they had only helped him to see the loneliness of his own heart.

The new gardener was working with the unhurried sureness of a good worker. He

was singing, and the words came to Shayne like a wind of the past.

The windy ways of all the world are calling to my feet.

Shayne found himself taking up the melody. Then, as in a dream, he heard himself speaking.

"I mind the last time I sang that song."

The pale flaming eyes of the man were fixed on Shayne.

"And when was that?" he asked, hardly above a breath.

"The last time I sang that song," Shayne said, "was thirty-five years ago, the day I parted with my brother Neill McDermott in the streets of Boston, and each of us turned our way, and we were to meet in a month's time, and never did I hear of my brother again."

"Shayne McDermott, look at me!" said the man.

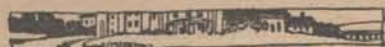
"Neill!" he cried. "I've known you all the time! I've known you since your eyes fell on me! Well, the windy ways of the world have brought you back to me, Neill, and have you been walking down them ever since?"

"That I have. And now that I have looked into your eyes, Shayne, and see how fine you are, I can go on my way with my heart at rest. Down the road always is the Dutchman's house, and his wife has red cheeks and brings in the beer to you fresh and foaming. Come there with me, Shayne, and we'll talk for the afternoon, and then I'll be on my way."

"What's this you're saying?" cried Shayne. "What's the talk of the Dutchman's wife handing you beer when there's my own Lucy sitting up on the veranda waiting to welcome you, and servants to bring us whatever we need?"

He raised his hand to wave to Lucy.

"Stop!" said Neill. "Wait, Shayne! Listen to my talk, Shayne McDermott; leave us talk together and drink together, and then let me go on my road, for the thoughts that I have in my head are different from the thoughts that you have been thinking, and the thoughts of you might be poison to me and the thoughts of me might be poison to you. For you have got all I have not, and all I have got you haven't, and if I was to stay, we might find the hearts of the both of us



was empty. I'm thinking we might find that death had emptied my heart, Shayne, and life had emptied yours. You've been gathering money in the years that lie between us and it's wisdom I've been gathering, and I know that all any two should have to say to each other can be said in the span of the afternoon. I warn you, Shayne McDermott, no good can come from me staying with you!"

"From the old days you could always talk around me," said Shayne. "You've got different reasons than the daft ones that you have been giving. What's in you heart, Neill?"

Neill looked away. His gaunt figure drooped. His eyes would not meet his brother's.

"It's your children, Shayne," he said. "The eyes of them are hard and shining, like the jewels you see staring at you mocking from behind glass cases when you are hungry on the streets."

The red of anger mounted to Shayne's face.

"I'd break the neck of any child of mine that went back on its own blood," he said.

"Did you ever hear tell of the Touchstone?" Neill asked, looking away.

"If its paste and brass they are, I want to know it and be done with it," cried Shayne.

Curiosity plucked at Lucy McDermott's heart. She rose ponderously.

Mary Deane, her basket full of roses, came upon them from the opposite direction.

"Mary!" cried Shayne. "Lucy, 'tis my brother Neill come back to me! The one I told you I parted with five and thirty years ago in the streets of Boston!"

V

THE children took him admirably. They were too proud to be ashamed of what belonged to them. They were romantic. And he was a figure of romance. They were Irish, and their hearts were warm; they were young, and the soft bright monotony of the Saturday afternoon had been as unsatisfying as syrup. When their greetings were over:

"Come on, and let's all drink a toast," said Shayne, "and then ye'll be sitting down and telling us the adventures you

have been having walking up and down the earth, and I will be telling you mine. The children can sit and listen and learn that there is more to me than some one who can just be signing checks for them——"

At the steps of the house Neill paused.

"What ails you, man?" asked Shayne.

"I've the feeling as if it was a trap, and yet it draws me and dares me."

"What's the matter with you? Why it's only a house, and I am the master of it."

"Are you so?" Neill asked with meaning.

"When I bought and paid for it, why wouldn't I be?"

"Why wouldn't you be, indeed? Maybe there's a fear in me because I was never in a big house before. I've seen them, big cages, the monuments to men's vanity, houses big as barracks, big as orphan asylums, and I've wondered what they was like. And now that I can go in," he paused, "I don't want to go in. I fear the house of you, Shayne McDermott. I feel that it might put the hands of itself on my heart as it has put its hands on the hearts of all of ye."

The children stirred uncomfortably and looked at each other.

Shayne McDermott's eyes sought his wife.

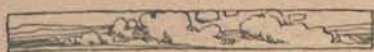
"What nonsense is this you're talking?" said Mrs. McDermott.

"Every one in the world sits mourning beside a graveyard of his dreams, and the graveyard of my heart is already full," said Neill. "There is something in this house that I know I am going to fight. There is something in this house that maybe I will fight and slay. There's nothing but kindness now between us, and when you can still say that, 'tis time to say good-by. So good-by to all of you, and let me be off before each of us has learned the truth about each other."

"Man, dear," said Lucy McDermott, "you can not harm us. Come in and bide."

"Don't mind the house," said Mary Deane. "You should know that houses are all alike. There's no difference in houses except in the shape and size of them."

"True for you," he answered. "They are all alike; they're all traps for the free hearts of men."



Lucy McDermott flung out a laugh like a gay banner.

"You're thinking, maybe, that you have brought back such a rich fortune from your wanderings that we are going to bolt the door on you. We'll leave the door open, and you can go out from it when you wish. Will that satisfy you?"

He walked about the place curiously. He walked up and down through the wide rooms which opened one into another, a curious figure with his long, thin overcoat streaming around him. The floor was like a dark mirror, and in its spaces were assembled many rare and costly things, for Shayne had a joy in lacquers—the odd forms and searching colors of the Orient pleased him. He loved faded mirrors and rich needle-work, and through these Neill walked shy and suspicious, like an animal.

He was very tall and of a powerful build and spare through hard living. His pale eyes blazed at this and that object, and he stood transfixed in Shayne's library which had been made by a bright young man and contained as many books in fine rich bindings as any man's library should have. For Shayne was not like some men who had come by riches suddenly. He knew what the tastes were that should go with a gentleman's life.

"Samples," Neill murmured to himself, "a case of samples."

VI

PRESENTLY his search was ended and they had all assembled for tea. At first all of them talked together, while Lynn crowded near his uncle, and presently one and another stopped to listen to Neill McDermott.

"'Tis a great fine land when you walk from the top to the bottom of it," he was saying. "There's wide roads and there's narrow, and there was always something new calling me at the end of every one of them. Whiles I'd come to mountains and I climbed up the summits of them. Whiles I'd come to the rim of the sea and the seas themselves didn't stop me, for the man who has nothing, there is nothing stops him. There's strange sights to behold in the far places of the world; islands that rise sheer from the sea like the cruel teeth of giants and the sea-waters about them so clear that the vessel you sail in stains

the pale floor of the sea with the shadow. There's hot countries where the thick sweet air is like syrup, and the flowers are no more rest for your eyes than a red beating heart. Wherever you go, all things change. The skies of heaven change from clime to clime. I've seen the sky deep like a well, and I've seen it stretched tight like a blue china bowl. Sometimes the stars blaze at night like the lights of a city and then they hang distant over your head cold and glittering."

"How did you get to go all over the earth?" Lynn asked.

"I was never afraid to stop working. When the work wasn't to my liking, I begged; when the begging went against the grain, I stole."

"Did you ever get caught?"

"I've been caught and taken to jail, but not for what I took, for I took but what I needed. What I went to jail for was my religion; when I was still beneath the spell of illusion I wished freedom. So I was often in jail at the time. Hey, one passes through many a slavery in one's youth!"

They knew his talk to be madness. They knew that it had no relation to life as one should live it within the walls of houses, and yet he enmeshed them in the golden net of his dreams. Envy awoke in the hearts of the men; desires for strange adventures in far countries swarmed about them.

Presently he spoke of youth and its dignity and of love and its beauty, and as he did he plunged his strange eyes into those of Betty's.

As he talked he stripped from her one by one the hard husks of her youth and her heart bloomed.

Dennis' heart was bruised. He had encased himself in the cynicism and now the cynicism was broken into pieces.

The minds of all of them fluttered out in search of forgotten dreams. The three older ones plunged back to the days of their youth—to their time of achievement—to the time of struggle, of love and despair. The spirit of the young people winged forth from the walls that surrounded them. Under the spell of his talk it was as if the house walls disintegrated, the house, the garage, the lawns had a smug irrelevance in the face of his far-flung picture of the world where beside

purple seas the white hands of youth and love forever sought one another like white moths.

"It's a great adventure, a great adventure," Neill said, "the adventure of life!"

He turned on Dennis.

"Will you have Things and Possessions, or will you have the Adventure? You can't have both."

"I'll have both," said Dennis, waking up as if from sleep.

"You can't have both, for to get money and keep money takes time, and the Adventure of life takes all the hours there is to the day. Money hems you in. It builds gold walls round you, high walls; it blinds the loving eyes to those who look at you."

He walked to the end of the terrace, a disintegrating prophet leaving the crumbling walls of their satisfaction about them. He had opened the gates of the future, and they walked through into the land of enchantment. Then he left them to their thoughts.

It was dinner-time before they missed him. They looked for him far and wide, and they could not find him.

It was Lynn who returned with the word of him, flushed with brick-red of embarrassment.

"He's eating with the servants!" he said.

"Eating with the servants! Whatever for?" cried his mother.

Lynn blushed a deeper red.

"He says there's a girl—the new housemaid—who's heart's a nest of dreams!"

VII

THE SUN had not yet risen. The sky was as empty as eternity. The Sound lay like a floor of ice. Except where the sky in the east was primrose, the color of the world was gone. The gardens of Shayne McDermott marched down the hillside to the water, and to the right and to the left were pastures. Like gray sheep the stones clustered together, and straggling processions of cypresses climbed the hills as if they were on their march to some unknown destination.

The lawns, the flowers, the shrubs, were drenched with dew. No sound, no wind. The world waited. The sleeping house turned blank unseeing windows on the

world. The sky and sea were like an empty shell.

Then the great house door opened quietly, and Neill McDermott came out. He walked up and down the terrace, his old overcoat flowing about him as if it were a vestment of some priesthood of the road.

"I was afraid of you," he thought, with his pale eyes fixed on the house. "Yesterday I feared the walls o' ye. And at the sound of my voice, and at the words of my heart and the music of my dreams, your walls fell and crumbled to dust, like the walls of Jericho!"

"Music! The walls come clattering down, and the spirit walked free. I feared your walls, for I thought they might enclose and trap my heart. Why do men stay within you when the hearts of them strain outward to go speeding along the highways and the rivers of the earth?"

"Rivers and roads! Dreams flow down them out of the houses, out from the confining walls; and the feet of men must follow the dreams of their hearts. What for was it that I was afraid o' ye? Mary Deane spoke a true word when she said that you're alike but for shape and size. It was a fool I was."

"One would think there was traps in the doorway and that the floors of houses was limed to catch the feet of me. I opened the doors o' ye for the people that live inside o' ye—the people that you thought you own. I opened the doors of the past and the doors of the future. They listened to the call of the purple circling seas, and they minded the song of the high winds of heaven; and the spirit of them flew out like strong-winged birds beating down the face of a storm."

"Why is it you trap us so? What is the magic of your four walls? Or is it the roof over the head of us and the thought you owned. I opened the doors of makes cowards of us, or the pattering of little duties that stuff up the ears of us the way we can't be hearing the sea calling or the song of the wind as it drives its herds of clouds before it across the high spaces of heaven?"

"You proud house, you big house, you strong house, you house made of bricks and stones and solid mortar! The sweat of men and their strength went to make you. You have as many rooms as I could

sleep the moon through and not sleep in the same room twice. And yet you were not as strong as my little words, as the little words of my mouth that have neither form nor shape to them. For you, too, are a dream. You are but a man's silly vain dream made into bricks and stone. And my dream was stronger than you, roof and four walls!

"Why should I have feared you? Why should you hold in slavery those who have dreamed you? There's slavery in dreams. I am a slave to a dream. But my dream changes like creation; the depths of the sea are at one end and the heights of the far heavens at the other. The winds of the world stream down it. So why should I fear you?"

"Four walls and a roof! And those that are within, you keep in slavery. I'll deliver them from you. I'll give them my secret. Walls are dust!"

VIII

THE SUN was climbing up the heavens, and Neill McDermott was sitting in the pasture. The cactus flung out the pale flames of its flowers, and on the ground beside him was Lynn.

"Mind the cactus," Neill warned him. "The way the thorns won't stick you. It's a strange grand sight, is the cactus by moonlight in the desert."

The boy did not answer. His face was heavy.

"What is it is wrong with you?" McDermott asked.

"Nothing that can be helped," said the boy.

"There's a way to help most things in the world for them that has courage. There's other ways to get from one town to another than by going over the road, my boy; though maybe you'd not know them, for you hardly know that legs is made for walking, being, as you are, the slaves of motor cars, and learning from them every day that there's no way to go about except by road, and a smooth one at that. But I'll tell you, there's cross-roads and little wood-roads, sweet and soft, where your cars can't go, where the wicked gleaming holes of mud lay await for your wheels. Will you live all your life like a velocipede instead of a man with two legs that could climb up the

craggy proud mountains of the earth if he was a-minded to?"

Lynn listened to him, and the music of the divine discontent of youth sang in his heart.

"You're going back to school soon?" his uncle demanded.

"Tomorrow," said Lynn.

"Tell me now, do they ever be laughing at you in school? For you've got big unchancy feet on ye and ugly knuckles on your wrists."

Lynn flushed a sullen red.

"They do now? Oh, they do? I warrant they do! Maybe it's not so forward in the classes you are. The little felleys maybe recite out of the book beside you."

"I can't be learning Latin," said Lynn.

"And why should you be learning Latin? Answer me that! What madness is there that is in the minds of men that should be shutting big strong boys like this, full of brawn and blood, with a Latin spelling-book? Have ye ever thought of running away from it? Have you ever thought of it now?"

"Many's the time," said Lynn gloomily.

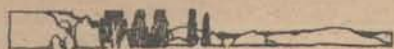
"And why are you yet here, boy?"

"I don't know," he said, flushing again. "There seems to be no reason at all."

"I'll tell you why if you want to know. You're born in a track-minded time, and the little blind roads and all the sweet little lanes leading through the secret heart of the forest is unknown to you. And why is it you haven't gone and why is it you're going back to stick your nose in a book?"

"The world's at war, and you're the frame of a man. I know what's in your heart. You heard the bugle calling to you and you're hearing the wind singing in the vessel's rigging. The heart of you, Lynn McDermott, is heavy within you, for you've a man's work to do in the world, and you know it. Oh, don't you hear the bugles calling?" He leaned over toward him. His eyes were like pale leaping flames. His thin face was alight. "Don't you hear 'em?"

"What makes you listen with your head up like this? 'Tis that you hear your own heart speaking to you. You meet the words of it face to face for the first time, boy. What's going to keep you? Boy, what's to keep you from following the call of the golden bugles?"



The light that had been in Lynn's face faded out.

"I haven't money enough to get away," he said.

"You've no money to spend on a railway ticket and your father as good as a mint?"

Lynn shook his head.

"It's never money that has kept me from the road, but maybe you're right," said Neill. "Maybe if you haven't the price of a ticket, it's caught that you be. It's sad to be caught like a rat in a trap, to have your dreams spread out to be laughed at like torn rags on a clothesline. But there's always ways of getting money. One can borrow; one can steal. Boy, I've got it!" He leaned toward him again.

"I have it!" he cried. "Many fine clothes you're going to take back with you. Sell your clothes to the boys of the school and then maybe they won't be laughing at you! Tell them Lynn McDermott is running away to enlist in the Navy, and they'll look at you with envy and with respect, and as you go they'll wring the hand of you. And it's a different looking boy, you are, for there's fires lit behind your eyes, and they come from the fire in your heart.

"Life's calling and beckoning to you. All the great adventures is lined before you in rows for you to take your pick. And it's lucky you are for you can swap the clothes off your back to make your dreams come true."

IX

THE DAY wore on. Mrs. McDermott sat upon the vine-covered piazza, and near-by sat Mary Deane. The shadow of the vine hid the fine marks of years from her face. It seemed as if warm young blood passed quickly through her veins.

Mrs. McDermott looked over the fair expanse of the gardens. Autumn flowers flung their challenging colors to the sun. She had always loved the Sabbath calm of things. Then she drank long drafts of the quiet waters of repose, while the humming loom of time paused.

On Sunday Shayne was home. Mornings they talked together about the children and the future, and he gossiped with her about the works. She put week-day worries from her and floated peacefully

upon the wide bosom of the waters of life. On Sunday she counted over her mercies, as if they were a rosary of the spirit. There would come flooding over her again that it was a wonderful thing that they should be so rich; that she had everything money could buy; that her children were growing up handsome ladies and gentlemen.

But today discontent, like an envious wasp, buzzed about her. She had the sensation of one who finds a shaking quagmire on a familiar road.

Her eyes fell upon the long figure of Neill McDermott sitting in the shadow of the pergola reading a book. His overcoat dropped about him in odd folds like a shawl.

When they had been talking together, his eyes had rested upon her with inquiry and pity, and she withstood their disintegrating gaze until as if wrenched from her, "What are you looking at me like that for?" she asked.

"Because you're such a fine, grand woman that I'm sorry for you, leading the life you do."

"Leading the life I do?" she cried. "Haven't I everything that money can buy?"

"Everything that money can buy?" he echoed.

"Everything the heart of a woman can want, then?" she amended.

"All but the bit of work for the hands of you and the bit of gossip with a friend to fill the heart o' ye."

And although she answered scornfully, "All but a washboard to break my back over, and a car instead of a trolley to take me home," it was as if his words had dropped poison into the cup of her content. It was as if, with these words, he had opened secret doors within her that she had kept closed. She looked into the dim room of her heart where she kept her unfulfilled desires, for as McDermott's interests had increased and multiplied with the years, the work of her hands had been taken from her until sometimes all the use she had in the world was to be the leisure that McDermott had not.

"I'm sorry for you, Lucy McDermott!" he went on. "When I am thinking that the friend of your childhood, Katherine Dolan, should be living two miles from you and too proud to speak to you."



"Kate Dolan!" she cried. "How did you learn that?"

"'Tis Kate Dolan's niece from Ireland that's working in your house, though she's forbid to tell you 'tis she."

"I'm going to Kate," cried Mrs. McDermott.

"You're going to order your car and sweep like a duchess to Kate Dolan, sitting on her back-porch peeling vegetables for the Sunday dinner? You're going up there like a great lady, are you, Lucy McDermott? For far and wide, up and down, they say McDermott is made of money. And what talk will you have with Kate Dolan?"

Slow tears came to Lucy McDermott's eyes.

"You're speaking the truth, Neill McDermott," she said. "And it's a weary path of years that lies between me and Kate Dolan. Neither one or the other of us can travel over it."

Neill McDermott walked away. Lucy McDermott sank back in her chair, and it seemed to her that lonely idleness stretched ahead of her as far as she could look down the lane of years.

X

"WHAT is it ails me?" she thought. "Yesterday 'twas Shayne; today it's me."

"Where's Shayne?" she asked aloud.

"Maybe he's with Lynn."

"Lynn's out in his boat and his last day home from school and all. It's strange things are today."

"How strange?" asked Mary.

"I wish I knew," she cried. "I wish I could tell you what I mean. An' how can I tell you if you can't see it for yourself? Is it natural that each one should be off by himself on a Sunday? Where's the music an' the talking of Sunday afternoon, Mary Deane? You sit dreaming, and every one has gone his own way—"

"You're strange yourself, Lucy."

"I know it well, and why should I care all of a sudden what's become of Shayne? That's a queer thing, too, and me married to him all the long years. I wish Shayne would come. When we were first married he had a bad, dangerous job on a dam, and when the streams above were swelling and the rains fell on the moun-

tains, something told me—and now I'm uneasy—in the same way. It takes me back. I feel as if the rains were falling on the mountains and the streams were swelling."

Mary got up.

"I'll go look for Shayne. I'm good at finding things—for you'd overlook what was under your nose."

Dennis came out of the house.

The cloud that had been hanging over him had lifted. He walked along singing, a half-smile on his lips, so absorbed that he didn't see his mother. He turned to the right and made across the terrace to the grape arbor by the servants' wing.

Slowly Mrs. McDermott arose. She walked to the edge of the piazza. Through the leaves of the grape arbor there came a glimpse of pink. A wonderfully wise look came over her face.

"Oho!" she said. "Oho!" She turned to Mary, demanding, "Did you find him? Where was he?"

"Where but in his library—sitting before his desk."

"Sitting before his desk in the library? Is the man crazy? Sitting before his desk of a Sunday afternoon! Is it daft he is? And whatever was he doing there?"

"He was sitting with his head in his hands. I tapped on the window, and he didn't hear me, and the while I looked he never budged. You'd best call him yourself, Lucy."

They went together to the window that gave on Shayne's library, and Lucy peered through the window. The room swam in shadow, and in the far end sat Shayne, his head in his hands, staring at something.

"Speak to him," said Mary.

"I can't. I feel as if he were far off, and I feel as if my voice couldn't carry to him."

"Why is it that we can't lift up our fists and bang them against the window? I ought to be calling him, for do you know what's happening this minute? It's Dennis sitting in the grape arbor talking with the new housemaid."

"No!" cried Mary.

"And do you know who the new housemaid is? 'Tis the niece of Kate Dolan come from Ireland, and I have shame in my heart to call Dennis away like she was the dust under my feet. There goes

Betty," said Mary, "stealing off across the lawn."

"You said the word—stealing off she is—and her that always runs out of the house like a brass band was playing before her and torches following after."

"Now what can ail her? Is there another one of us? You'd think the whole lot of us had been sleeping with our faces to the moon."

"And dressed in white and walking along as if she was carrying a candle for her first communion."

"Betty!" her mother called. "Betty!"

Still Betty walked on deliberately like a stately young woman.

"Neill," called Mrs. McDermott, "catch Betty for me. I have a word to speak to her."

He made off after her, his thick silvery hair blowing in the wind and his long coat flapping about him. Betty returned and stood before the older women, seeking their eyes for sympathy, mutely begging them to let her go.

"Where are you off to so quietly?" her mother asked.

"I was just meeting some one."

"And since when are you meeting your friends outside the house, like your mother lived in a tenement? And what's the matter with you that you're impatient?"

"I'll tell you what's the matter," cried Betty. "I'm going to meet the man I'm to marry."

"You're what?" cried her mother.

"I'm going to meet the man I'm engaged to!" said Betty.

Though she stood quivering, as she awaited the assault of her mother's anger, she had the secret and happy look of one to whom the meaning of life had been disclosed. She had been a hard green bud. She had become an unfolding flower.

"And who might it be that you're to marry?"

"It's Lawrence."

"Lawrence?" cried her mother. "Lawrence! A long-legged boy and him no more in his head than a red balloon on a string!" She tossed her hands in the air. "Let me hear no more of this talking. You can go and meet your Lawrence, but you can take along your aunt and tell him that you're not going to see him again until the nonsense is out of your head."

There was no gainsaying her. She drove

them before her on the mighty tide of her indignation.

"Oh, what is it that has come over all of us?" her heart cried out.

And here it was that Lynn stormed up on the piazza and threw his arms around his mother and buried his head upon her bosom, nuzzling into it with a gesture that she had not seen since he had been a baby.

And at this unwonted outburst the hidden bell of her spirit again tolled warning.

XI

THEY walked along slowly as if in a funeral procession, Neill and Mary behind and Betty before them. Betty's head was bowed. Her happiness had slipped from her, as if it had been a garment.

"Do you think it is right, Mary Deane?" said Neill, "to chide flowers for blooming? Is it for us to say to a rose 'you have bloomed too soon?' Mary Deane, flowers and hearts bloom at the moment God set for them. Flowers and hearts are beyond human bidding, though there's a way to stop flowers from blooming—a cruel, bitter way there is to stop them. The cold and dark stops them. The cold and dark withers the bloom of them."

"Stop!" said Mary Deane. "Stop, Neill McDermott! Blooming and marrying is two different things."

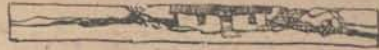
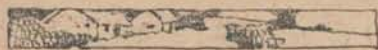
"Loving and blooming isn't so different. The love of her heart lay sleeping. Her heart was a gray chrysalis and then there burst forth from it a butterfly. There was a shimmer of gold on its wings. And do you know what Lucy McDermott has bid you do, Mary Deane? She bid you go catch the butterfly in your two clumsy hands and put it back where it came from. What happens to a butterfly that one would try to force back into its cast-off shell?"

"It would die," said Mary Deane.

"And so it would. What is it ails older women? Is it that they are jealous of young things who would be loving each other, and what is the crime that Lawrence has committed?"

"He's too young to marry," said Mary, wringing her hands in despair.

"And since when is youth a crime? Since when must we murder love to punish youth for loving? They must be awful



folks—Lawrence's folks—murderers and thieves, I'm thinkin', they must be."

"Indeed not," said Mary. "They're decent, honest folks."

"Well, the boy, then. Is it lackin' he is, maybe?"

"There's nothing the matter with him," said Mary Deane. "He's a big lump of a boy of twenty and only half through his college. All I can tell you is that he's a tall young boy, like another, no more fit to be married than a young robin with a long neck and round eyes looking over the side of its nest."

"Well, I'll tell you a thing or two about him," said Neill. "He's got the heart of a man beating inside him, and he's looked out into the wide world and seen the woman of his heart and he loves her, and, maybe, Mary Deane, he'll never love a woman again with the same beauty and strength. There's a purity in the heart of a boy that's as great as the purity of a girl's heart, and what is there more beautiful than two young things unfolding their hearts in the sunshine together? Why, Mary Deane, it's that distinguishes us from the beasts; it's that that's made us man; it's that that's made us love God. It's the fair love of man and maid the poets of the ages have sung of. Are we to read about it only in the books that people write, and when we see it come to us, are we to destroy it?"

Betty had dropped back and was walking beside them, her head still bent.

"Look at her now," said Neill, "as if a mourning veil was drawn over her. And what is it the two of you want her to be waitin' for? You needn't answer me, Mary Deane, for I know the reasons. I know all the little reasons, prudent they are and wise, in a worldly way they are; but there is no divinity to them."

"Oh, what can I do? What can I do?" cried Mary Deane.

"Let the two of them talk awhile, and turn your back on them, and let the two of them decide what it is they want to be after doin'. Think of your own life, Mary Deane, and turn your head away while the two are talking together a bit. It isn't much to ask of you. There's memories in your eyes. What would your life have been had you married your first love? Sorrow and stress and love and life, the stream of it would have poured over you and

swept you with it. And how old was Lucy when she married Shayne McDermott, and they without a cent between them? Is it mad-crazy we are to try to keep the men and women of tomorrow babies for so long?"

"And what affair is it of yours?" she cried. "And what's Betty's love to you?"

"Nothing," he said, and his eyes on the ground. "It's only I hate to see beauty murdered before my eyes."

Betty looked at Neill. Hope was gleaming in her eyes, and resolve.

"What is to prevent the two of you takin' a script and goin' trampin' down the face of the world together? And what do you fear? No, Mary Deane, let them make up their minds between the two of them. When you've lived as long as me, you get to know that there's but few things that count in the world, and to satisfy the sweet fresh love of your heart in the dawn of your youth, is one of them."

XII

THE TWO young people stood at a distance together, and Neill and Mary Deane watched them. They seemed to have stepped into the heart of youth, and presently Mary Deane found that she had tears in her eyes.

"Mary," said Neill, "Mary, what's this has happened to my heart? Why is it that the face of you has kept so sweet and that you looked to me like a girl as you came through the rose-garden so that it was Shayne's daughter that I thought you was?"

"I don't know," she said. "I can't tell you, Neill McDermott."

"Mary, when you looked on me, was it like you was comin' home to me?"

"Yes, Neill, the strange face of you wasn't strange to me at all. My heart leaped up, and I said to myself, 'There he is.'"

"Why do you suppose I've been walking up and down the earth, Mary? Why do you suppose I walked up and down and could never stop—all the years, all the weary years—and I could find rest nowhere but in the heart of you, Mary Deane, and in the blue eyes of you I found rest."

"It's many and many a year that I put woman's face out of my heart. There was



a curtain in my heart where the face of a woman would rightly be, and all the time it was your face behind it."

"The eyes of all the men I've seen, they seemed dull to me; and in my sleep I think I've dreamed of eyes that was like pale flames."

"Mary Deane, I can't stay longer in your house, but I can't go alone. Will you come with me, Mary Deane? Will you walk down the windy ways with me? Will you put your hand in mine and lead your life with me? Tonight when they're quiet, I'll slip out, for it would break my heart to say good-by. Go with me tonight, for the two of us have waited long enough for each other, and since I can't stay, you must come."

XIII

THEY came up the path through the garden together, and their eyes fell on Lucy McDermott sitting quiet and redoubtable, the dying light of the day turning her face to crimson. There was a menace in her immobility. She sat there as if she were a statue of the everlasting. One could imagine the house crumbling and the gardens whelmed by the wilderness, and yet she would remain undestroyed.

"I'm afraid of her," said Mary Deane, "and what's she going to say to us? Oh, it is the fool she's going to think me."

"You will tell her nothing," said Neill. "And why should you be afraid of her, Mary? Sure she is your own sister and ten years older than yourself and fifty pounds heavier."

"I know all that, but yet I'm afraid. You make my heart beat and the tears stand in my eyes, and they can't fall because of the song in my heart. But when I look at her, I feel as if all this might vanish like the down on the moth's wing."

"It's true, Mary Deane, what you say. The beautiful patterns of men's spirits are dust in the hands of those who want things, and how can you give to the blinded eyes the vision of a far-flung dream? So, don't you be fearing Lucy McDermott, for 'tis nothing but Shayne McDermott's old sweetheart she is, buried up in pounds of fat."

"She's more than that. She's a strong

grand woman and one that has loved and learned much by living," said Mary.

"That I grant you, but she is a good woman and an old woman and a fat woman. So don't be grievin' that you have gone against her and that Betty is comin' back with a song in her heart instead of with tears in her eyes. For there is little lovin' there is goin' to be in the world for the next few years, and all the fair, brave boys lying dead with their white faces turned to the sky and the blood dripping from their hearts. Love in these days is as precious as bread. We haven't it to waste and squander like we used to."

"You put sweet poison into my heart," said Mary. "Why don't you be droppin' some poison into the heart of Lucy herself? You should be throwin' some stardust into the eyes of her, too, Neill, the way she'll be saying, 'God speed' to Betty, and the way I won't be afraid to lift my eyes to her, for fear she will think me an old fool."

At that Neill turned his head away.

"And what is the matter?" asked Mary Deane.

"I look at her and of a sudden the power goes out of me. There she sits. You can unroot the heart of her as little as you can unroot the heart of youth, and I feel, Mary Deane, as if the words of me would be as idle as a handful of sand thrown by a lad against the walls of a city."

XIV

"WHATEVER have you been so long for?" called Lucy McDermott. "I've been waiting for Shayne, and all the time you have been gone he's been a glommering and a glooming, and whatever at all is it he has been lookin' at? So you go call him, Neill, and bring him here, for it's as if the minds of the whole lot of you is as mussed up as beds slept in by uneasy dreamers, and before the night falls it's me has got to straighten them out again."

As Neill made off she glanced up at Mary, and Mary turned away her head.

"I'm goin' daft," she thought to herself, "or else Mary has got a queer look to her, too."

"Wherever have you been at, Shayne,"



she called to her husband, "for I've been waitin' for you to get Dennis for me."

"And what is it ails Dennis?" asked Shayne.

"He's talkin' and whisperin' to the new housemaid under the leaves of the grape arbor over at the farmer's."

"And the new housemaid," said Neill, "is the niece of Kate Dolan that was!"

Shayne was silent a moment and then said he: "And what's the matter with that? Isn't she the kind of a girl to be helpin' Denny along, and aren't we on the wrong road at all, Lucy, that we should all be playin' at fine ladies and gentlemen?"

"Is it daft you are that you call a right-about-face to your oldest son! You've been dazzled by the talk of Neill McDermott. Dreams in her heart! Visions in her eyes! A pretty face and a few tinkling words, and the reason of men is upset! I know the kind of dreams that nest in the hearts of blue-eyed hussies! She can't see the good brown eyes of my Denny for the golden dollars that are flying about in the air about his head!"

"Lucy McDermott!" cried Neill. "Why should you think you knew better than me about it, when you never have talked a word with the child?"

"And why should you think," asked Shayne, "that dollars would make a maid blind to the man behind them?"

"Why," said Mary Deane, "should you be too proud to have your son marry the likes of yourself? You might take the pains to find out what at all she's like."

"And I'm not afraid to do that," cried Lucy McDermott. "Call her in and see which of us is right or wrong. Tell her to unlatch the door of her heart, and then let the dreams that's in it come fluttering out like birds, if they will."

So in a moment they had sent for her, and in a moment Lucy McDermott had engaged her in talk. She spoke to her of Kate Dolan, her aunt, and of the old days.

"And for a long time," Lucy McDermott said, "when I got to this country I couldn't believe it was true at all and that it wasn't that I was dreaming and would find myself in the old country again."

"And did you think thoughts like that?" said the new housemaid. "And so do I!"

"It's strange to have your dreams come true, and many a thing can come true in

this country," said Lucy McDermott. "And suppose you could have your dreams come true, what would you wish?"

They were all silent while she thought. She looked as if visions were in her heart. At last she spoke.

"I would like to be the picture of you all!" she said. "It's like livin' in my dream to live here—a big house and nothin' to do and servants to wait on me and a fine big motor car to draw up when I do be ringin' the bell!"

XV

NIGHT had come. The sitting-room was veiled in dusk, and the comfortable chairs and the tables seemed like a congerie of squat animals. The weather changed suddenly, as if September had been elbowed out by late October, and the remains of a fire glowed like a watchful red eye on the hearth. In front of this fire paced Lucy McDermott. She walked up and down like some clumsy pendulum. Up and down she paced, as if it would help her to solve the enigma that life had presented her.

The door opened softly, and Neill McDermott came in the room, padding along as he did in the house, like a suspicious animal, as if his nostrils were aquiver with the scent of danger, as if his eyes were ever on the alert for a trap.

At the sight of him, Lucy McDermott checked herself and stood quiet and accusing beside the wide fireplace. Silence formed a dark pool between them. It deepened and became formidable—a silence that would take courage to break. It was a silence that defined their positions to each other. They became accuser and accused without a word being spoken. It became a contest of wills, something which searched the characters of both of them.

Neill tried to speak, but his words had winged from him. The stifling darkness had put its hand over his mouth, and the grave eyes of Lucy put cold in his heart. He knew that when she was ready she would speak to him and he dreaded her speech, and yet he dreaded the silence more. She stood there, a great clumsy woman, quiet, the look of her eyes weighted with reproach. She spoke, and her voice came to his ears like the whispering of a breeze in the branches of a tree.

"What for, Neill McDermott, did you wish to pluck the life of us apart? What pleasure was it to you to put strife in the hearts of happy people? Was it envy in your heart that you must root up our lives? When you came you told Shayne that he had all of the things that you had not. Was it envy took you by the throat, Neill McDermott, that you tried to rob Shayne of his treasure, that you tried to rob Shayne and me of the fruit of our long years of toil?"

"I took nothing from you," said Neill.

The warm anger of her heart flamed up.

"You thought to turn our children's feet to the flinty paths that lead from us, Neill McDermott. You thought to do it, but I'm stronger than you, and though I could not make the winds of heaven stop to listen to me like yourself, I'm stronger than you."

"I thought only to send them away on the adventure of their hearts," said Neill.

She flung back her head.

"They're not going! They're not going! When Lynn put his head on my shoulder tonight and kissed me as if he was a baby, 'Something's wrong,' I said to myself. And what with one way and another I found out what was in the heart of him; and when my Betty came home walking like she was keepin' time to some music she couldn't hear, thinks I to myself, 'foolishness isn't yet dead in her.'"

"What have you done to them," asked Neill, "and however is it you have got around them?"

"Through the love of their hearts the feet of them was turned back to me," she cried at him in triumph. "They are to wait, and while they're waitin' the silly ideas die out of the heads of them."

"And while they're waitin'," said Neill, "the dreams will fade from their eyes."

"Dreams!" she cried. "What good at all could have come of it, sendin' Lynn out to be killed—sendin' out Betty to begin bein' a woman and herself with hardly a glimpse yet of girlhood? And what does a poor old homeless tramp that's never known roof over his head, that's never known the warm arms of his child around his neck, know about the patient ways of women with children? You've not reaped nor sown, sown nor reaped, Neill McDermott. You never planted and watched the green things sproutin'.

Dreams and windy words is all that you have. You can't feed the world with dreams, nor warm it with words, and you scorn the patient, fruitful ways of those who planted and reaped and tended the beasts."

"And what have you got out of it yourself?" said Neill. "Nothing. What does the future hold for you, Lucy McDermott? You've got only the past."

Again red anger leaped up in Lucy McDermott.

"Spare your words, for you can spin no web of discontent about me. Why should you come among us, disturbing us? What have you better to give than what we've got? What's better than this fine house and all the bills paid and the children beginning where we left off? What's all your purpling seas and your high heavens to that?"

"All you say is true," he answered. As she talked the strength had come back to Neill. "You say I am an old tramp and there's no use nor place for me in the world, and now I will tell you, Lucy McDermott, what you are. *You are the Dream Killer.* You're so afraid for the perishable bodies of your children that you don't care what becomes of their lofty visions."

"I care what becomes of themselves," she cried.

"All young things dream of love and glory, and you've murdered the bright dreams of them so you can see the bodies of them walking around safe and sound and drugged with food and sleep. 'Tis a Dream Killer you are, Lucy McDermott, and you can't help yourself because you are a mother. The mothers of the earth give birth to young things only to destroy the dreams of them. You'd like your children to live the life of your empty easeful old age. Mothers—dream killers! Youth's got a right to have love and to the struggles of life. What for did you kill their dreams only that you should be sleeping sound in your bed at night?"

"Do you know what's ruled the world of men over the ages? Words, thoughts, dreams! Men die for them—men die for them in torture, Lucy McDermott. For little thoughts the men of the world go forth and leave security and home and love. So maybe the thoughts of my heart are stronger and more real than all the

things that you and McDermott have heaped together in the years of your life.

"It's great and powerful you are, Lucy McDermott, though you'll never follow the Northern Lights shimmering over the edge of the sea, and you'll never float down the southern seas where the stars drip like gold into the tides. And all that you love you'll keep from going forth to seek such things, and there's a lot of love in your heart that no man can deny. So let's part in peace before I harm you more, for what's truth to me is poison to you. The water of life for you is the black waters of stagnation for me. Let's part in peace, for I'll never see your face again."

"Good-by for a while," said Lucy McDermott.

"Good-by for a while? What's the meaning of that?"

"The meaning is you'll be coming back to us, Neill McDermott. You know where the kind hand is and the warm hearth biding for you, and when you're cold and lonely, the bright eyes of the window of this house will beckon to you. For home this is to you, and home draws back to it the feet of wandering men. The warm place and the kind hand of their own calls them, and the bite and sup."

"You'd give me that yourself for all the harm I've done you?"

"And why wouldn't I? And aren't you my own flesh and blood? Would I be turning away a poor lonely old man from my fireside and with no worse fault than a mischievous tongue?"

"You speak the truth, and I know you do. You'd never turn me away because of the great mother's heart within you—the great and terrible mother's heart that you have. You're more fearsome than armies, Lucy McDermott. I love you, and I fear you, Lucy McDermott. I am going to leave you and forget about the house o' ye. But I see you're troubled, and to show you I've no hard feeling for all the things you said and because I love you though I fear you, I'll go in and make talk with Shayne, and, one pretext or another, I'll find out whatever 'tis is keeping him."

XVI

HE RETURNED with his thin face alight with smiles.

"Now, Lucy McDermott," he said, "I

tried to do kindness to all in the house, and it seemed unkindness to you; and now at last, before I go, you see I did no unkindness to you at all. The words of me woke memories in the heart of Shayne; it awoke the love of the past in him, Lucy McDermott."

"What do you mean?"

"It was looking at your picture, he was. It was this picture; it was your own picture. All the time you've been wondering, Shayne McDermott's been sitting and staring into your own face!"

He held out to her a little card on which was the face of a girl that looked like a flower. The face was heart shaped, the chin cleft, and the fair hair grew in a silvery widow's peak.

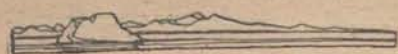
"It was a lovely child you was and fine grown woman you are." And here the words froze on Neill's lips, for the fresh color faded out from Lucy's face and left it ashy, and the grief of hopelessness overspread it. It was as if she crumbled down before him; it was as if the spirit of her was broken, and she clenched her fists as she rocked backward and forward in her despair and grief.

"Wo! Wo the day!" she cried. "And the very day that my children would have walked out of the doors of the house away from me that should I loose the love of the husband of my heart! O Shayne, is the heart of you turned so far from me to be loving me no longer, and loving the thing I used to be! Wo the day! What awful thing was it that you should go wandering off down the years? Why should I lose you, Shayne, that's been true and loved me so close and so fast that I didn't know where my own heart stopped and the heart of you began?"

"What has come to you?" cried Neill. "What is over you at all? And whatever is it that ails women? You were swift and able and unafraid to fight for your children, and now because your husband spends a day looking at your own picture, grief and distractions tramps through your life. What ails you? It's your picture he's looking at. Is it that you don't know your own face?"

But Lucy McDermott rocked back and forth.

"Oh! If it had been the face of another! And there's times when the hearts of men go out of their house like wander-



ing birds, and like birds they come back. But what hope is there for the woman whose man loves the woman she was once? The heart of him is buried in a tomb, and I am no better for him and no worse to him than was I a sepulcher. For I am a sepulcher of the youth of Lucy Deane. And what unchancy fate has happened to me to have my own face come out from the days that was to take my own husband from me? And why couldn't it have been that his heart should have been turned to a strange woman, the way I could be winning him back?"

So she rocked, and Neill stood humbled and helpless with the little picture in his hand, and suddenly, like the sun coming out after a storm, she straightened herself up and struck the table with her clenched fists.

"Let me tell him, Neill McDermott, I'll not be downed by that hussy! For whatever it was that Lucy Deane could do for Shayne, I could do a thousand times better than her. I'm a better woman than her, and there's no shadows from the past that can take me from Shayne, for I'm the mother of his children and the wife of his youth and age, all in one. And say good-by to me, Neill, for I'm going to wash the tears from my eyes. Say good-by, Neill McDermott, if it's going you are."

"Good-by," he called. "You strong woman, for you are stronger than your children, and you're stronger than your own youth, and the love of you is stronger than first love."

XVII

NEILL McDERMOTT sat looking after her.

"What am I waiting for?" he thought. "And why should I bide here longer? God help me," he thought. "I'm waiting here for Mary Deane, with her sweet face and her trusting heart."

At this he poured himself a glass from the decanter at hand and sank down before the fire.

"Who am I," he thought, "that I should put my hand in the lives of others? And what arrogance was in my mind that I thought to uproot the work of Lucy McDermott's heart? And what right at all have I to call her a Dream Killer? For

who can tell whose dream is true? I thought to open their windows to the width of the heavens, and I but slipped the poison of doubt in their hearts. She said I was casting envious eyes. Who knows? Perhaps in the black heart of me, envy was crawling, for often it is that pity is envy's cloak. And who am I?"

He stared into the fire. It seemed to him that the menace of cheerless old age crept around him.

"Who was I to call to the late youth in Mary Deane's heart that brings tears to my eyes like the violets of Fall? There's cold mists hanging over the flinty roads of the world. Who was I that should think that the gentle fire of her eyes was for me, an old man, making bold with the lives of others as God Almighty would shrink from? I sit here and wait with the ashes of the years about me. For what have I to do with women at all? For women and hearth-fires belong together."

"Four walls and a roof! I needn't have feared you. There's naught I need fear except the warm eye of your fire and the devouring flame that lives in the hearts of women."

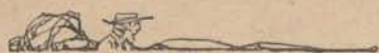
"And now I'll be going forth empty forever, and me that's begged for nothing must go back forever a beggar for a kind and a warm place. I thought my words like a trumpet before the walls of Jericho. I thought my words were strong, but in the fire of Lucy McDermott's heart the words of me have been shriveled and consumed and gone spiring up into heaven in the smoke of shame."

"And dreams? What are they in the face of the living truth? And who will look for the drift of star-dust while his body shivers and there's a fire to warm him? Hearth-fires and the warm hearts of women are more powerful than the wild dreams of men's hearts!"

Then as he sat there with the wreckage of his dreams about him, McDermott drank deep and oblivion engulfed him.

XVIII

AS HE lay there sleeping, Mary Deane stole in. Her heart beat, for the youth of it had been buried under the drift of years. She advanced as if a tip-toe for flight; and since Neill did not move,



since he did not speak, she became bolder. So by slow degrees she came to where he lay slouched and relaxed in his chair, his long hands hanging beside him, his head on his chest, the silver mane of his hair disordered, shining like silver in the light of the fire. And then, as if the fire were his enemy, it blazed up, and she saw him a poor tired tramp, and the youth in her heart withered.

So she stood there a moment, and then, as she would have gone, he started and awoke and peered at her.

"I know why you came," he said. "'Tis to bid me good-by."

They stared at each other, and at last Mary spoke.

"And what's come to you, McDermott, and what's happened to you since we walked in the garden?"

"Destruction's come to me, Mary Deane. I saw the face of me reflected in Lucy McDermott's heart, and the greatest despair of all came to me—the one despair of man that forever and ever he must go chained and living with himself through the years. An old man I saw, and he was lonely, and his days were empty."

The tears sprinkled the face of Mary Deane so she could not speak. She stood beside the mantlepiece, resting her head upon her arms, and sobbed.

"O Mary," he cried, "Mary beloved, don't mind my words. The heart of me's sore, and I'm going off into the night. I'm only a spinner of dreams that I can't make come true. I spun you a golden web and thought to catch your heart in it, but I've no place to keep a heart at all. Who was I to think of you, darlin'? And let me go now, for love that is watered with tears grows strong like plants that's watered with rain, so let me go quick. For I love you, my dear, I love you like a star."

"Let's tell the truth to each other, Neill McDermott," said Mary, wiping the tears from her eyes. "Let's tell the truth to each other. It's the nature of man to leave woman but for one reason."

"And what may that be?" asked Neill.

"That he don't want her," said Mary, turning away.

"What is it," he said, "that's come over me? Are you and Lucy McDermott the same, and is there no difference in women? You ask, Mary Deane, for the truth be-

tween us. Now tell me the truth. Where was it you thought you were going—down the ways of the world—to forget the bed that you slept in and not know where to-night's bed may be? What did you see at the end of the windy roadways of the world? I know what you thought, Mary Deane. Roads lead past houses. I walk, you thought, in fair Autumn weather, and the asters purpling the waysides and starring the fields. You wasn't coming with me, Mary, I was to go with you."

"And what if I was?" cried Mary Deane. "What's the harm in that, Neill McDermott—a house by the road and the door of it open? What was there wrong if I saw a house of our own? And you—when you asked me—was it thinking we'd be sleeping all our old age by the clamorous tides with the salt in our hair?"

"You have me entrapped," he cried. "I've seen my own face, and I know I am old, and I nod asleep over a fire. And you've seen me as I am, and you'll go with me yet?"

"It's traveling with light luggage we'll be, down the path of life," he said after a while.

"And how's that?" she asked.

"We have left our illusions behind; we know why we are going together. The cold wind of lonely age blew us into the arms of each other, and the touch of each other was warm. Do you hold close to me, Mary, the way I'll not run from you to be lying with my face to the stars. And now there's no use of our flying off into the unchancy night."

She put her hand in his, turning her face from him.

"We'll be goin' back to our rooms, then?" asked Mary.

"What else, Mary darlin'?" Neill asked. "We've thrown overboard the heavy weight of our illusions, and we love each other yet, so there'll always be tomorrow waitin' for us."

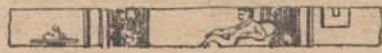
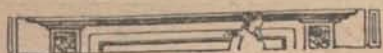
XIX

THE RED eye of the fire watched over the room, and then slowly a door opened and then another. Shayne's voice spoke.

"Neill," he said, "is it you moving?"

"No, 'tis me."

"It's you, Lucy, is it? I thought I heard voices."



"I thought it myself."

"Why, Lucy, what ails you? Now that my hands touch you, you're cold; you're cold and shaking. What is it that you're up so late?"

"There's no rest or peace in the house tonight."

"You're right, the house is restless. I thought I heard voices, and then I thought I heard the quiet shutting of a door."

"They're all in their rooms," said Lucy McDermott.

"Maybe it's Neill."

"O Shayne, Shayne, I'm afraid of Neill! 'Tis the unrest of the west wind that comes with his words."

"It's come from his wandering ways," said Shayne, "for he's walked far, and many's the sight he's seen on the road, and the lives of home-staying bodies do seem pinched, for he flings the earth out before you like it was a green banner, barred with the blue of the rolling rivers. The singing words of him upset the lot of us."

"Not me," cried Lucy McDermott, "not me, except that I saw the lot of you sifting between my fingers like the sands of the sea. I saw myself a lonely old woman."

"There's many a year between you and age, Lucy, and now put the shaking and shivering from you, for nothing at all has happened."

"Everything's happened!" she cried. "Do you call it that nothing's happened that Lynn should be trying to leave me and that Dennis should take up with Kate Dolan's niece and that Betty should turn into a fly-by-night? Is that nothing, then?"

"But you stopped them all," said Shayne.

"You said the right word, I've stopped them. And where was you, Shayne McDermott, who should have been helping me," she said, turning on him in anger, "and what was you doing? Your children could melt away like ice in the sun, and nothing would uproot you."

"What was I doing?" Shayne put his hands on her shoulders. "I couldn't drown the memories of the old years. They came walking restless about me, whispering stories of the past in my ears. I got to dreaming of the early days, the fights and struggles and the loving. The days of the past went whizzing past me like trees past

a train, and I couldn't hear the present for the noise of the past in my ears. It was a daft-like day for all of us, but it's over now. We'll live to laugh at it yet, Lucy, me sitting and staring at your picture. What was it happened to us all—what came across the path of us? It's a parcel of queer thoughts, like the driving of Autumn leaves on the storm that's torn through my mind today, and I'm tired. Come now, we'll be going to bed."

"Go on, then," she said. "Go to bed and rest. I'll stay here a while. I'll just stay here and look into the fire until I get sleepy again. You and your past, and Lynn and his gun, and Betty and Dennis, the whole pack of you and the troubles of all of you have upset the quiet of me, and I'd like to be sitting and thinking a while. You're no good to me at all tonight, Shayne McDermott, for singly you've let me battle today, maundering over an old faded picture of me."

He looked at her wistfully, and his love went out to her, for he felt her heart was laden with sorrow and doubt.

"I'm spent for sleep," was all he said.

XX

"THERE'S the difference between us," she thought. "They can sleep when they're tired and when we're tired, we can't. He says nothing's changed. Will anything ever be the same again, I'm wondering? What have I done today—what have I done? Have I sealed Lynn's ears from the call to glory; have I withered up the love in Betty's heart, and who should judge a maid from the silly, twittering words of her mouth? And was Dennis right, then, and me snatching the cup from his lips from which he might drink?"

"Dream Killer! Who knows if I'm right, and can I never be sure again, and why was it that Shayne's eyes turned back to the past? Was it to tell me that Neill was right and all this is illusion and that I have but grown old in vanity? Possessions and life—you can not have both. What, he asked, was the work of my hands? Withered hearts, frosting the hearts of my children with unfulfilled desires. . . . Shayne, he sat and thought of the days of struggle—dead and difficult days when the bodies of us were drenched



in sweat. 'Nothing's changed,' he says. The walls of my house are dust about me. Where's my content of yesterday when I walked a sure road? For I've strayed into the mire of doubt. Oh, can it be that the tender heart of me has been the grave of their joy?"

The door opened again, and Lucy McDermott, sitting in the quiet in her chair, didn't move, and the footfalls were soft as the dropping of petals. They went to the window, and the window opened.

It was Betty. She stood there in the moonlight, and it seemed to her mother that she was slender and shining like the new moon itself.

"Lawrence," her voice came, "are you there?"

"Yes. Are you coming, Betty?"

"Yes," she answered, "yes, with you going away to the war—and the old ones can't understand. Yes, I'm coming with you. They'll understand by and by. Once we're married, they'll know we're grown up."

Betty went to the door; she opened it so quietly that it made no sound, and Lucy McDermott didn't stir, for there had been

beauty in Betty's voice, and love, and it seemed to her that she had heard Lucy Deane speaking to Shayne McDermott, and she knew that when she was young she, too, must have gone, if the old ones hadn't understood.

"Dream Killer," she thought. "No, not this time," when the instinct of the heart surged up and she would have run after Betty. "No, not this time!" she thought. "What did he say? 'Love's as precious as bread.'"

"Dream Killers," she thought. "Dream spinners, what have old folks to do with all that? Youth and the love in youth's heart is the strongest."

So she sat there very quiet, and then her eyes fell on a dim card on the floor, and she picked it up and looked into her own face, heart-shaped with a cleft in the chin; then from deep within her the bitter tears welled up and overflowed from her eyes.

"Oh, Lucy Deane," she thought, "Lucy Deane, could I be you for one dear hour! Could I be but you, Lucy Deane! Could I have just one hour of the perilous sweetness of youth with Shayne McDermott beside me."

Waste Places

THE Yucca turns her golden goblets down,
Drained to their bitter dregs;
A lizard—slender, sinuous—scales the mound
On furtive, darting legs.
The harsh, wild grass upon the rocks is old—
Old as its bitter death.
In all this barren, desert land
There is no breath.

Yet somewhere there is cool, dark shade, God
knows,
And mountain streams where sparkling water
flows.

The high, exultant sun drips molten gold
Upon the mesa's face.
Above a yellow trail black buzzards hold
Their wide-winged waiting-place.
A spotted coil slides from the rocks—and down
Beside the fringed mesquite,
And over all this barren waste—
The white-hot heat.

Yet somewhere there is rain along a shore
And white surf sweeping inward evermore.

Grace Noll Crowell



King Richard

BY JACK HINES

GALEN and Fink, probably two of the best known and feared of the Alaskan dog-men, had come to the parting of the ways. That is, after five years of inseparable friendship—except when their devices necessitated trail excursions that left a temporary rift in their association—these two stood on the Nome beach and gripped, one to the other, a silent farewell.

But until that final moment, had been put off, evaded, ducked and otherwise sidetracked a subject that Galen seemed to need more strength to broach than he ordinarily required in disarming a trail stick-up man who may have caught Jimmy foul when he was known to have much gold about him—which had not infrequently occurred.

"Albert," Galen got that far. Fink knew what was coming and being a crafty man-angler let his old pal choke without an interrupting syllable. "It's about old Dick—" Fink knew it was—"ever since the boys got wise that I was making an exit, for God-only-knows how long—well, let's see how they looked in ledger language—Scotty Allan right smack up and says, five hundred. Bill Bunger says he's only got two twenty-five, but he'll give me that. Kegstadt says 'a tousand' which means no more to him than a quarter. 'Sport' Smith says, five hundred and ten—he was Jerry to Scotty's bid, I think. 'Mort' Atkinson, the dago, says he'll keep him for me and that if I'm gone two years it will cost him about sixty a year to feed him. The dago says he'll do me this favor. Jake Berger says, it's taking his heart's

blood, but if I was his own mother he wouldn't give me a cent more than sixty-five dollars.

"Well, I could name all the punchers from Leland to Corbersier. Oh yes, old 'Till' Price—Till says he'll give me two-fifty, if I'll take his note for four years. Well anyway, you can see Dick is in demand. But, old pal, I'm giving him to you—no, by God, I'm not—I beg his pardon—I'm lending him to you!"

Fink still keeps quiet. But what a look flashed from his eyes! He was born in Kentucky and surely throws back to some black-eyed Cherokee that used to roam around Jefferson County.

"It's needless to ask you to take good care of the old battler."

Now Fink speaks, and, would you believe it, tears are flowing from those dark Indian eyes. There's something stronger and more indissoluble than steel bands that grows between men in this country. I've never known an Alaskan to fail his pal when it came to a pinch.

"All right, Jimmy," Fink says, "I'll take care of old Dick, you can bet on that. I'll keep him tied up all the time he's in with my dogs and—"

"Hold on, Albert. You won't have to keep him tied up. Just turn him loose among them, he'll be all right."

"Turn him loose! Why, Jimmy, my dogs'll kill him before you're past Sledge Island."

"Well, if they do it won't be any fault of yours—or his." Galen added with a grin.

"Why, man, you don't realize; you



can't understand. Turn old Dick loose! Among those man-eaters, those horse-meat pirates, those wolves—those chain-chewing sons of—those—why it'll be murder. Your dog is some fighter, but look at the odds against him."

"Promise me you turn him loose or I take Kegstadt's thousand."

And so agreeing, the while sadly shaking his head, Fink saw Galen vault into Tom Ross' life-boat, in response to a sweet call from that kind surferman which in prose looks this way—"Say wotter youse two guys tink I am—a waiter?"

"You'll find him up in 'Tex' Rickards' office in the 'Northern'," Galen called out from the boat being launched. "Tex'll turn him over to you. I'll write you from Butte. Good-by, old pal."

And that was the last Fink saw of Galen for four years.

Now this is what caused the new custodian of the greatest malamute ever bred in the North to suggest isolating him from the other dogs of his crack team. First there was "Red" Fink. He was a Siberian swing-dog that had been banished from a Cossack outpost because after he had been shot by an indulgent owner he'd torn his would-be destroyer's shooting-hand off its wrist with one bite of his enormous jaws. Falling in with voyaging Indians, he had been brought to Cape Prince of Wales from where he naturally gravitated to Fink in Nome. There was also "Gyang" Fink, a Mazinka wolf, that so liked bacon that he'd torn down many a young shack and unguarded tent to get it. "Caesar" Fink would slaughter a horse in harness so as to quench his thirst for warm red blood.

And there was "Joe" Fink. Joe was bred by Wallace, the White Mountain sled-maker. Fink became interested in him when he heard that this industrious pup had slaughtered all of his five sisters and brothers before he or they were three months old. "Some pup," Fink had said upon hearing this. "I must have him." And he journeyed a hundred miles to get him at any cost—which was nothing, as Wallace, to use his own language "was glad to get rid of him. He was a murdering cuss—that's what he was; and Mr. Fink could damned well have him for the trouble it might cause him to carry him away from White Mountain." There

were nine altogether of this stripe in the kennel where Dick was destined to be "turned loose."

But those nine malamutes had vindicated their master's judgment and faith in them. They were the nonpareil string of trail-kings up to this time assembled in any one man's team.

As Galen had said, Dick was waiting for Fink in Rickard's office. The old dog—we call him old, but he really was not so old; Dick was a coming three-year-old at this time. That's really young for Dick's breed. But they develop so comparatively early in life that as in Dick's case, when a young dog has an old dog's head on his shoulders while he's yet a pup, why then he's called "old" Dick, or Tom, or Jerry.

At this time Dick was a prime beast who stood the perfection of heavy-coated bone and muscular development. A great brain-dome spread over the most humanly expressive head formations ever put on a dog. His eyes had the "speaking" trick, the frowning menace, the whimsical lift and its antithesis—the fatal glitter. They were as volatile as mercury in recording what passed in a galvanically organized mind. This Dick was some dog—as you will agree if I can do but half-justice in picturing him.

Well, Fink went along Main Street, his brows contracted in apprehensive concern, with Dick trotting along complacently at his heels. Dick knew all about what had happened. Knew that he was wanted—aye coveted—by every star dog-puncher in the territory. He, also, had known all along to whose care he would be ultimately consigned.

Being intimately woven in the sympathetic structure of his adored master, the dog had come to interpret correctly the workings of his mind. He divined the great love his master felt for the man at whose heels he now trod. And naturally he loved him, too, second best.

"Well," Fink said to himself, "notwithstanding my promise to Jimmy and likewise nevertheless, I'll be eternally damned if I'll put Dick in with those assassins—at least not yet awhile. The odds are all against him; I'll just let 'em get a smell of him first and see what happens."

So accordingly Dick had the freedom of the "Fink Block." This was a stretch



of improved tundra up at the head of Steadman Avenue quite isolated from all residential property and an area of about one hundred yards square upon which stood the comfortable Fink ménage with, also, the kennels and other minor buildings. This avenue ended at the north boundary of this lot, but from there on was called the Dry Creek Trail, which was an important traffic channel to the rich placer diggings on that and Dexter Creek—two busily-productive gold streams. Consequently this road was actively used by teamsters and pedestrians.

Dick's first duty was self-imposed and resultant upon a friendship which he immediately contracted for Miss Eleanor Fink, at that time a dainty queen aged four months. It was customary for Miss Eleanor to have from three to four hours at top-sun time basking in that healthy warmth, the while reposing in a smart perambulator, well-canopied and quilted. The usual spot for this invigorating bath was the graveled front entrance walk, about fifteen yards from the noisy creaking of non-greased wagon-axles and other disturbing elements that passed the house. Through most of the disquiet, however, the babe reposed in tranquil slumber.

There was one four-mule team that Dick, doing sentry duty at Eleanor's wheels, noticed on the first two days of this duty had made such a clatter in passing that it awakened the babe, causing for the time sleep to fly from her eyes and a cry to escape from her mouth.

It was not the mules that made the noise—they plodded along quite noiselessly as is their habit—but a long-ranged Missourian named Smart, who was skinner-in-chief to this outfit. The persuasive language of this Smart as he urged his mules onward was too unholy for even us to inscribe here.

Well, on the third day Dick heard the prolog to this performance as Smart was passing the Nome court-house down in the next block. Matters of millions were being adjudicated, but they were suspended *pro tem* so that the lawyers, Fink among them, and litigants might enjoy this embroidered flow of mule-propelling verbiage as it came to them through the open windows of the court-room.

When Smart got to the street that

crossed Steadman Avenue at this point, he was aware that his mules had suddenly ceased to listen to him and, with quivering nostrils and alarmed ears, were concerned with a ferocious thing of gray that blocked all advance past his challenge-post.

"Hey you, Mike, git on there. Don't let that mutt hinder you."

The bit of the blacksnake thereupon nicked Mike in the rump, and as he plunged ahead he was fairly grabbed in the snoot by Dick. It's the first time on record that a mule cried out in terror. As Dick caught poor Mike on the nose both he and his mate, Sandy, reared to their hind feet and toppled over backward on top of Joan and Buck.

Smart was down from his seat and past this pile of bewildered mules like a dart; he dove at Dick with the blacksnake, but instead of inflicting an effective cut with it, its folds fouled the angry dog's neck, and he with one snarling crunch of his teeth cut Mr. Smart's whip in half. With the loaded stock, now a murderous weapon, Smart charged Dick, who stood at bay to receive the onslaught. Smart didn't finish his charge. The Court, hearing the rumpus on the corner, abruptly and with not so much as a "hear ye," adjourned to witness it.

As Smart was about to deliver a savagely-aimed blow upon Dick's head, he was most effectively struck with something upon his own, which, when he recovered consciousness, he learned was the Court seal. This formidable shattering force had in some inexplicable manner found its way into Albert Fink's right hand, which, it developed later, had delivered the blow on the mule-skinner's head.

Eleanor slept peacefully the next day and all following days, even unto the fortieth, when descended prohibitive climatic conditions, over which Dick had no control, driving his charge to indoor quarters.

"I guess there's not much use my wasting any anxiety over this Dick dog," thought Fink after this occurrence, and the next day deliberately admitted Dick into the enclosed domain of his nine savage trailers. As if they were one dog this act put them in a state of mortal aggression, and Fink was tempted to remove Dick hastily from the menace that ominous snarls and rampant fighting manes presaged.

But one look at Dick completely reassured him. The Galen dog—known, feared and hated by the Fink team—walked unconcernedly in their midst, his tail lightly curled over his back, an imperial look of fearlessness proclaiming him the invincible master over each Fink dog that dared look him in the eye.

Nevertheless he was a bit nervous about withdrawing his presence from the kennel. He feared that when he turned his back a concerted attack would ensue. Its possible result alarmed him. "Nine to one is some handicap," he thought. But he did turn his back, went up to the gate, opened, stepped through and banged it shut in a most matter-of-fact manner.

Almost simultaneously with the click of the latch Dick was pounced upon by the entire nine outraged wolf-dogs. But not one of the ensuing howls of pain came from the victim-elect of this murderous orgy. The battling general in him—his royal birthright, which even overtopped his gigantic fighting strength and indomitable spirit—instantly asserted itself. Dick's defense and counter-assault, which he concentrated upon but one of the attacking dogs at a time, soon had five of them out of the fight and well-licked. Whereupon the remaining four struck their colors, convinced that they were dealing with a super-dog, and, in so far as they were concerned, he would never again be molested.

"By God, Jimmy was right!" was Fink's supreme compliment to Dick.

He had witnessed the unequal battle from beginning to end.

What happened at Dick's first meal-time clinched forever after the indubitable fact that at last the nine trailers had a sovereign ruler whose reign was to be supreme and absolute. At that time each of the dogs, including Dick, had a nice, juicy smoked-salmon thrown to him, and when Sub-chu-ahk, the Indian boy who fed the dogs, left the kennel, Dick with imperious assurance gathered all the fishes from before the hungry dogs and piled them temptingly in the center of the enclosure.

Then while the dogs sat with drooping jowls in subjugated timidity around their pilfered food, Dick began his first dinner and ate till his sides bulged. When finished he tantalizingly licked his chops

for a few minutes and then contemptuously and with unmistakable significance defiled what was left of the heap.

After this he scratched with all the might of his powerful hind feet a blinding hail-storm of loose gravel and dust into the faces of his dumbfounded vassals and retired to his own corner, inviting them as he did so to proceed with their repast. Which they did, notwithstanding, as it is not in the nature of hungry wolf-dogs to be overdiligent about many of life's trivialities. Dick, having thus established the *entente cordiale*, thereafter sported among the dogs, indulging them with frolicsome and capricious play, which to his dying day he never tired of doing.

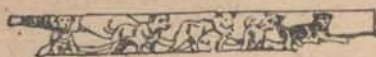
BEFORE the time of trail preparation that Fall, Dick had leisure opportunity to form an attachment that progressed in fervor and deep-rooted affection as the years advanced. He fell desperately in love with "Phoebe" Fink. I can only liken Phoebe to such *grandes dames* as Lady Diamond, for instance, who gave to Rey el Santa Anita such a racing son as Robador, or Rose-Ormonde, the famous mare possessed and beloved of Leland Stanford while that great soul was yet among us.

Phoebe was of this outstanding type and had given to the thoroughbred kingdom of Alaskan dogs two exceptional champions. One was Caesar and the other Crag, both Fink dogs, that worked in the wheel position directly in back of where Phoebe did her share in the breast hitch. It's logical that Dick should aspire to such a bride, and after the union of this royal pair Phoebe suffered no other beast so much as to breathe too much of the air near her that may have had in it the scent of her person.

To the other eight Dick evidenced no extraordinary liking, excepting perhaps Crag and Caesar, upon whom, for Phoebe's sake, no doubt, he bestowed a modicum of signal interest.

A singular example of the great dog's sense of justice may be seen in an occurrence when Dick made his first trip with the team in the masterpoint at their head. He had made no bones of his friendship for Crag and Caesar nor did he concern himself with the jealousies of the other dogs because of this preferment.

But on this first trip he adjusted all



unrest upon this score. Crag seemed to develop an exasperating trick of yelping and yipping upon each occasion when for any reason it was necessary to halt the team. He'd raise a great ado as if declaiming against the need of the stop.

He was impatient to be on the go. "Why stop here? Let's be on. See! I'm eager to hurry along." These were the things he might have been saying at these times. But when the journey was again renewed it was perceptible to Fink's keen driving sense that Crag was doing a bit of fancy soldiering. He saw that his tug-straps flapped a trifle. There was a laggard's play in them. It was a 'cute bit of subterfuge, this apparent impetuosity at resting-time, that masked his dishonesty in action.

The captain of a tug-of-war crew can see before him each individual straining on the tarred rope and no possible faking escapes his vigilant eye. But a dog leading a team of nine—eight beside himself—must have something other than eyesight to detect a slacker whose working point is four positions behind his back. About fifteen minutes after Crag had used up another rest interval in nervous expostulation, Dick suddenly came to a rooted stop. He stood dead still for an approximate thirty seconds and to Fink's "What's the matter, old boy?" gave no heed other than to toss his head in air and say, "Hold your horses, master."

He then with cold precision turned about-face and leveled a look directly into the eyes of Crag at the extreme other end of the string. The other dogs seemed a bit mystified about this move, but being conscience-clear did not heed it particularly. But Crag—foxy Crag, guilty Crag—he stretched his head way out of line so as to have a clear look at the leader's face. Saying with sheepish eyes exactly what Judas once said—

"Is it I, master?"

Whereupon Dick by a stripping of his tusks answered back—"You know damned well it's you!" and added with a back throw of his head, "and take my tip—Phoebe or no Phoebe—if you presume but once more upon the relation which obtains between your mother and me and fake any more on this job—well—you'll see."

Crag seemed to understand perfectly, for until sundown, when the team put up at Shea's on Solomon River, he pulled his

honest share and forgot to pull the song of protest. But Crag evidently had a very badly impaired memory, because the next day he let go the holler at the first stop, which Dick—the old sage—did not just at that exact instant appear to notice. But again in about fifteen minutes the master dog stood stock-still and turned this time to Fink.

"Boss, come here and unhook me a minute, will you? I've got a little matter to attend to that demands my attention elsewhere, so please release me from these swivel snaps and traces. It won't take long!"

Fink being half-dog himself—and black and tan at that—*saves* this language, and straightway Dick is freed from all encumbrances. Hereupon Richard the First walks down to master Crag, looking like a thunder-visaged school-master with a switch held behind his back going after little Willie in the last seat after said boy had bean-blown a slug of gum that struck and stuck just over teacher's dome on the blackboard. And by the same token Crag looked like little Willie.

Well, Dick just went to the culprit and with a slight preface which read, "So you thought I didn't mean it yesterday, eh? Well—*gr'r'r'r grab!*" He caught Crag just behind the ears and shook him like a ferret doing an obstinate rat to a finish. Be it said for the chastised one, he didn't whimper. He wasn't that sort. He took his medicine and after that did his singing when he was out of harness. Truth this is—absolute—Fink told it to me himself!

"Oh, he was a grand dog—a just dog. Let me tell you another to prove it before I give you the straight of the Kugruk water-rights affair."

This was the big high-light of Dick's career. None knew or could tell of it more authoritatively than the man most vitally, almost tragically, concerned, and we're leading up to it in that man's own way of its telling.

"Well," continued Fink, "you know Dick loved that Phoebe of mine as you or I would love a woman—I don't know about you—but at any rate as I love now—with all my heart. Why you know I suffer physical pain when Laura"—Laura being Mrs. Fink—"begins her packing. She's got the Berkshires or Coronado or some-



thing doing to hell and gone away from me. But I've got to stick and get the coin. My clients get in such deep holes that it takes me years sometimes to dig them out. So of course I can't go with Laura. Eleanor and Rudolph, the kiddies, are at school and father sweats blood in his loneliness.

"Dick loved his Phoebe like that. It got so that it sickened me to see him when she wasn't with him. And finally he wouldn't trail along with me any more unless she could go, too. Many's the time when I'd feel the itch to go up to the Northern and do away with Tex Rickard's faro-bank roll that I'd start out with Dick alone, and when I'd come out of the place sometimes twelve hours later, loaded, but not with the bank-roll, there would be Dick waiting for me, but with his Phoebe, sleeping side by side in the snow.

"Well, sir, hearken and heed this one—" a legal product of the blue grass, suh, this man, as I've mentioned before—"one day before I was starting on a trip to Ophir I noticed Phoebe just lavishing her beautiful self all over Dick and whispering something in his ear that made him turn to her with the sweetest expression of concern that you can conjure to your mind. Dick was standing in his lead-hitch holding the tug-line taut as a drum-string while the other dogs, Phoebe included, were being hooked in. It wasn't until the following Spring that I made out just what it was that she had confided to him that day.

"We'd no more than got out of town when I saw that old Dick was turning something over in his mind. He kept looking at 'Red,' who was running free. Having Dick now gave me ten dogs for a nine hitch, so I used one as a spell dog; just let him run loose—it happened to be Red this day. Well, Dick kept looking at him sporting along, and pretty soon he pulled his famous stop, braced himself, stretched himself, put his muzzle to the heavens and called out, 'Fink come here will you?' and of course I went. 'What is it, old scout?' I asked him. 'Take me out of harness for a minute.' He gave me the same stuff as the time that he wanted out of harness to cure Crag. This time I hadn't noticed any bunk from the dogs, so I was a bit puzzled—a bit puzzled I should say, sir.

"I took him out as he had asked—I didn't dream what the old boy had in his mind—but he knew what was in and on

his mind. By God, he was a grand dog—"

And here Fink spread his feet, placed his hands behind his back and from his drooping head I could see there was danger of falling tear-drops.

"Well, sir, he pranced up to Red and took hold of him by the ear and led him—like a mother bringing her truant brat to school—right smack over to Phoebe's side and then releasing his hold on Red's ear, old Dick licked Phoebe on the nose, looked up at me with the pleadingest damned look you ever saw and then actually tried with his teeth to unhook Phoebe's neck swivels and trace-snaps. May I never take another retainer if I speak a lie. Plain as day he says, 'Take her out. Put Red in her place. I know what I'm doing!'"

"Well, I wasn't going to take everything old Dick had a mind to hand me, so for a minute I thought, 'What the hell, haven't I got anything to say about running this team?' And do you know he read my mental speech and jumped up, placing his great paws upon my shoulders, and speaking right into my eyes he said, 'Aw, Finky, come on, take Phoebe out. You'll understand some day!' Of course I'm only human—I couldn't resist this from something that I am absolutely certain was super-human.

"So out came Phoebe, and all the way to Ophir Creek and back home, too, she did the two hundred miles in rapture sublime by the side of her lover, Dick.

"Next June she gave me the five prototypes of this great lover of hers—this peerless sire—and, sir, those five dogs have immortalized the name of Fink in the Territory, for they won the Alaska Sweepstakes for me twice hand-running and brought me the nice little sum of eighty thousand dollars.

"That's what she told Dick. She was in the ecstasy of that condition, and the old dog wasn't going to stand for the wasting of her precious strength on any sled-pulling—not while there was a spell dog running free as air that could be utilized in her stead."

Fink regarded me peculiarly for a moment after this. I think he was seeking the imp of incredulity in my eyes, but it was not there—there are a lot of things that I knew this Fink to be—but a liar—no. Gradually I saw a transition in those Cherokee eyes of his that, succeeding the whim-

sical quiz, seemed to film them with a seething membrane that fumed with iridescent luster. There was something going on in his mind this time—he paced back and forth before me, I should say, a dozen times—ever handing me this blazing gaze. I think he was stalling until suitable words arrived with which to launch the Kugruk matter. He may have been trying to impress me with the dramatic prolog spoken by his eyes. However, the words came all right.

"One Sunday morning late Fall—October it was—Dick and I were having a bit of a powwow on my front porch when a fellow sprung the gate latch and came right up to within six feet of Dick and me. He just stood there on the gravel walk and didn't say a damned word, but gave me about as sharp a looking over as I never hope to get again.

"That Territory's a queer country. Fellows like that come on you that way all unexpected and sometimes they pull some funny stunts. Very often the first glimpse you may get of them is over the sights of a wicked-looking gat that they might be holding on you. A lot of things shot through my mind while I sized this strange-looking guy up. I never tote hardware—it's safer, I've found, amongst these boys—but one of my thoughts this time was that it might have been well for me to slip a .41 into my jeans that peaceful Sabbath morning.

"But while this was going through my head, I heard—heard first—then glanced over and saw Dick slapping his great tail on the porch and looking up at me without even taking his head from between his feet. He had a very kind look in his eyes. 'Don't be afraid of this man, Fink,' I read in them. 'I don't know who he is, but I do know what he is. Take him on. He's timid, can't you see? He's waiting for you to say howdy or something.' This relieved me greatly, for I hate rows and that sort of thing on Sunday, so taking Dick's tip, of course, as usual I had to, I said:

"'Well, sir,' addressing myself amiably although, I confess, tardily to the stranger, 'what can I do for you?' I must not forget to describe this fellow. He wore a pair of sealskin water-boots that were tied above his knees with a thong, blue overalls and a moose-hide jacket over an

old faded blue-flannel shirt. His face was the color of—what shall I say—that red copper casserole over there on the sideboard—just that color." Fink told me this yarn last Winter in a Lake-shore mansion. He now was in Chicago. "His hair was very gray—almost white—but he had the bluest pair of eyes I ever saw in anybody's head. He wore a soft narrow-brimmed Stetson hat. He was a typical old-timer, and the strange part of it was that I thought I knew all or most of that handful of scouts, but this fellow was a teetotal stranger to me.

"'You Mister Fink?' He spoke after I had greeted him. His voice sounded strange, too, far-off like a voice coming from the bottom of a well. It made my skin creep a little, but Dick set me O. K. again with the slap of his tail. The old boy wasn't missing anything.

"'Yes, I'm Fink,' says I.

"'Mr. Fink,' he says, 'I've just walked down from the head of the Kugruk to see you—' 'Hold on,' I cut in, 'you what?'

"'I say I just walked down from the feed waters of the Kugruk River to see you.' He repeated with the slightly different wording. Then he says: 'Can't you hear me? Do I speak too low?' 'No,' I answered, 'but you surprized me—that's a two-hundred-mile jaunt isn't it?'

"'Thereabouts,' he said.

"'Well go on—oh, wait,' I interpolated, 'how about a cup of coffee?'

"'No, thanks, I just made a good breakfast off a package of raisins. My, they tasted good.' He smiled here—a good smile, you understand.

"'Mr. Fink, my name's Buchanan,' he continued, 'Robert Buchanan. I came into this country twenty-five years ago with Captain Green—you may have heard of him.' Of course I'd heard of the famous old captain; everybody had. 'Well I was one of the men who worked the Oomiluk lead mine at the top of Fish River.' I knew the old abandoned Galina mine, too. It had been inactive for over twenty years.

"'Green gave up the mine; it cost more to ship the lead to where we could market it than it was worth. Green went home, South, and I went prospecting, North. I'm telling you all this so's you'll have a pretty fair idea of my general make-up.' 'Who sent you to me?' I here asked him.

"'Gently, Mr. Fink, I'll get to that,'



he says. I had the old fellow sitting comfortably now. 'Well,' he went on, 'since then I crossed over into the Kewalick Valley, rambled up to the Selawick, went up the Koabuck, stuck around the Colville, looked over the Koyukuk, went down the Mackenzie, skirted around Barrow, stuck at Point Hope for a few years and finally got back almost to where I started from. And I'm there yet—or will be when I get back—and I'm aiming to start on tonight's crust. The going's been good there nights.'"

"What's your hurry, Buchanan?"

"I've got to get back," he says. "There's plenty of gold land up around that Kugruk River, Mr. Fink. I've got some of it staked, but what's better I own the water-rights—the big rights on the Kugruk—and I've represented them every year since before this Nome stampede started in '99. Two years ago the Immachuck rush brought a hell's slough of new people up to my neighborhood, and two of them were regularly appointed officials—from here in Nome—that set up a court in Deering. One's name is Grabenheimer and the other's Fox. You must know them both, Mr. Fink.' I couldn't place either of them just then. 'Well, they're well-named those two men, Grabenheimer, the judge, and Fox, the U. S. Marshal's deputy. Well, some one told these two men of my little camp at the head of the Kugruk which, no doubt, fired their curiosity and also their cupidity. Because one day I had this deputy marshal paying me a casual call—he wearing his badge and a six-gun so's I could plainly see them both.

"He gave my canals, dams and the penstock I've laid out up at that water-source a very keen looking-over. I'm a bit of a hydrostatic man Mr. Fink—water was my game in California before I came up here. Fox also closely inspected and made a copy of my original staking notice, and the next time I saw him—the old fellow swallowed a lump in his throat here—he came up with three other fellows and they plastered a new location on my property. Jumped me and took forcible possession. My property that I'd been holding on to for ten years before they ever heard of the country.

"That water'll be worth millions in twenty years from now, Mr. Fink—that's a rich country. I've heard about you help-

ing poor devils in trouble and I'm here to ask you to help me. I'm called to that Deering court on December the twentieth.'

"No wonder Dick slapped the floor with his tail. He had the old pioneer from the jump. Usually a stranger couldn't get to the gate, let alone open it, if Dick were on deck.

"I asked Buchanan some questions, familiarized myself with the situation and the upshot of it was that I agreed to be in Deering and appear for Buchanan in court on the twentieth of December, knowing it meant Christmas away from Laura and the kids, and also having postponed a big Blue Goose case I was fighting in Nome.

"The old man left about as abruptly as he had come, only he reached over and gave Dick an affectionate pat between the eyes. Dick enjoyed this I could see. Ah, man, he was a grand old dog.

"Now this was no child's play, this hike across the peninsula on December trail. We found the river-ice fickle and the snow deep and obstructive, but we got there on the dot.

"The old man had played his hand very well—that is, in the preliminaries. He didn't hire any cheap local man that would, as they usually do, talk too much and mess up the flax. He just lay back and waited until I came, and then sprung me on the day of the trial as a potent trump card. The crowd that were set to rob the old man had a lawyer come over from Candle to handle their case for them, and the proceedings were the usual 'defendant show cause why he should not be dispossessed' and so on and 'why the property should not rest in title' and so on in the hands of the fellows who'd jumped it and were then in peaceable possession.

"There was no use of my wasting any breath on the injustice of the situation. Judge Grabenheimer was the principal thief—his marshal the right-bower accomplice and the Candle lawyer the catspaw. That was as plain as day. But I did get our case down in the Commissioner's record in such manner that if it should ever come to the big court trial in Nome, its production would defy all the cunning of the plotters. It may sound strange but I used up ten days and part of the eleventh in weaving this protective net about old Buchanan's title, and I had my reason for this apparent sluggishness.

"Grabenheimer tried his utmost to hurry me, but I wouldn't be hurried. I dilly-dallied along until his patience began to squirm. Then came his decision. That fellow actually declared—from his point of view, considering all the facts as presented—that on the stroke of twelve or a minute after the stroke of midnight of December thirty-first, which was this day and what I was playing for, the Kugruk water-rights would be open for relocation.

"Well, that stunt has been pulled before by grafting recorders who were thinking more of the fees that would come to their coffers than of the graveyards that always did a rushing business the next day.

"I tell you I just stood there and admired that Grabenheimer worm. He was sublime. But these were wild men we had to deal with and blinded to any law but possession of the thing they were after.

"'Will you come up to the ground with me, Mr. Fink? It's my only chance to get there in time.' There was a note in old Buchanan's voice as he asked me this that made me proud of the affiliation between us. It was my first flash of a fearless Buchanan—a man who for twenty years had lived like the wild animals in the fierce Arctic. Here was an old warrior who would defend his castle, believe me.

"'Sure,' I said, 'and we start right away. I saw this coming and have planned to make a race of it. But I fear a matter of an hour or two won't make any difference with this crowd. They're crooks, Buchanan. But you go out to the shed where my team is and have Sub-chu-ahk hook them up and ready to start.' When the old man had gone, Fox, the deputy marshal, came to me and said, 'You ain't got a chance, Fink. We own everything and everybody around here.'

"I could see that this Fox was a vicious burly of the thug type. You find them among official man-hunters frequently. This fellow would stop at nothing. I could see that plainly. I was tempted at this time to break my rule and arm myself. Second thought made me abandon this plan and sudden realization that my hide was still unpunctured.

"It was then about three o'clock and the distance to be covered between that time and midnight about thirty miles. Which ordinarily meant nothing to me or

Dick, but traveling at night over no trail is another proposition. Now this Fox had a pretty snappy-looking team of dogs himself and got them started just a few minutes ahead of us. That didn't worry me a bit. There was nothing in the Territory could get away from my outfit. It turned out to be no race at all, because we overhauled the Fox gang within an hour and Dick gee'd out of the trail and passed them as if they were standing still.

"Fox and another fellow were riding their sleigh, and a third ran between the handle-bars. As we went by them Fox lifted a bottle of whisky in the air and yelled out 'Here's happy New Year, Fink—to you and your old mossback. You ain't got a chance!' He then took a good swig out of the bottle, and the other fellow riding produced another bottle and he, too, sung out something before he downed a slug.

"Soon we had them far behind us, but neither Buchanan nor myself were particularly cheerful. That booze meant danger ahead. These were tough customers, I tell you. Well, we got there, arriving at the Buchanan camp at about 11:30. I saw a lantern flash some hundred yards or so from the old man's shack, and he explained that it was one of the jumpers who had held down the ground while the others had gone to court.

"Buchanan produced a riparian location notice which, after I had filled it out, he signed, and I witnessed. Then leaving Sub-chu-ahk to unhook and tend to the feeding of the team, the old man and I went to his original stake, and, by the light of a lantern which I held for him, he nailed his new notice up at precisely three minutes after twelve.

"There were tracks around another stake which stood close to the Buchanan monument. Wobbly tracks they seemed to me. We found the Fox relocation notice already stuck up on this stake, and, no doubt, it had been done by the fellow we saw a half-hour before with the lantern.

"Upon seeing this, Buchanan said to me, 'Mr. Fink, you know I've never killed a man in my life, but I feel something stirring inside of me tonight.' I patted the old fellow on the back and told him not to worry as everything would come out in the wash, assuring him that I would stick to him through thick and thin.

"But when I heard a wild shouting come up the river, the singing and yelling with which the New Year was being welcomed by the rest of the jumping outfit, well, my heart sank for a second. Pretty soon they came directly to where we were, their dogs panting and spent, with Fox brawling and ugly drunk, in spite of his singing, as were the other two fellows.

"The three of them had guns hanging from their hips, and the first words, coming from Fox, were—'What the hell are you two doing on my ground. Git off!'

"He lurched up to the Buchanan stake and was just in the act of pulling it out of its base when old man Buchanan lunged at him and grabbed him by the throat. Fox straightened like a flash and pulled a gun and struck the old man a swinging blow on the side of the head. Buchanan sank to the snow with his blood spattering over it. It was as tight a box as I have ever been in. But my first thought seemed to be concern for old man Buchanan. While I was kneeling over him Fox had pulled up the true stake and, then muttering and growling, he stood with the other two, trying with blearing sight and shaking hands to light a lantern.

"Buchanan had come to from the effects of Fox's blow and as I stood him on his feet he almost wept into my ear: 'Take care of my property Mr. Fink. You'll find all papers in my cabin.' He then pulled a blued gun from his shirt and broke from me in a desperate charge on the three drunken men. He fired blindly into them and one went down without a groan. Not Fox. He struck the old man again, but this time a more murderous blow, and Buchanan crumpled in a heap in the snow. I thought he had been instantly killed.

"Well, the time for action had come for me. I grabbed for Buchanan's gun from beside his inert form. As I did so Fox and the other fellow both came at me with their guns raised to club me to death. But then the big thing happened. I saw—I see them yet—two blazing balls of green fire fly through the air. I heard a cry, half-whinny, half-challenge, and this great gray fighting beast had Fox nailed by the throat and toppled over on his back. Dick killed Fox in less than two seconds! I shall never forget the crunch that did the trick. The other fellow was stupified drunk

and hardly knew what it was all about, but Dick jumped him, too. My efforts to hold him back to save this other poor fool's life were like a child's restraint. The dog was beyond any control. He was wild again. He had the taste of one man's blood who was an enemy to me; now he took the other's. He had the second fellow lifeless on the snow before he paid any heed to my efforts to placate him.

"Then he came to me, but not in any attitude of submission. No, he came defiant and proud. Not a trace of penitence or submission. He seemed to me to be aware of a great responsibility—as having balanced the scales of justice once more.

"Dick began licking the blood from the old man's face. I put my ear to his heart and heard the faintest throb. I yelled for Sub-chu-ahk. I didn't think then that he was in the old man's shack cooking the dogs' supper and couldn't hear me. But Dick bounded away toward the shack and was back in an instant. A little later Sub-chu-ahk came up. Dick had made himself clear to the boy.

"Together we carried the old man to the shack and did what we could to ease him. Sub-chu-ahk and I then went to the jumpers' shack, and after pounding on the door we heard a thick voice say, 'What d'ye want?' We found this fellow also stupified drunk. He sobered up considerably when we took him out and led him to the dead bodies of his friends. We helped him in the carrying of the bodies to his shack.

"Old man Buchanan recovered from the blows and was afterward tried for the murder of the man killed by a gunshot wound. He was acquitted. I defended him. Proved self-defense.

"The other two fellows were obviously proved to have been gored to death by some attacking animal, but no eye-witnesses to these killings were forthcoming, so the people were compelled to abandon for lack of a defendant. The Wild Goose outfit bought Buchanan's title to the Kugruk riparian rights. They paid him a quarter-million and he gave me fifty thousand. The old man is down in the Sacremento valley. I hope he's alive and happy. He's probably got a raisin farm.

"Dick? Well Dick lived to be fourteen years old. His noble old soul passed to the God above about three years ago. He died with his head in my lap."



The Rescue

BY JOSEPH CONRAD

A Serial

Part III

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form.

THERE was no wind and the small brig that had lain all afternoon a few miles from one of the islands of the Malay Archipelago had hardly altered its course since midday.

At six o'clock a Malay *seacannie* relieved the wheel.

"Let's eat, Shaw," said "Red-Eyed Tom" Lingard, captain of the *Lightning*. "I say, just take a look round before coming below."

"Certainly, sir," returned the mate. "Nothing to report, sir," he informed the captain later.

"Between the islands there was a boat," pronounced the helmsman after the white men had disappeared.

"You saw a floating tree," rejoined Wasub, *serang* of the brig. "The order is to keep silence, lest evil befall the ship."

Darkness fell. Over the sea an advancing streak of foam reached the vessel and passed under. Darkness again. Silence. A shout.

"What—ship—is—that?"

"English brig," answered Lingard. "Come on board."

Carter, who boarded the brig from a small boat, explained that he was from the schooner-yacht *Hermit*, which was now stranded in soft mud sixty miles away, near Borneo.

"We are twenty, all told, besides the gentry. The owner, his wife and a Spanish gentleman—a friend they picked up at Manila. The owner's bound for Batavia, then for Ceylon."

"You say there is a lady aboard? Are you armed?" asked Lingard.

"Not much," replied Carter.

"I am going to the yacht," said Lingard with decision. "I must go to the rescue of these people. You come back to your ship with me."

"That wouldn't be carrying out orders," argued Carter. "I don't think you can do much—your vessel is too small. I've got to speak to a home-ward-bound ship or a man-of-war."

"Nonsense," said Lingard sharply. "You must come with me."

"You would keep me by force?"

"If needs be, yes. Do you know into what a hornets' nest your stupid people have blundered? They are interfering with my plans. How much d'ye think their lives are worth here? Not a brass farthing if the breeze fails me for another twenty-four hours. You want a gunboat. My God, that's not what you want! I am the man you want—the only one who can save you and your people's throats from being cut. You don't know your luck when you see it, but I know mine, I keep you," Lingard concluded.

A squall broke.

IT WAS noon the next day before they sighted the yacht off "The Shore of Refuge." Two figures moved over the beach of a rocky islet. They were Hassim and Immada, brother and sister.

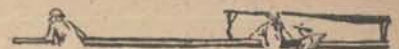
Hassim and Lingard first met in New Guinea. Hassim had come there to buy bird-of-paradise skins. Afterward, Lingard ventured into the village unarmed. There ensued a conflict with the natives.

It was in a small bay on the coast of New Guinea that Hassim and Lingard first met. A trader and adventurer, Hassim, the nephew of a great Wajo chief, had come there to buy some bird-of-paradise skins. Shortly afterward, Lingard came and ventured into the village unarmed. There ensued a conflict with the natives, during which one of Lingard's Malays was killed. Hassim went to the white man's aid, driving away the attackers.

That evening, Lingard entertained the young leader of the Wajo traders on board the brig. When he took his leave, Lingard said:

"You fired three shots for me, Panglima Hassim, and I have had three barrels of powder put aboard your *prau*; one for each shot. But we are not quits."

"This is indeed a friend's gift. Come to my country," invited Hassim.



"I promise," Lingard said.
 Next morning, the brig and *prau* left the bay.
 When they parted, the Malay shouted—
 "Remember the promise—come soon, lest what
 is written should come to pass."
 "What's written?" Lingard shouted.
 And over the water came faintly—
 "No one knows."

W AJO, because of its chronic state of disturbance, was closed to white traders. But Lingard guided his brig there, and while the vessel lay in sight of a cluster of bamboo huts, Jaffir, a servant of Hassim's, climbed aboard.

Briefly the Malay explained that in a civil war between Hassim and his enemies the former had been defeated and now, with a handful of followers, was a fugitive.

"You have arrived too late," said Jaffir, "Hassim's message is—'Depart and forget!'"

"Not I," exclaimed Lingard, and he outlined his plan to attempt to save Hassim from immediate danger.

Before morning, Lingard, with Hassim and his band aboard the brig, had departed from Wajo. Later in the day the brig was anchored near the Shore of Refuge, the lair of Belarab.

Then the center of Lingard's life shifted from the Straits of Malacca to the Shore of Refuge.

THERE is a lot of discontent in Wajo amongst the big people," spoke H. C. Jorgenson, ex-captain of the barque *Wild Rose*, to Lingard, while the latter was on one of his visits to the Straits Settlement. "Are you deep in this thing?"

"To the last cent," responded Lingard. "I want Hassim to get back his own."

"There's a devil in such work. Drop it!"

"By God, I won't!" swore Lingard. "Look here, I took them off when they were in their last ditch. That means something. I ought not to have meddled and it would have been all over in a few hours. I must have meant something

when I interfered, whether I knew it or not. I meant it then and did not know it. Very well, I mean it now and know it. When you save people from death you take a share in their life. That's how I look at it. I sail before morning. Will you come with me?"

That evening Jorgenson boarded the brig.

"Here I am," he said.

"All I expect you to do is to look after Belarab's morals when I am away," said Lingard. "One more trip and then we shall be ready to go ahead."

Thus for two years Lingard worked to raise men, money and ammunition to restore Hassim to power. On his first visit, Lingard spent six days at Belarab's settlement. In return for Lingard's support, a few guns and a little money, Belarab had promised his help for the conquest of Wajo.

Lingard purchased the *Emma*, a decrepit schooner, ran her aground near Belarab's settlement, and left Jorgenson in charge of the hulk, in which were stored guns and powder.

ON board Mr. Travers' yacht, Lingard said: "You are in the way of what I can not give up for any one, but I will see you through safely if you will only trust me."

"I don't see my way to utilize your services," returned Travers.

"I've offered to take you aboard my brig for a few days, as your chance of safety. And you ask my motives. They are not for you to know."

"You will get nothing by trying to frighten me," said Travers. "Leave this ship!"

Seeing a quarrel arising, d'Alcacer, a guest of Travers, started to intercede, but was restrained by Mrs. Travers. A few moments later Hassim and Immada boarded the vessel.

"Oblige me by taking these natives away," spoke up Travers harshly.

For a time, Lingard glared at the man; then, followed by Hassim and Immada, left the yacht.

V

THE afternoon dragged itself out in silence. Edith sat pensive and idle with her fan on her knees. D'Alcacer, who thought the incident should have been treated in a conciliatory spirit, attempted to communicate his view to his host, but that gentleman, purposely misunderstanding his motive, overwhelmed him with so many apologies and expressions of regret at the irksome and perhaps inconvenient delay "which you suffer from through your good-natured acceptance of our invitation" that the other was obliged to refrain from pursuing the subject further.

"Even my regard for you, my dear d'Alcacer, could not induce me to submit

to such a barefaced attempt at extortion," affirmed Mr. Travers with uncompromising virtue. "The man wanted to force his services upon me and then put in a heavy claim for salvage. That is the whole secret—you may depend on it. I detected him at once, of course." The eye-glass glittered perspicuously. "He underrated my intelligence; and what a violent scoundrel! The existence of such a man in the time we live in is inconceivable."

D'Alcacer retired and, full of vague forebodings, tried in vain for hours to interest himself in a book. Mr. Travers walked up and down restlessly trying to persuade himself that his indignation was based on purely moral grounds.

The glaring day, like a mass of white-hot iron withdrawn from the fire, was los-

ing gradually its heat and its glare in a richer deepening of tone. At the usual time two seamen, walking noiselessly aft in their yachting shoes, rolled up in silence the quarter-deck screens; and the coast, the shallows, the dark islets and the snowy sandbanks uncovered thus day after day were seen once more in their aspect of dumb watchfulness. The brig swung end on in the foreground, her squared yards crossing heavily the soaring symmetry of the rigging, resembled a creature instinct with life, with the power of springing into action lurking in the light grace of its repose.

A pair of stewards in white jackets with brass buttons appeared on deck and began to flit about without a sound, agile and spectral, laying the table for dinner on the flat top of the cabin skylight. The sun, drifting away toward other lands, toward other seas, toward other men, the sun all red in a cloudless sky raked the yacht with a parting salvo of crimson rays that shattered themselves into sparks of fire upon the crystal and silver of the dinner-service, put a short flame into the blades of knives and spread a rosy tint over the white of plates. A trail of purple, such as a smear of blood on a blue shield, lay over the sea.

On sitting down Mr. Travers alluded in a vexed tone to the necessity of living on preserves, all the stock of fresh provisions for the passage to Batavia having been already consumed. It was distinctly unpleasant.

"I don't travel for my pleasure, however," he added; "and the belief that the sacrifice of my time and comfort will be productive of some good to the world at large would make up for any amount of privations."

Edith and d'Alcacer seemed unable to shake off altogether a strong aversion to talk, and the conversation, like an expiring breeze, kept on dying out repeatedly after each languid gust. The large silence of the horizon, the profound repose of all things visible, enveloping the bodies and penetrating the souls with their quieting influence, stilled thought as well as voice. For a long time no one spoke. Behind the taciturnity of the masters the servants hovered without noise.

Suddenly Mr. Travers, as if concluding a train of thought, muttered aloud:

"I own with regret I did in a measure lose my temper, but then you will admit that the existence of such a man is a disgrace to civilization."

This remark was not taken up and he returned for a time to the nursing of his indignation, at the bottom of which, like a monster in a fog, crept a bizarre feeling of personal resentment, the sense of bitter and inexplicable rancor. He waved away an offered dish.

"This coast," he began again, "has been placed under the sole protection of Holland by the Treaty of 1820, and the neglect of solemn engagements so characteristic of most continental governments shows itself even in such trifling occurrences as this one. The Treaty of 1820——"

Both his hearers felt vividly the urgent necessity to hear no more. D'Alcacer, uncomfortable on a camp-stool, sat stiff and stared strongly as if hypnotized by the glass stopper of a *carafe*. Edith turned a little sideways and, leaning on her elbow, rested her head on the palm of her hand like one thinking about matters of profound import. Mr. Travers talked; he talked inflexibly in a harsh, blank voice, as if reading a proclamation; and with that air he always had, whether listening or talking, of his whole attention being scrupulously concentrated upon himself. The other two, as if in a state of incomplete trance, had their ears assailed by single words, by loose ends of sentences, by quoted fragments of official verbiage.

"An international understanding—the duty to civilize—failed to carry out—compact—Canning——" D'Alcacer became attentive for a moment. "Not that this attempt, almost amusing in its impudence, influences my opinion. I won't admit the possibility of any violence being offered to people of our position. It is the moral aspect of such an incident I am desirous of criticizing."

Here d'Alcacer lost himself again in the brisk recollection of Edith and Immada looking at each other—the beginning and the end, the flower and the leaf, the phrase and the cry. Mr. Travers' voice went on dogmatic and obstinate for a long time. The end came with a certain vehemence.

"And if the inferior race must perish, it is a gain, a step toward the perfecting of humanity which is the aim of progress."

He ceased. The sparks of sunset in

crystals and silver had gone out, and around the yacht the expanse of coast and shallows seemed to await, unmoved, the coming of utter darkness. The dinner was over a long time ago and the patient stewards had been waiting at his back, indifferent in the downpour of words like sentries under a shower.

Edith rose nervously and going aft began to gaze at the coast. Behind her the sun, sunk already, seemed to force through the mass of waters the glow of an unextinguishable fire, and below her feet, on each side of the yacht, the lustrous sea, as if reflecting the color of her eyes, was tinged a somber violet hue.

D'Alcacer came up with quiet footsteps and for some time they leaned side by side over the rail in silence. Then he said—"How quiet it is!" and she seemed to perceive that the quietness of that evening was more profound and more significant than ever before. Almost without knowing it she murmured—"It's like a dream." Another long silence ensued; the tranquillity of the universe had such an august amplex that the sounds remained on the lips as if checked by the fear of profanation. The sky was limpid like a diamond and under the last gleams of sunset the night was spreading its veil over the earth. There was something precious and soothing in the beautifully serene end of that expiring day, of the day vibrating, glittering and ardent, and dying now in infinite peace, without a stir, without a tremor, without a sigh—in the certitude of resurrection.

Then all at once the shadows deepened swiftly, the stars came out in a crowd, scattering a rain of pale sparks upon the blackness of the water, while the coast stretched low down a dark belt without a gleam. Above it the top-hamper of the brig loomed indistinct and high.

She spoke first.

"How unnaturally quiet! It is like a desert of land and water without a living soul."

"One man at least dwells in it," said d'Alcacer lightly, "and if he is to be believed there are other men, full of evil intentions."

"Do you think it's true?"

Before answering d'Alcacer tried to see the expression of her face but the obscurity was too profound already.

"How can one see a dark truth on such a dark night?" he said evasively. "But it is easy to believe in evil, here or anywhere else."

She seemed to be lost in thought for a while.

"And that man?" she asked.

After some time d'Alcacer began to speak slowly.

"Rough, uncommon, decidedly uncommon of his kind. Not at all what Don Martin thinks him to be. For the rest—mysterious to me. He is your countryman after all——"

She seemed quite surprised by that view.

"Yes," she said slowly. "But you know, I can not—what shall I say—imagine him at all. He has nothing in common with the mankind I know. There is nothing to begin upon. How does such a man live? What are his thoughts, his actions, his affections, his——"

"His conventions," suggested d'Alcacer. "That includes everything."

Mr. Travers appeared suddenly behind them with a glowing cigar in his teeth. He took it between his fingers to declare with persistent acrimony that no amount of "scoundrelly intimidation" would prevent him from having his usual walk. There was about three hundred yards to the southward of the yacht a sandbank nearly a mile long, gleaming a silvery white in the darkness, plumed in the center with a thicket of dry bushes that rustled very loud in the slightest stir of the heavy night air. The day after the stranding they had landed on it "to stretch their legs a bit," as the sailing-master defined it, and every evening since, as if exercising a privilege or performing a duty, the three paced there for an hour backward and forward, lost in dusky immensity, threading at the edge of water the belt of damp sand, smooth, level, elastic to the touch like living flesh and sweating a little under the pressure of their feet.

This time d'Alcacer alone followed Mr. Travers. Edith heard them get into the yacht's smallest boat, and the night-watchman, tugging at a pair of sculls, pulled them off to the nearest point. Then the man returned. He came up the ladder and she heard him say to some one on deck—

"Orders to go back in an hour."

His footsteps died out forward, and a somnolent, unbreathing repose took possession of the stranded yacht.

VI

AFTER a time this absolute silence which she almost could feel pressing upon her on all sides, induced in Edith a state of hallucination. She saw herself standing alone, at the end of time, on the brink of days. All was unmoving as if the dawn would never come, the stars would never fade, the sun would never rise any more; all was mute, still, dead—as if the shadow of the outer darkness, the shadow of the uninterrupted, of the everlasting night that fills the universe, the shadow of the night so profound and so vast that the blazing suns lost in it are only like sparks, like pin-points of fire, the restless shadow that like a suspicion of an evil truth darkens everything upon the earth on its passage, had gone to her, had enveloped her, had stood arrested as if to remain with her forever.

And there was such a finality in that illusion, such an accord with the trend of her thought that when she murmured into the darkness a faint "so be it" she seemed to have spoken one of those sentences that resume and close a life.

As a young girl, often reproved for her romantic ideas, she had dreams where the sincerity of a great passion appeared like the ideal fulfilment and the only truth of life. Entering the world, she discovered that ideal to be unattainable, because the world is too prudent to be sincere. Then she hoped that she could find the truth of life in ambition which she understood as a life-long devotion to some unselfish idea. Mr. Travers' name was on men's lips; he seemed capable of enthusiasm and of devotion; he impressed her imagination by his impenetrability. She married him, found him enthusiastically devoted to the nursing of his own career, and had nothing to hope for now.

That her husband should be bewildered by the curious misunderstanding which had taken place and also permanently grieved by her disloyalty to his respectable ideals was only natural. He was, however, perfectly satisfied with her beauty, her brilliance and her useful connections. She was admired, she was envied; she was sur-

rounded by splendor and adulation; the days went on rapid, brilliant, uniform, without a glimpse of sincerity or true passion, without a single true emotion—not even that of a great sorrow. And swiftly and stealthily they had led her on and on, to this evening, to this coast, to this sea, to this moment of time and to this spot on the earth's surface where she felt unerringly that the moving shadow of the unbroken night had stood still to remain with her forever.

"So be it!" she murmured, resigned and defiant, at the mute and smooth obscurity that hung before her eyes in a black curtain without a fold; and as if in answer to that whisper a lantern was run up to the foreyard-arm of the brig. She saw it ascend swinging for a short space, and suddenly remain motionless on the air, piercing the dense night between the two vessels by its glance of flame that strong and steady seemed from afar to fall upon her alone.

Her thoughts, like a fascinated moth, went fluttering toward that light—this—that man—that girl, who had known war, danger, seen death near, had obtained evidently the devotion of that man. The occurrences of the afternoon had been strange in themselves, but what struck her artistic side was the vigor of their presentation. They outlined themselves before her memory with the clear simplicity of events related in some immortal legend. They were mysterious, but she felt certain they were founded on something that was absolutely true. They embodied artless and masterful feelings; such, no doubt, as swayed mankind in the simplicity of its youth. Their very setting, this land without form, these shallows where the earth and sea were mingled together within the circle of the firmament, seemed to belong to the dawn of creation.

The fate that ruled those beings she had seen must have had that seductive simplicity which a mature mankind had managed to explain away to its own complete satisfaction. Not being satisfied herself she envied, for a moment, the lot of that humble and obscure sister. Nothing stood between that girl and the truth of her sensations. She could be sincerely courageous, and tender and passionate and—well—ferocious. Why not ferocious? She could know the truth of terror—and of

affection, absolutely, without artificial trammels, without the pain of restraint.

Thinking of what such life could be she felt invaded by that inexplicable exaltation, the consciousness of their physical capacities so often given to intellectual beings. She glowed with a sudden persuasion that she also could be equal to such an existence; and her heart was dilated with a momentary longing to know the naked truth of things; the naked truth of life and passion buried under the growth of centuries.

She glowed and suddenly she quivered with the shock of coming to herself, as if she had fallen down from a star. There was a sound of rippling water and a shapeless mass glided out of the dark void she confronted. A voice below her feet said—

"I made you out—on the sky."

A cry of surprise expired on her lips and she could only peer downward. Lingard, alone in the brig's dingey, with another stroke sent the light boat nearly under the counter, laid his sculls in and rose from the thwart. His head and shoulders loomed up alongside and he had the appearance of standing upon the sea. He looked up at the pale oval of her face. Involuntarily she made a movement of retreat.

"Stop," he said anxiously, "don't speak loud. No one must know. Where do your people think themselves, I wonder? In a dock at home? And you——"

"My husband is not on board," she interrupted hurriedly.

"I know."

She bent a little more over the rail:

"Then you are having us watched. Why?"

"Somebody must watch. Your people keep such a good lookout—don't they? Yes. Ever since dark one of my boats has been dodging astern here in the deep water. I swore to myself I would never see one of you, never speak to one of you here, that I would be dumb, blind, dead. Do you know what that means? Deaf, too, no matter who shouted, and—here I am!"

While he was speaking her alarm and mistrust were replaced by an immense curiosity, burning, yet quiet, too, as if before the inevitable work of destiny. After the first gust of emotion it seemed natural that he should be there speaking, that she should listen—and presently speak herself. She looked downward at him. His head

was bared and with one hand upon the ship's side he seemed to be thinking deeply.

"Because you had something more to tell us?" she suggested gently.

A moment of profound silence ensued.

"Yes," he said in a low tone and without moving in the least.

"Would you come on board and wait?" she asked.

"Who? I!" He lifted his head so quick as to startle her. "I have nothing to say to him, and I'll never put my foot on board this craft. I've been told to go. That's enough."

"He is accustomed to be addressed deferentially," she said after a pause, "and you——"

"Who is he?" asked Lingard simply.

These three words seemed to her to scatter her past in the air—like smoke. They robbed all the multitude of mankind of every vestige of importance. She was amazed to find that on this night, in this place, there could be no adequate answer to the searching naiveness of that question.

"I didn't ask for much," Lingard began again. "Did I? Only that you all should come on board my brig for five days. That's all. Give me the time to see, to turn around. I told him it was the only way to save you all and at the same time—do I look like a liar? There are things I could not tell him. I couldn't explain—I couldn't—not to him—to no man—to no man in the world——"

His voice dropped. "To myself," he murmured, as if in a dream.

"We have remained unmolested so long here," said Mrs. Travers a little unsteadily, "that it makes it very difficult to believe in danger now. We saw no one all these days except those two people who came for you. If you may not explain——"

"Of course you can't be expected to see through a wall," broke in Lingard. "This coast's like a wall, but I know what's on the other side. It was I who stirred them up! And now you come—people of my own skin as they say. Must I fight them? Must I? I said to myself, 'I wouldn't'. I hadn't seen you, then. I had forgotten you were on board this yacht. A yacht here, of all things that float! When I set eyes on her I could fancy she hadn't been more than an hour from home. I raised

my eyes to look for the old coast—for Torbay, by heavens; for Brixham! Nothing but the look of her spars made me think of old times. And then the faces of the chaps on board. I seemed to know them all. It was like home-coming to me when I wasn't thinking of it. And I hated the sight of you all."

"If we are exposed to any peril," she said after a pause, during which she tried to penetrate the secret of passion hidden behind that man's words, "it need not affect you. Our other boat is gone to the Straits and effective help is sure to come very soon."

"Affect me! Is that precious watchman of yours coming aft? I don't want anybody to know I came here again begging, even of you. Is he coming aft? Listen! I've stopped your other boat."

His head and shoulders disappeared, as if he had dived into a denser layer of obscurity floating on the water. The watchman, who had the intention to stretch himself in one of the deck chairs, catching sight of the owner's wife, walked straight to the lamp that hung under the ridge pole of the awning, and after fumbling with it for a time went away forward with an indolent gait.

"You dared?" she whispered down in an intense tone, and directly his head emerged again below her with an upturned face.

"I hadn't many minutes to think about it. It was dare—or give up. The help from the Straits would have been too late, anyhow, if I hadn't the power to keep you safe; and if I had the power I could see you through it all—alone. I expected to find a reasonable man to talk to. I ought to have known better. You come from too far to understand these things. Well, I dared; I've sent after your other boat a fellow who, with me at his back, would try to stop the governor of the Straits himself. He will do it. Perhaps it's done already. You have nothing to look for. But I am here. You said you believed I meant well——"

"Yes," she murmured.

"That's why I am here talking to you. I thought I would tell you everything. I had to begin with this business about the boat. And what do you think of me now? I've cut you off from the rest of the earth. You people would disappear like a stone in

the water. You left one foreign port for another. Who's there to trouble about what became of you? Who would know? Who could guess? It would be months before they began to stir."

"I understand," she said steadily; "we are helpless."

"And alone," he added.

After a pause she said in a deliberate, restrained voice:

"What does this mean—plunder, captivity?"

"It would have meant death if I hadn't been here," he answered.

"But you have the power to——"

"Why, do you think, you are alive yet?" he cried. "Jorgenson has been arguing with them there on shore," he went on more calmly with a swing of his arm toward where the night seemed darkest. "Do you think he would have kept them back if they hadn't expected me every day? His words would have been nothing without my fist."

She heard a dull blow struck on the side of the yacht and concealed in the same darkness that wrapped the unconcern of the earth and sea, the fury and the pain of hearts; she smiled above his head, fascinated by the simplicity of images and expressions. She was only half conscious of that smile which lingered unseen on her lips in the beginning of amused compassion that seemed to detect in the obscurity of the night, in the words of the man, a naïve and dramatic intensity. Gradually she lost herself in a mood of dreaminess altogether disconnected from the fantastic circumstances of its birth. It came up within her, uncalled like a memory, and like a memory wavering and absorbing, less still than the sea, more obscure than the night, as strangely simple as the man silent there below her feet—vast enough to contain the germs of all the emotions.

Lingard made a brusque movement, the lively little boat being unsteady under him, and she spoke slowly, absently, as if her thought had been lost in the vagueness of her sensations.

"And this—this—Jorgenson, you said? Who is he?"

"A man," he answered, "a man like myself."

"Like yourself?"

"Just like myself," he said with strange reluctance, as if admitting a painful truth.

"More sense, perhaps, but less luck. Though, since your yacht has turned up here, I begin to think that mine is nothing much to boast of either."

"Is our presence here so fatal?"

"It may be death to some. Worse than death to me. You saw the man and the girl here. If the thing failed I believe she would die. And it rests with you in a way. Think of that! She has done no harm to you. I can never find such another chance again. But that's nothing. Two years of life gone by the board. But that's nothing. A man who has saved my life once and who I passed my word to would think I had thrown him over. Let that go, too. Listen! As true as I stand here in my boat talking to you, I believe the girl would die of grief."

"You love her," she said softly.

"Like my own daughter," he cried low.

She said "Oh," faintly and for a moment there was a silence, then he began again.

"Look here. When I was a boy in a trawler and I looked at you yacht people in the Channel ports, you were as strange to me as the Malays here are strange to you. I am no nearer to your kind now than you are to that man and that girl. I left home sixteen years ago and fought my way all round the earth. I had the time to forget where I began. What are you to me against these two? If I was to die here on the spot would you care? No one would care at home. No one in the whole world—but these two."

"What can I do?" she asked, and waited.

He seemed to reflect, then lifting his head, spoke gently.

"Do you understand the danger you are in? Are you afraid?"

"I understand the expression you used, of course. Understand the danger?" she went on immediately. "No—decidedly no. I can hardly realize you are speaking to me and—honestly—I am not afraid."

"Aren't you?" he said in a disappointed voice. "Perhaps you don't believe me. I believed you, though, when you said you were sure I meant well. I trusted you enough to come here asking for your help—telling you what no one knows."

"You mistake me," she said with impulsive earnestness. "This is so extraordinary, unusual, sudden, outside my experience."

"Aye!" he murmured. "What could you know of danger and trouble? You! But perhaps by thinking it over——"

"You want me to think myself into a fright!" She laughed lightly, and in the gloom of his thoughts this flash of joyous sound was incongruous and almost terrible; next moment the illumined night appeared brilliant like day, warm like sunshine; but when she ceased the returning darkness gave him pain, as if it had struck heavily against his breast. "I don't think I could," she finished in a serious tone.

"Couldn't you?" He hesitated, perplexed. "It is not a little to ask of you," he went on very low, "to make it out as if you were, in a way—anxious. Though it need be no pretence. Things are bad enough too to make it no shame. I tell you," he said rapidly, "and I am not a timid man, I may not be able to do much if you people don't help me."

"You want me to pretend I am alarmed?" she asked quickly.

"Aye, to pretend—as well you may. It's a lot to ask of you—who perhaps never had to make believe a thing—isn't it?"

"It is," she said after a time.

The unexpected bitterness of her tone struck him with dismay.

"Don't be offended," he entreated. "I've got to plan a way out of this mess. It's no play, either. Could you?"

"Perhaps, if I tried very much. But to what end?"

"You must all shift aboard the brig," he began, speaking quickly, "and then we may get over this trouble without coming to blows. Now if you were to say that you wish it, that you feel unsafe in the yacht—don't you see?"

"I see," she pronounced thoughtfully.

"The brig is small but the cuddy is fit for a lady," went on Lingard with animation.

"Has it not already sheltered a princess," she commented coolly.

"And I shall not intrude."

"This is an inducement."

"Nobody will dare to intrude. You needn't even see me."

"This is almost decisive, only——"

"I know my place."

"Only, I might not have the influence," she finished.

"That I can not believe," he said roughly. "The long and the short of it is

you don't trust me because you think that only people of your own condition speak the truth always."

"Evidently," she murmured.

"You say to yourself—'here's a fellow deep in with pirates, thieves, niggers——'"

"To be sure——"

"'A man I never saw the like before,'" went on Lingard headlong, "'such a damn ruffian.'"

He checked himself, full of confusion. After a time he heard her saying calmly—

"You are like other men in this, that you get angry when you can not have your way at once."

"I angry!" he exclaimed in deadened voice. "You do not understand. I am thinking of you also—it is hard on me——"

"I mistrust not you, only my own power. You have produced such an unfortunate impression on Mr. Travers."

"Unfortunate impression! He treated me as if I had been a longshore loafer. Never mind that. He is your husband. Fear in those you care for is hard to bear for any man. And so, he——"

"What Machiavellism!"

"Eh, what did you say?"

"I only wondered where you had observed that? On the sea?"

"Observed what?" he said absently. Then pursuing his idea. "One word from you ought to be enough."

"You think so?"

"I am sure of it. Why, even I, myself——"

"Of course," she interrupted. "But don't you think that after parting with you on such—such—inimical terms, there would be a difficulty?"

"A man like me would do anything for money—don't you see?"

After a pause she asked—

"And would you care to appear in such a light?"

"As long as you know better!"

His voice vibrated—she drew back disturbed, as if unexpectedly he had touched her.

"What can there be at stake?" she began wonderingly.

"A kingdom," said Lingard.

She leaned far over the rail, staring. He lifted his head and their faces, one above the other, came very close together.

"There's only one other man in these

seas," said Lingard, "who ever thought of such a thing. And he has done it. But he's a gentleman with plenty of money and powerful friends at home. He could get a cruiser for the asking and could order port captains about like an admiral. Once a whole squadron came along to help him. He worked for himself. Well, I, too, am an adventurer, but there's no one at my back. No one. And I do not work for myself. Not in that way."

"Not for yourself?" she whispered.

He felt the touch of her breath on his forehead and remained still for a moment, perfectly still as if he did not intend to move or speak any more.

"Those things," he began suddenly, "come in your way, when you don't think, and they get all round you before you know what you mean to do. When I went into that bay in New Guinea I never guessed where that course would take me to. I could tell you—would you understand? You!"

He stammered, hesitated, and suddenly spoke, liberating the visions of two years into the night where she could see them as if outlined in words of fire.

VII

HIS tale was as startling as the discovery of a new world. She was being taken along the boundary of an exciting existence, and she looked into it through the guileless enthusiasm of the narrator. The heroic quality of the feelings concealed what was disproportionate and absurd in that gratitude, in that friendship, in that inexplicable devotion; and left to view only the workings of human sympathy so vast as to possess the fascination of a monstrous sentiment. The headlong fierceness of purpose invested his obscure design of conquest with the proportions of a great enterprise. It was clear that no vision of a subjugated world could have been more inspiring to the most famous adventurer of history.

From time to time he interrupted himself to ask confidently as if he had been speaking to an old friend, "What would you have done?" and hurried on without pausing for approval.

It struck her that there was a disinterestedness in all this, the beauty of an implanted faculty of affection that had found

itself, its immediate need of an object and the way of expansion; a tenderness expressed violently; a tenderness that could only be satisfied by backing human beings against their own destiny. Perhaps her hate of convention, trammeling, and frankness of her own impulse, had rendered her more alert to perceive what is intrinsically great and profound within the forms of human folly, so simple and so infinitely varied according to the region of the earth and to the moment of time.

He was saying:

"I noticed them looking at that land as if they were sorry they hadn't been left to die there. I had taken them off and there was only one thing to do. I told myself, 'I shall bring them back! I shall wake up that country, by heavens!' What else could you have done?"

And as if she had become very simple and very accessible to the terror, the poetry and the sadness that may be found in obscure events, she seemed to understand the ardor in the tone, the compelling power in the vision, and the mastery of the idea that enters the brain in the night, in a flash, perhaps in a dream, and clings to a life and can be only dislodged by death.

What of it that the narrator was only a common seaman; the kingdom of the jungle, the men of the forest, the lives obscure! That simple soul was possessed by the greatness of the idea; there was nothing sordid in the flaming impulses. When she once understood that, the story appealed to the audacity of her thoughts and she became so charmed with what she heard that she forgot where she was. She forgot that she was personally close to that tale which she saw detached, far away from her, truth or fiction, presented in picturesque speech, real only by the response of her emotion.

He paused. In the cessation of the impassioned murmur she began to reflect, with that uncertain hold upon the thought we have when waking up from a deep sleep. And at first it was only an oppressive notion of there being some significance that really mattered in this man's story—that mattered to her. For the first time the shadow of danger and death crossed her mind. Was that the meaning? Suddenly in a flash of acute discernment she saw herself involved helplessly in that story, as one is involved in a catastrophe.

He was speaking again. He had not been silent more than a minute. It seemed to her that years had elapsed, so different was the effect of his words. Her mind was agitated, as if his coming to speak and confide in her had been a tremendous occurrence. It was a fact of her own existence; it was part of the story also. That was the disturbing thought. She heard him pronounce several names: Belarab, Sheriff Daman, old Wa-Ratha, Panglima, Tengga, Ningart. These belonged now to her life and she was appalled to find she was unable to connect these names with any human appearance. They stood out alone, as if written on the night; they took on a symbolic shape; they imposed themselves upon her senses. She whispered as if pondering. "Belarab, Daman, Ningart," and these barbarous sounds seemed to possess an exceptional energy, a fatal aspect, the savor of madness.

"Not one of them but has a heavy score to settle with the whites. What's that to me? I had somehow to get men who would fight. I risked my life to get that lot. I made them promises which I shall keep—or— Can you see now why I dared to stop your boat? I am in so deep that I care for no Sir John in the world. When I look at the work ahead I care for nothing. I gave you one chance—one good chance. That I had to do. No! I suppose I didn't look enough of a gentleman. Yes! Yes! That's it. Yet I know what a gentleman is. I lived with them for years. I chummed with them—yes—on gold-fields and in other places where a man has got to show the stuff that's in him. Some of them write from home to me here—such as you see me, because I—never mind! And I know what a gentleman could do. Come! Wouldn't he treat a stranger fairly? Wouldn't he remember that no man is a liar till you prove him so? Wouldn't he keep his word wherever given? Well, I am going to do that. Not a hair of your head shall be touched as long as I live!"

She had regained much of her composure, but at these words she felt that staggering sense of utter insecurity which is given one by the first tremor of an earthquake. It was followed by an expectant stillness of sensations. She was silent. He thought she did not believe him.

"Come! What on earth do you think

brought me here—to—to—talk like this to you? I had given one good chance. There was Hassim—Rajah Tulla, I should say—who was asking me this afternoon 'What will you do now with these, your people?' I believe he thinks yet I fetched you here for some reason. You can't tell what crooked notion they will get into their thick heads. It's enough to make one swear." He swore. "My people! Are you? How much? Say—how much? You're no more mine than I am yours. Would any of you fine people at home face black ruin to save a fishing smack's crew from getting drowned?"

Notwithstanding that sense of insecurity which lingered faintly in her mind she had no image of death before her. She felt intensely alive. She felt alive in a flush of strength, with an impression of novelty as if life had been the gift of this very moment. The danger hidden in the night gave no sign to awaken her terror, but the workings of a human soul, simple and violent, were laid bare before her and had the disturbing charm of an unheard of experience. She was listening to a man who concealed nothing. She said interrogatively—

"And yet you have come?"

"Yes," he answered, "for you only."

The flood tide running strong over the banks made a placid trickling sound about the yacht's rudder.

"I would not be saved alone."

"Then you must bring them over yourself," he said in a somber tone. "There's the brig. You have me—my men—my guns. You know what to do."

"I will try," she said.

"Very well. I am sorry for the poor devils forward there if you fail. But of course you won't. Watch that light on the brig. I had it hoisted on purpose. The trouble may be nearer than we think. Two of my boats are gone scouting among the islets and if the news they bring is bad the light will be lowered. You'll know then there's no time to lose in clearing out from here. At night, suddenly and without a commanding breeze, I may not be able to interfere in time. Think what that means. And I've told you what I have told nobody—think of me also. I told you because I—because I trust you."

He gave a shove against the yacht's side and glided away from under her eyes.

She walked away unsteadily from the rail. The lamp and the skylights shone faintly along the dark stretch of the decks. This evening was like the last—like all the evenings before.

"Is all this possible?" she asked herself. "No—but it is true."

She sat down in a deck chair to think and found she could only remember. She was going over her talk with that man. She jumped up. She was sure somebody was hailing the yacht faintly. Was he hailing? She listened and, hearing nothing, was annoyed with herself for being haunted by a voice.

"He said he could trust me. Now what is this danger? What is danger?"

Footsteps were coming from forward. The figure of the watchman flitted vaguely over the gangway. He was whistling softly and vanished. Hollow sounds in the boat succeeded a splash of oars. The night swallowed these slight noises. She sat down again and found herself much calmer.

She had the faculty of being able to think her own thoughts—and the courage. This faculty is odious to men since an individual thought is the condemnation of the commonplace, the vulgar and the false. As a gift of Heaven it is at the same time the most fortunate and the most cruel. In this exceptional soul the development of ideas did not dry up the spring of passions, and she could give to an emotion the amplitude of a thought. However impressed by Lingard's warnings she could take no action of any kind till her husband's return. But Lingard's warnings were not what had impressed her most. This man had presented his innermost self unclothed by any subterfuge. There were in plain sight his desires, his perplexities, affections, doubts, his violence, his folly; and the existence they made up was lawless, but not vile.

She had too much elevation of mind to look upon him from any other but a strictly human standpoint. If he trusted her—how strange; why should he? Was he wrong—she accepted the trust with scrupulous fairness. And when it dawned upon her that of all the men in the world this unquestionably was the one she knew best, she had a moment of amused wonder followed by an impression of profound sadness. It seemed an unfortunate matter that concerned her alone.

Her thought was suspended while she listened attentively for the return of the yacht's boat. She felt anxious for the presence of her husband. She was dismayed at the task before her. Not a sound broke the stillness and she felt as if she were lost in empty space. Then suddenly some one amidships yawned immensely and said:

"Oh dear! Oh dear—" a voice asked. "Ain't they back yet?"

A grunt answered.

And after all the man was touching, because he could be understood. How simple was life—she reflected. She recognized that this man filled her thoughts. She was frank with herself. She considered him apart from social organization. She discovered he had no place in it. How delightful. Here was a human being and the naked truth of things was not so very far from her notwithstanding the growth of centuries. Then it occurred to her that this man by his action stripped her at once of her position, of her wealth, of her rank, of her past. "I am helpless. What remains?" she asked herself. "Nothing!" Anybody there might have said: "Your presence." She was too artificial yet to think of her beauty and yet the power of beauty is part of the naked truth of things.

She looked over her shoulder and saw the light at the brig's foreyard-arm burning with a strong, calm flame in the dusk of starlight suspended above the coast.

She stared intensely into the night as if she had expected to hear the footsteps, to see the shape, to feel the touch of that danger, which words could describe but could not make clear. She heard the heavy bump as of a boat run heedlessly against the ladder. They were back! She rose in sudden and extreme agitation. How could she tell? What should she say? How much? How to begin? Why say anything? It would be absurd, like talking seriously about a dream. She would not dare! In a moment she was driven into a state of mind bordering on distraction. She heard somebody dash up the gangway steps. With the idea of gaining time she walked rapidly aft to the taffrail. The light of the brig faced her without a flicker, enormous amongst the suns scattered in the immensity of the night.

She fixed her eyes on it. She thought:

"I shan't tell him anything. Impossible! No! I shall tell everything."

She expected every moment to hear her husband's voice and the suspense was intolerable because she felt that then she must decide. Somebody on deck was babbling. She devoutly hoped d'Alcacer would speak first and thus put off the fatal moment. A voice said roughly—

"What's that?"

And in the midst of her distress she recognized Carter's voice, having noticed that young man who was of a different stamp from the rest of the crew. She came to the conclusion that the matter could be related jocularly, or—why not pretend fear? At that moment the brig's yardarm-light she was looking at trembled distinctly and she was dumfounded, as if she had seen a commotion in the firmament. With her lips open for a cry she saw it fall straight down several feet, flicker, and go out. All the perplexity passed from her mind. This first fact of the danger gave her a thrill of quite a new emotion. Something had to be done at once. For some remote reason she felt ashamed of herself.

She moved swiftly forward and under the lamp came face to face with Carter who was coming aft. Both stopped, staring, the light fell on their faces, and both were struck by each other's expression. The four eyes shone wide.

"You have seen?" she asked, beginning to tremble.

"How do you know?" he said at the same time, evidently surprised.

Suddenly she saw that everybody was on deck.

"The light is out," she stammered.

"The gentlemen are lost," said Carter. Then he perceived she did not seem to understand. "Kidnaped off the sandbank," he continued, looking at her fixedly to see how she would take it. She seemed calm. "Kidnaped, like a pair of lambs! Not a squeak," he burst out with indignation. "But the sandbank is long and they might have been at the other end. You were on deck, ma'am?" he asked.

"Yes," she murmured. "In the chair here."

"We were all down below. I had to rest a little. When I came up the watchman was asleep. He swears he wasn't, but I know better. Nobody heard anything, unless you did. But perhaps you were sleep-



ing in the chair?" he asked deferentially. "Yes—no—I must have been," she said faintly.

VIII

LINGARD'S soul was exalted by his talk with Edith, by the strain of incertitude and by extreme fatigue. On coming aboard he asked after Hassim and was told that the rajah and his sister had gone off in their canoe promising to return before midnight. The boats sent to examine the channels between the islets north and south of the anchorage had not come back yet. He went into his cabin and throwing himself on the couch closed his eyes, thinking—"I must sleep, or I shall go mad." The thought that all his future depended upon the action of the man whom he defined as a "stuck-up fool" gave him the sensation of something red-hot in his head.

"Will she manage it? If she doesn't I'm ruined."

At times he felt an unshaken confidence in her—then he remembered her face. Next moment the face would fade, he would make an effort to hold on to the image, fail—and then become convinced without the shadow of a doubt that he was utterly lost, unless he let all these people be wiped off the face of the earth.

"They all heard him order me out of his ship—" he thought, and thereupon for a second or so he contemplated without flinching the lurid image of a massacre. "And yet I told her not a hair of her head shall be touched. Not a hair."

And irrationally at the recollection of these words there seemed to be no trouble of any kind left in the world. Now and then, however, there were black instants when from sheer weariness he thought of nothing at all; and during one of these he fell asleep, losing the consciousness of external things as suddenly as if he had been felled by a blow on the head.

When he sat up, almost before he was properly awake, his first alarmed conviction was that he had slept the night through. There was a light in the cuddy and through the open door of his cabin he saw distinctly the woman with whom he had been talking pass out of view across the lighted space.

"They did come on board after all—"

he thought—"how is it I haven't been called?"

He leaped out and darted into the cuddy. Nobody! He listened for footsteps on the stairs or on the deck above. Nothing! Looking up at the clock in the skylight he was vexed to see it had stopped till at last his ear caught the faint beat of the mechanism. It was going then! He could not have been asleep more than ten minutes. He had not been on board more than twenty!

So it was only a deception; he had seen no one. And yet he remembered the turn of the head, the line of the neck, the color of the hair, the movement of the passing figure. He returned spiritlessly to his stateroom, muttering—"No more sleep for me tonight," and came out directly, holding a few sheets of paper closely covered with a high angular hand-writing.

This was Jorgenson's letter written three days before and entrusted to Hassim. He had read it already twice in the afternoon, but he turned up the lamp a little higher and sat down to read it again. Above his head the barrels of the muskets glinted in a level row and at his back the rudder-casing encircled by bayonets resembled a squat column of steel with a wrought band of brass for capital. On the red shield the gilt sheaf of thunderbolts darting between the initials of his name seemed to be aimed straight at the nape of his neck as he sat with bared elbows spread on the table, pouring over the crumpled sheets.

The letter began:

Hassim and Immada are going out tonight to look for you. You are behind your time as it is and every passing day makes things worse. I write this not knowing if I shall be alive when you turn up. Nobody is after me yet, and I have been in tighter places; but then I had only my own conscience to reckon with. Now it is yours. I don't know you, Tom Lingard, if you don't make a lot of trouble for yourself out of this affair. Out of all the lot of traders that rushed these seas of late, you are the only man something after my mind. But you mean so well about so many things that a hellish mess is all I expect. I went in for more desperate jobs than any you can find to do now-a-days and all the time I meant well only to myself. I am smashed up, but I stuck to it, and after these years I may say not one of the men I helped has a right to curse me. Will you be able to say the same by-and-by?"

Here the first loose page ended. Lingard looked at it for some time with a



troubled face, then laid it aside and went on reading.

"Ten days ago three of Belarab's men, who had been collecting turtle's eggs on the islets, came flying back with a story of a ship stranded on the outer mudflats. Belarab at once forbade any boats from leaving the lagoon. So far, good. There were many surmises as to the character of the vessel and a great excitement in the village. The general talk is of a ship-of-war. I judged it must be a schooner—probably some fool of a trader. However, you will know all about her when you read this. You may say I might have pulled out to sea to have a look by myself. But beside Belarab's orders to the contrary, which I would attend to for the sake of example, all you are worth in this world, Tom, is here in the *Emma*, under my feet, and I would not leave my charge even for half a day.

"Hassim attended the council held every evening in the shed outside Belarab's stockade. Holy old Ningart was for looting that vessel. Hassim reproved him, saying that the vessel probably was sent by you because no white men were known to come inside the shoals. Belarab backed Hassim. Ningart was very angry and reproached Belarab for keeping him, Ningart, short of opium to smoke. He began by calling him 'O son,' and ended by shouting 'O you worse than an unbeliever!' Two of Belarab's men drew *krisses*. There was a hullabaloo. The followers of Tengga were ready to interfere and you know how it is between Tengga and Belarab. Datu Tengga always wanted to oust Belarab, and his chances were getting pretty good before you showed up and armed Belarab's bodyguard with muskets. Hassim stopped the row, and no one was hurt that time; but next day, which was Friday, Ningart, after reading the prayers in the mosque, talked to the people outside.

"He bleated and capered like an old goat, prophesying misfortune, ruin and extermination if these whites were allowed to get away. He is mad, but then they think him a saint and he had been fighting the Dutch for years in his young days. Six of Belarab's men marched down the village street carrying muskets at full cock and the crowd cleared out. Ningart was taken away by Tengga's men into their master's stockade. He's pretty near as strong as Belarab and if it was not for the fear of you turning up soon there would have been a fight that evening. I think it is a pity Tengga is not chief of the land instead of Belarab. A brave and foresighted man, however treacherous or violent, can always be trusted to a certain extent. I can never get anything clear from Belarab. He is crafty but muddle-headed, I think. Unless he's too deep for me. Maybe he would like to see Tengga go for that wretched ship, because he would have a good chance, while Tengga is busy outside, to get into his stockade. Then he could make what terms he liked with the Datu. But he won't let any of the village people have a finger in a looting job. Peace! Peace! You know his fad. And this fad makes him act silly. The peace racket will get him into a row. It will cost him his life yet. Many of the old villagers would follow Tengga.

"Walking ashore the other night I saw that old Sura—the old carver of handles and sheathes—cleaning a rusty flintlock. 'What news?' I asked. The news is good, O Tuan,' says he. 'Please God we will fight a little, and get a little loot, too, mayhap, as men should.' There are many more like that old fellow. I pointed out to Belarab how risky it would be if his people interfered with the whites. He sees that, but at the same time he is anxious for Tengga to do something rash which would give him, Belarab, the upper hand. Meantime Tengga does not feel himself strong enough to act with his own followers only and Belarab has, on my advice, disarmed the villagers. His men went into the houses and took away by force all the firearms and as many spears as they could lay hands on. The women screamed abuse of course, but there was no resistance. A few men were seen clearing out into the forest with their arms. Note this, for it means there is another power besides Belarab's in the village. Clearly Tengga.

"One morning—four days ago—I went to see Tengga. I found him by the shore trimming a plank with a small hatchet while a slave held an umbrella over his head. He is amusing himself in building a boat just now. He threw his hatchet down to meet me and led me by the hand to a shady spot. Several men, with swords, shield and lance, lounged about. He told me frankly he had sent out two good swimmers to observe the stranded vessel. These men stole down the creek in a canoe and when on the sea-coast swam from sandbank to sandbank until they approached unobserved—I think—to about fifty yards from that schooner. What is that craft? I can't make it out. The men report there are three chiefs on board. One whose eye glitters, one a lean man in white and there's another without any hair on the face and dressed differently to the others. Could it be a woman? I don't know what to think. I wish you were here.

"After a lot of chatter Tengga said, 'Six years ago I was ruler of a country and the Dutch drove me out. The country was small, but nothing is too small for them to take. They pretended to give it back to my nephew—may he burn! I ran away, or they would have killed me. I am nothing here—but I remember. These people out there can not run away and they are very few. There is perhaps a little to take. I would give it to my men who followed me in my calamity, because I am their chief and my father was the chief of their fathers.' I pointed out the imprudence of this. He said—'the dead do not show the way.' To this I remarked that the ignorant do not give information. He kept quiet for a while, then with grave bitterness, said: 'We must not touch them because their skin is like yours and to kill them would be wrong, but at the bidding of you whites we may go and fight with people of our skin and our own faith—and that is good. I have promised to Tuan Lingard twenty men and a *prau* to make war in Wajo. The men are good and look at the *prau*; it is swift and strong.' I must say, Tom, the *prau* is the best craft of the kind I have ever seen. I said you paid him for the help. 'And I also would pay,' says he, 'if you let me have a few guns and a little powder

for my men. We shall share the loot of that ship outside, only you and I, and Tuan Lingard will not know. It is only a little game. You have plenty of guns and powder under your care.' He meant in the *Emma*.

"On that I spoke out pretty straight, and we got rather warm until at last he gave me to understand that as he had about forty men of his own and I had only nine of Hassim's chaps to defend the *Emma* with, he could very well go for me and get the lot. 'And then,' says he, 'I would be so strong that everybody would be on my side.' I discovered in the course of further talk that there is a notion amongst many people that you have come to grief in some way and won't show up again—in fact that the great queen had ordered the Tran Besar, the great lord in Singapore, to imprison and fine you, it being improper—as Tengga said—for a common Nathoda like you to be so rich and powerful. After this I saw the position was serious and I was in a hurry to get to the *Emma*; but pretending I did not care, I said you were a friend to the great lord in Singapore, at which he smiled. Then I smiled, too, and thanked him for giving me warning of his intentions about me and the *Emma*. At this he nearly choked himself with his betel quid and fixing me with his little eyes, muttered—'even a lizard will give a fly the time to say its prayers.' I turned my back on him and was very thankful to get beyond the throw of a spear. I haven't been out of the *Emma* since. Hassim and Immada left Belarab and came to live on board that same day, but Hassim goes ashore every day to watch what's going on."

IX

THE letter went on to describe with careful minuteness the intrigues of Tengga, the wavering conduct of Belarab and the state of the public mind. It noted every gust of opinion and every event with an earnestness of belief in their importance befitting the chronicle of a crisis in the history of an empire. The shade of Jorgenson had indeed stepped back into the life of men. It looked at passions miserable and poignant, the love of loot and the love of danger, at the strength of hereditary instincts and at the stir of slumbering desire. The old adventurer did not express any opinion on what he saw. He simply looked on with a perfect understanding of the value of trifles, using his eyes for that other man whose conscience would have the task to unravel the tangle. Lingard had his need to know as exactly satisfied as if he had seen. He could picture to himself the faces, the gestures; he could almost imagine the very inflections of voices and detect the fundamental significance of tones and glances. He lived through

those days in the settlement and was thankful to Jorgenson; only as he lived not from day to day but from sentence to sentence of the writing there was an effect of bewildering rapidity in the succession of events that made him grunt with surprise sometimes or growl—"What?" to himself angrily and turn back several lines or a whole page more than once. Toward the end he had a heavy frown of perplexity and fidgeted as he read.

"—and I began to think I could keep things quiet till you came or those wretched people got their schooner off, when Sherif Daman arrived from the north on the very day he was expected, with two Illanun *praus*. I did not expect to see such a soft-spoken man. He looks like a Hindu. It is very evident to me he can wind the two Illanun *pangerans* round his little finger. The two *praus* are large and armed with one long gun and several four-pounder pieces. They sneaked all down the Bruni coast without being seen by a single cruiser and made for the south entrance where Belarab had planted a beacon, so that they did not pass anywhere near the stranded schooner, though they did see her, of course. They came up the creek, flags and streamers flying, beating drums and gongs and entered the lagoon with their decks full of armed men brandishing two-handed swords and sounding the war cry. A fine sight. They have women and children with them, as is their custom, and I must say they do look as if they would neither give nor expect quarter in war. It is a fine force for you, only Belarab who is a perverse devil would not receive Sherif Daman at once. So Daman went to see Tengga who kept him a very long time. Leaving Tengga he came on board the *Emma*, and I could see directly there was something up.

"He began by asking me for the ammunition and weapons they are to get from you, saying he was anxious to sail at once toward Wajo, since it was agreed he was to precede you by a few days. I replied that that was true enough but that I could not think of giving him the powder and muskets till you came. He began to talk about you and hinted that perhaps you will never come. 'And no matter,' says he, 'here is Rajah Hassim and the Lady Immada and we would fight for them if no white man was left in the world. Only we must have something to fight with.' He pretended then to forget me altogether and talked with Hassim while I sat listening. He began to boast how well he got along the Bruni coast. No Illanun *prau* had passed down that coast for years. I broke in, remarking that all the English men-of-war were up on the coast of China where there was war going. He turned sharp at me and says—'The white men will kill many Chinamen. I said, 'I expect so.' 'How many,' he asks, 'many hundreds, or maybe several thousands?' I said, 'Yes, several thousands, no doubt.' Then, looking thoughtfully all over the lagoon, he says, 'Ten years ago the whites hanged my father and two brothers for killing only eight

Chinamen—only eight wretched Chinamen.' I was so taken aback I could not say a word. It came to my recollection that man's family must have been chiefs of Tampassuk which was taken and burnt by the fleet many years ago on account of the piratical habits of the people. There was some hanging done, too, no doubt about it. This is bad. This man must have been very young at the time, but he seems to have been brooding over it—and that is dangerous in a native.

"I said at last, with don't-care-a-damn air, that white men were not so easy to kill as Chinamen—'No,' says he and sighed. Immada wanted me to give the arms he was asking for. The girl is beside herself with fear of something happening that would put a stopper on the Wajo expedition. She has set her mind on getting her country back. Hassim is very reserved but he is very anxious, too. Daman got nothing from me, and that very evening the *praus* were ordered by Belarab to leave the lagoon. He does not trust the Illanuns and small blame to him. Sheriff Daman went. He has no powder for his guns. As the *praus* passed by the *Emma* he shouted to me he was going to wait for you in a creek ten miles south from here. Tengga has given him a man who would show him the place. All this looks very queer to me.

"I did think for a moment of sending word to these white people to clear out—anyhow—in their boats, if they can't get the schooner off. But after all I daren't give your whole show away. Besides, would they have believed me? I don't know who these whites are. Not traders—I am certain.

"Look out outside then. The *praus* are hiding in that creek or else dodging amongst the islets. Daman has been up here twice in a war canoe belonging to one of the *praus*. He visits Tengga. Tengga called on me as a good friend to try and persuade me to give Daman the arms and gunpowder he is so anxious to get. Somehow or other they tried to get around Belarab, who came to see me last night and hinted I had better do so. He is anxious for these Illanuns to leave the neighborhood. He thinks that if they can loot the schooner they will be off at once. That's all he wants now. Immada has been to see Belarab's women and stopped two nights in the stockade. Belarab's youngest wife—he got married six weeks ago—is on the side of Tengga's party because she thinks the chief would get a share of the loot and she got into her silly head there are jewels and silks in that schooner. What between Tengga worrying him outside and the women worrying him at home, Belarab had such a lively time of it that he concluded to go to pray at his father's tomb. So for the last two days he has been away camping in that unhealthy place. When he comes back he will have fever as sure as fate and then he will be no good for anything. Tengga lit up a smoky fire this morning. Some signal to Daman. I went ashore with Hassim's men and put it out. This was risking a fight—for Tengga's men looked very black at me. I don't know what the next move may be. Hassim's as true as steel. Immada is very unhappy. They will tell you many details I had no time to write."

The last page fluttered on the table out of Lingard's fingers. He sat very still for a moment looking straight before him, then went on deck.

"Our boats back yet?" he asked Shaw whom he saw prowling on the quarter-deck.

"No, sir, I wish they were. I am waiting for them to go and turn in," answered the mate in an aggrieved manner.

"Lower that light there," cried Lingard, suddenly, in Malay.

"This trade isn't fit for a decent man," muttered Shaw to himself, and he moved away to lean on the rail, looking moodily to seaward. After a while, "there seems to be commotion on board that yacht," he said. "I see a lot of lights moving about aft. Anything wrong do you think, sir?"

"No, I know what it is," said Lingard in a tone of elation.

"She has done it," he thought.

He returned to the cabin, put away Jorgenson's letter and pulled out the drawer of the table. It was full of cartridges. He took a musket down, loaded it, then took another and another. He bit the cartridges, hammered at the waddings with fierce joyousness, with something impatient in his movements. The ramrods rang and jumped. The table was covered with loaded muskets. It seemed to him he was doing his share of some work in which that woman was playing her part faithfully.

"She has done it," he repeated mentally. "She has done it. And why? She does not understand anything of danger. It looks as if she had done it for me. Imagine her in that cabin!" And with his teeth fastened in a cartridge he stood looking across the table at the settee as if she had been sitting there before his eyes. "I could talk to her just as if I had known her from a child," he muttered, flinging a ramrod down the barrel violently.

The intimacy of his thought with that woman seemed to affect his body like strong drink, so that while cocking a musket he swayed a little. His hand trembled when he picked up a little copper-cap that shone like a tiny red spark between his big fingers. He pressed it steadily on the nipple, and his face was very still. They would be here directly. She would be on board here.

"All her doing. No friend could have served me better." He smiled with a dazed

air at the loaded firearms, at the red shield, all around at the white and gold paneling of the cuddy. "She's like those women you read about. She took my breath away the first time I looked at her."

"She walks like a clipper swims. You would think there could be no such eyes. When you look at them you could fancy yourself away up sitting on a royal truck. My word—you want a steady head—a steady head—" Leaning with both hands on the table he lost himself completely—"I would never have had the pluck to speak to her if my blood hadn't been up on account of that fool. Her husband! A whiskered little skunk—I could shake his little soul out——"

He shook at arm's length his clenched hand as if he had somebody by the throat. He was placated by the recollection that she was coming on board.

"She will sit in the cuddy. She will sleep in my berth. Well, I'm not ashamed of the brig. By heavens—no! I shall keep away; never come near them as I've promised. Now there's nothing more to say. I've told her everything at once. There's nothing more."

He felt a heaviness in his burning breast, in all his limbs, as if the blood in his veins had become molten lead.

"I shall get the yacht off. Three, four days—no, a week."

He found he couldn't do it under a week. It occurred to him he would see her every day till the yacht was afloat. No, he wouldn't intrude, but he was master and owner of the brig after all. He didn't mean to skulk like a whipped cur about his own decks.

"It'll be ten days before the schooner is ready. I'll take every scrap of ballast out of her. I'll strip her—I'll take her lower masts out of her, by heavens! I'll make sure. Then another week to fit out—and—good-by. Wish I had never seen them. Good-by—forever. Home's the place for them. Not for me. On another coast she would not have listened. Ah, but she is a woman—every inch of her. I shall shake hands. Yes. I shall take her hand—if I have to kill a man for it. Yes—just before she goes. Why the devil not? I am master here after all—in this brig—as good as any one—by heavens, better than any one—better than any one on earth."

He heard Shaw walk smartly forward above his head hailing—

"What's that—a boat?"

A voice answered indistinctly.

"One of my boats is back," thought Lingard. "News about Daman perhaps. I don't care if he kicks. I wish he would. I would soon show her I can fight as well as I can handle the brig. Two *praus*. Only two *praus*. I wouldn't mind if there were twenty. I would sweep 'em off the sea—I would blow 'em out of the water—I would make the brig walk over them. 'Now,' I'd say to her, 'you who are not afraid, now look how it's done. This would be danger for any other man. Look!'"

He felt light. He had the sensation of being whirled high in the midst of an uproar and as powerless as a feather in a hurricane. He shuddered profoundly and leaned the musket gently against the edge of the table.

"No fighting," he murmured. His face became drawn; his eyes had a careworn look. "What am I thinking of! There must be no fighting. I went to her—she is coming—for that."

His arms hung down, and he stood before the table staring like a man overcome by some fatal intelligence.

Shaw going into the waist to receive what he thought was one of the brig's boats, came against Carter making his way aft hurriedly.

"Hullo! Is it you again?" he said, swiftly barring the way.

"I come from the yacht," began Carter with some impatience.

"Where else could you come from?" said Shaw. "And what might you want?"

"I want to see your skipper."

"Well, you can't," declared Shaw viciously. "He's turned in for the night."

"Call him up, he expects me," said Carter stamping his foot. "I've got to tell him what happened."

"Don't you fret yourself, young man," said Shaw in a superior manner; "he knows all about it."

They stood suddenly silent in the dark. Carter seemed at a loss what to do. Shaw, though surprized by it, enjoyed the effect he had produced.

"Damn me, if I did not think so," murmured Carter to himself; then drawling coolly asked—"And perhaps you know?"

"What do you think? Think I am a

dummy here? I ain't mate of this brig for nothing."

"No, you are not," said Carter with a certain bitterness of tone. "People do all kinds of queer things for a living, and I am not particular myself; but I should think twice before taking your billet."

"What? What do you in-si-un-ate? My billet? You ain't fit for it, you yacht-swabbing, brass-buttoned imposter."

"What's this? Any of our boats back?" asked Lingard from the poop. "Let the *specanie* in charge come to me at once."

"There's only a message from the yacht," began Shaw deliberately.

"Yacht! Get the deck lamps along here in the waist! See the ladder lowered. Bear a hand, *Serang!* Mr. Shaw! Burn the flare-up aft. Two of them! Give light to the boats that will be coming alongside. Steward! Where's that steward? Turn him out then."

Bare feet began to patter all round Carter. Shadows glided swiftly.

"Are these flares coming? Where's the quartermaster on duty?" shouted Lingard in English and Malay. "This way, come here! Mara Sini, damn you! Put it on a rocket stick—can't you? Hold over the side—thus! Stand by with the lines for the boats forward there. Mr. Shaw—we want light!"

"Aye, aye, sir," called out Shaw, but he did not move, as if dazed by the vehemence of his commander.

"That's what we want," muttered Carter under his breath. "Imposter! What do you call yourself?" he said half aloud to Shaw.

The ruddy glare of the flares disclosed Lingard from head to foot, standing at the break of the poop. His head was bare; his face, crudely lighted, had a fierce and changing expression in the sway of flames.

"What can be his game?" thought Carter, impressed by the powerful and wild aspect of that figure. "He seems to see something. He's changed somehow since I saw him first," he reflected.

It struck him the change was serious, not exactly for the worse, perhaps—and yet. . . . By the Lord Harry, he looks a little mad! Lingard smiled at him from the poop.

Carter went up the steps and without

pausing informed him of what had happened.

"Mrs. Travers told me to go to you at once. She's very upset as you may guess," he drawled, looking Lingard hard in the face. Lingard knitted his eyebrows. "The hands, too, are scared," Carter went on. "They fancy the savages, or whatever they may be who stole the owner, are going to board the yacht every minute. I don't think so myself, but——"

"Quite right—most unlikely," muttered Lingard.

"Aye, I dare say you know all about it," continued Carter coolly, "the men are startled and no mistake, but I can't blame them very much. There isn't enough even of carving knives aboard to go round. One old signal gun! A poor show for better men than they."

"There's no mistake, I suppose, about this affair?" asked Lingard.

"Well, unless the gentlemen are having a lark with us at hide and seek. The man says he wasted ten minutes at the point, then pulled slowly along the bank looking out, expecting to see them walking back. He made the trunk of a tree apparently stranded on the sand and as he was sculling past he says a man jumped up from behind that log, flung a stick at him and went off running. He backed water at once and began to shout, 'Are you there, sir?' No one answered. He could hear the bushes rustle and some strange noises like whisperings. It was very dark. After calling out several times and waiting on his oars, he got frightened and pulled back to the yacht. That is clear enough. The only doubt in my mind is if they are alive or not. I didn't let on to Mrs. Travers. That's a kind of thing you keep to yourself, of course."

"I don't think they are dead," said Lingard slowly and as if thinking of something else.

"Oh! If you say so it's all right," said Carter, with deliberation.

"What?" asked Lingard absently; "fling a stick, did they? Fling a spear!"

"That's it!" assented Carter; "but I didn't say anything. I only wondered if the same kind of stick hadn't been flung at the owner, that's all. But I suppose you know your own business best, Captain."

Lingard, grasping his whole beard, re-

flected profoundly, erect and with bowed head in the glare of the flares.

"I suppose you think it's my doing," he asked sharply without looking up.

Carter surveyed him with a candidly curious gaze.

"Well, Captain, Mrs. Travers did let on a bit to me about our chief-officer's boat. You've stopped it, haven't you? How she got to know God only knows. She was sorry she spoke, too, but it wasn't so much of a news to me as she thought. I can put two and two together, sometimes. These rockets last night, eh? I wished I had bitten my tongue out before I told you about our first gig. But I was taken unawares. Wasn't I? I put it to you. Wasn't I? And so I told her, when she asked me, what passed between you and me on board this brig not twenty-four hours ago. Things look different now all of a sudden. Enough to scare a woman, but she is the best man of them all on board. The others are fairly off the chump because it's a bit dark and something has happened they ain't used to. But she has something on her mind. I can't make her out!" He paused, wriggled his shoulders slightly—"No more than I can make you out," he added.

"That's your trouble, is it?" said Lingard.

"Aye, Captain. Is it all clear to you? Stopping boats, kidnaping gentlemen. That's fun in a way, only—I am a youngster to you—but is it all clear to you? Old Robinson wasn't particular, you know, and he——"

"Clearer than daylight," cried Lingard hotly. "I can't give up——"

He checked himself. Carter waited. The flare-bearers stood rigid, turning their faces away from the flame, and in the play of gleams at its foot the mast near-by like a lofty column, ascended in the great darkness. A lot of ropes ran upslanting into a dark void and were lost to sight, but high aloft a brace block gleamed white, the end of a yardarm could be seen suspended in the air and as if glowing with its own light. The sky had clouded over the brig without a breath of wind.

"Give up," repeated Carter with an uneasy shuffle of feet.

"Nobody," finished Lingard. "I can't. It's as clear as daylight. I can't! No! Nothing!"

He stared straight out afar, and after looking at him Carter felt moved by a bit of youthful intuition to murmur, "That's bad," in a tone that almost in spite of himself hinted at the dawning of a befogged compassion. He did not believe there was any daylight to be seen, aye, not even by the man who stood there looking strong enough to "knock down a wall." Was it compassion he felt? It must have been, since in that misty feeling that came to him he associated the man before his eyes with the perplexed, the resolute, the hesitating, the assured, the bewildered figure of the woman who had sent him in hot haste on board the brig with a message of trust spoken with an air of mingled confidence and preoccupation, as if her mind had been following while she spoke some other meaning of the same plain words; an inward meaning leading her away from the simple necessities of the case.

He had a sense of confusion within him, the sense of mystery without. He had never experienced anything like it all the time when serving with old Robinson in the *Ly-e-moon*. And yet he had seen and taken part in some queer doings that were not clear to him at the time. They were secret, but they suggested something comprehensible. This affair did not. It had somehow a subtlety that affected him. He was uneasy as if there had been a breath of magic of events and men giving to this complication of a yachting voyage a significance impossible to perceive, but felt in the words, in the gestures, in the events, which made them all strangely startling.

He was not one who could keep track of his sensations, and besides he had not the leisure. He had to answer Lingard's questions about the people of the yacht. No, he couldn't say Mrs. Travers was what you may call frightened. She seemed to have something in her mind. Oh yes! The chaps were in a funk. Would they fight? Anybody would fight when driven to it, funk or no funk. That was his experience. Naturally one liked to have something better than a handspike to do it with. Still——

In the pause Carter seemed to weigh with composure the chances of men with handspikes.

"What do you want to fight them for?" he asked suddenly.

Lingard started.

"I don't," he said; "I wouldn't be asking you."

"There's no saying what you would do, Captain," replied Carter. "It isn't twenty-four hours since you wanted to shoot me; I haven't forgotten that."

"I only said I would, rather than let you go raising trouble for me," explained Lingard.

"One night isn't like another," mumbled Carter, "but how am I to know! It seems to me you are making trouble for yourself as fast as you can."

"Well, supposing I am," said Lingard with a sudden gloominess. "Would your men fight if I armed them properly?"

"What—for you or for themselves?" asked Carter.

"For the woman, damn it!" burst out Lingard; "you forget there's a woman on board. I don't care *that* for their carcasses."

Carter pondered conscientiously.

"Not tonight," he said at last. "There's one or two good men amongst them, but the rest are struck all of a heap. Not tonight. Give them time to get steady a bit if you want them to fight."

He gave facts and opinions with a mixture of loyalty and mistrust. His own state puzzled him exceedingly. He couldn't make out anything; he did not know what to believe and yet he had an impulsive desire, an inspired desire to help the man. At times it appeared a necessity—at others, policy—between whiles, a great folly, which perhaps did not matter because he suspected himself of being helpless, anyway. Then he had moments of anger. In those moments he would feel in his pocket the butt of a loaded pistol. He had provided himself with the weapon which hung on a rail in the sailing-master's cabin, when directed by Mrs. Travers to go on board the brig.

"If he wants to interfere with me I'll let drive at him and take my chance of getting away," he had explained hurriedly.

He remembered how startled Mrs. Travers looked. Of course a woman like that—not used to hear such talk. Therefore it was no use listening to her, except for manner's sake. Once bit, twice shy. He had no mind to be kidnaped, not he, nor bullied either.

"I can't let him nab me, too. You will want me now, Mrs. Travers," he had said; "and I promise you not to fire off the old thing unless he jolly well forces me to."

He was youthfully wise in his resolution not to give way to her entreaties, though her extraordinary agitation did stagger him for a moment. It was part of that inexplicable quality pervading the events of the last twenty-four hours. She seemed more scared than when she heard first of her husband's disappearance. Not mean to kill him! It was just when he meant "if it came to it," but women don't look in the same way at these things. When the boat was already on its way to the brig, he remembered her calling out after him:

"You must not! You don't understand."

Her voice coming faintly in the darkness moved him, it resembled so much a cry of distress.

"Give way boys, give way," he urged his men.

He was wise, resolute, and he was also youthful enough to almost wish it should "come to it." And with foresight he even instructed the boat's crew to keep the gig just abaft the main rigging of the brig.

"When you see me drop into her all of a sudden, shove off and pull for dear life."

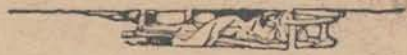
Somehow, just then he was not so anxious for a shot, but he held on with a determined mental grasp to his fine resolution lest it should slip away from him and perish in a sea of doubts.

"Hadn't I better get back to the yacht?" he asked gently. Getting no answer he went on with deliberation: "Mrs. Travers ordered me to say that no matter how this came about she is ready to trust you. She is waiting for some kind of answer, I suppose."

"Ready to trust me?" repeated Lingard.

His eyes lit up with pleasure. He looked about proudly—then sighed. "She's not the only one to trust me," he said, fastening his eyes upon Carter, who managed to appear perfectly unconcerned.

Every sway of flares tossed slightly to and fro the massy shadows of the main deck where here and there the figure of a man could be seen standing very still with a dusky face and glittering eyeballs.



Carter stole his hand warily into his breast pocket—

"Well, Captain," he said.

He was not going to be bullied, let the owner's wife trust whom she liked.

"Have you got anything in writing for me there?" asked Lingard, advancing a pace.

Carter, alert, stepped back to keep his distance. Shaw, who had listened, disregarded, stared from the side; his rubicund cheeks quivered; his round eyes seemed starting out of his head and his mouth was open as if he had been ready to choke with pent up curiosity, amazement and indignation.

"No! Not in writing," said Carter, steadily and low.

Lingard had the air of being awakened by a shout. The troubled gaze, the contemplative expression of one who, while speaking to men, communes with a vision, vanished from his face. A heavy and darkening frown seemed to fall out of the night upon his forehead and swiftly passed into the night again, and when it departed it left his visage so calm, his glance so lucid, his mien so composed, that it was difficult to believe the man's heart had undergone within the last second the trial of humiliation and of danger. He smiled sadly.

"Well, young man," he asked with a kind of good-humored resignation, "what is it you have there? A knife or a pistol?"

"A pistol," said Carter. "Are you surprised, Captain?" He spoke with heat because a sense of regret was stealing slowly within him, as stealthily, as irresistibly as the flowing tide. "I wasn't going to be taken unaware if you had the fancy to talk again about shooting. Who began these tricks?" He withdrew his hand, empty, and raised his voice. "You are up to something I can't make out. You—you are not straight."

The flares held on high streamed right up without swaying and in that instant of profound calm the shadows on the brig's deck became as still as the men.

"You think I am not?" said Lingard thoughtfully.

Carter nodded. He resented the turn of the incident and the growing impulse to surrender to that man.

"I didn't think I could be such a fool," he thought.

"Mrs. Travers trusts me, though," said Lingard with gentle triumph as if advancing an unanswerable argument of defence.

"So she says," grunted Carter; "I warned her. She's a baby. They're all as innocent as babies there. And you know it. And I know it. I've heard of your kind. You would dump the lot of us overboard if it served your turn. That's what I believe."

"And that's all."

Carter nodded slightly and looked away. There was a silence. Lingard's eyes traveled over the brig. The lighted part of the vessel appeared in bright and wavering detail walled and canopied by the night. He felt a light breath on his face. The air was stirring, but the shallows silent and lost in the darkness gave no sound of life.

This stillness oppressed Lingard. The world of his endeavors and his hopes seemed dead, seemed gone. His desire existed homeless in the obscurity that had devoured his corner of the sea, this stretch of the coast, his certitude of success. And here in the midst of what was the domain of his adventurous soul there was a lost youngster ready to shoot him on suspicion of some extravagant treachery. Came ready to shoot! That's good, too. He was too weary to laugh—and also too sad.

The episode separated him violently from the kinship with his race. It found him out. It was like an answer to what lurked within him as destruction may lurk in a spark—to the fiercely intended disregard of the lives whose value he had to measure against the priceless stuff of a dream. The outrage was in the implied claim on his allegiance. He had none of it for the beings who, passing suddenly from their world into his, were to his eyes, accustomed to other contemplations, more unsubstantial than so many specters.

Also the danger of the pistol-shot which he believed real—the young are rash—irritated him. He thought that the work of saving the reality of two years of hard toil, of struggle, of affection, of belief, of life in a word, was hard enough without being complicated by an uneasiness as to safety of the bare existence. The night and the spot were full of contradictions. He was humiliated by the distrust of which he was the object, but it was also like a tribute to the enigma that lived with him. To the young man before him he turned with



anger and sympathy. It was impossible to say who in this shadowy warfare was to be an enemy and who were the allies. So close were the contacts issuing from this complication of a yachting voyage that he seemed to have them all within his breast.

"Shoot me! He is quite up to that trick—hang him. Yet I would trust him sooner than any man in that yacht."

Such were his thoughts while he looked at Carter, who was biting his lips in the vexation of the long silence. When they spoke again to each other no allusion was made to what had taken place. They talked soberly, with a sense of relief, feeling as if they had come into cool air from an overheated room; and when Carter, dismissed, went into his boat, he had practically agreed to the line of action traced by Lingard for the crew of the yacht. He had agreed as if in implicit confidence. It was one of the absurdities of the situation which had to be accepted and could never be understood.

"Do I talk straight now?" asked Lingard.

"It looks straight enough," assented Carter with an air of reserve; "I will work with you so far anyhow."

"Mrs. Travers trusts me," remarked Lingard.

"By the Lord Harry," cried Carter giving way suddenly to some latent conviction. "I was warning her against you and she argued with me as if she had known you from a child. Say, Captain, you are a devil of a man. How did you manage it?"

"I trusted her," said Lingard.

"Did you?" cried the amazed Carter. "When? How? How?"

"You will know no more. You know too much already," said Lingard quietly. "Waste no time. I will be after you."

Carter whistled low.

"There's a pair of you I can't make out," he called back, hurrying over the side.

Shaw took this opportunity to approach, beginning with hesitation: "A word with you, sir." The mate went on to say he was a respectable man. He delivered himself in a ringing, unsteady voice. He was married, he had children, he abhorred illegality. The light played about his obese figure; he had flung his mushroom hat on the deck; he was not afraid to speak

the truth. The gray mustache stood out aggressively; his glances were uneasy; he pressed his hands to his stomach convulsively, opened his thick short arms wide, wished it to be understood he had been chief-officer of home ships, with a spotless character and he hoped "quite up to his work." He was a peaceable man, none more; disposed to stretch a point when it "came to a difference with niggers of some kind. They had to be taught manners and reason" and he was not averse at a pinch to—but here were white people—gentlemen, ladies, not to speak of the crew.

He liberated all that was on the bottom of his nature. He had never spoken to a superior like this before, and this was prudence, his conviction, a point of view, a point of principle, a conscious superiority and a burst of resentment hoarded through years against all the successive and unsatisfactory captains of his existence.

There never had been such an opportunity to show he could not be put upon. He had one of them on a string and he was going to lead him a dance. There was a courage, too, in it, since he believed himself fallen unawares into the clutches of a particularly desperate man and beyond the reach of law.

A certain small amount of calculation entered the audacity of his remonstrance. Perhaps—it flashed upon him—the gentry hear I stood up for them. This could conceivably be of advantage to a man who wanted a lift in the world. "Owner of a yacht—badly scared—a gentleman—money nothing to him." Thereupon he declared with heat that he couldn't be an accessory either after or before the fact. Those that never went home—who had nothing to go to perhaps—he interjected hurriedly, could do as they liked. He couldn't. He had a wife, a family, a little house—paid for—with difficulty—he followed the sea respectably out and home, all regular, not vagabonding here and there chumming with the first nigger that came along and laying traps for his betters.

One of the two flare-bearers sighed at his elbow and shifted his weight to the other foot.

These two had been keeping so perfectly still that the movement was as startling as if a statue had changed its pose. After looking at the offender with cold malev-

olence, Shaw went on to speak of law-courts, of trials and of the liberty of the subject; then he pointed out the certitude and the inconvenience of being found out, affecting for the moment the dispassionateness of wisdom.

"There will be fifteen years in jail at the end of this job for everybody," said Shaw, "and I have a boy that don't know his father yet. Fine things for him to learn when he grows up! The innocent are dead-certain here to catch it along with you. The missus will break her heart unless she starves first. Home sold up."

He saw a mysterious iniquity in a dangerous relation to himself and began to lose his head. What he really wanted was to have his existence left intact for his own cherishing and pride. It was a moral aspiration, but in his alarm the native grossness of his nature came clattering out like a devil out of a trap. He would blow the gaff, split, give away the whole show, he would back up honest people, kiss the book, say what he thought, let all the world know—and when he paused to draw breath, all around him was silent and still. Before the impetus of that respectable passion his words were scattered like chaff driven by a gale and rushed headlong into the night of the shallows. And in the great obscurity imperturbable, he said he "washed his hands of everything."

"And the brig?" said Lingard suddenly.

Shaw was checked. For a second the seaman in him instinctively admitted the claim of the ship.

"The brig. The brig. She's right enough," he mumbled.

He had nothing to say against the brig—not he. She wasn't like the big ships he was used to, but of her kind the best craft he ever. . . . And with a brusque return upon himself he protested he had been decoyed on board under false pretences. It was as bad as being shanghaied when in liquor. It was—upon his soul! And into a craft next thing to a pirate! That was the name for it or his own name was not Shaw. He said this, glaring owlishly. Lingard, perfectly still and mute, bore the blows without a sign.

He suffered exceedingly and his pain was simple, profound and unjust like that of a child confronted by the indignation of absurd elders. The silly fuss of that man scared his very soul. There was no end to

this plague of fools coming to him from the forgotten ends of the earth. A fellow like that could not be told. No one could be told. Blind they came and blind they would go out.

He admitted reluctantly but without doubt that, as if pushed by a force from outside, he would have to try and save two of them. To this end he foresaw the probable need of leaving his brig for a time. He would have to leave her with that man—the mate. He had engaged him himself—to make his insurance valid—to be able sometimes to speak—to have near him. Who would have believed such a foolman could exist on the face of the sea? Who? Leave the brig with him. The brig! Lingard was dismayed in mind and heart.

Ever since sunset, the breeze kept off by the heat of the day had been trying to reestablish in the darkness its sway over the shoals. Its approaches had been heard in the night, its patient murmurs, its foiled sighs; but now a surprizingly heavy puff came in a free rush, as if far away there to the northward the last defence of the calm had been victoriously carried.

The flames borne down streamed bluishly, horizontal and noisy at the end of tall sticks, like fluttering pennants; and behold, the shadows on the deck went mad and jostled each other as if trying to escape from a doomed craft; the darkness held up dome-like by the brilliant glare seemed to tumble headlong upon the brig in an overwhelming downfall; the men stood swaying as if ready to fall under the ruins of a black and noiseless disaster.

The blurred outlines of the brig, the masts, the rigging, seemed to shudder in the terror of coming extinction—and then the darkness leaped upward again, the shadows returned to their places, the men were seen distinct, swarthy, with calm faces, with glittering eyeballs. The destruction in the breath had passed, was gone.

A discord of three voices raised together in a drawling wail trailed on the sudden-immobility of the air.

"Brig ahoy! Give us a rope!"

The first boat-load from the yacht was approaching invisible still. The Malays with one leap lined the rail. Shaw picked up his hat.

"Hallo!" answered Lingard, peering for the boat.

She merged floating slowly into the pool of purple light wavering round the brig on the black water. Two men squeezed in the bows pulled uncomfortably; in the middle on a heap of seamen's canvas bags another sat, insecure, propped with both arms—sat stiff-legged, angularly helpless. The light from the poop brought everything out in lurid detail, and the boat floating slowly toward the brig had a suspicious and pitiful aspect. The shabby load lumbering her looked, somehow, as if it had been stolen by those men who resembled dejected castaways. In the stern-sheets Carter, standing up, steered with his leg. He had a smile of youthful sarcasm.

"Here they are!" he cried to Lingard. "You've got your own way, Captain. I thought I had better come myself with the first precious lot——"

"Pull round the stern. The brig's on the swing," interrupted Lingard.

"Aye! Aye. We'll try not to smash the brig. We would be lost indeed if—fend off there, John; fend off, old reliable, if you care a pin for your salty, tarry hide—I like the old chap," he said, when he stood by Lingard's side looking down at the boat which was being rapidly cleared by whites and Malays working shoulder to shoulder in silence. "I like him. He don't belong to that yachting lot, either. They picked him up on the road somewhere. Look at the old dog—carved out of a ship's timber—talkative like a fish—grim like a gutted wreck. That's the man for me. All the others there are married, or going to be, or ought to be, or sorry they ain't. Every man jack of them had a petticoat in tow—dash me! Never heard in all my travels such a jabber about wives and kids. The most affectionate lot of seafaring men I ever came across—hurry up, with your dunnage—below there!"

"Aye! I had no difficulty in getting them to clear out from the yacht. They are badly shook—I tell you. Never saw a pair of gents stolen before—you understand. It upset all their little notions of what a stranding means hereabouts. Not that mine aren't mixed a bit, too—and yet I've seen a thing or two—I wasn't born yesterday."

His excitement was revealed in this boyish impulse to talk.

"Look," he said, pointing at the growing pile of bags and bedding on the brig's

quarter-deck. "Look. Don't they mean to sleep soft—and dream of home? Maybe. Home! Think of that, Captain. These chaps can get clear away from it. It isn't like you and me——"

Lingard made a movement.

"I ran away myself when so high. My old man's a Trinity pilot. That's a job worth staying at home for. Mother writes sometimes, but they can't miss me much. There's fourteen of us altogether—eight at home yet. No fear of the old country ever getting undermanned, let die who must. There's always plenty more. And I don't care. Only let it be a fair game, Captain. Let's have a fair show."

Lingard assured him briefly he should have it. That was the very reason he wanted the yacht's crew in the brig, he added. Then quiet and grave he inquired whether that pistol was still in Carter's pocket.

"Never mind that," said the young man hurriedly. "Remember who began. To be shot at wouldn't rile me so much—it's being threatened, don't you see, that was lying so heavy on my chest. Last night is very far off though—and I will be hanged if I know what I meant exactly when I took the old thing from its nail. And it's pretty well the same with me yet—only I don't feel sure of having been right after all. There. More I can't say till all's settled one way or another. Will that do?"

Flushing brick red, he suspended his judgment and stayed his hand with the generosity of youth.

Apparently it suited Lingard to be reproved in that form. He bowed his head slowly. It would do. To leave his life to that youngster's ignorance seemed to redress the balance of his mind against a lot of secret intentions. It was distasteful and bitter as an expiation should be. It had the pathos of an exalted futility, but it pacified the clamor of certain whispers.

He also held a life in his hand—a life, and many deaths besides, but these were like one single feather in the scales of his conscience. That he should feel so was unavoidable because his strength would at no price permit itself to be wanted. It would not be—and there was an end of it. All he could do was to throw in another risk into the sea of risks. Thus was he enabled to recognize that a drop of water

in the ocean makes a great difference. He perceived this as he perceived other things, shadowy and familiar, surrounding him—people, facts, his own thoughts—a dumb and disorderly crowd disdainful of reason, bewildered and mighty.

His very desire, unconquered, but exiled, had left the place where he could constantly hear its voice. Within him there had fallen the perplexity of silence and in the outer darkness the imperative shade urged him still on, as if in irony, after the withdrawal of guidance. He saw it; he saw himself, the past, the future; he saw it all, shifting and indistinct like those shapes the strained eyes of a wanderer outlines in darker strokes upon the face of the night.

X

WHEN he went to his boat to follow Carter, who had gone back to the yacht, Wasub, mast and sail on shoulder, preceded him down the ladder. The old man leaped in smartly and busied himself in getting the dingy ready.

In that little boat Lingard was accustomed to traverse the shallows alone. She had a short mast and a lug-sail, carried two easily, floated in a few inches of water. In her he was independent of a crew and, if the wind failed, could make his way with a pair of sculls taking short cuts over shoal places. There were so many islets and sandbanks that in case of sudden bad weather there was always a lee to be found, and when he wished to land he could pull her up a beach, striding ahead, painter in hand, like a giant child dragging a toy boat. When the brig was anchored within the shallows it was in her that he visited the lagoon.

Once when caught by a sudden freshening of the sea-breeze he had waded up a shelving bank carrying her on his head and for two days they had rested together on the sand while around them the shallow waters raged lividly, and across three miles of foam the brig would time after time dissolve in the mist and reappear distinct, nodding her tall spars that seemed to touch a weeping sky of grayness.

Whenever he came into the lagoon tugging with bare arms, Jorgenson, who would be watching the entrance of the creek ever since a muffled detonation of a gun to sea-

ward had warned him of the brig's arrival on the Coast of Refuge, would mutter to himself— "Here's Tom coming in his nutshell." And indeed she was in shape somewhat like half a nutshell and also in the color of her dark varnished planks. The man's shoulders and head rose high above her gunwales; loaded with Lingard's heavy frame she would climb sturdily the steep ridges, slide squatting into the hollows of the sea, or, now and then, take a sedate leap over a short wave. Her behavior had a stout trustworthiness about it, and she reminded one of a surefooted mountain-pony carrying over difficult ground a rider much bigger than himself.

Wasub wiped the thwarts, ranged the mast and sail along the side, shipped the rowlocks. Lingard looked down at his old servant's spare shoulders, upon which the light from above fell unsteady but vivid. Wasub worked for the comfort of his commander and his single-minded absorption in that task flashed upon Lingard the illuminating consolation of an act of unexpected friendliness. The elderly Malay at last lifted his head with a deferential murmur; his wrinkled old face with a half-dozen wiry hairs pendulous at each corner of the dark lips expressed a kind of weary satisfaction, and the slightly oblique worn eyes stole a discreet upward glance containing a hint of some remote meaning. Lingard found himself compelled by the justice of that obscure claim to murmur as he stepped into the boat.

"These are times of danger."

He sat down and took up the sculls. Wasub did not shove off the boat and held on to the gunwale as to a last hope of a further confidence. He had served in the brig five years. Lingard remembered that very well. This aged figure had been intimately associated with the brig's life and with his own, appearing silently ready for every incident and emergency in an unquestioning expectation of orders, symbolic of blind trust in his strength, of an unlimited obedience to his will. Was it unlimited?

"We shall require courage and fidelity," added Lingard in a tentative tone.

"There are those who know me," snapped the old man readily, as if the words had been waiting for a long time. "Observe, Tuan. I have filled with fresh water the little beaker in the bows."

"I know you, too," said Lingard.

"And the wind—and the sea," ejaculated the *serang* jerkily. "These also are faithful to the strong. By Allah! I who am a pilgrim and have listed to words of wisdom in many places, I tell you, *Tuan*, there is strength in the knowledge of what is hidden in things without life as well as in the living men. Will *Tuan* be gone long?"

"I come back in a short time—together with the rest of the whites from over there. This is the beginning of many stratagems, Wasub! Daman, the son of a dog, has suddenly made prisoners two of my own people. My face is made black."

"*Tse! Tse!* What ferocity is that! One should not offer shame to a friend or to a friend's brother lest revenge come sweeping like a flood. Yet can an Illanun chief be other than tyrannical? My old eyes have seen much, but they never saw a tiger change its stripes. *Ya-wa!* The tiger can not. This is the wisdom of us ignorant Malay men. The wisdom of white *Tuans* is great. They think that by the power of many speeches the tiger may—" He broke off and in a crisp, busy tone said: "The rudder dwells safely under the aftermost seat should *Tuan* be pleased to sail the boat. This breeze will not die away before sunrise." Again his voice changed as if two different souls had been flitting in and out of his body. "No, no, kill the tiger and then the stripes may be counted without fear—one by one, thus."

He pointed a frail, brown finger and abruptly made a mirthless dry sound, as if a rattle had been sprung in his throat.

"The wretches are many," said Lingard.

"Nay, *Tuan*. They follow their great men even as we in the brig follow you. That is right."

Lingard reflected for a moment.

"My men will follow me then," he said.

"They are poor *calashes* without sense," commented Wasub with pitying superiority. "Some with no more comprehension than men of the bush freshly caught. There is Sali, the foolish son of my sister, and by your great favor appointed to mind the tiller of this ship. His stupidity is extreme, but his eyes are good—nearly as good as mine that by praying and much exercise can see far into the night."

Lingard laughed low and then looked earnestly at the *serang*. Above their heads

a man shook a flare over the side and a thin shower of sparks floated downward and expired before touching the water.

"So you can see in the night, O *Serang!* Well, then, look and speak. Speak! Fight—or no fight? Weapons or words—which folly? Well, what do you see?"

"A darkness, a darkness," whispered Wasub at last in a frightened tone. "There are nights—" He shook his head and muttered. "Look! The tide has turned. *Ya, Tuan*. The tide has turned."

Lingard looked downward where the water could be seen gliding past the ship's side, moving smoothly, streaked with lines of froth across the illumined circle thrown round the brig by the lights on her poop. Air bubbles, sparkle, lines of darkness, ripples of glitter, appeared, glided, went astern without a splash, without a trickle, without a plaint, without a break.

The unchecked gentleness of the flow captured the eye by a subtle spell, fastened insidiously upon the mind a disturbing sense of the irretrievable. The ebbing of the sea athwart the lonely sheen of flames resembled the eternal ebb-tide of time; and when at last he looked up, the knowledge of that noiseless passage of the waters produced on his mind a bewildering effect.

For a moment the speck of light lost in vast obscurity, the brig, the boat, the hidden coast, the shallows, the very walls and roof of darkness—the seen and the unseen alike seemed to be gliding smoothly onward through the enormous gloom of space. Then with a great mental effort he brought everything to a sudden standstill, and only the froth and bubbles went on streaming past ceaselessly, unchecked by the power of his will.

"The tide has turned—as you say, *Serang?* Has it? Well, perhaps it has, perhaps it has," he finished, muttering to himself.

"Truly it has. Can not *Tuan* see it run under his own eyes," said Wasub with an alarmed earnestness. "Look! Now it is in my mind that a *prau* coming from amongst the southern islands, if steered cunningly in the free set of the current, would approach the bows of this, our brig, drifting silently as a shape without a substance."

"And board suddenly—is that it?" said Lingard.

"Daman is crafty and the Illanuns are very bloodthirsty. Night is nothing to them. They are certainly valorous. Are they not born in the midst of fighting and are they not inspired by the evil of their hearts even before they can speak? And their chiefs would be leading them while you, *Tuan*, are going even now——"

"You don't want me to go?" asked Lingard.

For a time Wasub listened attentively to the profound silence.

"Can we fight without a leader?" he began again. "It is the belief in victory that gives courage. And what would poor *calashes* do, sons of peasants and fishermen, freshly caught—without knowledge? They believe in your strength—and in your power—or else—whites that come so suddenly avenge you? They are here like fish within the stakes. *Ya-wa!* Who will bring the news and who will come to find the truth and perchance to carry off your body? You are alone, *Tuan!*"

Wasub's words sank into Lingard's heart as lead sinks into the water. He sat musing. Wasub, tired of stooping, squatted on the bottom step and held on to the boat patiently.

"I must go—to Daman," said Lingard at last. "I shall remain only a little time."

"Only a little—very true. Perhaps all the life," muttered the *serang*.

"There must be no fighting. It would be a calamity," insisted Lingard. "There is blood that must not be spilt."

"Hear, *Tuan!*" exclaimed Wasub with heat. "The waters are running out now." He punctuated his speech by slight jerks at the dingey. "The waters go and at the appointed time they shall return. And if between their going and coming the blood of all the men in the world were poured into it, the sea would not rise higher at the full by the breadth of my finger nail."

"But the world would not be the same. You do not see that, *Serang*. Give the boat a good shove."

"Directly," said the old Malay and his face became impassive. "*Tuan* knows when it is best to go, and death sometimes retreats before a firm tread like a startled snake. *Tuan* should take a follower with him, not a silly youth, but one who has lived—who has a steady heart—who would walk close behind watchfully—and quietly. Yes. Quietly and with quick eyes—like

mine—perhaps with a weapon—I know how to strike."

Lingard looked at the wrinkled visage very near his own and into the peering old eyes. They shone strangely. A tense eagerness was expressed in the squatting figure leaning out toward him. On the other side, within reach of his arm, the night stood like a wall—discouraging—opaque—impenetrable. No help would avail. The darkness he had to combat was too impalpable to be cleft by a blow—too dense to be pierced by the eye; yet as if by some enchantment in the words that made this vain offer of fidelity, it became less overpowering to his sight, less crushing to his thought. He had a moment of pride which soothed his heart for the space of two beats. It was like a lull in the stress of a gale, like a hint of safety to be found somewhere in the world if only life endures long enough to wear out the turmoil. It was an instant of rare amplex in which his unreasonable and misjudged heart, shrinking before the menace of failure, could expand freely with a sense of generous gratitude. In the threatening dimness of his emotions this man's offer made a point of clearness, the glimmer of a torch held aloft in the night. It was priceless no doubt, but ineffectual—too small, too far, too solitary. It did not dispel the mysterious obscurity that had descended upon his fortunes so that his eyes could no longer see the work of his hands. The sadness of defeat pervaded the world.

"And what could you do, O Wasub?" he said.

"I could always call out—'Take care, *Tuan.*'"

"And then for these charm-words of mine. Hey? Turn danger aside? What? But perchance you would die all the same. Treachery is a strong magic, too—as you said."

"Yes, indeed! The order might come to your servant. But I—Wasub—the son of a free man, a follower of rajahs, a fugitive, a slave, a pilgrim—diver for pearls, *serang* of white men's ships, I have had too many masters. Too many. You are the last." After a silence he said in an almost indifferent voice. "If you go, *Tuan*, let us go together."

For a time Lingard made no sound.

"No use," he said at last. "No use, *Serang*. One life is enough to pay for a

man's folly—and you have a household.”

“I have two—*Tuan*; but it is a long time since I sat on the ladder of a house to talk at ease with neighbors. Yes. Two households; one in —” Lingard smiled faintly. “*Tuan*, let me follow you.”

“No. You have said it, *Serang*—I am alone. That is true, and alone I shall go on this very night. But first I must bring all the white people here. Push.”

“Ready, *Tuan*? Look out!”

Wasub's body swung over the sea with extended arms. Lingard caught up the sculls, and as the dingy darted away from the brig's side he had a complete view of the lighted poop. Shaw leaning massively over the taffrail in sulky dejection, the flare-bearers erect and rigid, the heads along the rail, the eyes staring after him above the bulwarks. The fore-end of the little vessel was wrapped in a lurid and somber mistiness, the sullen mingling of darkness and of light; her masts pointing straight up could be tracked by torn gleams and vanished above as if the trucks had been tall enough to pierce the heavy mass of vapors motionless overhead. She was beautifully precious. His loving eyes saw her floating at rest in a wavering halo between an invisible sky and an invisible sea, like a miraculous craft suspended in the air.

He turned his head away as if the sight had been too much for him at the moment of separation, and, as soon as his little boat had passed beyond the limit of the light thrown upon the water, he perceived very low in the black void of the West the stern lantern of the yacht shining feebly, like a star about to set, unattainable, infinitely remote—belonging to another universe.

BOOK IV

THE VISIT TO THE *Emma*

I

LINGARD brought Mrs. Travers away from the yacht, going alone with her in the little boat. During the bustle of the embarkment and till the last of the crew had left the schooner he had remained towering and silent by her side. A smoky lantern hung under the main-boom lighted their heads and shoulders. She had given

him only one glance and then looked down, but he looked at her continuously. His passive strength seemed to watch the intensity of her meditation.

Neither of them gave, during the half-hour, a single thought to the unfortunate captives. Not these two men alone, but all mankind, not only this coast and these two shallows but the whole earth itself was too far away from their mood to be of the slightest importance. It was only when the murmuring and uneasy voices of the sailors going away in the boats had been completely lost in the distance that his voice was heard grave in the silence, pronouncing the words—“Follow me.” She followed him; their footsteps rang hollow and loud on the empty deck. At the bottom of the steps he turned round and said very low—“Take care.”

He got into the boat and held on. It seemed to him that she was intimidated by the darkness. She felt her arm gripped firmly—“I've got you,” he said. She stepped in headlong, trusting herself blindly to the grip and sank on the stern seat catching her breath a little. She heard a slight splash, and the indistinct side of the deserted yacht melted suddenly into the body of the night.

Rowing, he faced her, a hooded and cloaked shape, and above her head he had before his eyes the gleam of the stern lantern expiring slowly on the abandoned vessel; when it went out without a warning flicker he could see nothing of the stranded yacht's outline. She had vanished utterly like a dream; and the occurrences of the last twenty-four hours seemed also to be a part of a vanished dream. The hooded and cloaked figure was part of it, too. It spoke not; it moved not; it would vanish presently. He tried to remember her features even as she sat within two feet of him in the boat. He seemed to have taken from that vanished schooner not a woman but a memory—the tormenting recollection of a human being he would see no more.

At every stroke of the short sculls she felt the boat leap forward with her. Lingard, to keep his direction, had to look over his shoulder frequently.

“You shall be safe in the brig,” he said.

She was silent. A dream. A dream. He lay back vigorously; the water slapped loudly against the blunt bows. The ruddy glow thrown afar by the flares was reflected

deep within the hood. The dream had a pale visage; the memory had living eyes.

"I had to come for you myself," he said.

"I expected it of you."

These were the first words he had heard her say since they had met for the third time.

"And I swore—before you, too—that I would never put my foot on board your craft."

"It was good of you to—" she began.

"I forgot, somehow," he said simply.

"I expected it of you," she repeated.

He gave three quick strokes before he asked very gently.

"What else do you expect?"

"Everything," she said.

He was rounding then the stern of the brig and had to look away. Then he turned to her.

"And you believe?" he exclaimed.

"I like to believe," she interrupted, "because—"

Above them a startled voice cried in Malay, "Captain coming." The abrupt and strange sound silenced her. Lingard laid in his sculls and she saw herself gliding under the high side of the brig. A dark staring face appeared very near her eyes; black fingers caught the gunwale of the boat. She stood up swaying.

"Take care," said Lingard again, but this time, in the light, did not offer to help her.

She went up alone and he followed her over the rail.

The quarter-deck was thronged by men of two races. They crossed it rapidly between the groups that moved out of the way on their passage. Lingard threw open the cabin door for her, but remained on deck to inquire about his boats. They had returned while he was on board the yacht, and the two men in charge of them came aft to make their reports.

The boat sent north had seen nothing. The boat which had been directed to explore the banks and islets to the south, had actually been in sight of Daman's *praus*, which were anchored under the shelter of one of these small islands. The man in charge reported that several fires were

burning on the shore, the crews of the two *praus* being encamped on the beach. Cooking was going on. They had been near enough to hear the voices. The islet was only an elongated sand-dune with thin grass and lank scrub on the ridge. There was a man keeping watch on the ridge; they knew this because they heard him once shouting to the people below by the fires. Lingard wanted to know how they had managed to remain unseen.

"The night was our hiding-place," answered the man in his deep growling voice.

He knew nothing of any white men being in Daman's camp. Why should there be? Rajah Hassim and the lady, his sister, appeared unexpectedly in their canoe. Rajah Hassim had ordered him in whispers to go back to the brig at once and tell *Tuan* what he had observed. Rajah Hassim said that he would return to the brig with more news very soon. He obeyed because rajah was to him a person of authority, "having the perfect knowledge of *Tuan's* mind as we all know."

"Enough," cried Lingard suddenly.

The man looked up heavily for a moment and retreated forward without another word. Lingard followed him with irritated eyes. A new power had come into the world, had possessed itself of human speech, had imparted to it a sinister irony of allusion. To be told that some one had "a perfect knowledge of his mind," startled him and made him wince. It made him aware that now he did not know it himself—that it seemed impossible for him ever to regain that knowledge. And the new power not only had cast its spell upon the words he had to hear, but also upon the facts that assailed him, upon the people he saw, upon the thoughts he had to guide, upon the feelings he had to bear. They remained what they had ever been—the visible surface of life open in the sun to the conquering tread of an unfettered will. Yesterday they could have been discerned clearly, mastered and despised; but now another power had come into the world and had cast over them all the wavering gloom of a dark and inscrutable purpose.



The Way of a Sire With a Son

BY GERTRUDE MAC NULTY STEVENS

THE CAPTAIN of the Bear-Cats slouched rebelliously over a dog-eared arithmetic in the privacy of his own room, contemplating with unseeing eyes an absurd query as to the percentage of arable land owned by a creature the rest of whose uninteresting property consisted in so many acres of wood and garden. It was almost at the end of a day by no means perfect.

On top of a more or less hectic session at school, wherein he had been unjustly singled out for persistent persecution because of his red head, had appeared his report, cheerfully borne home by his sister in the grade below his, its varied percentages resembling a temperature chart in the fluctuations from normal, or passing mark.

And then, right off the reel, didn't that crab of an old lady Ellis come bounding in and claim that the Bear-Cats were a nuisance and had broken down her hedge hunting for balls, and that their language was such as she wouldn't have her Jamie hear, much less his sister.

For result, here now was Russell Joyce Kingdon marooned over his books, while from the Bear-Cats' "athletic field," softened by three blocks of suburban tree-filled space, came the joyous melody of the team in practice without him.

Yes, they could laugh and shout and play—darn 'em—while he, their captain, the fellow who had assembled them, organized them, provided them a clubroom over his father's car-less garage—he, the only pitcher in the aggregation with more than a wind-up and a glove to bless him-

self with, must be shut away from everything, just because of the spite of a lot of senile fussbudgets who happened to have recognized him from among the throng. Having a red head was a regular identification chart. It wasn't fair.

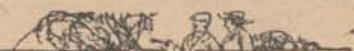
From time to time, with practiced hand, he sketched on the margin of his book the brutal features of his critics, the tale-bearing snakes who had brought this punishment upon him and who were threatening to plow up the only vacant lot for a mile around suitable for a diamond. Lest full recognition of the portraits fail, he carefully appended the names, garnished with vivid, concrete verbiage.

He was securing a measure of melancholy satisfaction from the task, when his ears caught the voice of his brother Rupert, a blasé and cynical pessimist in third-year high school, discussing him with his mother, over the pruning of some vines.

"I told you, didn't I, just how it would be, mom?" Rupert was chanting. "That little runt puts it all over you and pop right along, and gets away with it! That gang of roughnecks he trains with makes my foot ache. Letting them have the garage room was the last straw. I was thinking of setting a hen there. They'll raise heck up there, you mark my words."

"But, Rupert, twelve-year-old boys have to have some place to let off steam in. They've trained in the attic all Winter until I couldn't hear myself think, and now that it's warm enough for them to play in the garage, I thought they could have a lot of fun with a club there——"

"Oh, they'll have fun, all right," agreed



the pessimist sourly. "Of course it's nothing to me. I don't have to pay for the windows they smash or the furniture that's busted. I just don't want to be blamed for the cookies 'Bud' sneaks out to treat the gang on, or the apples. And they needn't think they can give me any of their lip, like Bud tried to show off yesterday when I told him to come down off the roof where he was kicking off shingles to make airplane rud——"

Flesh and blood could stand no more. *Bang*, went up Russell's window and out popped his glowing head.

"You're another. I was just getting a loose one. Think you can bull me all the time! For two cents I'd just tell Mamma where that half mince pie went to yesterday——"

Rupert dropped his shears and reached for a clod.

"And for less'n half that, I'd let you have this in the ear!"

But the window banged tauntingly down, and Mrs. Kingdon's rebuking "Rupert! How old are you anyway?" fell on deaf ears.

Russell returned to his gloomy meditations. It occurred to him once that he might possibly get through his penance in time for a little practice before sundown, but a glance along the seven problems remaining to be done gave little hope of such accomplishment. He heard his mother call Jessica in to practice her music, and saw Rupert dawdling up the hill with a barrow-load of rose cuttings; then a cautious, syncopated whistle trembled on the air from the hedge, and "Shorty" Small peered up at the window.

Russell threw up the sash and leaned out.

"Lo, Short! What you know?"

"Nothin', 'cept Harve Kendall's come over to watch the Cats work, and he wants to see you pitch, so's to find out if he'll get his team to play us. He just laughs at Jo's pitching. Say, c'm on over, can't you? He makes me sick."

"Who?"

"Harve. He's ridin' a pony somebody's boardin' at his father's, and he says he's gettin' two dollars a week f'r exercisin' it!"

"Likely lie. Why'n't he tell a good one whiles he's 'bout it anyhow?"

"S what I say! Payin' anybody f'r ridin' a pony!"

They chuckled appreciatively; then Shorty continued.

"How soon can you get out?"

"Got seven more to do—those doggone problems."

"Seven? We only had eight. Ain't you done but one?"

Russell frowned fiercely

"I can't do 'em. No sense to the dern things."

"Throw out the book and I'll get 'Sharky' Allen to do 'em for you. He's one of those fellers that just eats 'rithmetic up. I c'n take it right over now while you do your grammar, and bring 'em back in a jiff."

"Here you go!"

A thin book whirled through the air to land neatly in Shorty's hands.

"Whistle twice when you come back. Now beat it! That old pie-face Rupe's comin' down the hill."

The captain of the Bear-Cats closed the window softly and returned to his desk. He did not feel entirely comfortable over the arrangement, deceit being really foreign to his nature, but what is a feller to do when grown-ups are so unreasonable on a fine Spring day, with a rival ball captain waiting to pass judgment on your curve and control?

"Anyhow, I never 'speck to use 'rithmetic when I grow up, any more 'n I've got now," he mused. "I can make change, and that's enough."

His views on grammar were highly similar, with the added certainty that undue use thereof was distinctly "sissy." No reg'lar feller ever said, "It is I," and why any human being should object to "ain't" and "them kind," he had never been able to figure out.

However, at the present moment, there was certainly nobody even to attempt writing for him the ten sentences with the modifiers of various idiotic sorts, since not one Bear-Cat was any more of a grammarian than himself. He must, perforce, attack them unaided.

He concentrated valiantly and with such success that he was finishing the last one when Shorty's jubilant but restrained whistle sounded, and he answered it with the corresponding cat-call, also repressed cautiously. His hands were outstretched for the folded paper, when Rupert's voice again broke officiously into his affairs.

"On your way, kid. Russ can't come out. He's got to get his lessons."

"Aw, I just want to toss him something."

"Give it here. I'll take it to him. My mother don't want you kids running up there disturbing him. He can't come out till he does his problems."

"It's a wonder you can't ever mind your own business, Mr. Butt-in-ski!" yelled Russell, somewhat alarmed and thoroughly annoyed. "Can't Short even gimme a list of the line-up 'thout you pokin' your old nose into our 'fairs? Here go, Short! I got it! So long! Ah-h, think you're smart, don't you? Ever get left?"

Again the window banged down, but not before a skillfully hurled pebble zipped close to Russell's ear, sure evidence of the resentment of age against the flippancy of youth.

Five minutes later Russell presented himself at his mother's elbow, where she watched Jessica struggling with that tender little piano piece, "When Rover Was a Puppy-dog."

"All done, mom. Can I go now? The fellers 're waitin' f'r me."

Mrs. Kingdon looked her surprize.

"So soon? All the sentences, too? Jessica, you have the wrong note. It is B. The examples, too? I thought you would have to have me help you on them. Are you sure they're all done?"

Russell's expression was steady and virtuous. It was indeed lucky that she had put the query thus impersonally. They were done. Sure, that was no fib!

"You can find 'em right up on my desk. All right! I'll be back soon."

He wheeled about, leaving the rug a mass of outraged wrinkles, and, ducking under Rupert's blockading arms, gained the hall door.

The team greeted Russell with a roar of welcome that warmed his heart, and even penetrated to the family library where Rupert still lingered, cap on and shoulders hunched, gazing out of the window.

"Rupert, do take off your cap," admonished Mrs. Kingdon. "You mustn't be so hard on the little fellow. I would have much less trouble with him if you would co-operate with me a little."

"Co-operate!" sniffed Rupert. "You need to co-operate with a shingle on him! You and pop talk too much to him and

don't lick him enough. He's getting away with a lot of stuff that I got good and walloped for when I was his age. I guess if you heard some of the talk he puts out you'd drop dead."

"Mrs. Ellis has been complaining of the language used on the ball-field by her house. I do feel very uneasy about it. Now, that is surely something you could help with, Rupert. A small boy is easily influenced for good by an older one—"

Rupert emitted a derisive hoot.

"Influence a hen! Why, mom, that bunch is as tough as they come. You don't know them. They're hellions!"

"Rupert!"

"That's what!"

Mrs. Kingdon sighed.

"And Mrs. Ellis says that every time her Jamie comes near the ball-field, the Bear-Cats throw stones at him. Why, Rupert, I don't see anything funny about that!"

Rupert tried vainly to swallow a grin. He was at the age when stoicism is the only virtue.

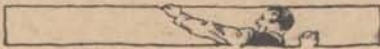
"Aw, I wish they'd throw a peck of 'em! Jamie Ellis 's a perfect lady. Don't know enough to go in when it rains. Hi! There went a clean hit through the hen-house window! Now watch the fur fly!"

He hastened out of the house and down the road. Mrs. Kingdon made a half-hearted effort to prevent the excited Jessica from joining the flight to the ball-field, gave it up in despair, and went out on the porch herself.

She could see a group of boys eddying about a tall woman in the center of the diamond, revealing, from time to time, a red and white sweater in which she recognized Russell. Even at that distance it was apparent that the tall woman was in an abnormal state of mind, and Mrs. Kingdon's intuitive surmise that Russell had some connection therewith was made a certainty by the return presently of Rupert, the assured triumph of the bearer of prophesied bad news in his gait.

"Just what I told you, mom! Russ batted that ball through the Ellis chicken-house, a right good punch for a kid, and he was feeling some chesty about it, you bet! I got there just as he was telling the gang that there was no use looking for the ball as it was probably half-way to —"

"Rupert!"



"Just what he was saying, and then old Mrs. Ellis popped out of the house and lit on him like a thousand of brick——"

"Rupert, she's not old at all. Younger than I am, probably."

"Well, she acts like it, anyhow. And she says she'll have the field plowed up at her own expense to keep the Cats off, and she's going to complain to pop about Russ's language. Russ gave her some more lip then——"

"Oh, Rupert, what did he say?"

"Never you mind!" Rupert was darkly mysterious. "Anyway, here he comes. You can ask him. I told you he was getting too fresh, but you wouldn't believe me. You and pop are so tender with him. Makes me sick."

Mrs. Kingdon turned on him, her eyes flashing.

"For goodness sake, do stop croaking! Your continual criticism of the child only makes it harder for me to manage him. Go finish the roses, do! Or set a hen, or climb a tack! Anybody would think you a grandfather. How long is it, I'd like to know, since you were at the same tricks?"

Rupert disappeared around the corner of the house muttering disparaging things about the rising generation, and the captain of the Bear-Cats, seeing no chance of evading his mother by a circuitous route, lunged across the lawn and up the steps. Before Mrs. Kingdon could make up her mind just which of many remarks she would make, he burst forth into a vehement flood of vituperation against the whole Ellis family, including even their suppositious ancestry in the oration, and ending with dark threats of what the team intended as reprisal. It was somewhat too well done to be entirely convincing. Even the most casual listener might have suspected the sincerity of the speaker, and, moreover, Mrs. Kingdon was no stranger to the method, having three other sons to her credit, older than Russell.

She let him run on till breath failed. —Then, "Russell, go right upstairs and take a good bath," she said.

"Aw, mom, I had one yesterday, or day before!"

This was a tactical error on Russell's part. His mother's eyes fixed him coldly.

"And shampoo your head. I will come up myself presently and do your neck and

ears. Tonight, your father will talk to you about this affair on the ball-field."

Russell departed, breathing out threat-enings and slaughter as Mr. Kingdon's car stopped at their corner.

Mrs. Kingdon waited until after dinner before broaching the matter of the Bear-Cats vs. Mrs. Ellis. Many years of married life had brought a measure of wisdom to her.

Russell's father received the story after a hearty meal when care sits but lightly on any man. He assumed his customary easy manner and attempted to make light of the whole affair.

"So that was the reason Bud looked so chaste and subdued and cleaned up generally? I thought something must have happened when he was so polite at table. Batted one through the hen-house window? Looks like a whale of a punch from here!"

"Now, Jerry, I do wish you'd be serious for once. Mrs. Ellis is very much wrought up about it and is going to bring the whole matter of the Bear-Cats up before the Civic Club tomorrow night. She thinks something ought to be done about them."

"Lord, what can be done? Boys have to play, don't they? It's better to have 'em playing near home where some sort of an eye can be kept on 'em, than to shove them off on the edge of town by themselves or worse, isn't it? Let Bud pay for the glass out of his savings, and I'll try to get her to put netting over that window so this can't happen again. The bad language? H'm! Well, now, I guess all kids have to let off a little steam in a game, don't they? Oh, of course, I'll speak to him about it! And, tell you what, I'll knock off early tomorrow afternoon and come on home and umpire a game for them. I'll get Harris Trescott and John Coyle to lay off too and renew their youth. Their kids are Bear-Cats too. It may be a good idea to pal a bit with the youngers. I used to be some sand-lot pitcher myself, and Trescott was a breeze on the bases. Come here, Bud. How'd you like to have your dad and Mr. Trescott and Mr. Coyle give the Bear-Cats the once-over tomorrow and referee a game for you?"

Russell received the news with unflattering protest.

"Aw, pop, you don't wanta do that! You couldn't help us any, and the fellers



wouldn't like it. Ain't it bad 'nough to have old lady Ellis always spyin' on us, 'thout havin' your own folks too?"

"Where do you get that spy stuff?" inquired Mr. Kingdon with some heat. "And as for helping you, Master Swell-head, I want you to know that we men used to play better ball than you shrimps ever will. You ought to be glad to have us take time to come out and give you a few pointers. Moreover, it looks as if some of the complaints I hear of the Cats were justified, when you don't want your parents to watch your games. You round up that outfit tomorrow in good shape. We'll be out at 3:30." And to his wife he added, as Russell departed—"Can you beat a kid for ingratitude?"

Russell's prophetic soul had not deceived him as to the reception of the news by his team. To a man, every Cat suspected the proposed visitation of malign and ulterior motives, and frankly assailed Russell for not having headed it off.

"Aw, you could of, too! Why'n't you tell him we didn't have a game on?" Shorty Small demanded.

"Didn't think quick enough. Besides, he knows we play every day," Russell defended. "No use grouchin'. They most prob'ly won't stay long. No seats to sit down on out there—only the ground. There's their car. Let's get into some practice till the Zulus come. Ain't that 'Sissy' Ellis' grandpa with 'em?"

"Oh, gosh, yes! He's fussier'n the old lady. Wouldn't let me get a ball outer his garden last week. Hope he chokes!"

The team practiced madly, paying no attention beyond an embarrassed grin or two from shamed sons as the quartet of men drew near. Captain Kingdon, in a wind-up that distorted his small person from feet to physiognomy, sent a wild pitch past his backstop far into the field, whence it was retrieved by a bevy of shrieking small girls, whom the presence of the fathers encouraged to approach the forbidden grounds.

"Better cut out the curves, son, and stick to your straight ones," advised Mr. Kingdon, kindly. "First thing you know you'll get a glass arm. No kid your size ought to be curving a ball."

Messrs. Trescott and Coyle interpolated various suggestions to their offspring, at first base and short-stop respectively.

Russell glared at them all from beneath his visored cap. So that was what this bunch of old guys had come for? Giving out advice! H'm! He could feel the waves of resentment emanating from the team. Bitterly was he conscious that they were blaming him for it. As if he had asked these hoary fossils to come here! He relinquished the ball to his understudy and went to the plate for his turn at batting. Only by violently assaulting something did he think that his feelings could be relieved. With all his force he swung at the first ball pitched, only to cut into the unresisting air, and nearly topple over.

A second time he did it. And a third. Then Grandpa Jennings' high-pitched laugh pierced his ear.

"That kid never busted none of our hen-house winders! You needn't tell me!" he cackled. "Bet I c'd beat that myself, if I am a grandfather!"

It was unendurable. A red rage flooded Russell's whole being. Twelve years of parental drilling on the respect due to age fell from him like a torn shirt. Furiously throwing down his bat and cap, he shouted, as he stalked from the diamond:

"All right, why'n't you go on in and prove it?"

"Gentlemen, I blush for my che-ild," Mr. Kingdon apologized, turning off with a jest, as was his custom, a difficult situation. "Let's accept the challenge, and show 'em! Get in behind the plate, Coyle. How about you at first, Trescott? One minute for a warm-up, Mr. Jennings, and you go in to bat."

The Bear-Cats circled off to the sidelines, their faces registering mingled emotions of amusement and annoyance, deeply tingled with shame on the part of those pitiable three whose parents were thus making an exhibition of themselves.

There was no doubt about the enjoyment of the men. Their coats and hats came off in a jiffy; sleeves were rolled up and collars discarded. The warm-up continued until Russell demanded scathingly of Shorty whether he supposed these old ginks meant to hog the whole afternoon buttin' in on their game?

Grandpa Jennings took his stand at the plate at last, however.

"Now none of your fancy tricks on me, Kingdon," he admonished. "I'm thirty

years out of practice, but I used to be a husky hitter on a straight one. We never had no curves in my day."

He let the first two balls go by without an effort.

"Them's no good," he remarked calmly.

"They're good for two strikes," asserted Mr. Kingdon.

"The devil they are," flared the old man. "One of 'em was round my neck and t'other two feet wide o' the plate!"

"You're a—er—you're mistaken!" shouted Mr. Kingdon. "They were perfect strikes. How about it, Coyle?"

"We need an umpire," Mr. Coyle replied diplomatically. "Isn't that Rupert over by the apple tree? Come on over and umpire, Rupe! We need you."

Rupert, at his father's shout, reluctantly took a few steps toward them.

"Aw, you don't want me, pop. Get somebody outside the family. There's the ice-man. Ask him."

The ice-man accepted the commission with alacrity.

"Batter up!" bawled the ice-man, in true big league style, and again the ball sped toward grandpa, who stood with feet well apart and bat firmly clenched between his fists, the light of a grim determination in his eyes. By now the original audience of Bear-Cats had been augmented by the arrival of the other team, several delivery wagons and a miscellaneous aggregation of pedestrians of the male sex, whose comments and criticisms stimulated the players.

Mr. Kingdon took an impressive wind-up and let the ball leave his hand in a mighty heave. Grandpa met it with a powerful swing. Out and back the ball recoiled from the bat in a vicious foul tip that Catcher Coyle entirely misjudged, falling all over himself amid the spectators, and picking himself up with several unfortunate remarks that he muffled too late.

"Get up on your toes, you undertaker," yelled Mr. Kingdon, quite forgetful of the audience. "What do you think this is, a rest-cure?"

Mr. Coyle responded by throwing the ball straight at him, and so swiftly that the pitcher had no time to put up his glove, so was forced to stop it with his floating ribs, a proceeding that caused him to utter words he would later fain have retracted.

"Dry up and play ball," exhorted grandpa, who was having the time of his life. "This time I'm a-goin' to knock her to Key West."

And the event justified the brag. It was, in very truth, "a whale of a wallop," a long, clean drive that sailed like a gleaming arrow straight for the dining-room window of his daughter's home, smashing it into a sunburst of twinkling glass, and upsetting two geraniums and an angora cat that adorned the sill.

For one eye-wink of eternity the world stood hushed, then arose a mighty pæan of pure joy, led by the captain of the Bear-Cats, and ably sustained by every human being on the field, even to the stoic Rupert.

"My, Godfrey Daniels, how in heck did I ever come to do a dodgasted thing like that?" is what Grandpa Jennings stoutly insists he stated anent the affair, but the Bear-Cats to a Cat knew better, and hesitated not to say so, with addenda, to the end of their days.

In the thick of the confusion appeared Mrs. Ellis from the house, and before she could articulate a word, her father assumed the offensive.

"Now, Mary 'Lizabeth," he said, sternly, "don't ye say a word. Not a word. I allus knew that there winder was p'inted the wrong way. There never was no call f'r a winder on that side the house anyhow. Only thing ye can do's to put a good heavy wire screen acrost it, and that I'll 'tend to myself, termorrer. There ain't no other place where these boys can play——"

"I hear you, father," replied his daughter ominously. "And, furthermore, I heard you a few minutes ago. I have sent Jamie into the house——"

The old man drew himself up to his full height, the light of conflict still gleaming in his eyes.

"Mary 'Lizabeth," he ordered. "You go right in there after him. I'll talk to you later."

Their eyes crossed like rapiers for a second, then Mrs. Ellis turned and went swiftly across the field to her back door, through which she disappeared with a resounding slam of the screen.

"Now, looky here, boys," said Grandpa Jennings ingratiatingly. "Which one of you's captain of this team?"

Several hands pushed forward the protesting Russell.

"Here he is—Russ Kingdon!"

"H'm. Ain't you the boy that plowed up my lettuce bed with a ball last week?"

Russell acknowledged it.

"H'm. Favor your paw, don't ye? Well, I was sorter hot 'bout that, but I don't feel so bad now. I'd kind o' like to make a deal with you. If you'll take my grandson on the team and learn him to play——"

A murmur of dissent rose from the Bear-Cats, and one bold spirit voiced the club sentiment aloud.

"Aw, he don't know a hit from a sand-hill and he's 'fraid of the ball!"

"I know it, but you boys can learn him better, and if you'll take him on and just keep kinder quiet about what happened here today, I'll buy you a bat and ball—a reg'lar league ball."

The Bear-Cats looked at one another, and a glorious sun of possibilities rose in their minds. They nudged Russell, and he understood. Mr. Kingdon and the other fathers were struggling into their coats. The Bear-Cats faced them joyously.

"Why, we don't mind keeping it quiet," said Russell and he looked his father full in the eyes. "Of course, we've got a rule about cussing, but——"

Mr. Kingdon was nobody's fool. He turned to the other men with a compelling grin.

"Guess we better come into this too, Trescott? How about it, Coyle? I think the Bear-Cats need a catcher's mask, that I can get, and a few base bags and a chest protector would come in handy. Are you with me?"

"I am," said John Coyle, and Harris Trescott chimed in with the same suggestion that the Civic Club might be induced to provide a backstop of wire as a measure of self-protection.

Gradually the field cleared of all save the captain of the Bear-Cats, who stayed to retrieve the club property. As he gathered up the last bat a long shadow fell across his vision and a hesitant figure drew near him.

"Lo, Russ," said Jamie Ellis.

"Hi, Jim!" responded Russell cordially, and let us here state in passing that "Jamie" died right then and there in favor of "Jim."

"Hi, Jim! Say, your grandpa's a reg'lar feller! How'd you like to come on the team and field for us? We got to lose 'Fats' 'cause he's going on the school team. Will your mother let you?"

"Sure she will!" piped Jim joyfully. "Grandpa said, right before her, that he'd lick the tar out of me if I didn't learn to play ball! Say, Russ, can I come over before school and catch with you some?"

That night, to the corner of the Kingdon porch, where the heads of the family rested from their labors and recounted the day's occurrences, came the slow and painful clicking of a typewriter, impelled by a searching, unskilled forefinger.

"Who's at my machine?" Mr. Kingdon began, but his wife checked him.

"Now, Jerry, don't fuss. It's Russell. He's formulating some new rules for the club. I saw the first three when he left the machine a while ago. I'm sure you'd endorse them." She threw him a searching, mischievous glance.

"What are they?"

"Rule I. Bad langwige of any kind postifely furbidden in this Club. Any offender will be immediately kicked out at once, And I mean it.

Rule II——"

Mr. Kingdon threw up his hands.

"Don't shoot. I'll come down," he begged. "Maybe you don't know it, but that rule is going to cost me the new mashie I've been saving two months to get! But if you could have seen old man Jennings' face when he realized his daughter had heard him, you would agree with me that it was worth the price, and then some."

"And what did you say?" pursued Mrs. Kingdon with interest.

Her husband regarded her with what he would like to have made a severe frown, but which changed into a sheepish grin.

"Never you mind, Madam," he said. "I've sent Jessica to the drug-store to buy you some chocolate mints. I guess I can't afford to take any more afternoons off for a while."



The Miniature

BY CARL CLAUSEN

ALAMEDA STREET, the one time fashionable residence street of Los Angeles, lay chill and deserted under the flickering arclights. A lazy drizzle of rain descended from the leaden sky that hung oppressively low over the dully gleaming chasm of the street. Gusts of wind-driven rain tore around the corners, shaking cascades of accumulated rainwater from the dripping awnings. Here and there a light from a store, whose owner had been delayed with his accounts after the rest of the shops had put up their shutters, fell across the glistening sidewalk. Within these isolated squares of light the raindrops seemed to fall more rapidly as if they were hastening to return to the earth before being discovered.

Young Andrew Gaynor walked with hunched shoulders and upturned coat-collar at a quick pace along the deserted street, past the narrow mouth of Jackson Alley, a mere slit of a thoroughfare between two gray walls four stories in height. It was a night when people hugged the glowing warmth of their hearthfires, unless business or peculiar temperament drove them forth. Andrew rather liked it. It gave him a sense of exhilaration to feel the needlelike sting of the raindrops upon his cheeks as if they were whipping some hitherto dormant power within him into battle with the elements.

As he strode along, warmed by the bodily glow from his brisk walk, he thought about the drab loneliness of his past life and compared it with his present. After eight years of tramping the seas as a com-

mon sailor, he had suddenly taken his place among the dwellers of the solid earth and was beating them at their own game. His one year at business college had served only to open his eyes to the futility of hoping to cope with a world already intrenched against interlopers like himself.

At first he had thought of returning to the sea, but after meeting John Devor, a fellow-student at the business college, a vague but no less firm desire to batter down the bulwarks to success had taken hold of him. John Devor was a struggling artist, a painter of miniatures, attending the night-school to learn geometry. When he had gained sufficient knowledge the school would know him no longer. During recess and their walks home together after school Andrew had listened with beating heart to Devor's story of his life. Devor had been a window-trimmer. A natural love for color and artistic arrangement had been responsible for this latter choice of profession. Even now when funds were low, he went back to his old trade for a few days to keep the pot boiling. But he was winning slowly but steadily. The man's courage and enthusiasm had fired Andrew with ambition.

The old desire to write, that had long lain dormant in his heart, burst into flame. He, Andrew Gaynor, would write. He would speak to the hearts intrenched behind the barriers of money and caste and would force them to open their portals. He would bridge, in one span, the gulf that separated him from the land-dwellers.

He went about it methodically. At the



age of sixteen he had deserted school in favor of the sea. The things he had learned so easily and thought so unimportant in those years suddenly took new and undreamed of value. He began to read avidly everything he could lay his hands on. From daylight until dark he haunted the public library. He discovered to his delight a new, strange country between the dusty shelves. He discovered also that speech like his, the sailor vernacular, was ridiculed by most writers—lightly by some, but ridiculed always. He decided from that moment he'd be more careful in his speech.

When the attendant took his halting request, he noted the inflection of her voice, and her manner of pronouncing her words. In his room at night he held a series of lectures to himself in monologue to cure himself of his defect of speech. He worked prodigiously into the small hours of the night, talked with people who seemed to know things, haunted literary clubs and lecture-halls.

His first literary efforts were crude things, written in the sweat of his brow, but by close observance and honest self-criticism he began to solve things that seemed promising. He worked at slag heat. His faith in himself never wavered after his mind had been made up.

His years upon the sea under many climes came in good stead. He found himself in possession of an inexhaustible storehouse of information filled with the things the land-dwellers were burning to know and to read about.

Smiling to himself he remembered that the check he had received only this morning from Mr. Moore, his New York agent, represented his sixteenth conquest in the magazine field.

At Arcadia Street he turned the corner in a savage gust of wind and hastened to shelter under the wooden awnings of the old Bandini Block, on the top floor of which his studio was located. Some of the magazines had bought as high as from six to eight stories from him, others one or two. Hardly a month passed now when he did not add a new editor to his growing list.

Sometimes in the seclusion of his modest den he would sit and marvel at it all. For three years he had written from daylight until dark, and often long into the hours

of the night without selling a word. Something like a million words stood to his credit or discredit after those three years. His stories had gone the usual rounds, with monthly postage bills so enormous that he was forced to forego even a fire in his grate.

In his old shabby overcoat and his feet wrapped in a blanket, he had written, written, written. Then suddenly one day a short essay won the first prize in a technical magazine in New York. The ten-dollar check he had received for this essay seemed the open sesame to the world of literature.

Down South, a small southern California magazine, bought two stories the same week at a modest price. Mr. Carson, the editor, gave him to understand that *Down South* would be glad to buy one story a month at the same price. Andrew was jubilant.

From Mr. Moore in New York, whom Andrew had mailed some thirty short stories a month earlier, a check for seventy dollars came also that week for two short stories of Los Angeles. He had broken the ice! Two weeks later he won the second prize in a short story contest of the Sunday magazine of a local daily. Checks began to come regularly from New York, modest ones at first, then larger ones. One month his earnings had run close to the thousand-dollar mark! He was rich beyond his wildest dreams.

Skirting the side of the building under the sheltering awnings, Andrew turned into a columned doorway, crossed a wide cavernous expanse of brown tiled floor, and mounted the stairway by the light of its solitary flickering gaslight.

The Bandini Block was one of the old landmarks of Los Angeles. Built some forty years earlier as an apartment hotel when the corner of First and Main Streets was a sleepy, pepper-tree shaded hub of commerce and the old Plaza the civic and social center of the little Pueblo of Los Angeles, the building had been the standing joke of the town. "Bandini's Folly" some wag had nicknamed it. A three-storied structure with Renaissance cupolas and Roman windows, it had for twenty-five years reared its imposing pile above the heads of the adobe dwellings about it.

During that period it had sheltered many notables. "Quo Vadis" had been written in one of its high-ceilinged rooms.

Madame Mojeska had for a short period dwelt within its hospitable walls. Then suddenly the southward trend of the city had left the old building for a period of ten years cobwebbed and forgotten in the center of the present Latin quarter of Los Angeles.

One by one, men of artistic temperament and meager means—the two things seem to go together—found this old shell of a building and moved in. Others followed. In the space of two years, every room of the top floor had been taken by devotees of pigment, letters and music. The second floor was still occupied by a miscellaneous aggregation of brokers, Latin weeklies and job-printing establishments with a fortune-teller or two to give variety.

Andrew Gaynor mounted the second flight of stairs to the third floor and turned the key of his studio. From a half-open doorway across the hall came the soft tinkling of a piano. Pausing to shake the water from his hat in the ill-lighted hall, Andrew listened. "Pete" was playing Leybach's "Fifth Nocturne." It was her signal to him that her day's labor of wrestling with pupils was over. The tea-kettle, he knew, was now humming away upon the single-burner gasplate.

Andrew threw his coat and hat over a chair inside his studio, closed the door and tiptoed across the cavernous hall, pausing outside the half-open door. From his vest-pocket he pulled a small object. It was a ring-case, plush-covered and dainty. Opening the lid he stood looking thoughtfully at a fine solitaire, set in platinum, gleaming against the dark purple plush in the murky light of the hall.

Returning the ring to his pocket he leaned his shoulder against the doorjamb and stood looking through the half-open door at the girl seated before the old black-walnut piano. Unobserved by her in the gloom of the hall, where two flickering gas-jets and the murky glow of the city through the skylight above the carved staircase only seemed to accentuate the gloom, he stood watching her as her slender fingers wandered up and down the yellow, discolored keyboard.

The air the girl was playing seemed curiously interwoven with the mood and atmosphere of the old building. Andrew stood watching her in silence. Now and then he strained for a glimpse of her dark

head as it moved out of his range of vision with the rhythm of the music. Her head was thrown back slightly, and her long dark eyelashes lay like twin crescents of jet against her clear white skin. Her face with its thin aquiline nose and tapering chin was outlined in sharp profile against the shaded glow of a lamp behind her. The rather high cheek-bones threw a soft shadow over the lower part of her face and gave it a suggestion of frailness that the proud poise of her head and her firm white throat could not entirely dispel. A head of brown hair, bobbed high above the white sailor collar of her plain black shirtwaist, which was held together at the throat with a heavy white cord, gave the face a certain haughtiness.

Petra Agostini—Pete—had rented the studio some two years earlier. She was the daughter of a poor Italian foundryman, who, because of his large and ever-increasing family, had welcomed the girl's determination to shift for herself. On certain occasions Agostini, Sr., visited his daughter's studio with one or more of the younger Agostinis, out at heel and elbows, tagging along to give weight to his precarious financial problems. After such visits Pete would dine on tea and toast for many days.

Between Andrew and the girl had sprung up a friendship built upon respect, warm mutual interest and unflinching ambition. His evenings spent by Pete's grate, criticizing, each encouraging and eager for the other's praise, were delightful; but no moments were comparable to those when with Pete's arm linked in his and the girl's light step flying to keep up with him they tramped together over the poppy-clad hills of Garavanza.

From the day of his first meeting, Andrew had taken to her. He discovered in Pete a marvelous creature who could laugh with him over trifles, sympathize with him in his failures, and spur him on to greater endeavors when he became too serene in the security of accomplishment. He found that he could at will awaken in her echoes of his hopes. She was a constant source of wonder and delight to his honest, primitive sailor nature.

The short distance he had traveled along the road to fame had opened to him a vista of hitherto undreamed of things, and day by day he grew more humble and eager for

praise and encouragement. With his small success had come a certain air of conviction in his bearing, a deep and powerful persuasion in his voice. He could meet men on their own ground and discuss matters with authority. The tenants of the Bandini Block frightened him no longer. He had grown used to being looked upon as a man of attainment, whose advice was worth soliciting. They sought his opinion and criticism. It gave him a feeling of intrinsic worth that was very gratifying and at the same time gave him perspective to keep his eyes unflinching upon the road where the real giants of the earth were traveling.

As he stood in the darkness beyond the half-open door, looking at the girl's face silhouetted against the glow of the lamp, a sudden fear that this picture of her would vanish in air took hold of him. He was still so recent from the sea and the drab loneliness of the sailor's quarters, that the memory of sordid things was very poignant and real.

Even now he would wake up at night from some troubled dream of his lonely past which only the sight of his work-table, stacked to overflowing with magazines containing his published stories, and the thought of Pete, could dispel. He would crawl back to bed with a sigh of relief after fondling some familiar object and lay on his back smoking and thinking, with the sweetness of the girl's personality assuaging the horrors of his dream.

He realized tonight more than ever how necessary Pete had become to him. Two years earlier, during the despairing hours when the question of his next meal had been a powerful driving force toward success, he had needed nothing more to spur him on. The very obstacles that had piled themselves mountain-high before him, had aroused his fighting spirit to a pitch that no barriers could exclude. But now, with the creature satisfied, the reaction from his three years of suffering and sacrifice had caused a certain bodily apathy to creep upon him at times, as when one awakens on a cloudy day cold and depressed from a too long sleep.

He had tried to throw himself into the Bohemian life and gaiety of the old building, thinking thus to effect a cure, but after such short excursions he always returned to his work frantically with a feel-

ing of having betrayed himself and his dream-people. A visit to Pete with her warm, genuine personality, her unflinching sense of intrinsic values, would then put him aright.

"It is because they are not honest with themselves," Pete had said one evening. "I like them, but they are so frantically trying to live up to what the world calls 'Bohemianism,' that they have lost the sense of value and have gotten out of touch with themselves. Why be a freak because you have a talent? Simplicity is the hallmark of true genius."

His wonder at her sane arguments and clear-thinking mind never ceased. The lofty idealism of this girl, that neither sordid home conditions nor the rebuffs of the world had been able to shake, gave Andrew renewed hope and purposes. He began to measure the vices and virtues of his characters by Pete's philosophy and unconsciously wrote her personality into the pages of his stories.

The girl stopped playing and turned her head, perceiving him for the first time.

"Andy!" she exclaimed, rising from the piano-stool with both hands extended, as Andrew pushed the door open and entered. "You almost frightened me. How long have you been standing there? Why didn't you come in?"

"Is tea ready? Andrew asked sheepishly, like a schoolboy caught in the act. He handed her a paper sack. "Some of those Chinese almond cookies you said you liked. I walked down to Tuey Far Low's and got 'em."

"In this rain?" Pete answered, regarding him with a faint flush on her cheeks as she opened the paper sack. "You must be wet. Pull the rocker over by the grate while I brew the tea. The water is boiling."

Andrew sat by the fire watching her as she moved about the room. The shaded glow of the lamp on the piano threw a soft shadow upon her face as she bent over the tea-tray on the stand near-by. He could not see her eyes but he felt them suffused with a soft, tender light beneath her drooping eyelids. She moved forward a step or two with the tray in her hand.

"Shall we move the stand over by the fire?" she asked.

For a moment he sat gazing at her stand-



ing there in the half-light with the tray poised in her slender hands and her head thrown back. She looked like a boy page of some ancient day.

"Andy, are you dreaming?" she asked with a quick embarrassed laugh.

"Excuse me!" he said, springing to his feet and moving the stand in front of the grate between the two chairs. "I guess I was—dreaming," he added, avoiding her gaze.

When she poured the tea he lifted his eyes for an instant. She was looking at the tray, not at him. Passing him his cup without raising her eyes, she stretched herself in the chair opposite with her own cup in her lap.

"Well, what's the score today?" she asked presently.

"Two thousand words," Andrew answered, his eyes upon the glowing embers. "And a check from the Black Book—for eighty-five dollars."

"Good!"

Her face lighted instantly with enthusiasm for his good fortune. For a moment she sipped her tea in silence. Then she said—

"Some day you'll be a great man, Andy."

Andrew did not answer her at once. He felt that she was thinking precisely of what was on his own mind. He glanced apprehensively at the bulky protuberance which the ring-case made above his vest-pocket. Many times he had been on the point of asking Pete to marry him but he felt that her own success in music must be assured before she would consent. To ask her now would be unfair. In monetary reward he had gone far beyond her. He knew that he must wait until such a time when she could give herself to him with a sense of equality. Her pride would never allow her to participate in his success before her own future as an artist had been assured.

"Some day you'll be a great pianist," he answered presently.

She nodded.

"Yes!"

They sat in silence with the crackling fire and the glow of their thoughts warming them to a sense of their importance in each other's eyes and to the world, humbly conscious of the gifts the Master had showered in their laps, proudly determined to make the utmost of those gifts.

"Some day I may have to go to New York," Pete said presently.

The words sent a pang through Andrew. His hand, grasping the saucer, trembled.

"Of course!" he answered dully.

Pete turned her dark eyes upon him.

"The Bandini Block will be lonely without you, Pete," Andrew added. "It seems as if we should always go on working shoulder by shoulder, you and I."

He let this vision possess him as she filled his empty cup. He was never as happy as when he surrendered himself to dreams about Pete and himself. These dreams had become interwoven with the motive of every sentence and paragraph in his stories. If Pete went to New York his genius would depart with her.

The girl placed her empty cup on the tray and leaned back in her chair with her hands folded in her lap.

"I have helped you, then?" she asked softly.

"Yes, very—much."

"You have helped me more than you realize, Andy," she said, dropping her lids slowly in the way he liked. "Very few women are blessed with a friend like you. Your fairness to my sex is the result of your years upon the sea. I wonder, Andy, if you'll ever lose this perspective of fairness."

"I hope not," he answered.

Andrew arose from his chair with the pretext of replenishing the fire. Pete reached out her arm for a piece of wood from the box at her side. As Andrew took the piece of wood from her his hand touched hers. For a brief moment his fingers closed about hers. Pete sat staring at the fire motionless, without protest. Andrew threw the piece of wood upon the glowing embers. In the resultant flare, he stole a glance at the girl. A soft smile lingered about her lips.

There was a long silence between them. Deep quiet fell upon the room. The blue gas-flame under the tea-kettle lay flat and still like a pool of faintly glowing phosphorus. A cloud of tobacco smoke from Andrew's pipe churned lazily and wreath-like in the circle of light sharply defined by the colored Chinese lamp-shade. The grotesquely carved legs of the old-fashioned piano seemed to become alive with gargoyle images dancing in the firelight.

Upon the windows lay a snowy film of

steam, shading into gray transparency at the edges. Everything about the room was just as Andrew had pictured it when he had pushed his way against the storm an hour earlier. In his wanderings about the seas he had thought of such a scene as this, seated with his dream-girl before their glowing grate with a good day's work accomplished. . . .

There was steps outside in the hall, followed by a knock. John Devor entered and closed the door behind him.

"Hello, folks," he said, throwing his raincoat over the back of a chair and advancing to the glowing grate rubbing his wet, steaming hands. "Please sit still," he added, dropping to a seat on the wood-box beside Pete, refusing the chair Andrew pushed forward. "I'd much rather sit where I am. You can't get close enough to a fire on a night like this."

He glanced from Pete, who had risen and was pouring him a cup of tea, to Andrew's face.

"What's happened?" he asked in mock seriousness. "You both look like you had lost your last friend or—dollar."

The girl passed him his cup with a quiet smile.

"How's your cough, John?" she asked, ignoring his question.

A shadow passed momentarily over Devor's face. He stirred his tea thoughtfully before replying. Then, with a pathetic smile on his thin lips, he replied:

"Fine! It's growing into a real man's size cough. Even the landlady is beginning to take notice. She hinted this morning that she might have to increase my room-rent. Tourist season and so forth, she said. Doctor Bayless gave me six months to live, bless his generous heart."

Pete shot Andrew a scared glance.

"Why don't you chuck everything and go camping in the mountains, John?" Andrew inquired.

"Hm," Devor answered. "In the Spring I shall, perhaps. At present I'm having rather a good time analyzing the progress of slow dissolution. It's good copy and fascinating. Some day I hope to write a book about the last moments of a consumptive. If I happen to pass out before the book is finished, you'll find half a ream of notes on the subject in the top shelf of my bookcase, Andrew. It's hot stuff."

"John!" Pete exclaimed in horror.

Devor placed his hand on the girl's arm with a motion of apology.

"Forgive me, Pete," he said contritely, "I didn't mean to be a boor. I guess this thing is beginning to get on my nerves. I have always been so confoundedly healthy, you know."

"You mustn't talk like that, John."

He continued with vehemence:

"For six years I have struggled and fought. Just when success is within my grasp, this thing comes along." He drained his cup to the dregs and placed the empty cup on the stand. "It's a great life if you don't weaken," he whispered with a slow smile.

When Devor had gone to his studio Andrew rose and stretched his legs before the fire.

"Poor John," he murmured.

Pete was busy putting the tea things away in the far end of the room. She did not answer at once. Then crossing the floor to Andrew's side, she held her hands over the grate and said—

"I think John is broke, Andy."

Andrew started and grasped her by the shoulders.

"Good God!" he exclaimed. "It never struck me for a moment. Why—why didn't he say something?"

"John is proud," Pete answered softly. "Something he said yesterday started me to thinking. Didn't you notice his watch was gone? I think John is in a bad way."

Instinctively Andrew ran his finger into his own vest-pocket. It came in contact with the plush-covered ring-case. Pete's eyes followed his finger.

"What's that lump?" she asked innocently.

For a moment Andrew was at a loss what to say. Then looking into her dark eyes he saw that she was half-suspecting what the pocket contained. He blushed furiously. Pulling the ring-case from the pocket he placed it in her hand and watched her breathlessly open it.

"Andy!" she exclaimed.

He took the ring from her hand and placed it on her finger. As he did so the case dropped to the floor and rolled under the rocking chair. Pete raised her face to his. Andrew took her burning cheeks between his hands and kissed her. For a moment she clung to him shyly. He laid

his lips upon her hair that was soft and fragrant like mosses on the warm slopes of the cañons.

"I—I—was afraid to ask you," he whispered, "you seemed so—wrapped up in your career, Pete."

"Andy," she laughed softly, "love was all I needed to make my success sure. And love itself is the greatest career in the world."

He smoothed the hair from her forehead with trembling, ecstatic fingers. It seemed to Andrew that the world was a great chamber filled to bursting with exquisite music that any moment might rend it asunder and scatter its sweet-toned wonder over the universe.

There was a knock on the door. The two lovers flew apart.

"Come in," Andrew said with a new authority in his voice.

John Devor entered. He gazed curiously from one to the other.

"I dropped my note-book somewhere," he said, glancing about the floor in front of the grate.

Pete lifted the lamp from the stand and helped him search. Moving the rocking-chair, Devor dropped to his knees and discovering the ring-case where it had rolled under the chair, held it up to the light and examined it. Andrew and Pete exchanged meaning glances. Devor opened the ring-case with an odd expression on his face. His glance fell upon Pete's face suffused with a telltale flush, and traveled slowly to her hand grasping the lamp upon whose finger the solitaire sparkled in the soft light. His face turned the color of chalk. Rising to his feet he placed the ring-case dazedly upon the mantle. For a moment he stood swaying in the uncertain light, then he ran his hand over his eyes as if to brush away some unpleasant vision and drew a deep breath.

"I guess I must have dropped—the note-book in the hall," he stammered. "You'll excuse me for bothering you."

He crossed the floor unsteadily. At the door he paused with his thin bony hand clutching the knob convulsively.

"Good night and—good luck to both of you," he said with white lips.

The next moment the door closed upon him. Pete replaced the lamp on the stand. When she joined Andrew at the grate there was tears in her eyes.

"Poor old John," Andrew whispered, "we've both been blind, Pete."

He bent low and kissed her.

"Good night, Pete," he said gently, taking her slim hand in his own and holding it up to the firelight. In the soft glow the diamond sparkled and leaped as a thing alive. Pete pressed the ring to her lips, and looked at Andrew in silent adoration.

"Good night, Andy," she said softly.

Andrew crossed the dim-lighted hall to his studio as in a dream. Beneath his new found happiness smoldered the thought of John Devor, his friend, fighting a losing battle with the white specter in his lonely tower studio down the hall.

II

THE next day when Andrew went to lunch he met Agostini Sr. coming down the stairs. A wave of resentment and disgust swept over Andrew as he glanced at the wrinkled, scowling face of the old Italian foundry-man. Pete had been bled again. No one knew better than he himself how ill she could afford it!

Motioning to the man he drew him into the sheltering darkness of the stairway. Old Agostini's face turned white with guilt.

"What you want?" he growled, drawing back.

Andrew drew forth a roll of small bills and counted twenty dollars into the astonished man's hand.

"When you need money again, come to me," he said. "Understand? You are not to bother Pete any more."

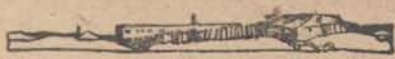
"I—understand," the old man grinned, favoring Andrew with a knowing wink.

"I don't think you do—quite," Andrew retorted, clenching his fists meaningly.

The man shrank back coweringly, stuffing the bills into his greasy pocket.

"Miss Agostini must know nothing about this. You may tell her that your wages have been raised or anything you choose. Once a month I will meet you at an appointed place, with a like amount, on the condition that you do not breathe a word about this to your daughter. Understand? As much as a hint and the allowance stops. Good-by."

When Andrew mounted the stairs and unlocked his door half an hour later, he saw John Devor come out of Pete's studio,



close the door softly behind him and walk on tiptoe down the deserted hall to his tower room above. At the foot of the narrow staircase which led to the tower Devor paused for a moment and stood gazing at a small dark object in his outstretched palm. The rays of the Winter sun fell yellow and wan through the skylight above his head upon his gaunt, sunken face.

Andrew saw him bend over the object in his hand for a moment, then with his head sunk on his chest, Devor mounted the narrow staircase out of sight. Andrew stood rooted to the spot. What was Devor doing in Pete's studio? The girl was absent, he knew, at this hour. Andrew had recognized the object in his friend's hand. It was the purple plush ring-case. He wanted to run after Devor, but something restrained him. Opening the door of his studio he flung himself upon the lounge and buried his face in his hands.

With the door ajar he watched for Pete's return, resolving to say nothing about the incident. She would think the empty case had been swept out by the janitor during her absence. She came in an hour later than usual. As she stepped upon the landing outside her door, Andrew took the key from her hand and opened the door. Her face was flushed with the exertion of the two flights of stairs, and when he closed the door behind them and took her in his arms, he felt her heart beating close to his own in their embrace. She removed her hat and gloves while he stood watching her out of his eager, happy eyes. Glancing at her gloveless hand he asked—

"Where is the ring, Pete?"

"Oh," she replied, "I couldn't bear to have other people share in my happiness—yet. I left it there in the case on the mantle—why—where!" She crossed the floor to the mantle with a cry of horror. "Andy," she gasped, "are you playing a joke on me?"

Andrew stood staring at the smooth empty expanse of the mantle-shelf.

"You—left—it in the plush case—on the—mantle?" he asked dazedly.

"Yes, yes," she cried. "Oh, Andy, some one must have stolen it."

For a moment Andrew stood speechless, staring from the mantle to the girl's tearful face.

"Oh, my God!" he blurted out.

The horrible situation burst upon him in a flash. The plush ring-case in Devor's hand as he mounted the stairs to his studio! It was perfectly plain. His friend's financial condition had caused him to commit a theft.

"Has anyone besides John and myself got the key to this room?" he asked hoarsely.

"Only the janitor and my father," Pete quavered. "I would trust either of those three." She sank into a chair and buried her face in her hands. "Oh, what must you think of me, Andy," she sobbed.

Andrew took her in his arms.

"Never mind, sweetheart," he whispered. "It'll turn up sure. Don't worry! Leave it to me."

Just before dusk Andrew walked with a heavy heart up the creaking stairs to Devor's tower room on the roof of the building. For an hour he had been rehearsing over and over again what to say to John. He had decided to drop no hint about the loss of the ring for the present. In some way he must contrive to force John to accept a loan, so that his unfortunate friend would be enabled to return the ring. At first a wave of resentment and horror had swept over Andrew at John's betrayal of his faith in him. But upon maturer consideration, the resentment gave place to a feeling of great pity and tolerance. He placed himself in John's position and shuddered. The temptation of starvation he knew only too well. After all, what was the price of a paltry ring with a human life at stake? The ring with its one-carat gem spelled two months of leisure in the mountains for John—two months longer lease of life for his sick friend. Andrew shuddered for himself, were he placed in such a position.

When he knocked at the door of the tower room he heard Devor spring to his feet.

"Who is there?"

"It's Andy, John," Andrew answered, with beating heart.

"Just a moment, Andy."

Andrew heard Devor close a drawer, then footsteps across the floor. The next moment the bolt was withdrawn and John, in his smoking-jacket, opened the door.

"I was doing some special work, so I shot the bolt," Devor explained, pointing to a chair; "sit down, Andy."

Andrew glanced about the room. Never before today had it struck him how poorly this tower room was furnished. He had always thought of the place with its half-finished sketches in oil and pastel as a workshop. Now he saw it for the first time as the only home John had ever known. The ragged couch-cover, the crazy chairs, the table littered with tubes of paint, worn-out brushes, and crayons were eloquent of his friend's reduced circumstances.

For several moments he sat with parched lips, avoiding John's gaze. He was at a loss how to begin. He could not come right out and offer his friend assistance. Devor was standing with his back to him looking out of the window across the roofs of the buildings. Andrew's gaze wandered about the room. Suddenly a thought occurred to him.

"John," he said with as much calm as he could muster, pointing to a painting of a young girl near the window, "what will you take for that picture?"

Devor turned upon him slowly with a cynical smile on his thin lips.

"Don't kid me," he said.

"I am in earnest, John. How much will you take, spot cash?"

"Ye Gods," John whispered, "my first sale. Steady boy! How much shall I stick the gentleman? He looks good for ten dollars. Shall I wrap it up or do you wish it delivered, sir?"

Andrew drew out his check-book with trembling hands.

"Give me a pen," he said.

He tore off the check and handed it to Devor.

"I've O.K.'d the signature. You can get it cashed at any bank."

Devor stood staring at the piece of paper dazedly.

"Fifty dollars," he murmured. "Andy, I refuse to allow you to—"

"Give me the picture before you change your mind," Andrew said sternly. "The transaction is closed."

Devor took the painting from the wall and handed it to Andrew. His face was flushed with a mixture of embarrassment and gratitude. When Andrew paused in the open door with the picture under his arm, John held out his hand and said huskily—

"I sha'n't forget, Andy."

For a moment Andy looked his friend straight in the face. John's eyes never wavered. Andrew felt the guilty flush of suspicion, unwarranted, mount to his own cheeks.

"Good-by," he said, closing the door softly and descending the stairs.

Pete was waiting for him in his studio when Andrew entered with the picture under his arm.

"I—I—think I have a clue to the loss of the ring," he said, avoiding her gaze. "Get your hat and coat and let us go to a play and try to forget about the ring. Everything will be all right."

The girl glanced at the picture and caught her hand at her throat.

"Andy!" she whispered, looking him straight in the eyes.

Andrew dropped his eyes in confusion.

"Please get your hat and coat and let us be going," he said almost gruffly.

"All right, Andy," the girl whispered humbly, leaving the room.

III

WHEN the door closed upon Andrew, Devor stood gazing silently at the check in his hand. Crossing the room, he drew from his pocket a small key with which he opened the top drawer of his dresser.

With trembling hands he took from the drawer the small purple ring-case and pressed the spring and smiled softly. The night before, he had removed the inside padding and had fitted in its place a small miniature painting of Pete which he had begun shortly after midnight and had just finished when Andrew had knocked. He had intended to replace the ring-case on the mantle before Pete's return from her afternoon pupils, as a surprise for the girl, but Andrew's visit had upset this plan.

Changing his smoking-jacket for a gray Norfolk, he folded up Andrew's check, stuck it in his vest-pocket, placed the ring-case with its miniature painting open on the table, that the paint might dry quickly, and left the studio, locking the door behind him.

After cashing the check at Andrew's bank, he called on Rubinstein, the pawnbroker, to redeem his watch on which he had borrowed ten dollars a few days earlier.



Rubinstein was busy with a customer at the far end of the store, so Devor sauntered about the place looking at the showcases. His attention was attracted to the wicket gate in front of the safe by the excited voice of Rubinstein's customer and the pawnbroker's insistent refusal of some request.

Glancing up curiously, Devor saw the owner of the excited voice, a short dark-complexioned man, stuff a handful of soiled bills into his trousers pocket. There was something familiar about the man. Devor turned his back upon the two men as the customer came shambling down between the showcases. As the man passed into the street, Devor got a glimpse of a swarthy familiar face. Old Agostini, Pete's father! He wondered what article the old impecunious Italian had possessed to charm money from the flinty Rubinstein. The family crucifix perhaps?

Devor was aroused from his speculations by Rubinstein tapping his shoulder.

"Vat can I do for you, Mister Dee-vor?" the pawnbroker inquired, rubbing his hands genially.

"Oh—er, my watch. I came to redeem it," Devor answered.

"So soon, eh? Goot business." Rubinstein grinned. "Come with me back."

Devor followed the pawnbroker to the counter before the safe at the rear of the store, where the nucleus of Rubinstein's business rested securely behind a row of strong iron bars. The pawnbroker stooped down and pulled out a drawer from which he selected an envelope with Devor's name upon it.

"Ten-forty, Mister Deevor. Ten dollars principal und forty cents interest. I must charge you full month, four per cent.," he sighed, as if apologizing for his usury.

"Very well," Devor answered, as the pawnbroker wound up the watch obligingly while the money was being counted out. Pushing the bills across the counter to Rubinstein, Devor asked casually—"What did old Agostini have to pawn?"

The pawnbroker grinned.

"You know him?" he asked.

"Slightly," Devor answered.

"A ring," Rubinstein volunteered, "a damn fine ring." He reached into the open safe behind him. "Look! Some class, eh, Mister Deevor?"

Devor stared speechless with amazement at the ring between the pawnbroker's gnarled fingers. There could be no mistake about it. It was the ring he had seen on Pete's finger the night before. The design was a peculiar one of Andrew's own idea. Devor took the ring between his fingers and examined it. On the inside was engraved the word "Pete."

He suddenly remembered having seen old Agostini in the hall outside Pete's studio about noon. The whole thing was perfectly plain. The old Italian had visited Pete's room in the girl's absence. Devor knew that the man had the key to his daughter's studio. He had taken the ring from its case on the mantle—robbed his own daughter.

Devor handed the ring back to the pawnbroker.

"How much did he borrow on it?" he asked casually.

"Forty dollars," Rubinstein answered. "He wants fifty. He got mad. You heard him."

Devor laughed softly.

"You old robber," he grinned. "It's worth a hundred and fifty if it's worth a cent."

"Sure, I know," Rubinstein answered, "retail. Wholesale about seventy-five. I lend fifty per cent., wholesale value only. I gotter live!"

"You'll never die of heart failure, Rubinstein," Devor said thoughtfully. "Where does Agostini live? Have you got his address?"

"Sure," the pawnbroker answered, "you like to buy the ring for the lady friend?" Rubinstein grinned. "I bet you she right away send for the preacher maybe. One carat full—oi, oi. I bet she get tickled, no?"

"If I buy the pawnticket from Agostini will you turn over the ring to me on payment of the forty dollars with interest?" Devor asked.

"Sure thing," Rubinstein said, "four per cent.—dollar sixty—\$41.60 and the ring is yours."

"Give me his address," Devor said.

Rubinstein consulted his pawn record.

"R. Agostini, 751 Palmetto Street," he said.

Devor made a note of the address and handed back his watch to the pawnbroker.

"I'll let the watch stand another month,

Rubinstein. You can keep the forty cents interest," he said.

Rubinstein passed Devor back his ten dollars with a grin.

"All right, Mister Devor."

"I'll be back for the ring this evening, Rubinstein," Devor said. "S'long."

IV

THE HOME of Agostini on Palmetto Street was an old adobe hovel set back from the street in a wilderness of broken-down fences, woodpiles and the overflow of a second-hand machinery concern, whose yard piled high with rusted cogwheels and scrap-iron of every description, surrounded it on three sides.

Once a farm-house when the city was young, it now stood in the center of that mongrel demesne east of Main Street, which is neither resident nor factory district, a place given over without lease or privileges to the poorest classes of the workers. White, Black and Yellow lived here side by side in amiable squalor. It was a place of curs, garlic and settlement schools. Women perennially big with child, heavy-footed men with lack-luster eyes, children hoary in the vices of youth.

Devor picked his way shudderingly down the littered unswept sidewalk. Out of this seraglio Pete had stepped, marvelous and bright-eyed, to demand from the world a place for her ideals.

In response to his knock the door was opened by a slatternly woman with dark eyes like Pete's—turned heavy lidded and weary with hopes deferred. From the room at her back, beyond the open door, came the fretful bickering of alien child tongues.

"What you want?" the women inquired of Devor, shouting a shrill warning in Italian over her shoulder to the children.

"Is Mr. Agostini at home?" Devor asked, removing his hat.

The woman regarded him searchingly in the smoke-churned gloom of the hall.

"What you want with him?" she repeated ungraciously.

"My name is John Devor. I am a friend of your daughter Petra. May I speak to your husband?"

Mrs. Agostini's weary eyes lit up with momentary interest.

"A friend of Pete's?" she asked. There was a sudden change in her attitude and

tone, "Is she with trouble? Will you not come in? My husband is at home, yes, but he—is—not very well. Tonight was pay-night," she added by the way of explanation.

Devor nodded and followed her through the hall into a large room that served as kitchen, sitting-room, laundry and nursery. Wiping a litter of crumbs from a chair with her apron, she bade him be seated and went into the adjoining room. Four young Agostinis, in various stages of undress, stared at Devor across the littered supper-table. The latest arrival, scarcely a year old, regarded him solemnly from a battered high-chair by the stove, dividing its attention impartially between Devor and a crust of bread in its grubby fist.

From the adjoining room Devor heard the muffled voice of Mrs. Agostini exhorting her husband in Italian to get up. Presently she returned.

"He'll be out in a minute," she volunteered, turning her back upon Devor. "How's Pete? There ain't nothing bad has happened, is there?"

"Oh, no," Devor answered reassuringly. "I just came to—" he paused.

In the open doorway stood Agostini, stubby-bearded, unkempt, blinking his watery eyes, one suspender dangling at his waist.

"What you want?" he growled, scowling at Devor across the littered table.

"My name is John Devor," Devor said steadily, extending his hand. "I'm a friend of your daughter Petra. May I speak with you in private?"

Agostini ignored the salutation and fastened his small, beady eyes furtively upon Devor's face. His liquor-inflamed cheeks turned a sickly green.

"What you want?" he spluttered with a show of bravado.

"I would rather discuss the matter with you in private," Devor answered pointedly.

"All right!" Agostini answered ungraciously. "Come in here!"

"Well?" he growled, shutting the door behind him and facing Devor with a menacing frown.

Devor looked the man steadily in the eyes for a moment.

"I want you to give me the pawn-ticket, Agostini," he said quietly.

"You go to hell!" the Italian shouted.



"I will give you just one minute to produce the pawn-ticket," Devor said.

"You're ver-ry kind, Meester Devor," Agostini retorted with a drunken leer.

"Agostini," Devor said, "I saw you come out of your daughter's studio today, and Rubinstein gave me your address. I have two plainclothes-men waiting down the street. Come now, don't be a fool."

The old Italian's face became livid with fear.

"I—I spent the money. My children need clothes," he whined hypocritically.

"I didn't ask you for the money," Devor said contemptuously. "All I want is the pawn-ticket."

"Oh," the man growled in evident relief. He ran his hand into the pocket of his overalls and threw a folded piece of paper on the soiled bed-cover. "Take it!"

Devor stuck the piece of paper in his pocket and left the man sitting on the edge of the bed muttering drunkenly. Mrs. Agostini, with the baby in her arms, looked up inquiringly as Devor came out of the bedroom.

"May I speak to you a moment?" Devor asked, motioning her outside.

"Pete sent you this," he said, pressing a five-dollar bill into her hand. "Better not let your husband know," he added.

Mrs. Agostini caught his hand impulsively.

"Tell Pete, hello, from me," she whispered. "Maybe some day I come see her. Only I think she ashamed of me."

V

WHEN he stepped off the street-car at the corner of Second and Main Streets, Devor found to his dismay that Rubinstein had closed his shop. He rattled the handle of the door without getting any response. For a moment he stood in indecision, looking up and down the almost deserted street and clutching the pawn-ticket nervously in his hand. There was nothing to do but wait until morning.

Crossing into Spring Street, he bought himself something to eat at a lunch-counter. He was faint from hunger and from the reaction after his stormy interview with old Agostini. The sleepy-eyed waiter took his order with an air of personal resentment. Devor ate his sandwich ravenously, gulped down a cup of beastly

coffee and rose to his feet unsteadily. The atmosphere of the place nauseated him. He threw the amount of his check on the greasy counter and staggered into the street in a violent fit of coughing. Leaning against a lamp-post for support, he turned up the collar of his threadbare Norfolk, then continued his way unsteadily north on Main to the studio.

At Temple Block he paused in another violent fit of coughing and sank exhausted to a seat on the granite steps of the Federal Building. The street lay wet and glistening, wrapped in gray, clammy fog punctuated by flickering arclights. A sharp, penetrating wind stole down the narrow chasm of Temple Street, chilling him to the bone. Hugging the granite pedestal of the bronze-armed lamp-post, he placed his fevered forehead against the icy metal.

For a long time he sat very still with his hands at his throbbing temples, thinking, thinking, thinking. Early in the morning he would go to Rubinstein's and redeem the ring. He would save Pete from the disgrace of knowing that her own father was a thief. Returning the ring to her with the case containing the miniature he could explain that he had only borrowed the ring-case for the purpose of painting the picture and that he had not discovered that the ring was inside until he had opened it in the morning to fit the miniature into it. She would believe him implicitly. Pete was that kind. Devor smiled softly. Andrew's check had saved the situation. Little would his old friend suspect the reward his generosity had reaped.

Rising shiveringly, he staggered north on Main Street through the fog. Familiar objects stood outlined in vague blurs on every hand. Pedestrians with hunched shoulders and upturned coat collars rose out of the fog, passed him and were lost to sight a moment later. He seemed to be groping his way through a universe filled with noxious, strangling fumes, whose denizens were automatons. Gasping and coughing, he felt his way along the wall under the columned gloom of the Bandini Block's marquis-shrouded sidewalk and found the entrance. Clutching the banister he dragged himself up the two flights of stairs with the pawn-ticket in his hand, and staggered down the hall to his tower studio.

When he inserted the key he was astonished to feel the door open at his touch. For a moment he stood swaying in the light of the open door blinking his eyes dazedly. Beside the table in the middle of the room stood Pete and Andrew. On the table in the pool of light from the shaded reading-lamp lay the purple ring-case with Pete's miniature, where he had left it to dry. Horror-struck, Devor stood staring from one to the other. Andrew's gaze was bent accusingly upon him. Pete turned her back upon him and buried her face in her hands. Something within Devor's brain seemed to snap. He staggered across the threshold. The pawn-ticket fluttered from his hand. He felt Andrew's arm encircle his waist. The room turned black before his eyes.

The chill Winter sun fell through the arched windows above his couch. Devor turned his head upon his pillow wearily.

"Pete!" he gasped.

The girl raised her head from her task of stirring something in a water tumbler on a stand near his head.

"Yes, John?" she said softly, bending over him and pressing the glass to his lips.

Devor stared at her hand holding the glass. Encircling the girl's finger was the stolen ring. Rising upon his elbow he ran his hand over his eyes.

"Pete — where — how — did you get — that——?"

Pete replaced the glass on the stand.

"Oh, John," she sobbed, dropping to her knees beside him. "We took the pawn-ticket to Rubinstein's this morning and redeemed the ring. You dropped the ticket on the floor when you fainted last night. Rubinstein told us everything." She pressed Devor's thin, emaciated fingers to her lips. "Oh, John, John," she whispered, "can you ever forgive us?"

The door opened. Andrew entered with a tray which he placed on the table, and, with both hands extended, came swiftly to Devor's bedside.

"John!" he said, huskily averting his face and grasping his sick friend's thin hands in a grip of steel.

Devor closed his eyes.

"How do you like—the miniature, Pete?" he whispered.

"Like it?" she whispered back. "Words can not express, John! It is the work of a master——"

"Yes, yes," he murmured with a smile on his thin bloodless lips. "The master—painted — your — picture on — my heart, Pete—" He rose on his pillow and took her face between his hands. "Pete," he gasped, "look at me! Straight in the eyes! I am—taking—your picture—back with me—to—the master——"

Dust

TOUCH lightly these gray stones, since who
knows

What romances lurk here, what beauties bide?
Here some great, long-dead queen, perchance, may
hide

Her loveliness, and here's the fragrant rose —
That graced her breast. Here, wistfully, there
blows

A song born of a poet's ancient pride
That sorrow, want, and mortal pain defied;
And here's the laurel crown that fame bestows.

Aye, all of these, and more—the winnowings
Of immemorial years of change and rust;
Kingdoms and creeds and prophets; flutterings
Of birds and bees and blossoms; for the dust
Is dream and youth and bloom and melody,
Love, life and death—the world's epitome!

Charlotte Becker



The Tempering

BY CHARLES NEVILLE BUCK

A Five-Part Story

Part II

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form.

"**N**OTHIN' don't nuver come ter pas hyar—about!" Boone Wellver lamented aloud to the Cumberlands.

Came a rustling, and Victor McCalloway, with saber, rode up.

"Son," said McCalloway, "I'm bound for Cyrus Spradling's house. Does your father live near?" "Hain't got no daddy, no mammy, nuther. Asa Gregory's my first cousin. I reckon you know him?"

"Yes," replied the man, who had read about Gregory's indictment for the murder of John Carr.

At this juncture Asa strode up and volunteered to accompany McCalloway to the latter's destination. While on the way Asa told the man he had killed Carr in self-defense.

BITTER was the party feeling in the election for Governor of Kentucky in 1899. Marlin Town, a mountain community, was Republican. Despite the hatred of the mountaineers, William Goebel, the Democratic candidate, spoke at the town. Asa and Boone were present.

Later Saul Fulton, who had left the backwoods to live as a tenant on a bluegrass farm, visited his cousin Asa.

"There is ter be a rally at ther incline ter-night," he explained, "an' they wants me ter fotch ye back—an' thet ye shan't tote no weepin' of airy sort. Your enemy, Tom Carr, 'll be there unarmed. Ef ye an' Tom shakes hands, all will ride home quiet an' take off thar coats ter beat Goebel for governor."

That night Asa and Carr shook hands, pledging to lay aside feudism for the time being for the sake of political harmony.

After the speaking Boone went to McCalloway's

home where he met General Basil Prince. The two men talked late, Prince praising the British general, Sir Hector Dinwiddie, who, slandered, had taken his life in Paris.

When Prince had finished, McCalloway held out his saber.

"This is Dinwiddie's sword," he explained, "and he trusted me enough to leave it in my keeping."

WINTER came and the election. Both sides claimed the narrow margin of victory and the fight was taken to the courts. In December Fulton and Boone drove a herd of cattle to market and on the Twelfth the boy saw the inauguration of the Republican governor.

Fulton and Boone lived in a frame house back of the country home of Colonel Tom Wallifarro. A Christmas-eve reception was held and Boone went, thinking the affair was similar to the parties held in the mountains.

"I heered tell thet thar was a dancing party goin' forward hyar," he announced as he opened the door, "an' I 'lowed I'd jest fare over fer a spell."

An outburst of laughter greeted him.

General Prince, who was present, introduced Boone.

"I fear I've done made a fool o' myself, an' I reckon I'll say farewell to you-all," he remarked.

"This is my party," spoke up little Anne Masters, "and I invite you to come in."

A VISITOR called on Fulton one night during the first week in February and made arrangements for Saul, and Jim Hollins of Clay County, and representatives of other counties,

to induce armed mountaineers to go to Frankfort to petition the Legislature.

Shortly afterward "Bev" Jett, sheriff of Marlin County, advised Asa Gregory to go to Frankfort to try to secure a pardon.

When, on the twenty-fifth of January, he visited Frankfort to attend a political conference, Colonel Wallifarro saw a train arrive, filled with mountaineers. He heard the cry—

"The mountaineers have come!"

IX

WHEN the Senate convened that day, strange and uncouth lookers-on stood ranged about the Statehouse corridors and their unblinking eyes took stony account of their chief adversary as he entered.

Upon his dark face, with its overhanging forelock, flickered no ghost of misgiving, no hint of any weakening or excitement. His gaze betrayed no interest beyond the casual for the men along the walls, whom report credited with a murderous hatred of himself.

Boone was fretting his heart out at the cabin of Saul Fulton while he knew that history was in the making at Frankfort, and on the evening of the twenty-ninth an eagerness to be near the focus of activity mastered him. The elements of right and wrong involved in this battle of political giants were to his untrained mind, academic; but the drama of conflict was like a bugle-call—clear, direct and urgent.

He would not be immediately needed on the farm and Frankfort was only fifteen miles away. If he set out at once and walked most of the night he could reach the Mecca of his pilgrimage by tomorrow morning, and in his pocket was the sum of "two-bits" to defray the expenses of "snacks an' sich-like needcessities."

For the avoidance of possible discussion, he slipped quietly out of the back door with no announcement to Saul's wife. With soft snowflakes drifting into his face and melting on his eyelashes, he began his march, and for four hours swung along at a steady three-and-a-half-mile gait. At last he stole into a barn and huddled down upon a straw pile, but before dawn he was on the way again and in the early light he turned into the main street of the State capital. His purpose was to view one day of life in a city and then to slip back again to his uneventful duties.

The town had outgrown its first indignant surprise over the invasion of the

"mountain army" and the senator from Kenton had passed boldly through its unordered ranks as need suggested. The hillmen had fallen sullenly back and made a path for his going.

This morning he walked with a close friend, who had constituted himself a bodyguard of one. The upper house was to meet at ten and it was five minutes short of the hour when the man with preoccupied and resolute features swung through the gate of the Statehouse grounds. The way lay from there around the fountain to the door set within the columned portico.

In circling the fountain the companion dropped a pace to the rear and glanced about him with a hasty scrutiny, and, as he did so a sharp report ripped the quietness of the place, speedily followed by the more muffled sound of pistol shots.

The gentleman in the rear froze in his tracks, glancing this way and that in a bewildered effort to locate the sound. The senator halted, too, but after a moment he wavered a little, lifted one hand with a gesture, rather of weariness than of pain, and, buckling at the knees, sagged down slowly until he lay on the flag-stoned walk with one hand pressed to the bosom of his buttoned overcoat.

Figures were already running up from here and there. As the dismayed friend locked his arms under the prone shoulders he heard words faintly enunciated—not dramatically declaimed, but in strangely matter-of-fact tone and measure.

"I guess they've—got me."

Boone Wellver saw a throng of tight-wedged humanity pressing along with eyes turned inward toward some core of excited interest, and heard the words that ran everywhere—"Goebel has been shot!"

He felt a sudden nausea as he followed the crowd at whose center was borne a helpless body, until it jammed about the door of a doctor's office, and after that, for a long while, he wandered absently over the town.

Turning the corner of an empty side street in the late afternoon, he came face



to face with Asa Gregory, and his perplexed unrest gave way to comfort.

Asa was tranquilly studying a theatrical poster displayed on a wall. His face was composed and lit with a smile of quiet amusement, but before Boone reached his side, or accosted him, another figure rounded the corner, walking with agitated haste, and the boy ducked hastily back, recognizing Saul Fulton, who might tax him with truancy.

Yet when he saw Saul's almost insanely excited gaze meet Asa's quiet eyes, curiosity overcame caution and he came boldly forward.

"Ye'd better not tarry in town overlong, Asa," Saul was advising in the high voice of alarm. "I'm dismayed ter find ye hyar now."

"Why be ye?" demanded Asa, and his unruffled utterance was velvet-smooth. "Hain't I got a license ter go wharsoever hit pleasures me?"

"This hain't no safe time ner place fer us mountain fellers," came the anxiety-freighted reply. "An' you've done been writ up too much in ther newspapers a-ready. You've got a lawless repute an' atter this mornin' Frankfort-town hain't no safe place fer ye."

"I come down hyar," announced Asa, still with an imperturbable suavity, "ter try an' git me a pardon. I hain't got hit yit, an' tharfore I hain't ready ter turn away."

Gregory began a deliberate ransacking of his pockets in search of his tobacco plug and, in doing so, he hauled out miscellaneous odds and ends before he found what he was seeking.

In his hands materialized a corncob pipe, some loose coins and matches, and then—as Saul's voice broke into frightened exclamation—several rifle and pistol cartridges.

"Good God, man," exploded the other mountaineer, "ain't ye got no more common sense then ter be totin' them things round in this town—terday?"

Asa raised his brows and smiled indulgently upon his kinsman.

"Why, ginrally, I've got a few ca'tridges and pistol hulls in my 'pockets," he drawled. "Why shouldn't I?"

"Well, git rid of 'em, an' be speedy about it! Don't ye know full well thet every mountain man in town's goin' ter be sus-

picioned, an' thet ther Legislater'll vote more money then ye ever dreamed of to stretch mountain necks? Give them things ter the boy, thar."

Fulton had not had time to feel surprise at seeing Boone, whom he had left on the farm, confronting him here on the sidewalk of a Frankfort street. Now as the boy reached up his hand and Asa carelessly dropped the cartridges into it, Saul rushed vehemently on.

"Boone, don't make no mention of this hyar talk ter nobody. Take yore foot in yore hand an' light out fer my house—an' ther fust spring-branch ye comes ter, stop an' fling them things inter ther water."

When the wires gave to the world the appalling climax of that savagely acrimonious campaign, a breathlessness of shock settled upon the State where passion had run its inflammatory course. The reiteration of Cassandra's prediction had failed to discount the staggering reality, and for a brief moment animosities were silenced.

But that was not for long. Yesterday the lieutenants of an iron-strong leader had bowed to his dominant will. Today they stood dedicated to reprisal behind a martyr—exalted by his mortal hurt.

It appeared certain that the rifle had barked from a window of the executive building itself. And when police and posses, hastily summoned, had hurried to its doors, a grimly unyielding cordon of mountaineers had spelled in human type the words, "no admission."

The secretary of State, who was a mountain man, was among the first to fall under accusation and had the city's police officers been able to seize the governor, he, too, would doubtless have been thrown into a cell. But the governor still held the disputed credentials of office, and he sat at his desk, haggard of feature, yet at bay and momentarily secure behind a circle of bayonets.

Just wrath would not, and could not, long remain only righteous indignation. Out of its inflammation would spring a hundred injustices and so in opposition to the mounting clamor for extreme penalties arose thundering the counter-voice of protest against a swift and ruthless sacrifice of conspicuous scapegoats.

To the aid of those first caught in the dragnet of vengeful accusation, came a

handful of volunteer defense attorneys and among them was Colonel Wallifarro.

The leader with the bullet-pierced breast was dying; and in the Legislature the contest must be settled, if at all, while there was yet strength enough in his ebbing life currents to take the oath of office.

His last fight was in keeping with his life—the persistence of sheer resolution that held death in abeyance and refused surrender.

But when the Democratic majority of the Assembly gathered at their chambers they encountered muskets; when, casting dignity to the snowy winds, they raced toward an opera house, the soldiers raced with them, and arrived first. When they doubled like pursued hares toward the Odd Fellows' Hall they found its door likewise barred by blade and muzzle.

Among the first men thrown into jail were Saul Fulton and his friend Hollins of Clay County. Their connection with the arrival of the mountaineers was not difficult to establish—and for the officers charged with ferreting out the ugly responsibility it made a plausible beginning.

Meanwhile the majority Legislature, thwarted of open meeting, caucussed in hotel bedrooms and gave decision for the dying candidate. A hectic and grotesque rumor even whispered that Mr. Goebel's gallant hold on life had slipped before the credentials could be placed in his weakened hand—and that the oath was solemnly administered to a dead body.

Boone had gone back to Saul's farmhouse, and, on the way, he had tossed the cartridges into a brook that flowed along the road, but his brain was in a swirl of perplexity and in his blood was an innoculation. He would never know content again unless, in the theater of public affairs, he might be an onlooker or an actor.

X

A FEW days after that Boone started back again to his mountains. With Saul in jail and his wife returning to her people, there was nothing further to hold him here. Indeed, he was anxious now to get home. Like one who has been bewildered by a plethora of new experiences, he needed time to digest them, and above

all he wanted to talk with Victor McCalloway whose wisdom was, to his thinking, as that of a second Solomon. There, too, was his other hero, Asa, who had returned to the hills as quietly as he had left them. Boone was burning to know whether in the whirlpool of excitement there at Frankfort, his efforts to secure executive clemency had met with success or failure.

When, immediately upon crossing Cedar Mountain, he presented himself at McCalloway's house, he was somewhat nonplussed at the grave, almost accusing eyes, which the hermit gentleman bent upon him.

"I've jest got back hyar from ther big world down below," announced the boy, "an' I fared straight over hyar ter see ye fust thing." He paused, a little crestfallen to note that reserve of silence where he had anticipated a warmth of welcome, and then he went on shyly. "Thar was hell ter pay down thar at Frankfort town, an' I seed a good part of ther b'ilin' with my own eyes."

Very slowly Victor McCalloway made response.

"You have witnessed a tragedy—a crime for which the guilty parties should pay with their lives. Even then a scar will be left on the honor of your State."

Boone crowded his hands into his coat-pockets and shivered in the wet wind, for as yet he had not been invited across the threshold.

"I don't know nothin' about who done hit," he made calm assertion. "But fellers like Saul Fulton 'peared ter 'low he plum' needed killin'."

Fellows like Saul Fulton!

The retired soldier drew a long breath and his eyes narrowed.

"You went down there, Boone, with a kinsman who now stands accused of complicity. The law presumes his innocence until it proves him guilty, but I'm not thinking of him much just now. I'm thinking of you." He paused as if in deep anxiety then added: "A boy may be led by reckless and wilful men into—well—grave mistakes. I believe in you, but you must answer me one question and you must answer it on your word of honor—as a gentleman."

The boy's pupils widened interrogatively and held those older eyes with an unfaltering steadiness. In their frank and



engaging depths of blue as open as the sky, Victor McCalloway read the answer to his question and something like a sigh of relief shook him—something spasmodic that clutched at his throat and his well-seasoned reserve.

He had dreaded that Boone in that fanatically bitter association might have brushed shoulders with some guilty knowledge. He had refused that fear lodgment in his thoughts as an ungenerous suspicion, but a lurking realization had persisted. It might need only a short lapse from a new concept to an inherited and ancient code to make heroes of "killers" for this stripping.

Slowly and candidly the boy spoke.

"On my word of honor as a gentleman—"

His utterance hung hesitantly on that final word. It was a new thought that it might be applicable to himself, yet this man was a better and more exacting judge of its meaning than he, and his heart leaped to the quickened tempo of a new pride.

"I don't know nothin'—save thet I heered hit named aforehand thet men war a comin' from ther mountings ter see justice done, an' didn't aim ter be gain-said ner thwarted. I 'lowed, though, hit would come about in f'ar fight—ef so be hit bred trouble."

That same afternoon Asa Gregory happened by, and because McCalloway had come to recognize in his influence the most powerful feudal force operating upon the boy's thought, he waited somewhat anxiously to hear whether the man would express himself on the topic of the assassination. Since it was no part of wisdom to assail deep-rooted ferocities of thought in minds already matured beyond plasticity, he did not himself broach the matter, but he was pleased when Asa spoke gravely and of his own volition.

"I done hed hit in head ter go along down thar ter Frankfort with them boys thet Saul gathered tergether, but now I'm right glad I went by myself. Thet war a mighty troublous matter thet came ter pass thar."

"Did yer git yore pardon, Asa?" asked Boone, and the older kinsman hesitated, then made a frank reply.

"I hain't talkin' much erbout thet, son. Ther governor war hev'in' a right stressful

time an' any favors he showed ter mountain men war bein' held up ergainst him by his enemies. But I reckon I kin trust both of ye. Yes, I got ther pardon."

Late in February an item of news filtered in through the ravines of the hills which elicited bitter comment. The Legislature had voted a reward fund of one hundred thousand dollars for the apprehension and conviction of those guilty of the assassination of Senator Goebel, and, heartened by this spurring, the pack of detectives, professional and amateur, had cast off full-cry.

Saul Fulton lay in jail all that Winter without trial. Upon the motion of the Commonwealth his day in court was postponed by continuance after continuance.

"I reckon," suggested Asa bluntly, "they' aims ter let him sulter in jail long enough ter kinderly fo'ce him ter drag in a few more fellers besides himself—but hit won't profit 'em none."

That Winter spent its dreary monotony, and through its months Boone Wellver was growing in mind and character as well as in bone and muscle. McCalloway began to see the blossoming of his Quixotically fantastic idea into some hope and semblance of reality. The boy's brain was acquisitive and flaming with ambition, and Victor McCalloway was no routine schoolmaster, but an experimenter in the laboratory of human elements. He was working with a character which he sought to bring by forced marches from the America of a quaint, broad-hearted past to the America of the present—and future. Under his hand the pupil was responding.

The slate-gray ramparts of the hills reeked with the wet of thawing snows. Water-courses swelled into the freshet-volume of the spring-tide. Into the breezes crept a touch of softer promise and in sheltered spots buds began to redden and swell. Then came the pale tenderness of greens and the first shy music of bird-notes. The sodden threadbare neutrality of Winter was flung aside for the white blossoming of dogwood, and in their wake came the pink foam of laurel blossom.

On one of those tuneful days, while Boone sat on the door-step of Victor McCalloway's house listening to a story of a campaign far up the Nile, Asa Gregory came along the road with his long, elastic stride and halted there. He smiled in-

fectiously as he took the proffered chair and crumbled leaf tobacco between his fingers for the filling of his cob pipe.

For a while the talk ran in simple neighborhood channels. They spoke of "drappin' an' kiverin'" in the corn-fields, and the uncomplicated activities of farm life. But after a time, Asa reached into his hip-pocket and drew out a rumpled newspaper, which he tendered to Victor McCalloway.

"Mr. McCalloway," he said quietly, "ye're a friend of mine, an' right now I have sore need of counsel with a man of wisdom. I'd be beholden ter ye, es so be ye'd read that thar printed piece out loud."

The retired soldier took the sheet, several days old, and with the first glance at its headlines his features stiffened and his eyes blazed into indignation.

"This is a slander!" he exploded. "It's an infamous libel. Do you actually want me to read it aloud?"

Asa nodded and, in a voice of protest, McCalloway gave audible repetition to a matter to which he refused the sanction of belief.

NEW MURDERS FOR OLD

That was the first headline, and the subheads and the item itself followed in due order.

COMMONWEALTH UNCOVERS STARTLING EVIDENCE

ASA GREGORY INDICTED FOR FIRING FATAL
SHOT AT GOEBEL—ALLEGED HE RE-
CEIVED A PARDON FOR PRIOR
OFFENSE AS PRICE OF
FRESH INFAMY.

Perhaps the most astounding chapter in a long serial of the bizarre and melodramatic, came to light today when the Franklin grand jury returned a true bill against Asa Gregory, a notorious mountain feudist, charging him with the assassination of Governor Goebel. In the general excitement of those days the presence of Gregory in the State capital escaped notice. Now it develops, from sources which the Commonwealth declines at this time to divulge, that on the day of the tragedy Gregory, who already stands charged with the murder from ambush of several enemies, came cold-bloodedly to town to seek a pardon for one of these offenses, and that in payment for that favor he agreed to accept unholy appointment as executioner of Governor

Goebel. Gregory is now in hiding in the thicketed country of his native hills, and it is foreseen that before he is taken he may invoke the aid of his clansmen and precipitate further bloodshed.

McCalloway laid down the paper and stared at the blossom-burgeoning slopes. It was strange, he reflected, that one could so swiftly yield to the instincts of these wild places. For just now it was in his heart to advise resistance. He thought that trial down there before partizan juries and biased judges would be a farce which vitiated the whole spirit of justice.

It might almost have been his own sentiments that he heard shrilled out from the excited lips of the boy—a boy whose cheeks had gone pale and whose eyes had turned from sky-blue to flame-blue.

"They're jest a seekin' ter git ye thar an' hang ye out of hand, Asa. Tell 'em all ter go everlastin'ly ter hell! Ye kin hide out hyar in ther mountains an' five hundred soldiers couldn't never run ye down. Ye kin cross over inter Virginny an' go wharsoever ye likes—but ef ye suffers yourself ter be took, they'll hang ye outen pure disgust fer ther hills!"

Yes, thought Victor McCalloway, that was just about what would happen. The boy whom he had been educating to a new viewpoint had, at a stride, gone back to all the primitive sources of his nature, yet he spoke the truth. Then the voice of Asa Gregory sounded again with a measured evenness.

"What does ye think, Mr. McCalloway? I was thar on that day. I kin hide out hyar an' resist arrest, like ther boy says, an' I misdoubts ef I could git any lavish of justice down thar."

"I doubt it gravely, sir," snorted McCalloway. "By Gad, I doubt it most gravely."

"An' yit," went on the other voice slowly, somewhat heavily, "ef I did foller thet course hit mout mean a heap of bloodshed, I reckon. Hit'd be mightily like admittin' them charges they're a'makin', too." He paused a moment, then rose abruptly from his chair. "I come ter ask counsel," he said, "but afore I come my mind was already done made up. I'm a-goin' over ter Marlin Town termorrer mornin', an' I'm a-goin' ter surrender ter Bev Jett, ther high sheriff."

"Don't ye never do hit, Asa," shouted the boy. "Don't ye never do hit!" But

McCalloway had risen and in his eyes gleamed an enthusiastic light.

"It's a thing I couldn't have advised, Mr. Gregory," he said in a shaken voice. "It's a thing that may lead—God knows where—and yet it's the only decent thing to do."

AT the edge of Marlin Town stood the bungalow of the company's superintendent, and in its living-room, on either side of a document-littered table, sat two men. One of them, silvered of temple and somewhat portly of stature, leaned back with the tranquility of complete relaxation after his day's work. His face wore the urbanity of well-being and prosperity, but the man across from him leaned forward with an attitude of nervous tension.

To Larry Masters there was something nettling in the very repose with which his visitor from Louisville crossed his stout and well-tailored legs. This feeling manifested itself in the jerky quickness of hand with which the mine superintendent poured whisky into his glass and hissed soda after it from the syphon.

"Won't you fill up, Tom," he invited shortly. "The entertainment I can offer you is limited enough—but at least we have the peg at our disposal."

"Thank you—no more." Colonel Wallifarro spoke with a pleasingly modulated voice, trained into effectiveness by years of jury elocution. "I've had my evening's allowance, except for a nightcap."

Masters rose abruptly from his chair. He tossed down half the contents of his glass and paced the floor with a restless stride, gnawing at his close-cropped and sandy mustache. His tall, well-knit figure moved with a certain athletic vitality and his florid face was tanned like a pigskin saddle-skirt. But his brow was corrugated in a frown of discontent and his pale-blue eyes were almost truculent.

"By Gad, Tom," he flared out with choleric impetuosity, "you can put more righteous rebuke into a polite refusal of liquor than most men could crowd into a whole damn temperance lecture. I dare say, however, you're quite right. Life spells something for you. It's worth conserving. You've got assured position, an adoring family, money, success, hosts of friends. You'd be a blithering fool, I grant you,

to waste yourself in indulgence, but I'm not so ideally situated. I 'take the cash and let the credit go.'"

"Yet you have ahead of you some ten or twelve years more of life than I can reasonably expect," was the quiet response. "You still have youth—or youth's fulfilment—early middle-age."

"And a jolly lot that means to me," retorted Masters with acerbity. "I live here among illiterates, working for a corporation on a salary pared to the bone. At the time of life when one ought to be at the top of one's abilities, I'm the most pathetic human thing under God's arching sky—a man who started out with big promise—and fell by the wayside. Heaven help the man who fires and falls back—and if he can retrieve a bit of temporary solace from that poor substitute—" he jerked a forefinger toward the bottle—"then I say for heaven's sake let him poison himself comfortably and welcome."

Colonel Wallifarro studied the darkened scowl of his companion for a moment before he replied and when he spoke his own manner retained its imperturbability.

"I didn't offer gratuitous criticism, Larry," he suggested. "I merely declined another today."

"You know my case, Tom," the younger of the two caught him up quickly. "You know that no younger son ever came out from England with fairer expectations of succeeding on his own. I've been neither the fool nor the shirk—and yet—" A shrug of disgust finished the sentence.

Colonel Wallifarro studied his cigar ash without rejoinder, and when Larry Masters failed to draw a return fire of argument he sat for a minute or two glumly silent. Then as his thoughts coursed back into other years a slow light kindled in his eyes as if for a dead dream.

"You were always skeptical about Middlesboro, even when others were full of faith—but why?" he demanded. "To you, with your bluegrass ideas of fat acres, these hills must always be the ragged fringes of things, a meager land without a future. It was only that you lacked imagination."

The speaker swept torrentially on with as much of argumentative warmth as if he had not just confessed himself ruined by reason of his own former confidence.

"Where the gap came through lay the natural gateway of the hills, hewn out in readiness by the hand of the Almighty. There was water-power—ore. There was coal, for smelter and market, timber awaiting the ax and the saw-mill—the whole tremendous treasure house of a natural Eldorado."

"Perhaps," observed the colonel, "and yet, when all is said and done, it was only a boom—and it collapsed. Whatever the causes, the results are definite."

"Yes, it collapsed and we went with it." Masters paused to take up and empty the glass which had started the discussion, then with a heightened excitement he swept on afresh.

"Yet how near we came! Gad, man, your own eyes saw our conception grow! You saw lots along what had been creek-bed trails sell at a footage-price that rivaled New York's best avenues. And you yourself recognized in me, for all your skepticism, a man with a golden future. Then, after all that, you saw me jolly well ruined—and yet you prate of what life may hold for me in the vigor of my middle age."

"All that happened ten years back, however," the elder man equably reminded his companion.

"It was the old story of a boom and a collapse, and one misfortune—even one disaster—need not break a man's spirit. You might have come back."

The eyes of the portly gentleman rested in a momentary glance on the bottle and glass, but that may have been chance. At least he did not mention them.

"You think I might have come back, do you?" The voice of the Englishman had hardened. "I don't want to be nasty or say disagreeable things. You've been a staunch friend to me—even when Anne found herself growing bitter against me. Well, I don't blame her. Her people had been leaders always. She had the divine right to an assured place in society and I had failed. I suppose it was natural enough for her to feel that she'd been done in—but it happened to be the finish of me. I'd sweated blood to make Middlesboro—and I didn't have the grit left to commence over."

For the first time—Colonel Wallifarro's attitude stiffened, bringing up his silver-crowned head defensively.

"Anne didn't leave you for financial reasons, Larry," he asserted steadily; "she's my niece and you are my friend, but no purpose is to be served by my listening to *ex parte* grievances from either of you."

Masters shrugged his shoulders.

"I dare say you're quite right," he admitted.

"But be that as it may, she did leave me—left me flat. If she didn't divorce me, it wasn't out of consideration for my feelings. It would almost have been better if she had. All I ever succeeded in doing for her was to make her the poor member of a rich family—and that's not enviable by half. And yet if I'd been a sheer rotter, I could scarcely have fared worse."

"If it wasn't consideration for you, at least it was for some one who should be important to you. As it is, your little girl isn't growing up under the shadow of a sensational divorce record."

The pale-blue eyes of the Englishman softened abruptly, and the lips under the short-clipped mustache changed from their stiffness to the curvature of something like a smile. Into his expression came a lurking half-shy ghost of winsomeness.

"Yes, yes," he muttered, "the kiddie. God bless her little heart!"

After a moment, though, he drew back his shoulders with a jerk and spoke again in a harsher timbre.

"Anne has been fair enough with me about the child, though I'm bound to say I've been jolly well made to understand that it was only a chivalrous and undeserved sort of generosity. Well, the kiddie's almost twelve now, and before long she'll be a belle, too—poor but related to all the first families."

Masters paused and when he went on again it was still with the air of a repressed chafing of spirit.

"I dare say her mother will see to it that she doesn't repeat the mistake of the previous generation—marrying a man with only a splendid expectancy. Her heart will be schooled to demand the assured thing. That pointing with pride, a gesture which you Kentuckians so enjoy—well, with my little girl, it will all be done toward the spindle branch. There won't be much said about the wastrel father."

"Perhaps," suggested the other, "you are a little less than just."



"I dare say. She'll be a heart-breaker before long now—and listen, man—" Masters came a step nearer—"don't make any mistake about me, either. When she's here the bottle goes under lock and key. I play the game, where she's concerned."

Colonel Walliferro nodded slowly.

"I know that, Larry," he hastily answered. "I know that. If the breach hadn't widened too far, I'd go as far as a man could to bring your family together again under one roof-tree."

"That's no use, of course," admitted Masters with a dead intonation. "Only remember that down here where I'm chained to my little job, life ain't so damned gay and sunny at best and don't begrudge me my liquor."

XII

DURING those following months when Asa Gregory lay in jail, first in Frankfort, then in Louisville as a prisoner of State who had been denied bail, the boy back in the laurel-mantled hills smoldered with passionate resentment for what he believed to be a monstrous injustice.

In his quest of education he sought refuge from the bitter brooding that had begun to mar his young features with its stamp of sullenness. Asa had killed men before, but it had been in that feud warfare which was sanctioned by his own conscience. Now he stood charged with a murder done for hire, the mercenary taking off of a man for whom he had no enmity save that of the abstract and political.

Upon his kinsman's innocence the boy would have staked his life, and yet he must look helplessly on and see him thrown to the lions of public indignation.

Of Saul he hardly thought at all. Saul was small-fry. The Commonwealth would treat him as such, but upon Asa it would wreak a surcharged anger, because to send Asa Gregory to the gallows would be to establish a direct link between the governor who had pardoned him and mountain murder-lust.

Already the secretary of State had been disposed of with a promptitude which, his friends asserted, savored rather of the wolf-pack than the court-room. The verdict had been guilty, and his case was now pending on a motion for rehearing.

Already, too, a stenographer who had been in the employ of the fugitive governor, had been given a life-sentence and had preferred accepting it without appeal to risking the graver alternative of the gallows.

As he lay in jail waiting until the slow grind of the law-mill should bring him into its hopper, Asa, too, recognized the extreme tenuousness of his chances.

But it was not until the wheat had been harvested and threshed in the rich blue-grass fields that the session of court was called to order whose docket held for Asa Gregory the question of life and death.

That trial was to be at Georgetown, a graciously lying town about whose borders stretched estates where a few acres were worth as much as a whole farm in the ragged and meager hills. It was a town of kindly people, but just now of very indignant people, blinded by an unbalanced anger. It was not a hopeful place for a mountaineer with a notched gun, who stood taxed with the murder from ambush of a governor.

Over the door of the brick court-house stood an image of the blindfolded goddess. She was a weather-worn deity, corroded out of all resemblance to the spirit of eternal youthfulness which she should have exemplified, and Boone pressed his lips tight as he entered with McCalloway and noted that the scales which she held aloft were broken, but that the sword in the other hand was intact—and unsheathed.

At the stair-head, in precaution against the electrically charged tension of the air, deputies passed outspread hands over the pockets and hips of each man who entered, in search for concealed weapons. About the semicircular table, fronting the bench and the prisoner's dock, sat the men of the press, sharpening their pencils and—waiting.

Under the faded portrait of Chief Justice Marshall, a battery of windows let in the Summer sun, and the mellow voice of a distant negro raised somewhere in a camp-meeting song.

Across a narrow alley-way were other windows in another building, and beyond them operators sat idling by newly installed telegraph keys. These men had no interest in the routine of the "running story." That was a matter to be handled by the regular telegraph offices. These

newly strung wires would be dedicated to a single "flash" when the climax came.

Then the reporters would no longer be sitting at their crescent-shaped table. A few of them would stand framed in those court-room windows under the portrait of Chief Justice Marshall, and as the words fell from the lips that held doom, their hands would rise, with one, two, three, or four fingers extended, as the case might warrant.

In response to that prearranged signal, the special operators would open their keys and, if one finger had been shown, over their lines would run the single but sufficient word "death." Two fingers would mean "life-imprisonment," three "acquittal," four would indicate a "hung-jury." That time was still presumably far off, but the arrangement for it was complete.

In a matter of seconds after that grim pantomime occurred, foremen of printing crews standing by triple-decked presses in Louisville, in Cincinnati—in many other towns, as well—would reach down and lift from the floor one of the several type metal forms prepared in advance to cover each possible exigency. With the first "flash," the form for that particular exigency would be swung to the big rollers, locked into place and a switch would be flipped. Back to the hot slag of the melting-pots would go the other half-cylinders and within three minutes papers, damp with ink and news, would be pouring from the maws of the presses into the hands of waiting boys.

To Boone, these preparations were not yet comprehensible, but as McCalloway led him to a seat far forward, he felt the tense atmosphere of the place and moment.

He recognized in those lines of opposing counsel an array of notability. He picked out, with a glare of hatred, the bearded man whom the prosecution had brought as co-counsel from another State because of his great repute as a breaker-down of witnesses under cross-examination. Then his eyes lighted as down the aisle came the full figure of Colonel Tom Wallifarro—to take its place among the attorneys for the defense. There was reassurance in his calmness and unexcited dignity.

And after interminable preliminaries, he heard at last the voice of the clerk droning from his docket:

"The Commonwealth of Kentucky, against Asa Gregory; wilful murder," and

after yet other delays the velvety direction from the bench: "Mr. Sheriff, bring the prisoner into court."

Asa's face as he was led through the side door was less bronzed than formerly, but his carriage was no less erect or confident. In a new suit of dark color, with fresh linen instead of his hickory shirt, clean shaven and immaculately combed, the defendant was a transformed person; and if there remained any semblance of the highland desperado, it was to be found only in the catlike softness of his tread and the falcon alertness of his fine brown eyes. Pencils at the press table began their light scratching chorus—the reporters were writing their description of the accused.

Asa Gregory's line of defense had been foreshadowed in the examining court. He had sworn that he arrived on the day of the shooting to petition a pardon, and he had known nothing of what was in the air until, from street talk, he learned of the tragedy.

The chief issue of fact pivoted on his testimony that on that day he had not been near the Statehouse or executive building. The Commonwealth would contradict that claim with the counter-assertion that, straight as a hiving bee, Asa had hastened from the train to the governor's official headquarters, where he had been cold-bloodedly rehearsed in his grim duties. After firing the shot, the prosecution would contend, he had taken command of the other mountaineers who refused to the police the privilege of entry and search.

Through days, weeks even, after that Boone sat always in the same place with steadfast confidence in the eyes which he bent upon his kinsman.

Into the press dispatches began to steal mention of a boy in a cheap but new suit of store clothes, whose eyes held those of the prisoner with a rapt and unwavering constancy. It was even said that the amazingly steady courage of the defendant seemed at times of unusual stress to lean on that supporting confidence and that whenever they brought him from jail to court-room, he looked first of all for the boy, as a pilot might look for a reef-light.

Shortly before the Commonwealth was ready to close, rumors went abroad. It was hinted that new and sensational witnesses would take the stand with revela-



tions as spectacular as the climax of a melodrama.

Boone had followed the evidence with a tense absorption. He had marked the effect of each point, the success or failure of every blow, and he realized what a powerful web was being woven about the man in whom he fully believed. There was no escaping the cumulative and strengthening effect of circumstance built upon circumstance.

He recognized, too, how like a keystone in an arch was the dependence of the State upon proving one thing—that Asa had been present, just after the shooting, and in command of those who barred the doors of the executive building against legitimate search. He took comfort in the fact that so far it had not been established by one sure piece of evidence. Then came the last of the Commonwealth's announced witnesses.

Upon the faces of the attorneys for the prisoner quivered a dubious expression of apprehension as they waited the promised assault of the masked batteries. The son of the man who had walked at Senator Goebel's side when he fell, took the stand and told with straightforward directness the story of the five minutes after the shot had sounded. He and a policeman had sought entrance to the building which presumably harbored the assassin—and mountain men had halted him at the door, under the leadership of one to whom the rest deferred. He described that commander with fulness of detail, and it was as if he were painting in words a portrait of the man in the prisoner's dock.

"I was there as a volunteer to see that no one who might be guilty escaped from the building," testified the witness with convincing candor. "I noticed one man in particular, because he seemed to be the unofficial leader of the rest. Some one called him 'Asa'."

The man's voice was responsibly, almost hesitantly grave, and on the faces in the jury-box one could read the telling impression of his words.

Then the bearded attorney, whose fame was secure as a heckler of witnesses, rose dramatically from his chair.

"Do you see that man in the court-room now?"

For a matter of seconds testifier and prisoner gazed with level directness into

each other's eyes, while over the crowded court-room hung a tense pall of stillness.

Then the witness spoke in a tone of bewilderment—his words coming slowly—as if they surprised himself.

"No. I don't think I see him here."

The poised figure of the lawyer, drawn statuesquely upright, winced as painfully as if a trusted hand had smitten him, and in his abrupt change of expression was betrayal of dismay and chagrin.

"You say—you can't—identify him," he echoed incredulously.

Stubbornly the man who was testifying shook his head.

"May I explain in my own way?" he inquired, and as the lawyer barked raspingly back at him, the court intervened:

"This is your own witness. You must understand the impropriety of attempting to embarrass him."

"While I was looking at the defendant there, just now," went on the man in the chair, "I was seeing only his side face and I was positive that he was the person I was describing. Feature for feature and line for line the likeness seemed exact. I was willing to swear to it, but when he turned and faced me I saw something else—and now I don't think he is the man."

The words came as a puzzled and dumfounded confession, and the witness paused, then went resolutely on again.

"This man has a fine pair of clear and well-matched eyes, when one sees them both at once. That one at the door had something—I can't say just what it was—that marred one eye. I shouldn't call it a cast exactly—but they didn't match."

Abruptly the State dismissed that witness, and about the defense tables went quiet but triumphant smiles, which the jury did not miss, as the pencils of the press writers raced. But over Boone Wellver's face passed a shadow, and Asa, catching his eye across the heads of the crowd, read the motion of the boy's moving lips, as without sound they shaped the words:

"Keep cool now, Asa! Keep cool."

XIII

BUT THE prosecution had other trumps yet to play.

It called a name, which brought into the court-room, with shambling and uncer-

tain step, a man whose face was pasty with prison pallor. His thin body was garbed in the zebra-stripes of the penitentiary's livery, and the hand that he raised to take oath trembled. His voice, too, carried a quaver of weakness in its first syllable.

Here at length was the promised sensation. The stenographer who had accepted his life-term had become star-witness for the State. Now, enlisted from the ranks of the accused, he had undertaken to tell what purported to be the inside story of the plot.

To hear his words one had to bend attentively; yet when he had talked for an hour, the scratching of pencils at the press table sounded, through his pauses, almost clamorous, and there was no other sound.

Boone sat tight of muscle with his eyes steadfastly fixed on Asa. He thought that just now he was needed, but at the pit of his stomach gnawed a sickness of dread and it seemed to him that already he could see the gallows rising from its ugly platform.

The bearded lawyer, who had once battered down this man's own defense, now stood before him shepherding his words on toward their climax. Faint response followed sharp interrogation with a deadly effectiveness.

"When did you first meet the defendant—Asa Gregory?"

"On the thirtieth of January—in the forenoon."

"Where?"

"At my office in the Statehouse."

"Did your office adjoin that of the secretary of State?"

"It did."

"What occurred at that time and place?"

"Mr. Gregory rapped. I let him in. He handed me a letter from the governor and we went into the secretary's room. Then he went over to the window and looked out—and drew the blind part of the way down. For a while he just studied the room—taking in its details."

The man in convict garb paused and fell into a fit of broken coughing.

"Did you have any conversation with him?"

"I did, sir."

"What was it, in substance?"

"I explained to him that the plan was to kill Senator Goebel when he came to

the Senate that morning. I showed him two rifles in the corner. They were of different makes."

"What did he do then?"

"He had me explain the way to get to the basement. He kneeled down by the window and sighted one of the guns. He piled up several law-books to rest it on—and then he said that he was ready——"

McCalloway's teeth were tight-clamped as he listened.

"Yes, go on."

"He said he had come to get a pardon for 'blowing down old man Carr'—and was ready to give back favor for favor. Presently I saw Senator Goebel turning in at the gate, and I said, 'That's him,' and he said, 'I see him,' and I turned and slipped out of the room. As I was on the stairs, I heard a rifle shot—and then several pistol shots."

Boone Wellver groaned and the current of his arteries seemed to run in icy trickles through his body, but he kept his eyes steadfastly fixed on Asa, whose life, he felt sure, this man was swearing away in perjury. Asa gazed back. He even inclined his head with just the ghost of a nod and the boy knew that he meant that for encouragement.

Through hours of that day the ghastly story unwound itself and its tremendous impact, gaining rather than losing impressiveness from the faltering style of its telling, left the defense staggered and numbed. McCalloway, glancing down at the boy's drawn face, felt his own heart sicken.

But when at last the man with the gray face and the gray-stripped livery had gone, the Commonwealth's attorney rose and said in the full-throated voice of master of the show—

"Now, we will call Saul Fulton."

Saul had been indicted but never tried. Saul, too, had taken the enemy's pay. Neither McCalloway nor Boone doubted that all this drama of alleged revelation was fathered in falsity out of the reward fund and its workings, yet one realized out of mature experience and the other out of instinct that to the jury it must all seem irrefutable demonstration.

In marked contrast with the sorry drabness of that last witness was the swagger of the next, who came twirling his mustache with the gusto of pure bravado.

Saul went back of the other's story and

ramified its details. He told of the mountain army which he had helped to recruit and swore that that force had come with a full understanding of its mission.

"We went to ther Legislature every day expectin' trouble," he declared with a full-voiced boastfulness. "And we were ready to weed out the Democratic leaders when it started."

"To what purpose was all that planned?" purred the examining lawyer, and the response capped it with prompt assurance.

"The object was to have a Republican majority before we got through shooting."

"And you were willing to do your part?"

Virtuously boomed the reply—

"If it was in fair battle, I was willin', yes, sir."

Saul particularized. He recounted that he himself had nominated Asa as a dependable gun-fighter and that on the day of the tragedy he had met Asa on the streets of Frankfort. Asa, he asserted, had brazenly displayed a pocket-full of cartridges.

"He said to me," proceeded the witness, "'them ca'tridges comes out of a lot thet's done made hist'ry. Whenever I looks over ther sights of a rifle-gun, I gits me either money or meat, an' this time I've done got me both.'"

Boone Wellver had been leaning tensely forward in his seat as he listened. Here at last, to his own knowledge, the words that were cementing his kinsman's doom were utterly and viciously false. He had been a witness to that meeting and it had been Saul and not Asa who had seen danger in the possession of cartridges. It had been Saul, too, who had excitedly instructed him to destroy the evidence.

But Saul continued glibly.

"Asa had done named ter me back thar in ther mountains that he reckoned him an' ther governor could swap favors. So when we met up that day in Frankfort, he said, 'Me an' ther big man, we got tergether an' done a leetle business.'"

The court-room was tensely, electrically silent when a boy rose out of his chair, and with the suddenness of a bursting shell shrilled out in defiance:

"Thet's a damn lie, Saul, an' ye knows hit! I was right thar an'——"

The instant clatter of the judge's gavel and the staccato outbreak of the judge's voice interrupted the interruption.

"Silence! Mr. Sheriff, bring that disturber before the Court."

Still trembling with white-hot indignation, Boone was led forward with the sheriff's hand on his shoulder until he stood under the stern questioning of eyes looking down from the bench.

But instantly too, Colonel Wallifarro's smoothly-controlled voice was addressing the Court.

"May it please, your honor, before you punish this boy I should like to offer a word or two of explanation."

So Boone did not go to jail, but, after a sharp reprimand, he was sworn as a witness for the defense and excluded from the court-room.

When he took the witness stand later it was with a recovered composure—and his straightforward story went far toward shaking the impression Saul had left behind him—yet not far enough.

He realized, with black chagrin, that as long as he had sat there steadfastly calm, he had been to Asa a tower of strength—but that when he had broken out he had forfeited that privilege—and left his kinsman unsuccored.

At last the Commonwealth closed and Asa himself came to the stand. Had he been possessed of a lawyer's experience he could hardly have evaded more skillfully the snares set in his path as with imperturbable gallantry he met his skilled hecklers. The even calmness of his velvety eyes became a matter of newspaper report, and when he had finished his direct testimony and had been turned over to the enemy, the fashion in which he cared for himself also found its way into the news columns.

Asa kept before him the realization that he had been advertised as a "bad man" and an assassin. Just now he was intent upon impressing the jury with his urbane proof against exasperation even when the invective of insinuation mounted to ferocity.

"You have known the witness, Saul Fulton, for years, have you not?" demanded the cross-examiner.

"I've known him all my life."

"Can you state any motive he should have for offering malicious and false evidence against you?"

"Any reason for his lyin'?" The prisoner gazed at the barking attorney with a



calm seriousness and replied suavely. "No, sir, only that he's swearin' to save his own neck from the rope, an' that's a right pithy reason, I reckon."

Yet all the while that he was making his steep, up-hill fight Asa was feeling a secret disquiet growing to an obsession within him. He could not forget that some one upon whose reassurance he had leaned had been banished from that place where his enemies were bent upon his undoing. He felt as if the red lantern had been quenched on a dangerous crossing and the psychology of the thing gnawed at his overtried nerves.

Boone's freckled face and wide, blue eyes had seemed to stand for serenity where all else was hectic and fevered.

To Asa that intangible yet tranquilizing support had meant what the spider meant to Bruce, and now it had been taken from him.

The bearded attorney who had destroyed defendant after defendant was battering at him with the massed artillery of vindictive and unremitting aggressiveness.

For a long while Asa fenced warily, coolly, remembering that to slip the curb upon his temper meant ruin, but as assault followed assault, through hours, his senses began to reel, his surety began to weaken, and his eyes began to see red.

The attorney, who was scourging him with the whips of law, saw the first break in his armor and bored into it with ever-increased vindictiveness.

Into Asa's mind flashed a picture of the cabin back home, of the wife suffering an agony of anxiety, of the baby whom he might never again see. He seemed groping with his gaze for the steadying eyes of the boy, who was no longer there—whom he desperately needed.

"Asa's gittin' right mad," whispered one mountaineer to another. "I'd hate ter encounter him right now in a highway an' be an enemy of his'n."

But the bearded attorney, who was not in the highway, only badgered and heckled him with a more calculating precision and, as he slowly shook the witness out of self-restraint into madness, he was himself deliberately circling from his place at the Commonwealth's table to a position directly back of the jury-box.

Now, having achieved that vantage

point, he watched the prisoner's face grow somber and furious as the prisoner's head lowered like that of a charging bull.

One more question he put—a question of deliberate insult which brought an admonitory rap of the judge's gavel; then he thrust out an accusing finger which pointed straight into the defendant's face.

"Look at him now, gentlemen of the jury!" he dramatically thundered. "Look at those mismated eyes and determine whether or not this is the man who blocked the Statehouse doorway—the assassin who laid low a governor!"

Gazing from their seats in the jury-box the men of the venire saw before them and facing them a prisoner whose two fine, calm eyes had been transfigured and mismated by passion—whose pupils were marked by some puzzling phenomenon of rabid anger that seemed to leave them no longer twins.

It was much later that the panel came in from the room where it had wrangled all night, but that had been the decisive moment. Three or four reporters detached themselves from their places at the press table and stood close to the windows.

Then the foreman spoke, for in Kentucky the jury not only decides guilt but fixes the penalty, and the reporters raised one finger each. It meant that the verdict was death.

XIV

AS Victor McCalloway and Boone went to the railroad station on the afternoon of the day that brought the trial to its end they found the platform crowded with others who, like themselves, were turning away from a finished chapter.

The boy stared ahead now with a glassy misery and the eyes and ears, usually so keenly awake to new sights and sounds, seemed too stunned for service. Had it been the boy himself instead of his kinsman who stood condemned to die, he could hardly have suffered more. Indeed, had it been his own tragedy, Boone would not have allowed himself this surrender of bearing under the common gaze but would have held his chin more defiantly high.

Back in the hills Boone Wellver was for the first time listless over his studies, and even when he stood, sword in hand, before McCalloway, the spirit of swift en-

thusiasm seemed departed from him. He had moved away from the cabin where the "granny folks" dwelt to help Araminta Gregory run the farm which had been bereft of its man, and his eyes followed her grief-stricken movements with a wordless sympathy.

McCalloway realized that now, even more than formerly, the flame of the convicted man's influence was operating on the raw material of this impressionable mind, welding to vindictiveness the feudal elements of its metal. But McCalloway had learned patience in a hard school and now he was applying the results of his experience.

Slowly under his guidance the stamp of hatred which had latterly marred the face of his youthful protégé began to lighten. Boone was as yet too young to go under the yoke of unbroken pessimism. The very buoyancy of his years and splendid health argued that somehow the clouds must break. Meanwhile his task was clean-cut—and dual. Asa's "woman" must have from the stony farm every stalk and ear of corn that could be wrung from its stunted productivity. And he must put behind him that ignorance which had so long victimized his kind.

So once more he turned to his books when he was not busy with hoe or plow.

One day while the boy and the man sat together in McCalloway's house, knuckles rapped sharply on the door. It is contrary to the custom of frontier caution for one to come as far as the threshold without first raising his voice in announcement from a greater distance.

But the door opened upon a grizzled man, at the sight of whose face McCalloway bent forward as if confronted by a specter—and, indeed, the newcomer belonged to a world which he had renounced as finally as if it had been of another incarnation.

This visitor was tall, lean and weather-beaten. His face was long and somewhat dour but tanned brown, and instead of speaking he brought his hand to his temple with a smart salute. It was such a salute as bespoke a long life of soldiering and the second-nature of military habit. The voice in which McCalloway greeted him was almost unrecognizable as his own, because it was both far-away and strained.

"Sergeant," he exclaimed, "what has brought you here?"

"The lad, sorr," the other gravely reminded him, "I must speak with ye alone. T'is a verra private and a verra serious matter that brings me."

Boone had never heard so hard a note in his benefactor's voice as that which crept into his curt reply.

"It must needs be—to warrant your coming without permission, MacTavish."

They were just finishing their daylight supper and the boy rose, pushing back his chair. Faithfully he regarded his pledge of respecting the other's privacy whenever he was not invited to share it and instinctively he felt that this was no moment for his intrusion.

"I reckon I'll hev ter be farin' over thar ter see how Asa's woman's comin' on," he remarked casually as he reached for his hat that lay at his feet. "Like es not she needs a gittin' of firewood erginst night-fall."

But the matter-of-fact tone and manner were on the surface. Boone secretly distrusted the few messages that came to his preceptor from the outside world. By such voices he might be called back again and hearken to the summons and Boone could not contemplate existence with both his idols ravished from his temple.

Now he closed the door behind him in so preoccupied a mood that he left his rifle standing against the wall forgotten, and McCalloway remained standing by the table rather inflexible of posture and sternly inquisitorial of countenance.

"MacTavish," he said in sharply clipped syllables. "You are one of few—a very few—who know of my incognito and address. I have relied upon you implicitly to guard those secrets. I trust you can explain following me into what you must know was a retirement not to be trespassed upon without incurring my anger—my very serious anger."

Respectfully, but with a face full of eager resoluteness, the other saluted again.

"General," he said, "it's China—they need you there."

"Sergeant—" an angry light leaped in the steel-gray eyes—"if they want me in China, some one whom I have trusted has betrayed my identity. No living soul there ever heard of Victor McCalloway—Mister McCalloway, not general anything, mind you!"

The newcomer crossed to the center of

the room and his movements were quick and precise, as are those of the drill-ground.

"To every other man on earth ye may be Mister McCalloway—but to me, ye are my general. Before I'd betray any trust ye might place in me, sorr, I'd cut off that hand at the wrist as ye ken, sorr, full well. I've told nae soul where ye wor'r. I've only said that I'd seek for ye."

"But in God's name how——?"

"If I may interrupt ye, sorr, I am no longer Sergeant-major MacTavish. I'm a time-retired man at home, but when I wear a uniform now, its that of the army of the Manchu Emperor. They seek to reorganize their army along Western lines. They want genius. They ken nothin' of ye save that one Victor McCalloway was once a British officer of high rank who served so close to Dinwiddie that Dinwiddie's strategy is known to him. Read this, sor'r, and ye'll understand more of the matter."

The general took the large, official-looking missive and stood for a moment with a drawn and concentrated brow before he slit its linen-lined covering.

The feel of the thing in his fingers brought to him a certain stirring and quickening of the pulses—such a restiveness as may come to the retired thoroughbred at the far-off sound of the paddock bugle, or to the spent war-horse at the rolling of drums.

The heavy blue paper and the thick seal set into disquieting momentum an avalanche of memories. Active days which he had resolved to forget were conjured into rebirth as he handled this bulky envelope which proclaimed its officialdom. Even the daily papers came to him here with desultory lack of sequence.

He knew in disjointed fashion how that same Summer an anti-foreign revolt had broken out in Shantung and spread to Pechili. He had read that the Japanese Government had despatched twenty thousand men to China. Later he had followed the all too meager accounts of how the allies had raced for Peking to relieve the besieged legations.

The young emperor's ambition to impress upon his realm the stamp of Western civilization had made him, for two years, a virtual prisoner to the empress dowager and her reactionaries. Now in turn the empress dowager was in flight and presum-

ably the Japanese, working in concert with agents of the captive emperor and Prince Ching, were looking toward the future.

It would seem that they divined once more the opportunity to Occidentalize army and Government. If so, it was the rising of a world tide which might well run to flood and it offered him a man's work. At all events this letter, which caused his fingers to itch and tremble as they held it, came from high Japanese sources and it was addressed only, "Excellency," without a name. The envelope itself was directed to "The Honorable Victor McCalloway."

For a long time he stood there immovable looking at the paper, as great dreams marched before him. Organization, up-building—that was his metier!

Seeing the rapt concentration of his brow and the hunger of his eyes, the former British sergeant spoke again with persuasive fervor.

"Go under any name ye like, sor'r, ye'll be prompt to give it glory! For many years I served under yer, General. For God's sake, let me take my commands from ye once again! Come out to China, sor'r, where they need a true soldier—and can keep silent!"

The hermit strode over and laid a hand on the shoulder of his visitor. Their eyes met and held.

"Old comrade," said McCalloway, as the rust of huskiness creaked in his voice. "I know you for the truest steel that ever God put into the blade of a man's soul—but I must have time to think."

He crossed the room slowly and took up Dinwiddie's sword. Tenderly he drew the blade from the scabbard and as he looked at it his eyes first glowed with fires of longing then grew misty with the sadness of remembrance.

After that he laid the scabbard down and handled once more the sheets that had been in the envelope. He did not reread the written sentences, but let his fingers move slowly along the smooth surface of the paper, while his pupils held as far-away a look as if they were seeing the land from which the communication had come.

But after a little McCalloway came out of that half-hypnotized absorption and his eyes wandered about the room until finally they fell on the rifle that the mountain boy had forgotten to take away with him.



He knew Boone well enough to feel sure that he had not gone far without remembering. He was certain, too, that his young protégé would have returned for it before now had he not been inhibited by his deference for the elder's privacy.

Over there across the world was an army to be shaped, disciplined—but an army of alien blood, of yellow skins. Here was the less conspicuous task to which he had set his hand—the shaping of a single life, beset with hereditary dangers, into a worthy edifice of which the timbers and masonry were Anglo-Saxon and the pattern, Americanism. He had too far committed himself to that architecture to turn back.

Slowly he shook his head. The struggle had been sharp, but the decision was final.

"No, MacTavish, old comrade and old friend," he said very seriously. "No, I've withdrawn from all that. I'll not deny that my hand sometimes aches for a grip on a saber-hilt and my ears are hungry for a bugle—but that's all past. Go out and make an army there, if you can, but I stay here. I needs must stay."

XV

ONE DAY McCalloway received a paper several days old that contained a piece of news which he was anxious for Boone to see at once, and he straightway set out to find the boy.

Araminta greeted him at the door of the Gregory cabin with apathetic eyes.

"Booney's done gone out with his rifle-gun atter squirrels," she said. "I heered him shoot up on ther mountain side thar not five minutes back."

Before he followed the boy, McCalloway read to her and construed the item in the paper and for the first time in many weeks the hard wretchedness of her heart softened to tears and a faint ray of hope stole through her misery.

McCalloway began climbing the hillside, searching the thickets for the boy, and at last he saw him while he himself remained unseen. Boone was standing with his gaze turned toward Louisville—and its jail—two hundred and more miles distant. His face was like that of a fanatic in a religious trance and his right hand gripped his rifle so tightly that the

knuckles showed out white-splotched against the tanned flesh.

"I failed ye, Asa," came the self-accusing voice in a tight-throated strain. "I bust out and got sent outen ther co'te-room when ye needed me in thar ter give ye countenance, but God knows I hain't fergot ye." He paused there and his chest heaved convulsively. "An' God, he knows, too, I aims ter avenge ye," he ended up with a dedication of savage sincerity, while his gaze still seemed to be piercing the hills toward the city where his kinsmen lay condemned.

McCalloway came forward then and while he talked Boone listened with attentive patience but an obdurate face.

The man sought to exact a promise that until he was twenty-one Boone should "hold his hand" so far as Saul Fulton was concerned. Given those plastic years he could hope to wean the lad gradually away from the tigerish and unforgiving ferocity of his blood, but Boone could only shake his head, unable either to argue or to yield.

Then McCalloway sketched the seemingly irrelevant narrative of what had occurred in China—of the peril of the legations. He talked of an emperor, captive to court intrigue, and slowly the lad's eyes, which had been until now too preoccupied with his own wormwood to think of other matters, began to liven into interest.

"But thet's all plum' acrost ther world from hyar, though," he asserted in a pause, as if he begrudged the arresting of his attention. "What's hit got ter do with me—an' Asa?"

General McCalloway cleared his throat. It came hard for him to talk of himself and of a sacrifice made for another.

"It has this to do with you, my boy," he announced bluntly. "I have been offered a soldier's job over there. I have been invited to aid in reorganizing an army that would help to stabilize China—and I have refused."

Boone Wellver's lips parted in amazement.

"Refused?" he gasped. "Fer God's sake what made ye do hit?"

"Because of you," was the sober response. "I thought you needed me and I thought you were worth standing by."

"Fer me!" The lad was trembling again, but this time not with anger. "I reckon I'll be powerful beholden ter ye all my

life fer thet—but ye hedn't ought ter hev done hit. They needs ye over thar, too, an' thar's monstrous numbers of 'em from what ye narrates."

"I know it, Boone," McCalloway spoke earnestly. "I've centered some very ambitious dreams about your future. The time is hardly ripe to explain them, but you have a great opportunity—unless you throw it away in vengeful fury. If you won't trust me and suffer me to guide you—until you come of age at least—I had much better have gone to China."

The boy turned away and in his set face McCalloway could read that for him this was an actual moment of Gethsemane. Through his nature, as over a hotly embattled field, surged contrary and warring emotions, and between them he was cruelly buffeted.

"God knows I'm wishful," he broke out at length; "an' God knows attar what ye've jest told me, I hain't got no license ter deny ye nothin' ye asks, but—" The end of his sentence came like a sob. "But ye wouldn't ask me ter be disloyal ter my own kith an' kin, would ye?"

"No—but I would ask you to have a higher loyalty."

Boone stood trembling like an ague victim. It was no light matter for him to give so binding a pledge.

"No Gregory ner no Wellver hain't nuver died on ther gallows tree yit," he faltered. "Thar's two things I'd done swore ter do. One of 'em was ter git Saul. I reckon, though, that could wait."

"What is the other thing?"

"Thet afore they hangs him—some fashion or other—I've got ter git a gun in thar ter Asa so he kin kill hisself. Hit hain't fitten thet he should die by a rope like a common feller!"

The emotion-laden voice became almost shrill.

"Even ther Carrs an' Blairs don't hang. They come nigh ter hangin' one once't but a kinsman saved him."

"How?" inquired McCalloway, and the boy responded gravely,

"He lay up on ther hill-side an' shot his uncle ter death as they was takin' him from the jail-house ter ther gallows."

Truly, reflected the soldier, he was modeling with grim and stiff clay, but he only said—

"Promise me that, as to Saul, you will wait until you are twenty-one."

Boone did not reply for five full minutes, but at the end of that time he nodded his head.

"I kain't deny ye nothin' attar what ye've done fer me," he assented briefly.

Then McCalloway read from the paper his scrap of encouragement. The court of appeals had granted the secretary of State a rehearing.

"But thet hain't Asa," objected the boy. "I don't keer nothin' erbout thet feller."

McCalloway smiled.

"It's a similar case tried by the same court and involving the same principles. It indicates that Asa will have a new trial, too."

"Ef he comes cl'ar," announced Boone, with the suddenly rocketing spirits of boyhood, "I reckon Asa kin handle his own affairs."

McCalloway had set himself to preparing Boone within a year from that Fall for entrance into the State University. There was but a faint background of prior attainment against which to paint many things, but there was an avidly acquisitive pupil, a tireless teacher and an intensive plan of education.

Gregory was still in the Louisville jail—where indeed a half dozen other years were yet to find him. The secretary of State had come through his second trial with a second conviction and had once more been granted a rehearing.

Saul Fulton, the star witness in Asa's trial, had disappeared and report had it that he had gone to South America—but the record of his former testimony remained fixed in the stenographer's notes and was fully available for later use—so that his going lifted no shadow from Asa's future.

"I reckon they squashed ther indictment ergin him," Boone commented bitterly to McCalloway. "An' paid him off with some of thet thar blood money."

He paused and then went on, holding his finger between the pages of the book he was studying. "He's done fared a long way off—but, some day, he'll fare back again. I stands full pledged twell I comes of age an' I aims ter keep my word. Attar thet I hain't makin' no brash promises. Ther hate in my heart, hit don't seem ter

slacken none. I mistrusts hit won't—never."

But if the festering grievance did not "slacken," at least it seemed just now partly submerged in the great adventure of going down to the world below and becoming a collegian.

He went early in the Autumn when he was seventeen, and McCalloway who accompanied and matriculated him came away smiling. He had felt as if he were leading a wolf-cub down into a kennel of blooded hounds. But when he had watched the self poise with which his registrant bore himself and how quickly amused smiles faded away under his level gaze, he left with a reassured confidence.

When the days began to grow crisp the uncouth scholar saw for the first time the lads in leather and moleskin tackling and punting out on the campus in the early try-outs of the season's football practice. He looked on at first with a somewhat satirical detachment, but when the scrimmages took on the guise of actual ferocity his interest altered from tepid disapproval for "such foolery" to a realization that it was "no gal's play-party."

Several afternoons later Boone shyly intercepted the coach as he led out the practice squads.

"Does thet thar football business belong ter a club—or somethin'," he inquired, "or kin any feller git inter hit?"

The coach looked at the roughly dressed lad with the unruly hair, who talked in barbaric phrases—and his practised eye took in the sinewy strength of the well-muscled body. He appraised the power of the broad shoulders and the slim agile lines of waist and legs, and gave him a chance.

From the beginning it was evident that Boone Wellver would make the scrub team. He was a tornado from the instant the ball was snapped—"an injia rubber idjit on a spree," and yet this mystifying wolf-cub from the hills came back to the coach in less than a week with an almost sullen face and announced shortly—

"I hain't goin' ter play no more football. I aims ter quit hit."

"Quit it. Why?"

"I've ben studyin' hit over," the retiring candidate gloomily explained. "A man thet hain't no blood kin ter me is payin' what hit costs ter send me hyar. I hain't

hardly nothin' but a charity feller, nohow, an' until he says hit's all right, I don't aim ter spend ther time he's payin' fer out hyar playin' fool games."

At the solemnness and the unconscious self-righteousness of the tone, a laugh went up, and Boone turned with a straight-lined mouth to meet the derisive outburst.

"But I'm out here now, though—" he added pointedly, lowering his head as does a bull about to charge, "an' I kin stay a leetle longer. If any of you fellers, or ther whole damn' passel of ye, thinks I'm quittin' because I'm timorous, I'd be right glad ter take ye on hyar an' now—fist and skull."

There was no acceptance of the invitation and Boone, turning, with his shoulders straight, marched away.

But when McCalloway read his letter, he promptly responded:

A razor is made to shave with. Its purpose is work and only work. Still if it isn't honed and stropped it loses its edge. It's hardly fair to regard as wasted, the time spent on keeping that edge keen.

I want you to get the most out of college, and that doesn't mean only what you get out of the books. If I were you, I'd play football and play it hard.

Boone went down the stairs four steps at a time. He could hear the coach's whistle out on the campus and he came like a hound to the chase.

"Hi, thar!" he yelled. "Kin I git back in thet outfit? He 'lows hit's all right fer me ter play!"

Back in the hills Victor McCalloway was more than a little lonely. He began to realize how deeply this boy—at first almost a waif—had stolen into the affections of his detached life. Once or twice he went to Lexington to see how his protégé progressed and he had several brief visits from General Prince and more than several from Larry Masters. After what seemed a very long while indeed, Boone came home for his first Summer vacation.

Araminta Gregory had a brother at her farm now, so the boy went direct to the house of Victor McCalloway, which was henceforth to be his home.

XVI.

"HAPPY" SPRADLING, whose father had overseen the raising of Victor McCalloway's house, was only two



years younger than Boone. When he had gone away, a lad of seventeen, he had been untroubled by thoughts of girls and she had certainly wasted no meditation upon him.

But the Boone who came back was not quite the same boy who had gone away. He was still roughly dressed, judged by exacting standards, but corduroy had supplanted his old jeans and he returned with a much developed figure and an improved bearing.

Now one afternoon Happy Spradling stood with a pail by a "spring-branch" of crystal water as Boone came by and halted. She, too, had been to one of those settlement schools that were just beginning to introduce new standards in the hills, and her homecoming to unrelieved crudities was not an unmixed pleasure. Certain it is that the slim girl in her calico gown was blessed with a fresh and vigorous beauty. Her sloe-brown eyes were heavily lashed and her skin was blossom-clear. Dark hair crowned her well-poised head in heavy masses, and the boy was surprised because he had not remembered her as so lovely.

"Ye look right sensibly like a picture outen ther Bible of Rebecca at the well," he banteringly announced, and the girl flushed.

"Ye ain't quite so uncurried of guise as ye used to be your own self, Boone," she generously acceded, and they both laughed.

They talked on for awhile and before Boone started away the girl invited shyly, with lids that drooped—

"Come over sometime, Boone, an' tell me all about the college."

But it happened that the next day he went, with a note from McCalloway, to the house of Larry Masters, the "mine boss," at the edge of Marlin Town, and there fate ambushed him in the person of the girl who had asked him to dance at the Christmas party.

Anne Masters came to the door in response to the boy's knock, and, when he had seen her, he stood hesitant with his eyes fixed upon her until her cheeks flushed, while he forgot the note he had brought for her father.

Anne herself did not recognize him at first, for Boone stood close to six feet now, and although he would always be, in a fashion, careless of dress, he would never

again be the sloven, as were the kinsmen about him. His corduroy breeches, flannel shirt and boots that laced half-way up the calf, all seemed a part of himself, like a falcon's plumage. But what the girl noticed first, since she was both young and impressionable, was the crisp curl of his red-brown hair and the direct fearlessness of his sky-blue eyes.

"I reckon ye don't remember me?" he hazarded by way of introduction, and she shook her head.

"Have I seen you before?" she inquired, and Boone found it difficult to talk to her because he was so busy looking at her.

There had been girls as well as boys at the State University, but among them had been none like Anne Masters. Boone was to learn from a broader experience that there were few like her—anywhere. Even now, when she was a bud not yet blossomed, she had that indescribable fairy godmother's gift to which no analyst can fit a formula—the charm which lays its spell upon others and the gift of individuality.

"You've seed me—seen me—I mean—before. But it's right natcher'l fer ye to forgit it, because it was a long spell back. You gave me the first Christmas gift I ever got in my life—a piece of plum-cake. Do you remember me now?"

The light of recollection broke over her face, illuminating it—and Anne Masters had those eyes that actually sparkle within—the dancing eyes that are much rarer than the phrase.

"Of course I remember you! I've thought about you—lots. I've always called you the fruit-cake boy." Suddenly her laugh rippled out in a lilting merriment. "Don't you remember when you challenged Morgan with the fencing foils?"

"Oh," exclaimed Boone, flushing. "I'd plum' disremembered that."

It was June with days of diamond weather and the bloom still upon wild rose and rhododendron. Anne looked away beyond the boy's head to the tallest crest of the many that ringed the town. Suddenly she demanded—

"Have you ever been up there—at the tip-top of that mountain?"

He nodded his head, and she at once commanded:

"I want you to show me the way up



there. I want to go up and climb to the top of that tree that you can see from here—the one that stands up higher than all the others.”

Boone shook his head soberly.

“It’s a right hazardous undertakin’ fer anybody thet isn’t used to scalin’ cliffs,” he objected. “Why do you want to go up there to the top of old Slag-face?”

Her expression had clouded to autocratic displeasure at his failure of immediate assent, but only for an instant; then her eyes altered again from coercive brown to irresistible smile.

“Why?” she exclaimed. “Why does a bird want to fly? Up there at the top of that tree you’d be almost in the sky. You’d be looking down on everything but the clouds themselves. When I was a little girl,” she announced suddenly, “they had a hard time persuading me that I couldn’t fly. They had to keep watching me because I’d climb up on things and try to fly down.”

“Have you plum’ outgrown that idee?” he inquired somewhat dryly. “Because I’m not cravin’ to help you fly offen that mountain-top.”

Her laugh rippled out like bird notes as she replied with the large scorn of fourteen years.

“That was when I was a child.” After a moment she added appealingly—“The last time I saw you, General Prince said that when I came to these hills you’d be ‘charitable’ to me.”

“I aims to be,” he asserted stoutly, “but it wouldn’t skeercely be charitable to be the cause of your breakin’ an arm or—” he paused an instant before adding with sedateness—“or a limb.”

BUT ANNE had her way. She always had her way and some days later they looked down on an outspread world from the crest of Slag-face.

Boone had not been long in discovering that this slender girl was driven by a dauntless spirit that made of physical courage a positive fetish, so he had pretended weariness himself from time to time and demanded a breathing spell.

The sky overhead was splendidly soft and blue, broken by tumbling cloud masses, which, it seemed, one could almost reach out and touch.

From the foreground where they sat

flushed and resting, with moss and rock and woodland about them, the prospect went off into distances where mountain shadows fell across valleys and other ridges were ranked row on row. Still more remote was the vagueness of the horizon, whose misty violet merged with the robins-egg blue of the sky.

The girl stood leaning against the tree and her violet eyes were full of imaginative light.

Through lids half-closed the boy looked at her. She was an exponent of that world of which he had dreamed. He thought of the hall where he had first seen her, of the silk and broadcloth, of the mahogany and silver, of the whole setting which was home to her and to him a place into which he had come as a trespasser in homespun.

Into the tempering of the crude ore came a new element. Asa Gregory had been the fire and so far Victor McCalloway had been the water. Now came the third factor of life’s process—the oil—for there and then on the hill-top he had fallen in love, and it was not until he was riding home in the starlight that he stopped to consider the chances of disaster.

It had been a wonderful day, accepted without questioning, but now he drew his horse suddenly to a stop and took his hat from his head. For a time he sat there in his saddle as unmoving as if he and the beast he rode were inanimate parts of an equestrian group—the statue of a pioneer lad rough-mounted.

His face stiffened painfully and he licked his lips. Finally he said to the dark woods where the whippoorwills were calling and the fireflies flickering:

“Great God! I mout jest as well fall in-love with a star up thar in heaven.”

Something like agroan escaped him and after a while he gathered up his reins. Again he spoke but in a dull voice.

“I’ll quit afore I get in too far. Tomorrow night I’ll go over thar and ‘set up’ with Happy Spradling.”

He remembered how they had laughed at him at college when, quite naturally, he had used that term “setting up with a gal” to express the idea of courtship. Now he laughed himself, but bitterly. That was what his own people called it, and after all it was better to remember that he was of his own people.

The next night Boone kept his word.

He brushed his clothes and did what he could with the unruly crispness of his hair, and then he set out for the log house of Cyrus Spradling on the head waters of Snag Ridge.

He was not going on this, his first formal visit to a girl, with such leaping pulses as might have been expected. He was following out an almost grim determination quite devoid of eagerness. Having lost his heart to royalty, he was now bent on forcing himself into a society where he had a right to be.

He had not slept much that night after the excursion to Slag-face, and what sleep he had had, had been troubled by dreams in which Anne had stood smiling down on him from the mountain-top, while he looked up from a deep gorge where the shadows lay black. He was driven by a mad sense of necessity to climb up and stand beside her—but always he slid back, or fell from narrow ledges until he was bruised, bleeding and unsuccessful. He woke up panting and afterward dreamed the same thing over. And every time he fell he found Happy waiting in the gorge and saying:

"Why don't ye stay here with me? You don't have to climb after me—and I'm a right pretty gal."

Always, too, he answered in the words that Anne had used:

"Why do I want to go up there? Up there you'd be looking down on everything but the clouds themselves," and he would begin climbing once more, clutching with raw fingers upon frail and slippery supports.

All day he had argued with himself, and being young and unversed in such problems, he told himself that the only way to halt this runaway thing within himself that led to no hope, was to set his heart upon something which lay in reach. His inexperience told him that Happy liked him, that she was a nice girl trying to better her condition in life as he was himself trying, and he meant to commandeer his own heart and lay it at her feet. It was, of course, an absurd and impossible thing to undertake, but this he must learn for himself.

As Boone reached the house, old man Spradling sat on his porch in the twilight with his cob pipe between his teeth. Cyrus remained what his "foreparents" had been

before him, a rough-hewn man of undeviating honesty and of an innate kindliness that showed out only in deeds and not at all in demonstrativeness.

Just now Cyrus wore an expression of countenance that was somewhat glum as he watched the lingering afterglow which edged the western crests of the "Kaintuck ridges" with pale amber.

"Set ye a cheer, Booney," he invited with a brief nod. "I reckon ye didn't skeercely fare over hyar ter set an' talk with me, but ther gal hain't quite through holpin' her mammy with the dish-washin' yit, an' I wants ter put some questions ter ye afore she comes out."

The lad drew a hickory-withed chair forward and sat down, laying his hat on the floor at his feet.

"Ye've done been off ter college, son," began old Cyrus reflectively as he bit on his pipe-stem and judicially nodded his head.

"I've always countenanced book lore myself, even when folks hes faulted me fer hit. I've contended thet ther times change an' what was good enough fer ther parents hain't, of needcessity, good enough fer ther young ones. 'Peared like, ter me, a body kinderly hes a better chanst ter be godly ef he hain't benighted."

"I reckon there ain't no two ways about that proposition," agreed the boy eagerly. "Hit just stands ter reason."

"An' yit, hyar latterly," suggested the mountaineer dubiously, "I've done commenced ter misdoubt ef I've been right atter all. Thet's what I wanted ter question ye about. My woman an' me, we sent Happy off ter thet new school in Leslie, an' since she's come home I misdoubts ef her name fits her es well es hit did afore she went over thar. She used ter sing like a bird all day an' now she don't."

"I don't see how knowin' something can make a body unhappy," protested Boone.

Cyrus Spradling studied him with a keen but not unkindly fixedness of gaze.

"Ye don't, don't ye? Wa'al let me narrate ye a leetle parable. Suppose you an' me hes done been pore folks, livin' in a small dwellin'-house. We've done been plum' content, because we hain't never knowed nothing better. But suppose one of us goes a visitin' ter rich kinfolks—an' tother one stays home."

He paused there to rekindle his pipe



and the voice of his resumed "parable" was troubled.

"Ther one thet's been away hes done took up notions of wealth that he kain't niver hope ter satisfy. The mean cabin seems a heap meaner when he comes back ter hit, but ther other pore damn' fool he's still happy an' contented becouse he don't know no better."

"I reckon," laughed the young visitor, "if the feller that had gone away was anything but the disablest body in the world, he'd set about improving the house he had to dwell in."

"I hope ter God ye're right, Booney. Hit's been a mighty sober thing fer me ter ponder over, though, whether I was helpin' my gal or hurtin' her."

Boone was smitten with a sense of guilt. He felt that he ought to make confession that he had come here tonight because he had already recognized a new flame in his heart, and a flame which the voice of sanity and wisdom told him he must quench—that he was here because discontent had driven him. But his voice was firm. As he made some commonplace reply Cyrus nodded his satisfaction.

"Mebby if thar's a few boys like ye growin' up hyarabouts, ther few gals thet gits larnin' won't be foredoomed ter lead lonesome lives, atter all."

The moonlight was beginning to convert the dullness of twilight into a nocturne of soft and tempered beauty.

Boone felt suddenly appalled, as if the father had given him parental recognition and approval and laid upon him an obligation. He wanted to rise and frame some excuse for immediate flight, but it was, of course, too late for that.

The evening star came up over the dark contours of the ridge. It shone soft and lustrous in the sky where other stars would soon add their myriad points of light, but however many others might fill the heavens there would still be only one evening star. And Boone, as he waited for one girl, fell to thinking of the other with whom he had climbed Slag-face, yesterday—the girl who had set fire to his young imagination.

Then Happy came out of the door and soon after the father went in.

"Thar hain't no place fer an ign'rant old feller like me, out hyar amongst ther young an' wise," he chuckled as he left them.

"I reckons ye aims ter talk algebray an' sich-like."

The mountains were great upward sweeps of velvet darkness. Down in the slopes, where the moonlight fell, was a bath of silver and shadows not dead and inky, but blue and living, but Happy Spradling, keyed to the emotional influences of that June evening found herself laboring with a distraught and unresponsive visitor, who made an early excuse for departure.

XVII.

BEYOND the goal of getting through college in three years, Boone had planned his future but vaguely. He might seek election to the Legislature, when he came of qualifying age, and strive upward from that beginning toward Congress and the larger rewards of a political life. For such a career the law was a necessary preparation, so while he was still in college he began its reading.

Whenever he went home from the university he saw Happy, and, in the tacit fashion of simple souls, their neighborhood fell to speaking of "Boone and Happy" as if the linking of their names was natural and logical, and in local gossip it was almost as if they were betrothed.

Happy had other suitors, more than a few of them, indeed, drawn to the Spradling house by her beauty. Along those neighborhood creeks from the trickles where they "headed up" to the mouths where they emptied, there were few girls who could hope to compete with her loveliness of sloe-eyes, dusky hair and slender grace of body. But the old wives shook their heads, saying—

"Happy Spradling wouldn't hurt a fly—but jest ther same she's breakin' hearts right an' left becouse she's mortgaged ter Boone Wellver—an' she's jest a'waitin' fer him."

Old Cyrus already looked on him as a son, and Boone spoke as little of Anne Masters as he would have spoken of the things sealed in Masonic secrecy.

Happy's school was one which arranged its terms and vacations in accordance with local exigencies. Crop planting and gathering had the right of way over text-books, and so it happened that when Anne was at Marlin Town, Happy was usually at school, and their ways did not cross.

Yet each Summer, too, as a man may go from the provinces to court and yet not delude himself with the hallucination that he is a courtier, Boone went over to Marlin Town. For every Summer Anne Masters came for a few weeks to visit the father who held his position there, remote from the things that, to his thinking, made up the values of life.

During these periods Boone found life a strange and paradoxical pattern, woven of a web of ecstasy and a woof of torture. Since that night when we had dragged suddenly at his bridle-curb and had told himself, "I might as well fall in love with a star up there in heaven," he had never departed from his resolute conviction that it would be sheer insanity for him to entertain any thought of Anne, save that of the willing and faithful slave who would joyously have laid his life down for her.

She dominated his world of boyhood dreams and since he was not deaf to the talk about himself and "Cyrus Spradling's gal," he wondered if he ought not to tell Happy the whole truth. But after long reflection he shook his head.

"It would only hurt Happy, like telling her about dreams that come at night of some sort of heaven where I don't see her herself."

And so he did not tell her.

ONE DAY in the Spring of the year when Anne was sixteen, Mrs. Larry Masters dropped into the office of her kinsman, Tom Wallifarro, to talk over some small matter of business. It was one of the regrets of the lady's life—a life somewhat touched and frostbitten by bitterness—that all of her business was small. It was, however, one of her compensations that this gentleman gave to her petty affairs as much care and consideration as to the major features of his large practice.

"My dear," observed the colonel irrelevantly as he looked at the weary eyes of the woman who had in her day been an almost famous beauty, "you seem worried. You are altogether too young to let lines creep into your face."

Mrs. Masters laughed mirthlessly.

"I have a daughter growing up. I am ambitious for her. She has charm, grace, breeding—and she's the poor member of a rich family. Such things bring wrinkles around maternal eyes, cousin Tom."

"Happily she lives in Kentucky," the lawyer reminded his visitor. "We are yet provincial enough to think something of blood, even when it's not gilded with money."

"Yes, thank God, and thanks to you she has had educational advantages. If Larry had only had business sense—but I can't talk patiently about Larry."

"No—I wish you could bring yourself to think of him more indulgently, but—" Colonel Tom knew the fruitlessness of that line of counsel, so he brushed lightly by to other topics. "But that isn't what I wanted to talk about. I think Morgan ought to travel abroad for several months, don't you?"

Mrs. Masters sighed. There was a thought in her mind which had long been there. If Morgan and Anne could be brought to a fancy for each other, her problem in life would be settled. The girl would no longer be a charity child. But what she said was an amendment to the original thought.

"Isn't he a bit inexperienced and headstrong yet to be turned loose in Europe?"

The colonel's eyes twinkled.

"I mean to have a checkrein on him."

"What fashion of checkrein, cousin Tom?"

"I thought," said the lawyer offhandedly, since he always surrounded his beneficences with a show of the casual, "that it would be a good thing for Anne, too. Now if you and she and Morgan made a European trip together, the responsibility of two ladies on his hands would steady the youngster."

Mrs. Masters almost gasped in her effort to control her delighted astonishment. Morgan had always thought of Anne as a "kid" to be teased and badgered and of himself as a very finished and mature young gentleman. Now they would see each other in a new guise. Their eyes might be opened. In short, the possibilities were immense.

"Your goodness to us—" she began feelingly, but the colonel cleared his throat and raised a hand in defense against the embarrassment of verbal gratitude.

A MONTH later the three sat in the *salle à manger* of the Elysée Palace Hotel by a window that commanded a view of the Arc de Triomphe, and many things had happened. Among them was the sur-

prizing discovery by the young man that while few eyes seemed concerned with him many turned toward Anne, and having turned, lingered.

Only last night they had been to a dance and Anne had been so occupied with uniforms that she had found no time to waltz with him, though he was sure that he danced circles about these stiff-kneed gentry with petty titles.

Now over the *petit déjeuner* he took his young and inconsiderate cousin to task.

"Last night, Anne, I camped on your trail all evening, and you couldn't manage to slip me in one dance. Nothing would do but goggling Britishers and smirking frog-eaters. I'm getting jolly well fed up with these foreigners."

Anne lifted her brows, but her eyes sparkled mischief.

"Oh, Morgan, I can dance with you any time," she assured him. "You're just kin-folks. Is it because you're 'jolly well fed up' with foreigners that you like to ape English slang?"

The young man blushed hotly, but he chose to ignore the question with which she had capped her response. Inasmuch as it was a fair hit, he had need to ignore it, but his eyes snapped with furious indignation.

"Anne, I don't understand you," he announced in a carefully schooled voice. "You can play with absurd little dignitaries, or with mountain illiterates—anything abnormal—but for your own blood—"

He paused there a moment, searching his abundant and sophomoric vocabulary for the exact combination of withering words, and while he hesitated, she interrupted in a tone which was both quiet and ominous.

"Let's take up one thing at a time, Morgan. Just who is the illiterate in the mountains?"

"You know as well as I do—Boone Wellver."

"Boone Wellver. I thought so. At all events he's a man, even if he's not quite twenty-one yet."

"A man, that is to say a specimen of *genus homo*! So is the fellow that brought in the eggs just now. So is the chap that drives the taxi."

The young aristocrat shrugged his shoulders and snapped his fingers in excellent imitation of Gallic expressiveness, then as Anne's twinkle reminded him of his

being "jolly well fed up with foreigners," the change of his tone became as abrupt as the break in a boy's altering voice, and he added:

"The point is that he's hardly a gentleman. I commend his ambition; but there's something in birth as well. Unless you attach some importance to the elegances and nuances of life, you are only a member of the mob."

"The elegances of life—as for instance," the dancing sparkle stole mischievously back into the blue eyes and the voice took on a purring softness. "As for instance the handling of the small sword—or fencing foil?"

Morgan rose petulantly from the table and pushed back his chair.

"If you ladies will excuse me," he announced with super-dignity, "I will leave you for a while to your own devices."

Anne's laughter pursued him in exit with an echo of musical mockery.

But that evening Mrs. Larry Masters posted a letter to Colonel Tom Wallifarro.

"Morgan has discovered Anne!" she said in part. "He has been too close to her until now to realize her attractiveness, but she has been noticed by other men and at last Morgan is awake. They have quarreled and next to making love that's the most significant of developments. My dear kinsman and benefactor, you know what our mutual hope has been and I think its fulfillment is not so far away! Tonight when I slipped my claret at dinner I drank a silent toast—'To my girl and your boy.'"

While Mrs. Masters was writing that note her daughter was sitting at another desk in the same room and her letter was addressed to a postoffice back of Cedar Mountain.

When Boone received that second missive, he turned the envelope over in his hand and gazed at it for a long while. Even then he did not open it until he sat alone in a place where the forests were silent save for the call of a blue-jay and the diligent rapping of a "cock of the woods" who was sapping and mining for grubs.

The boy held between thumb and forefinger an envelope of a sort he had never seen before, of thin outer paper over a dark colored lining. In one corner was a stamp of the French Republic, and there in writing that had crossed the sea was his name and address.

"She found time to write to me," he said

rapturously to himself, and then dropping intentionally and whimsically into his old childhood speech he added, nodding his head sagely to a pert squirrel that frisked its tail near-by—

"She's done wrote me a letter cl'ar from tother world."

It was that same Summer, when Anne had gone to Europe, that Boone came back from college very serious and taciturn, and McCalloway was prompt to guess the reason.

"You went down to Louisville, didn't you?" he inquired as the two sat by the door-step on the day of the boy's return, and Boone nodded.

The man did not nag him with questions. His seasoned wisdom contented itself with smoking on in silence and after a little the lad jerked back his head.

"I reckon you know what took me there, sir?"

The final word came in afterthought. No mountaineer says, "sir," by habit.

A part of that stubborn independence which is at once the virtue and the fault of the race balks at even such small measure of implied deference, but Boone had noticed that "down below" where courtesy flowers into graciousness, the form of address was general.

McCalloway responded slowly.

"Yes, I can guess your errand there. How is he?"

The boy's eyes gazed off across the slopes through contracted lids and his voice came in deliberate but repressed tenseness.

"I hunted up Colonel Wallifarro's office and he went over there with me. I reckon except for that they wouldn't have let me see him."

He paused, and the man thoughtfully observed—

"No, I fancy not."

"You go into that jail-house through a stone door, and ther's a rough-lookin' feller settin'—I mean sitting—there in front of another door made of iron gratin's as thick as crowbars. The place don't smell good."

"Isn't it well kept?" inquired McCalloway in some surprize, and the boy hastily explained.

"I don't mean that it plumb stinks. I reckon it's as clean as a jail can be, but the air is stale—even out on the street that lowland air is flat. It don't taste right in a man's throat. Asa was reared up here in

these free hills. He's like a caged hawk down there."

The soldier nodded sympathetically.

"Did he seem well?"

"He hasn't sickened none, but his face used to be right colorful. Now it's pale—and sort of gray-like. Of course a turnkey went along with us and we didn't talk with him by himself. I reckon he didn't say none of the things he craved most to say. He was right silent-like."

The boy broke off and for a while the two sat in silence. When Boone took up the thread of his narrative again, there was something like a catch in his throat.

"They were pretty polite to us there. They showed us all over the place—they even took us to the death row. There was a nigger in there that was goin' ter be hung next morning at daybreak. I reckon he's dead now. A feller kept walkin' back and forth in front of that cell, and an electric light was burnin' there full bright. That nigger, neither night ner day, could ever git away from that light. They were afraid he might seek ter kill hisself. He come ter the bars an' said 'Howdy, white-folks,' an' then he went back an' sat down on the ledge that he sleeps on."

The recital, painfully punctuated with its frequent pauses, halted there. It was a matter of several minutes before it began again. Now the voice was labored as if the speaker were panting for breath and the careful pronunciation relapsed wildly into the older and ruder forms of solecism.

"They tuck us out an' showed us the cement yard, whar the gallows stood. It was painted a sort of brownish red. It put me in mind of dried blood. The nigger could hear the hammers whilest they set the thing up. Asa could hear 'em, too. Asa hed done seed ther scaffold hisself, through the winder-bars when he exercised in the corridor. But when I looked at the nigger thet's dead by now, seemed like it was Asa I saw—with thet lamp glarin' in on him, daylight and night-time alike." The voice leaped into a sob-like vehemence. "Thet's what Judas money dogged him to! Seemed like I couldn't endure it!"

XVII.

SO IF the time ever came when Boone stood face to faec with Saul Fulon it would, for all the amendment of his new

life, be a moment of desperate crisis. The pig-iron of his half-savage beginning had been made malleable and held promise of tempered and flexible steel, but the metal was still feudist ore.

McCalloway comforted himself with the reflection that Saul was not likely to return, but did not delude himself into forgetting that strange perversity which seems to draw the mountaineer inevitably back to his crags and woods, even in the face of innumerable perils. Some day Saul might attempt to slip back, and Boone would almost inevitably hear of his coming. Then for a day or an hour the lad might relapse into his old self, even to the forgetting of his pledge. Such an unconsidered day or an hour would be enough to wreck his life.

Carefully and adroitly, therefore, McCalloway played upon the softer strings of life, and sometimes to that end he opened a hitherto closed door upon the events of his own life and let his protégé look in on glimpses that were sacredly guarded from other eyes.

One Summer night, for example, Boone laid down a book and said suddenly:

"It tells here about a fellow winning the Star of India and the Victoria Cross. I'd love to see one of those medals."

Silently McCalloway rose and went over to the folding desk, to come back with his battered dispatch box. He unlocked it and laid out before the boy not one decoration, but several. The ribbons were somewhat faded now, and the metal tarnished; but Boone bent forward and his face glowed with the exaltation of one admitted to precincts that are sacrosanct. For a long while he studied the Maltese cross with its lion-surmounted crown and its supporting bar chased with rose-leaves; the cross that bears the queen's name, for which men brave death.

Beside it lay the oval showing Victoria's profile and the gilt inscription on a blue-enameled margin—"Heaven's Light Our Guide." A star caught it to its white-edged blue ribbon, and that was the coveted Star of India.

Here before his eyes—eyes that burned eagerly—were the priceless trifles that he had never hoped to see. The modest gentleman who, for his sake, had relinquished fresh honors in China, had won them, and until now had never spoken of them, but

Boone knew that they are not lightly gained—and that in no way can they be bought.

A sudden and unaccountable mistiness blurred his sight.

"I'm obliged to you, sir," he said seriously. "I know you don't often show them."

He had meant to say nothing more than that, but youth's questioning urge mastered his resolution so that he put an interrogation very slowly, half-fearing it might seem an impertinence.

"You told me once, sir, that I might ask whatever questions I liked—and that you would refuse to answer when you felt like it. I'm going to ask one now, but I reckon I oughtn't to." Again there was a diffident pause, but the sincere blue eyes were unwaveringly steady as they met the gray ones. "Do you reckon, sir, the day will ever come when I can know the real name of the man I owe pretty nigh everything to?"

McCalloway blinked his eyes, which this cub of a boy had a way of tricking into unsoldierly emotion, and resolutely he set his features into immobility.

"No, sir; I'm afraid not," he answered with a gruffness that in no way deceived his questioner. "McCalloway is as good a name as any, I'm afraid; at all events, it will have to serve to the end."

Slowly and gravely the lad nodded his head.

"All right, sir," he declared. "It was just curiosity, anyhow. The name I know you by is good enough for me."

But McCalloway was disquietingly moved. He rose and replaced the dispatch-box on its shelf and after that he paced the room for a few moments with quick, restive strides. Then his voice came with an impulsive suddenness:

"There's a paper in that dispatch-box that would answer your question, Boone," he said. "I tell you because I want you to realize how entirely I trust you. It's the secret chamber of my *Bluebeard* establishment. While I live it must remain locked."

After a moment he added:

"If I should die and you still want to know then you may open the box, but even then what you learn is for yourself alone and I want that you shall destroy all those documents and whisper no word whatever of their contents to any living soul."



"I promise, sir," declared the boy. "On my honor."

WHEN August had brought the yellow masses of the goldenrod and the rusty purple of the ironweed; when the thistles were no longer a sting to the touch but down drifting along the lightest breeze, two horses stopped at McCalloway's fence and a girl's voice called out:

"Can we come in?"

Boone had not known that Anne Masters was back on this side of the Atlantic, nor had he ventured to hope that she would find time to come up here into the hills before the Summer ended, but the voice had brought him out to the stile, as swiftly as a cry for help could have done. Now he stood looking up at her as she sat in her saddle with a blaze of worship in his blue eyes that went far to undo all the self-restraint with which he had so studiously hedged about his speech and manner. Surprise has undone many wary generals. So his eyes made love to her, even while his lips remained guarded of utterance.

"I didn't have any idea that you were on this side of the world," he declared. "It's just plumb taken my breath away from me to see you sitting right there on that horse."

Larry Masters had dismounted and was hitching his mule. Now he turned to inquire—

"Where's Mr. McCalloway?"

The boy had momentarily forgotten the existence of his patron. He had forgotten all things but one, and now he laughed with guilty realization.

"I reckon I'll have to ask your pardon, sir. I was so astonished that I forgot to tell you he wasn't here. He's gone fishing—and I'm afraid he won't be back before sundown."

"Well, we've ridden across the mountain and we're tired. If you don't mind we'll wait for him."

Anne reached down into her saddlebags and produced a small, neatly wrapped package.

"I brought you a present," she announced with a sudden diffidence and Boone remembered how once before, as he stood by a fence, she had spoken almost the same words. Then, too, she had been looking down on him from the superior position of one mounted. He wondered if she

remembered and in excellent mimicry of his old boyish awkwardness he said:

"Thet war right charitable of ye. Hit's ther fust present I ever got from acrost ther ocean-sea."

Anne's laugh rippled out, and she followed suit, quoting herself from the memory of other years.

"Oh no, it isn't that at all. Please don't think it's charity."

Then she slid down and watched him as he unwrapped and investigated his gift—a miniature bust of Bonaparte, the conqueror, in Parian marble. The light August breeze stirred the curls against her cheeks with a delicate play, but they stirred against the boy's heart with the power of lightning and tornado.

Anne was at her father's house for several weeks and scarcely a day of that time did her vassal fail to ride across the mountain, but those hours squandered together were fleet of wing. McCalloway smiled observantly and held his counsel.

The charm and gaiety of Anne's bright personality would do more to dispel the menace of gloom from the dark corners of the boy's nature, where tendencies of melancholy lurked, than all his own efforts and wisdom. Later there would come an aftermath of bitter heartache, for between them lay the fortified frontier which separates red blood and blue—the demarkation of the contrary codes of Jubal and Tubal Cain—but at that thought the soldier shrugged his shoulders with a ripe philosophy.

Just now the girl's influence was precisely what the lad needed. Later, when perhaps he needed something else, he would take his punishment with decent courage and even the punishment would do him good. A blade is not forged and tempered without being pounded between anvil and sledge; and if Boone could not stand it, then Boone could not realize the dreams which McCalloway built for his future.

The wisdom of middle age can treat as ephemeral disasters in which first love can contemplate only incurable scars. Boone himself regarded the golden present as an era for which the whole future must pay with unrelieved levies of black despair.

It was chiefly as he rode home at night that he faced this death's-head future with young lips stiffening and eyes narrowed.



In the morning sunlight or through woods that sobbed with rain, he went buoyant, because then he was going toward her, and whatever the indefinite future held in store, he had that day assured with all its richness.

None-the-less, Boone played the game as he saw it, with the guiding instincts of a gentleman. Because it was all a wonderful dream and he was doomed to an eventual awakening, he sealed his lips against love-making.

Anne was taking him for granted, he reasoned. He had simply become a local necessity to a bright nature overflowing with vital and companionable impulses.

As vassal he gladly and proudly offered himself and as vassal she frankly and without analysis accepted him. Should he let slip the check upon his control and go to mooning about love, instead of meeting her laughter with his laughter and her jest with his jest, she would send him away into a deserved exile.

On the day before Anne was to leave they were on the great pinnacle rock above Slag-face, and by now Boone had come to regard that as the lofty shrine where he had discovered love. Afterward it would stand through the years as a spot of hallowed memories.

Anne had been talking with vivacious enthusiasm of the things she had seen abroad, and Boone had followed her with rapt attentiveness. She had a natural gift for vivid description, and he had seemed to stand with her by moonlight in the ruins of the Coliseum and to look out with her from the top of Cheops' pyramid over the sands of Ghizeh and the ribbon of the Nile.

But at last they had fallen silent and with something like a sigh, the girl said—

"Tomorrow I go back to Louisville."

He had forgotten that for the moment and he flinched at the reminder, but his only reply was:

"And in a few days I've got to go back to Lexington. I always miss the hills down there."

Her violet eyes challenged him with full directness—

"Won't you miss—anything else?"

Boone, who was looking at her, closed his eyes. He was sure that they would betray him and when he ventured to open them again he had prudently averted his

gaze. But though he looked elsewhere he still saw her. He saw the hair that had enmeshed his heart like a snare, saw the eyes that held an inner sparkle—which was for him an altar fire.

"I'm not the sort of feller that can help missing his friends," he made guarded reply, but his tongue felt dry and unwieldy.

Usually people were not so niggardly as that with their compliments to Anne, and as she held a half-piqued silence Boone knew that she was offended, so his next question came with a stammering incertitude.

"You are a friend of mine, aren't you?"

She rose then from the rock where she had been sitting and stood there lance-like, with her chin high and her glance averted. To his question she offered no response save a short laugh; the pulses in his temples began to throb, and once more he closed his eyes as one instinctively closes them under a wave of physical pain.

Boone had made valiant and chivalrous resolves of silence, but he had heard a laugh touched with a bitterness from lips upon which bitterness was by nature alien.

"Anne," he exclaimed in a frightened tone, "what made you laugh like that?"

Then she wheeled and her words came torrentially. There was anger and perplexity and a little scorn in her voice, but also a dominant disappointment.

"I mean, Boone Wellver, that I don't know how to take you. Sometimes I think you really like me—lots. Not just lumped in with everybody that you can manage to call a friend. I have no use for lukewarm friendships; I'd rather have none at all. You seem to be in deadly fear of spoiling me with your lordly favor."

The boy stood before her with a face that had grown ashen. It seemed incredible to him that she could so misconstrue his attitude—an attitude based on hard and studied self-control.

"You think that, do you?" he inquired in a low voice, almost fierce in its intensity. "Do you think I'm fool enough not to take thankfully what I can get without crying for the moon?"

"What has the moon to do with it?" she demanded.

But the vow of silence which Boone had taken with the grave solemnity of a Trappist monk was no longer a dependable bulwark. The dam had broken.



"Just this," he said soberly; "you're as far out of my reach as the moon itself. You say I seem afraid to tell you that I really like you. I am afraid. I'm so mortally afraid that I'd sworn I'd never tell you. God knows that I couldn't start talking about that without saying the whole of it. I can't say I like you because I don't like you—I love you. I love you like—" The rapid flood of words broke off in abrupt silence. Then the boy raised his hands and let them fall again in a gesture of despair. "There isn't anything in the world to liken it to," he declared.

Anne's eyes had widened in astonishment. She said nothing at all and Boone waited, steeling himself against the expected sentence of exile. Nothing less than banishment, he had always told himself, could be the penalty of such an outburst.

"Now," he continued in a bitter desperation, "I've done what I said I'd never do. I've foresworn myself and told you that I love you. I might as well finish because I reckon I can guess what you'll say presently. From the first day when you came here, I've been in love with you. I've never seen the evening star rise up over the Kaintuck Ridges that I haven't looked at it and thought of it as your own star. I've never seen it, either, that I haven't said to myself, 'you might as well love that star,' and I've tried just to live from hour to hour when I was with you and not think about the day when you'd be gone away."

Anne still stood with wide and questioning eyes, but no anger had come into them yet. Her voice shook a little as she asked:

"Just why do you think of me that way, Boone? Why am I—so far—out of reach?"

"Why!" His question was an exclamation of amazement. "You've seen that cabin where I was born, haven't you? You know what your people call my people, don't you—'poor white trash'? Between you and me there's a gorge two hundred years wide. Your folks are those that won the West and mine are those that fell by the roadside and petered out and dry-rotted."

As he finished the speech, which had been such a long one for him, he stood waiting. Into the unsteady voice with which she put her last question he had read the reserve of controlled anger, such as a just

judge would seek to hold in abeyance until everything was said. So he braced himself and tried not to look at her, but he felt that the length of time she held him in that tight-drawn suspense was a shade cruel—unintentionally so, of course.

The girl's face told him nothing, either, at first, but slowly into the eyes came that scornful gleam that he had sometimes seen there when he sought to modify the risk involved in some reckless caprice of her own, suggesting a disdain for all things calculatedly cautious. At last she spoke.

"You could say every one of those things about Lincoln," was her surprising pronouncement. "You could say most of them about Napoleon or any big man that won out on his own. When I brought you that little bust, I thought you'd like it. I thought you had that same kind of spirit—and courage."

"But, Anne—"

"I didn't interrupt you," she reminded him. "My idea of a real man is one who doesn't talk timidly about gorges, whether they're two hundred years wide, as you call it, or not. Napoleon wouldn't have been let into a kitchen door at court, so he came in through the front way with a triumphal arch built over it. He knocked down barriers and got what he wanted."

"Then—" his voice rang out suddenly, "then if I can ever get up to where you stand I won't be 'poor white trash' to you?"

She shook her head and her eyes glowed with invincible spirit.

"You'll be a man that wasn't faint-hearted," she told him honestly. "One that was brave enough to live his own life as I mean to live my own."

"Anne," he said fervently, "you asked me if I'd miss anything but the hills. I'll miss you—like—all hell—because I love you like that."

They were on a mountain-top, with no one to see them. They were almost children and inexperienced. They thought that they could lay down their own plans and build their lives in accordance, with no deflection of time or circumstance.

A few moments later they stood flushed with the intoxication of that miracle that makes other miracles pallid. The girl's breath came fast and her cheeks were pinkly flushed. The boy's heart hammered and the leagues of outspread landscape

seemed a reeling, whirling, but ecstatically beautiful, confusion. Their eyes held in a silent caress, and for them both all subsequent things were to be dated from that moment when he had impulsively taken her in his arms and when she had returned his first kiss.

XVIII

GENERAL BASIL PRINCE sat in his law office one murky December morning of the year 1903. It was an office which bespoke the attorney of the older generation and about it hung the air of an unadorned workshop. If one compared it with the room in the same building where young Morgan Wallifarro worked at a flat-topped mahogany table, one found the difference between Spartan simplicity and sybarite elegance. But over one bookcase hung an ancient and battered cavalry sword, a relic of the days when the general had ridden with the "wizards of the saddle and the saber."

Just now he was, for the second time, reading a letter which seemed to hold for him a peculiar interest.

DEAR GENERAL:

Your invitation to come to Louisville and meet at your table that coterie of intimates of whom you have so often spoken is one that tempts me strongly—and yet I must decline.

You know that my name is not McCalloway, and you do not know what it is. I think I made myself clear on that subject when you waived the circumstance that I am a person living in hermitage, because my life has not escaped clouding. You generously accepted my unsupported statement that no actual guilt tarnishes the name which I no longer use, yet despite my eagerness to know those friends of yours, those gentlemen who appeal so strongly to my imagination and admiration, I could not, in justice to you or to myself, permit you to foist me on them under an assumed name. I have resolved upon retirement and must stand to my resolution. The discovery of my actual identity would be painful to me and social life might endanger that.

I'll not deny that in the loneliness here, particularly when the boy is absent, there are times when, for the dinner conversation of gentlemen and ladies, I would almost pawn my hope of salvation. There are other times, and many, when for the feel of a saber-hilt in my hand, for the command of a brigade, or even a regiment, I would almost offer my blade for hire—almost but not quite.

I must, however, content myself with my experiment—my wolf-cub.

You write of my kindness to him, but, my dear General, it is the other way about. It

is he who has made my hermitage endurable—and filled in the empty spaces of my life. My fantastic idea of making him the American who starts the pioneer and ends the modern, begins to assume the color of plausibility.

I now look forward with something like dread to the time when he must go out into a wider world. For then I can not follow him. I shall have reached the end of my tutorship. I do not think I can then endure this place without him, but there are others as secluded.

My dear General, the very cordial tone of your letters emboldens me to ask a favor, and it is a large one, in this connection. When he has finished his course at college I should like to have him read law in Louisville. That will take him into a new phase of the development I have planned. He will need strong counsel and true friends there, for he will still be the pioneer with the rough bark on him, coming into a land of culture, and though he will never confess it, he will feel the sting of class distinctions and financial contrasts.

There he will see what rapid transitions have left of the old South, and despite the many changes, there still survives much of its spirit. Its fragrant bouquet, its fine traditions, are not yet gone. God willing, I hope he will even go further than that, and later know the national phases as well as the sectional—but that, of course, lies on the knees of the gods.

General Prince laid down the letter and sat gazing thoughtfully at the scabbarded saber on the wall. Then he rose from his chair and went along the corridors to a suite legended "Wallifarro, Banks & Wallifarro." The general paused to smile, for the last name had been freshly lettered there, and he knew that it meant a hope fulfilled to his old friend, the colonel. His son's name was on the door and his son was in the firm. But it was to the private office of Colonel Tom that he went, and the colonel shoved back a volume of decisions to smile his welcome.

"Tom," began the general, "I have a letter here that I want you to read. I may be violating a confidence, but I think the writer would trust my judgment in such a matter."

Tom Wallifarro read the sheets of evenly penned chirography, and, as he handed them back, he said musingly:

"Under the circumstances, of course, it would not be fair to ask if you have any guess as to who McCalloway is—or was. He struck me as a gentleman of extraordinary interest. He is a man who has known distinction."

"That's why I came in this morning, Tom. I want you to know him better, and to co-operate with me, if you will, about

the boy. Since the mountain can't come to Mohammed——"

"We are to go there?" came the understanding response, and Basil Prince nodded.

"Precisely; I wanted you and one or two others of our friends to go down there. I had in mind an idea that may be foolish—fantastic even for a lot of old fellows like ourselves—but none-the-less interesting. I want to give the chap a dinner in his own house."

Colonel Wallifarro smiled delightedly as he gave his ready sanction to the plan.

"Count me in, General, and call on me wherever you need me."

It was not until January that the surprise party came to pass, and Basil Prince and Tom Wallifarro had entered into their arrangements with all the zest of college-boys sharing a secret. Out of an idea of simple beginnings grew elaborations as the matter developed until there was indeed a dash of the fantastic in the whole matter, and a touch, too, of pathos.

Because of McCalloway's admission that at times his hunger for the refinements of life became a positive nostalgia, the plot-ters resolved to stage, for that one evening, within the walls of hewn logs, an environment full of paradox.

Results followed fast. A hamper was filled from the cellars of the Pendennis Club. Old hams appeared, cured by private recipes that had become traditions. Napery and silver—even glass—came out of sideboards to be packed for a strange journey. All these things were consigned long in advance to Larry Masters at Marlin Town, where railway traffic ended and "jolt wagon" transportation began.

Aunt Judy Fugate, celebrated in her day and generation as a cook, became an accessory before the fact. In her house only a "whoop and a holler" distant from that of McCalloway's, she received, with a bursting importance and a vast secrecy, a store of supplies smuggled hither far more cautiously than it had ever been needful to smuggle "blockade licker."

Upon one pivotal point hinged the success of the entire conspiracy.

Larry Masters must persuade McCalloway to visit him for a full day before the date set, and must go back with him at the proper time. The transformation of a log house into a banquet-hall demands time and non-interference. But there was no

default in Masters' co-operation, and on the appointed evening McCalloway and Larry rode up to the door of the house and dismounted. Then the soldier halted by his fence-line and spoke in a puzzled tone:

"Strange—very strange that there should be lights burning inside. I've been away forty-eight hours and more. I dare say Aunt Judy has happened in. She has a key to the place."

Larry Masters hazarded no explanatory suggestion. The vacuous expression upon his countenance was, perhaps, a shade overdone, but he followed his host across the small yard to his door.

On the threshold McCalloway halted again in a paralyzed bewilderment. Perhaps he doubted his own sanity for a moment, because of what he saw within.

The center of the room was filled with a table, not rough, as was his own, but snowy with damask, and a-sparkle with glass and silver, under the softened light of many candles. So the householder stood bewildered, pressing a hand against his forehead, and as he did so, several gentlemen rose from chairs before his own blazing hearth. When they turned to greet him, he noticed with bewilderment that they were all in evening dress.

Basil Prince came smilingly around the table with an outstretched hand and an enlightening voice.

"Since I am the original conspirator, sir, I think I ought to explain. We are a few Mohammeds who have come to the mountain. Our designs upon you embrace nothing more hostile than a dinner-party."

For a moment Victor McCalloway, for years now a recluse with itching memories of a life that had been a-throb with action and vivid with color, stood seeking to command his voice. His throat worked spasmodically and into the eyes that had on occasion been flint-hard with sternness came a mist that he could not deny. He sought to welcome them—and failed. Rarely had he been so profoundly touched and all he succeeded in putting into words, and that in an unnatural voice, was:

"Gentlemen, you must pardon me if I fail to receive you properly. I have no evening clothes."

But their laughter broke the tension, and while he shook hands around, thinking what difficulties must of necessity have

been met in this gracious display of cordiality, Moses, the negro butler from the Wallifarro household, appeared from the kitchen door bearing a tray of cocktails.

It was not until after two keenly effervescent hours of talk, laughter and dining, when the cigars had been lighted, that Prince came to his feet.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I am not going to pledge the man who is both our host and guest of honor, because I prefer to propose a sentiment we can all drink, standing, including himself. I give you the success of his gallant experiment—the boy, Boone Wellver—a toast to the native-born!"

They rose amid the sound of chairs scraping back, and once more McCalloway felt the contraction of his throat and the dimness in his eyes.

"Gentlemen," he stammered, "I am grateful. I think the boy is going to be an American; not only a hillman, not even only a Kentuckian or a Southerner—though God knows either would be a proud enough title—but an American who blends and fuses these fine elements. That, at all events, is my hope and effort."

He sat down hurriedly—and yet in other days he had spoken with polished ease at tables where distinguished men and women were his fellow-diners—and it was then that Tom Wallifarro rose.

"This was not to be a formal affair of set speeches," he announced in a conversational tone, "but there is one more sentiment without which we would rise leaving the essential thing unsaid. Some one has called these mountain folk our 'contemporary ancestors'—men of the past living in our day. This lad is in that sense of an older age. When he goes into the world he will need such advisors of the newer age as he has had here in Mr. McCalloway—or at least pale imitations of Mr. McCalloway, whose place no one can fill. We are here this evening for two pleasant purposes. To dine with our friend, who could not come to us, and to found an informal order. The Boone who actually lived two centuries ago was the Godfather of Kentucky.

"Gentlemen, I give you the order of our own founding tonight—The Godfathers of Boone."

It was, of course, by coincidence only that the climax of that evening's gathering should have been capped as it was. Probability would have brought the last guests, whom no one there had expected, at any other time, but perhaps the threads of destiny do not after all run haphazard. Possibly it could only be into such a fantastic pattern that they could ever have been woven.

At all events it was that night they came, the two short men, with narrow eyes, set in swarthy Oriental faces, such as those hills had not before seen.

There was a shout from the night—the customary mountain voice raised from afar, as the guide who had brought these visitors halloed from the roadway.

"I'm Omer Maggard, an' I'm guidin' a couple of outlanders thet wants ter see ye."

McCalloway went to the door and opened it, and because it was late, the guide turned back without crossing the threshold.

But the two men who had employed his services to conduct them through the night and along the thicketed roads entered gravely and though they, too, must have felt the irrational contrasts of the picture there, their inscrutable almond eyes manifested no surprise.

They were Japanese, and as both bowed from the hips, one inquired in unimpeachable English—

"You are the Honorable Victor McCalloway?"

If the former soldier had found it impossible to keep the mists of emotion out of his pupils a little while ago, such was no longer the case. His glance was now as stern in its inquisitorial questioning as steel. It was not necessary that these gentlemen should state their mission, to inform him that their coming carried a threat for his incognito, but he answered:

"I am so called."

"I have the honor to present the Count Oku—and myself, Itokai."



The Little Green Devils

BY JAMES FRANCIS DWYER

THE Broadway subway trains running northward take a sudden leap out of their black burrow when they get up near Manhattan Street and, apparently much to their own surprise, rush along for a few hundred yards in the full light of day. Riding the high trestles they roar noisily, palpably endeavoring to attract attention to their elevated position, but the dark tunnel again springs up before them, and, with a strange purring sound that might be construed into a note of thankfulness, they disappear into the darkness.

One can make curious comparisons with the Broadway trains. Poets, politicians, actors, authors, pugilists, pragmatists, parsons, *et al.*, imitate the trains. They burrow for years in a darkness lit only by the dim lights of ambition; then suddenly they roar into the limelight, prance for a moment upon the high trestles of Fame, then on into oblivion. A little unlike the trains, though, they never come back!

But, and here we come to the subject of this story, there are gems in the world—great and wonderful gems with careers analogous to the subway trains. They are what the big jewelers call “unpedigreed gems.” At long, long intervals they appear upon the market, carrying with them no history of their wanderings, and they excite suspicion. They are spoken of in whispers; their value depreciates. They become the Magdalenes of the trade, very beautiful without a doubt, but they are not listed correctly in the “Who’s Who” of the gem world in which proper legitimate gems like the Kohinoor have records

that rival that of Caesar’s wife. Two such outlaws are “The Little Green Devils.”

FREDERICK OSWALD BARNARD, the original “F. O. B.” of Detroit, Michigan, knew a little of outlaw gems when the small Tatar, with the microscopic brow and the eyes in which terror danced on pin-points of light, called upon him. Old F. O. B. was in his own suite at the Grand Hotel des Wagons-Lits in Peking, and the undersized Tatar had been brought to the rooms by two fat and important Chinamen who had much difficulty in keeping him there.

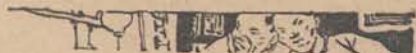
A wild suspicious bird was the Tatar. He pulled his sheepskin coat tighter and watched every movement of F. O. B., the secretary and the two men who had introduced him. He was taking no chances with the company and he did not conceal his distrust. Old Barnard, who indexed every person at first sight and never altered the entry, spoke to his secretary in a whisper when the Tatar was being cajoled to enter the reception room.

“If I had a billion for every throat that little hound has cut,” he growled, “I’d buy up every Liberty-loan bond in the U. S.”

“And you’d have a little left then, sir,” murmured the secretary.

The largest and more elaborately robed of the two Chinamen introduced the Tatar, gripping him firmly by the collar as he spoke.

“This is the man, your excellency,” he said, speaking perfect English. “They are now with him.”



"Very good," said the man from Detroit. "Take no notice of me. Go ahead in your own little way and make him put his goods upon the table. I'm ready to examine them. I have an expert in the next room."

The two Chinamen did proceed in their own way. The smaller poured out a stream of unintelligible abuse upon the Tatar, but the owner of the sheepskin coat drew that article tighter around his lean body and whined curiously.

"He wants all the doors and windows locked and bolted," explained the big Chinaman. "He is afraid of the friends of The Little Green Devils."

"What friends?" asked old F. O. B.

"Friends we can not see," said the Chinaman gravely. "The friends of the air that they know."

Barnard spoke to his secretary.

"Let Kuhn in here," he said, "then bolt the doors."

The secretary brought the expert, a tall lean and very solemn person, who, like all experts, looked as if he thought a trap was being constructed into which it was hoped he would fall and smash his carefully built-up reputation. He mistrusted the yielding carpet, the three Orientals, the quick, sure-footed secretary. He clutched the magnifying glass in his coat pocket, it was the only thing upon which he relied implicitly.

"Now," said Barnard, smiling at the two Chinamen, "the little set is ready. Shoot!"

Again the smaller of the two Celestials spoke hurriedly to the Tatar, whose suspicions were evidently not completely allayed. The appearance of the expert had startled him, but at last convinced that Kuhn was not dangerous, he thrust his hand within the hairy sheepskin jacket and drew forth a ball of the thick, knot-covered linen they make on the hand looms in the northern provinces. He unrolled it with fierce quick gestures, tearing off the last yard of wrapping to the accompaniment of a little crooning song; then, with a flourish, he laid something down upon the teakwood table.

The heads of Kuhn, F. O. B., the secretary and the two Chinamen came slowly forward, drawn by the invisible halts of a curiosity that strangled nonchalance, and a choking silence came into the room.

It was the big Chinaman who broke the stillness.

"Those, your excellency," he said, addressing Frederick Oswald Barnard, "are The Little Green Devils."

Old F. O. B. looked at the two Chinamen, the expert, the secretary, and the small-eyed Tatar, who still held high the linen bandage as if threatening the things upon the table; then F. O. B. laughed in a queer, strained manner.

"Just so," he murmured. "Just so. Well we might—we might get down to business."

The secretary looked at his chief. He had seen Barnard take over a three-million-dollar business without the least excitement. Now his chief was stammering like a youth making his first investment!

The long fingers of Kuhn went slowly out and clutched one of The Little Green Devils. He brought it toward the magnifying glass and thrust it beneath it. A careful man was Kuhn. He had been brought to the Wagons-Lits to examine a pair of ear-rings whose value was enormous, and he intended to do the work thoroughly. Very slowly, very carefully, without bestowing a glance or a word upon the others, he made his examination, submitting the stones to careful tests, scrutinizing them intently for flaws.

After a long, long time he pushed the pair back to the center of the table, frowned as if their flawless beauty still puzzled him, put his glass back into his coat-pocket and whispered softly into the ear of Barnard who had lowered his head to receive the report.

Old F. O. B. straightened himself and signaled the secretary.

"Go and ask Miss Stephanie to come here," he said. "It is silly to buy them unless she likes them."

The Tatar immediately intimated that the gems should be covered while the door was open, and Kuhn placed a jade bowl over them, lowering it gently, reluctantly, on the little bed of green fire that burned in the center of the black table. Kuhn loved them, and yet, with the curious mental twist of the detector of flaws, he hated them. Beauty is detestable to the critic; the skilful vice investigator dislikes the spotlessly pure who offer no opportunities to the art of spying.

As it is impossible to describe the fire



and deviltry of the wonderful gems, so, also, must the beauty and sweetness of Stephanie Barnard be left to the reader's imagination. Yuan Shih-Kai, who had a quick tongue, said upon seeing Stephanie Barnard:

"Then the American Beauty is not a flower! I am a fool because I always thought it the name of a rose!"

She came into the room looking a little startled, a little afraid, showing in her gentle movements a belief that she was a little out of place. And she certainly was. The room when she entered it was charged with a peculiar hectic atmosphere brought about by the presence of the gems. But the entry of the girl brought a soothing, quieting effect. The secretary, who was the most self-possessed of the six men, noted the immediate effect her arrival had upon old F. O. B. Barnard was a little wrought up after his first glimpse of the gems, but the coming of his daughter acted like a charm. He pulled himself together, obtained control of his face and brought back to his voice the quiet firm timbre that momentary excitement had destroyed.

"Stephanie," he said, pointing to the jade bowl, "we have here a pair of stones that I thought you might like."

Kuhn lifted the bowl, and the girl, with exquisite grace, moved forward and leaned over the little bed of green fire. All watched her. Even the half-crazed Tatar stopped tugging at his sheepskin coat and stared at the lovely face and the splendidly graceful throat, the latter showing to advantage as the girl leaned forward to examine the gems.

The men sensed their own queerness in her presence. Kuhn, the expert, felt a little ashamed of his morbid hatred of the gems—a hatred born of his inability to detect a flaw in their matchless beauty. The two Chinamen endeavored to crush the greed that broke down the barriers of celestial stoicism and paraded boldly upon their faces. The featherweight intellect of the Tatar worked manfully to keep his fingers from the suffering sheepskin coat.

For fully five minutes the girl stared at the gems without speaking; then with a look of absolute amazement tinged with something akin to supernatural fear upon her beautiful face, she turned to her father.

"Oh, Daddy!" she cried. "I—I have never seen anything so wonderful! They

are so strange that they make me just a little—just a little afraid of them!"

Barnard laughed softly, then stepped forward and patted her little white hands.

"I'm glad you like them, Stephanie," he said. "I am going to buy them for you as a birthday present. Mr. Kuhn has just examined them and he thinks the stones are perfect."

Kuhn, who at the moment had his suspicious glance still upon the gems as if his eyes were unable to believe in the absolute flawlessness of The Little Green Devils, turned quickly and bowed to the girl.

"They are without equal," he said grudgingly. "I have never seen such stones. I have heard of these, heard of them years and years ago when I was at Canton, but I thought the story that was told to me was something from a child's fairy-book. They told me then that the gems possessed some strange power."

The larger of the two Chinamen seized the opportunity to air his knowledge. He stroked his fat throat, patted his silken vestlet and addressed Stephanie.

"They have a power as this gentleman observes," he said, his voice as oily as his moon-shaped face. "It is an extraordinary power. It can be obtained by those who own them, and then only at the expense of the gems. It is so, my lady. If any person who owns these beautiful jewels should desire something very, very much, they must throw the gems away, throw them away in a manner which to them makes recovery impossible."

He stepped closer to Stephanie Barnard and lowered his voice.

"It is said," he whispered, "and I who am a fool know not how true it is, that the glorious Empress Dowager of China once owned these stones. Yes! Yes! She, and again I speak from hearsay, flung them into the Yangtze-Kiang from the window of her palanquin when she was crossing the river on her way to Peking. She wanted a throne, and she was willing to sacrifice everything!"

"Oh!" murmured the girl. "And how were they recovered?"

"By a fisherman beneath the bridge," answered the narrator. "The gems must be tied together before they are thrown away, and as they came through the air they made an arc of green fire which the

fisherman saw. He thought a god was falling from the heavens and he flung out his hand-net and into it fell the gems. The people who wonder at the circumstances that brought an unknown woman to the throne of China know nothing of The Little Green Devils."

The narrator's countryman nodded his head viciously as if his forehead was a hammer that drove the nails of truth into the story. After he had performed this work to his own satisfaction he decided to add further glory to the gems.

"There was a girl at Tai-ping," he began, his voice full and sonorous, "a girl to whom a rich merchant of Nanking had done a dreadful wrong. And this girl's father bought The Little Green Devils from the fisherman who caught them as they fell from the bridge. The father gave the jewels to the girl as a wedding present, but the girl knew that there would be no wedding. And in the madness that came upon her she held up her hands to the sky and offered The Little Green Devils for the rich man's heart!"

"She flung the gems from the edge of a great cliff, O beautiful lady, first tying them together with a lock of her hair, and then went her way home. But on her way she came to a place where a robbery had been committed. Some one had killed a merchant. The girl knelt down and looked at the battered face, and lo, it was the face of her lover! And his heart, the heart for which she had offered the gems, was nailed to a tree near-by!"

"Oh, how dreadful!" gasped Stephanie. "How horrible!"

"I tell it to show the power of the gems," said the Chinaman. "They have great power. When the girl flung them from the cliff they fell at the feet of the man who murdered the merchant and who was even then fleeing down the side of the mountain, and he brought them to my partner and me. Listen, lady, the murderer is in this room, but do not look at him. He has cut many throats, and he would cut mine, too, if he knew what I am telling you!"

Stephanie Barnard tried hard to keep her splendid eyes from surveying the person in the sheepskin coat, but she failed. And the Tatar, catching her frightened glance, felt sure that the Chinaman had been dragging his iniquities into the light.

His little ferret eyes flashed malignantly, and the low brow was transformed into three furrows of hate.

It was Barnard's secretary who averted a breach of the peace. He presented a great bundle of bills to his master, and the sight of the money made the Tatar forget the Chinaman. He became a whining, money-mad pariah, his hairy hands outstretched to F. O. B., and his yellow teeth made a peculiar clicking sound as Frederick Oswald Barnard counted the bills into his hands. The two Chinamen smiled as they received their commission; then Kuhn, the expert, took up The Little Green Devils and passed them to Barnard who handed them to Stephanie.

The Tatar, going out the door, his money hidden beneath his sheepskin coat, spoke rapidly to the larger of the two Chinamen, and the Chinaman translated to Stephanie Barnard.

"He says," remarked the unsmiling celestial, "that the last owner of the gems got the heart of a dead man in return for them, but it is far better to get the heart of a live man. Therefore, he says, if you want something great do not delay the sacrifice of the stones. I bid you good morning, my lady."

F. O. B. and his beautiful daughter left Peking two days later, Stephanie hugging to her bosom The Little Green Devils for which her father had paid a price that was unbelievable. She thought often of the stories which the two Chinamen had told of the power they wielded. She visualized both stories they told. She saw the ambitious girl who wished to rule an empire passing over the yellow Yangtze-Kiang in her palanquin. She pictured her, suddenly overcome by the desire to rule, tearing from her ears the wonderful gems and tossing them into the tumbling waters.

"Oh, how could she?" she would murmur again and again, when in the privacy of her own bedchamber she would study the carving of the devils, the work of some long-dead Eastern lapidary who, so it would seem, had made the pattern strange and intricate with the desire to hold the gems in his possession for a long, long time. "I wouldn't throw you away for a thousand thrones!" she would cry. "No, no, no!"

And she thought often that the cunningly-carved little devils grinned back at her as if they had heard similar protestations through the years. At times they looked strangely alive to Stephanie. Wonderfully old they were, those two little pariahs of the world of gems!

She thought of the other story with a shudder. She wondered what the girl thought when she came upon the heart for which she had hurled the gems into space!

"But you didn't kill him!" Stephanie would cry, kissing one green emerald, and then, with a "Neither did you!" kissing its companion. "It was the horrid man in the sheepskin coat that murdered her lover!"

Very, very childish and believing was Stephanie Barnard. She had at twenty the precious power of belief that the years unfortunately destroy. Implicitly and firmly she believed in the power of The Little Green Devils that she loved.

Barnard and Stephanie drifted away over hot, scented seas away up to Yokohama, and then over roads deep with cherry blossoms they went to Nikko. It was Stephanie's wish to go to Nikko.

Where the holy come and go,
Where the cherry blossoms blow,
Where the gods speak soft and low—
At Nikko in the Spring.

And at Nikko, wonderful to relate, Stephanie Barnard of Detroit, Michigan, U. S. A., met a townsman! He was painting there—painting the sanctuaries built by the great shoguns of the Tokugawa dynasty. His name was Jack Beecher, and way back in a misty beautiful past, way back before Frederick Oswald Barnard had seized opportunity by the forelock and hog-tied the creature by forming overnight The Great American Production & Distribution Company, Jack and Stephanie had played together in the yards of two wooden houses in a very unaristocratic neighborhood in old Detroit.

And the years rolled away at Nikko—Nikko where the old grow young, and where the youthful become children again. Jack was poor, very poor, while Stephanie was dreadfully rich, but at Nikko worldly riches do not count. The prince prays with the beggar in the century-old shrines, so Jack Beecher and Stephanie were not aware of the abyss that separated them as they

strolled around in the sweet stillness and examined holy places that the little green hands of the dead years had patted softly.

Old F. O. B. noticed, but to F. O. B. Nikko was a place where people did unconventional things which they viewed with a shudder when they reached Chicago, London, Detroit, or whatever other spot where their social gods sat in judgment. Mr. Barnard's ideas upon art were very vague. Some one had once told him that a great artist had said that art invaded the hovel of the pauper as well as the palace of the prince, and old F. O. B., with the story in mind, devoutly hoped that it would dodge his Detroit mansion which was midway from hovel and the palace. But he was kind to Stephanie and he let her have her own way.

The Barnards journeyed up to Yamagata and then came back to Yokohama where F. O. B. had engaged the finest suites on the *S. S. Mongolia* homeward-bound to San Francisco. And it was on the morning when Mr. Barnard and Stephanie rickshawed down the Bund from the Grand Hotel that F. O. B. realized the wisdom of that old motto which asserts that a stitch in time saves nine. It was while the rickshaws were threading a way through the crowded thoroughfare that Stephanie's wonderful eyes found Mr. Jack Beecher, and Mr. Beecher, without being told that F. O. B. and his daughter were returning to the United States on the *Mongolia*, hurriedly announced that he had just been able to get the last available berth upon that steamer.

"Extraordinary luck!" he cried. "Amazing good fortune!"

"H'm," said F. O. B.

"I stupidly left it till the last minute," burbled the artist. "Didn't think about going till the other day, then I got homesick and all that and packed hurriedly."

"Quite so," said Barnard dryly. "But it's unwise to leave things till the last moment. You should have booked your berth when we booked ours. I wired the agents from Nikko."

"You going on the *Mongolia*?" cried Beecher. "You and Miss Stephanie? Why that—that is perfectly splendid! It's bully!"

How amazed he was! He said it was one of the most extraordinary coincidences that he had ever heard of, and, although



old F. O. B. gave no manifestations of astonishment, Stephanie was brave enough to support Beecher in his assertions.

"It is a strange happening," she stammered, her beautiful face warmed with soft blushes. "We—we say good-by to you at Nikko and find now that you are going back to America by the same boat!"

Old F. O. B. coldly ventured an opinion regarding the weather, and the interview ended. Later, however, as he and Stephanie sat upon the deck of the *Mongolia*, he broached the Beecher matter.

"Stephanie," he said, "that young painter is chasing you."

"Chasing me, daddy?"

"Sure! That bronze idol in your cabin could tell you that. I've got no objection to what he is but I object to what he does. Nobody loves an artist, at least no one that has a million and a beautiful daughter."

"But, daddy!" cried Stephanie, "Jack does——"

"Don't let us quarrel. You're a sensible girl and you know that things that go at Nikko would raise old Nick at Detroit. It's a bad pun, girlie, but it carries my meaning."

LOVE, say the Arabs, uses the little grains of the desert, the scents of the flowers and the breezes of the dawn. The wild doves are the slaves of love, and the date-palm signals messages with its waving fronds. And so, as the *Mongolia* moved eastward, the ocean equivalent to Cupid's desert helpers, brought Jack Beecher and Stephanie Barnard closer to each other. There was little conversation between them and no meetings that F. O. B. could frown at; but the winds, the sunshine, the stars and the blue, blue sky fought against parental control as they always have fought since the first primitive wench put a chain of red berries around her neck and crept out of the sleeping *kampong* to meet a lover in the moonlight.

F. O. B. seemed perfectly happy. On the first day out he found in the smoke-room of the *Mongolia* a dandified person who seemed to exude wealth, and later he introduced the dandy to Stephanie.

"The Baron Rossino," he said, leading the dandy to his daughter's deck chair.

"The Baron has been in every port in the world."

The Baron admitted unblushingly that he had traveled extensively, and a few minutes later, when F. O. B. went in search of a steward, he pointedly informed Stephanie that in all his travels he had never seen a vista more beautiful than the one he was enjoying at that moment. Stephanie was uneasy, and when the Baron gave a further exhibition of bad taste by commenting upon The Little Green Devils, she was only too willing to hide her embarrassment by telling the story of the gems.

Baron Rossino was interested. He was more than interested. He asked where they were purchased, and from whom; and after much skilful maneuvering he endeavored to find out their value.

"I don't know what they are worth," said Stephanie, then as she glanced at the little eyes of the Baron she was startled by the light of greed that showed within them.

"I don't like him!" she told Jack Beecher when Jack rescued her from the Baron's conversational grip. "I think he's horrid! No American would be half as impertinent."

The artist gritted his teeth, but he said nothing. He had overheard the Baron as he bragged to old F. O. B. in the smoking room, and he realized that the titled person would be his particular *bête noire* on the voyage. Half-formed plans of irritating the Baron sprang into his head. He thought of jumping hard upon Rossino's patent leather shoes, of pouring a glass of *liqueur* over his glossy black hair; he even thought of a dark night and a quick push over a deck rail!

For three days the Baron Rossino devoted to Stephanie all the time he could spare from the card-tables. A girl in a deck chair is the victim of a persistent male, and Stephanie shuddered at the dandy's approach. Books were no shield against him, neither was feigned sleep. Jack Beecher, always watchful, loafing in the distance, was the girl's only salvation.

"You promised to walk with me, Miss Stephanie," he would remark, "Sorry, Baron, to interrupt your story."

Old F. O. B. at times regretted his action in introducing the Baron to his daughter. On the third day out an Ameri-



can cavalry officer had refused to sit in a card game with the Baron at the table, and the Baron had not resented the insult.

And then on the fifth night out from Yokohama a coral reef built by polyps through innumerable years was brought into the game by Daniel Cupid. This uncharted point that had climbed inch by inch toward the surface and had cunningly evaded those who map the waters of the deep drove itself deep into the hull of the *Mongolia*, and the good ship quivered at the thrust. The vicious sword that the years had made tore a tremendous hole, and twenty minutes after the vessel struck, the captain decided that the boats were much safer than the unfortunate ship.

Jack Beecher found Stephanie and her father on the deck, the old man endeavoring to protect the girl from the feet and shoulders of sailors who rushed backward and forward to carry out the commands that came from the bridge. The girl was calm and she spoke in a whisper to the artist.

"Would you do me a great, great service?" she asked. "Would you? My—my ear-rings are in my cabin. On the dressing-table. I—I want them. You know they have a great power and—and if father's life was in danger—Oh, Jack, please go and get them! Please!"

The lights went out as Jack Beecher reached the door of Stephanie's stateroom. Through a darkness that was stifling he groped his way toward the dressing-table. He moved carefully, his feet muffled by the thick carpet.

Beecher's hand touched the table, and his fingers moved forward gropingly in search of The Little Green Devils. Stephanie, with her childlike belief in their power, wanted them to save the life of her father, and he was determined that he would get them if he stayed in the cabin till the *Mongolia* took her long dive.

Slowly, carefully, the sensitive fingers of the artist moved across the table, feeling each object they touched. Suddenly the fingers of the right hand came in contact with something that made Beecher quickly withdraw his hands and brace himself for a shock. His fingers had touched a human hand, a hand that was moving slowly across the dressing-table as if its owner sought the same objects as the artist!

Beecher waited. There was absolute

stillness in the cabin. The other occupant, aware of the artist's presence, was also awaiting an attack.

For over a minute there was no movement on the part of either; then the artist took a step forward, and the step provoked an immediate attack on the part of the unknown. Beecher's shoe struck the leg of the table, and something heavy, evidently a small mirror, hurtled by his head and smashed itself into fragments against the cabin wall. The artist sprang into the darkness, cannoned heavily against a body braced to receive his attack, and the battle was on.

They fell upon the floor and threshed around like a pair of gigantic reptiles. They clawed themselves up by the aid of chairs and tables and fell again to the carpeted floor, because the list of the ship made it impossible for them to battle while standing erect.

There was no attempt at science. It was a mad, wild rough and tumble fight in the dark. From above and around them came harsh cries and the patter of feet, the creaking of blocks and the wild clatter of breaking china; but they fought in silence.

They broke apart and for an instant lost each other. Beecher leaped forward, and a little fiery shaft of pain struck deep into his right side. He tried to understand what had happened. There was no explosion, so no shot had been fired. Yet he was wounded. He felt his side, and knew that his fingers were wet. Wet with blood! And upon the deck Stephanie was waiting for him to bring her the precious gems in which she had such great faith.

A slight noise came out of a corner of the cabin, and with a howl of rage Beecher sprang. He caught the unknown by the neck, thrust him against the cabin wall, then rolled with him to the floor as the *Mongolia* took a sharp sudden list to port. The other tried to break the grip but the artist had a death hold. He saw Stephanie waiting, and his fingers burrowed deeper into the throat of the robber and would-be murderer.

The unknown's struggles lessened, then ceased altogether. Beecher sprang to his feet and staggered to the dressing-table. Hurriedly, madly, he clawed among the little silver knick-knacks that littered it, till with a great cry of joy, he found The



Little Green Devils! He felt his way to the door, stumbling over the man with whom he had fought. The half-choked one unloosed an oath, and Beecher for the first time knew with whom he had been fighting. It was Baron Rossino!

On the dark deck of the *Mongolia* he found Stephanie, her father and the husky first officer who was vainly endeavoring to drag the girl to a boat.

"But I must wait for him!" she protested. "I told him to get them, and I—I—"

"I've got them!" gasped Beecher. "Hurry! Hurry! She's going!"

It seemed as if the *Mongolia* had waited for Beecher's arrival upon deck to make preparations for her last plunge. She quivered like a cold hound, lifted herself for an instant, then slowly settled.

It was every one for himself at that moment, and Jack Beecher was handicapped by the fact that three inches of steel had entered his ribs some few minutes before. Clinging to the davit-lines, he helped Stephanie into the boat—Stephanie clasping her Little Green Devils. Down went Barnard and the first officer; then, as if dissatisfied with her exit, the *Mongolia* humped her stern suddenly, and Beecher, faint with loss of blood, was thrown from the ropes into the water!

Stephanie screamed as the first officer shouted out an order. The boat was thrust away from the side of the ship, and a sailor swung a lantern in a circle.

"We'll get him!" cried the officer. "He'll come up!"

There was an interval of intense quiet. The Pacific sucked at the big ship; no one spoke. The sailor swung the lantern monotonously, and as the light fell upon the white hand of Stephanie Barnard she opened it and looked at the gems it con-

tained. And she saw more than The Little Green Devils. Her hand was wet—wet with blood that was upon the jewels when Beecher handed them to her!

In an instant the girl realized the cause of his delay below deck. With frantic haste she knotted her tiny lace handkerchief around the two wonderfully carved gems and thrust them quickly over the side of the boat!

A sailor in the bow shouted a warning and the boat shot forward. The big first officer leaned far out and gripped something, two sailors came to his assistance, and Jack Beecher was dragged into the boat.

"Pull away!" shouted the officer. "Give it to her. Every ounce, boys! The old ship is going!"

Five minutes later, Jack Beecher whispered to Stephanie, who had managed to bind up the knife wound.

"I did give you your earrings, didn't I?" he murmured. "Things got a bit mixed with me after I got that jab. But I did give them to you; tell me I did?"

"Yes, yes," stammered the girl. "You gave them to me, Jack."

"Show them to me so that I won't think you're trying to let me down easy," he gasped. "I—I was a little silly when I got on deck, Stephanie, but if I saw them—"

"Jack," she said, her face close to his, "they—they slipped from my hand a moment after you fell into the water."

And old F. O. B. of Detroit, Michigan, sitting close to them in the darkness, overheard. It was then that he recalled the remark of the great Whistler about Art entering the hovel of the pauper and the palace of the prince. F. O. B. had a mighty big idea that the Detroit mansion would house it, too!

The Field

LITTLE girls, running up through the grasses,
Know you the way your footsteps take,
Slowing, to that mysterious seedland
Where the blossoms of men awake?

Runners among the wheaten tassels,
Bend and leap as the lush stalks do!
The green heads fall and childhood passes;
The harvest is reaped from both of you.

Wilton Agnew Barrett



Partners

BY W. TOWNEND

A Complete Novelette

THE day was hot, even for July on the Mohave Desert, and the glare of the sun on the white sand and the puffs of scorching air that came from the bare hills to the south made the little town of Herkomer, with its tin shacks and stores and 'dobe houses and the station buildings of dark red, an inferno of torment, deserted and desolate.

Only Dan Summers and Jim Yardley, his partner, sat in the shade outside the saloon and argued.

"No, Jim," said Dan patiently, "it ain't right."

And for the second time he refused to agree to Jim's proposal.

Jim's round, serious face with the slightly goggle eyes was very sad. Dan watched him and smiled. He usually did smile when he looked at Jim for long; he found in his appearance and moods an endless source of interest and amusement. There were so many things about Jim that Dan never understood, so many questions that he would have liked answered. But he never asked these questions. On the desert one waits to be told; one is never curious openly.

Dan wondered why Jim Yardley, a man of nearly forty, fifteen years older than himself, and yet so much younger in experience and worldly wisdom, well-educated and loathing hardship and toil, should be content to spend his life prospecting. What was his past history?

They had little in common; Jim was

not really a prospector at all, nor would he make one; he was wofully ignorant of rocks and ores; he was no hand at managing a burro or running a drill; he was awkward around a camp; nevertheless, with all his faults, Dan knew that no one could have had a partner to equal Jim. He was a responsibility, of course. He wanted looking after and guiding always, and never more so than now. For Dan realized that the restlessness that came with the sight of the railroad was on him once more. Also he had money. Poor silly old Jim! A good old scout, but just as simple and innocent as a kid of ten!

For the third time Jim began.

"Dan, I'm tired. We sold that Gold Bug mine, and we've got money—heaps of money—more than we need to fit up the next trip. Danny, listen to reason. I want to wear clean clothes an' a white collar again, if it's only for two weeks. I want to feel what it's like to have a shave from a real barber, an' to sit down to meals with a linen table-cloth an' a waiter to say 'sir' to you. I want to go to a show, an' I want—damn it! Dan, I want to ride in a street-car again. That's not extravagance, is it? I want to see the lights at night an' hear the crowds in the street an' go visitin' friends, an' Danny, I want a drink—a long, iced drink, Danny. I'm a thirst inside, nothin' but a ragin', tearin' thirst." He paused and went on again very dolefully. "Don't you ever get tired of the desert, Dan? The heat an'



sun an' brush an' rocks an' snakes an' dirt—an' the dodbusted monotony of it all? Aren't you tired, Dan?"

Dan watched a big freight-engine with its long line of refrigerator fruit-cars puffing slowly away across the desert with the rails and telegraph wires all vanishing at the one point on the horizon.

After all, thought Dan, it was hard on Jim—darned hard. He had worked well and he needed a change. The worst of it was, once he was off the desert, one never knew quite what damfool trick he would be up to next. And then—Dan liked Jim least when he was in a city, in store clothes, looking like a commercial traveler and standing drinks like a millionaire. He had the style, all right, had old Jim. No one had anything on Jim when it came to mixing with folks, certainly. But . . .

"Dan." Jim was speaking once more. "Dan, for Heaven's sake! Let's divvy up an' go into Los Angeles."

Dan sighed.

"All right, Jim. But for the love uh Mike! Take care. We've got to keep some money, ain't we? Or else, maybe, it's a job in a mine again——"

Jim shivered.

"Goshormighty! Swinging a seven-pound hammer or mucking out, hey? Not for this child! It's all right for you, Dan, running a mill or a mine hoist——"

"I ain't so stuck on Los Angeles myself, Jim, an' yuh know it. I guess I'll go down to the beach for a blow from the ocean, an'—there's Browning I want to see. I ain't been in Browning for so long now, I almost forget what it looks like."

SO DAN went to Browning and stood on the sidewalk of the main street and smiled. Nothing had changed. No new stores had been built. Browning's business section was made up of the same six buildings as before: the post-office and grocery store, the hardware store, the pool room, the bank, the barber's with its funny, little, striped pole, and old man Newsom's real-estate office. And wherever one looked, north, south, east, west, on both sides of the street and beyond, in the midst of gardens and houses, were vacant lots, unsold and unsellable.

The door of the real-estate office opened and an active little man with gray hair and a withered face hurried out.

"Hello, Dan! Back again, then."

"Howdy, Mr. Newsom, how's business?"

"Boomin'," said the little man as they shook hands. "Dan, you buy. I dunno if it's worth my while tryin' to int'rest you in any lots in your home town or an orchard, maybe, but prices are sure goin' to jump."

Dan roared.

"Not on your life," he said. "No real estate for me, Mr. Newsom. Nothin' doin'. I'd as soon bury my money in Death Valley as in Browning. Browning's dead."

"It's the livest corpse you ever seen, then," said the little man.

They chatted for a while on the future before Browning and then Dan turned away.

"Well, I'm goin' to visit Elmer Prescott. See you later, Mr. Newsom."

Mr. Newsom grunted.

"Huh! Elmer's gone ahead in the world. One of our leadin' citizens, Elmer is."

ELMER'S house was white with a green-shingled roof and green shutters and a wide veranda, over which climbed masses of purple Bougainvillea, and a sleeping-porch with red-and-white-striped blinds. And in front was a green lawn—green, not parched and burned like the grass one saw elsewhere, and flower beds, and on either side were tall, rustling palm trees and behind was the orchard and a garage and barns.

Dan was impressed. This, then, was where old Elmer lived. No wonder Mr. Newsom had said he had gone ahead. Why, he must be rich!

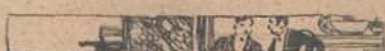
Elmer was glad to see him. No one had ever been so glad to see any one in the world before. Dan would stay the night, of course; Elmer would take no refusal. He stood in the entrance hall, with its dark floor stained and covered with rugs, laughing and talking boisterously. Then he called up the stairs—

"Margie, come on down an' see what's blown in on us!"

"Who's comin'?" Dan asked.

"I'm married now, Dan. Didn't you hear? I married little Marjorie James three months ago. Margie, old man James' daughter; you remember Margie, don't you, Dan?"

"Yes," said Dan slowly. "I remember Margie."



Lord alive! Could he ever forget—to his dying day? Could he ever forget? Everything that would have made life worth living crumbled into nothingness and he saw before him a vista of empty years. Margie married to Elmer! What a fool he had been! When he had drifted back on to the desert without having spoken, he had had hopes; he had returned to find that his hopes were dreams. And he wanted to escape from Elmer's house, to get right away from everybody and hide before Margie could see him. There was a dull ache in his heart and he felt wretched and unhappy, more unhappy than he had ever felt before, and yet he would have to stop where he was and smile and pretend—damn it—that nothing was wrong and that he was glad Elmer was happy—and so he was glad! Wasn't Elmer a friend?

And then Margie came down the stairs, dark and pale and slender, smiling happily, dressed in white, and looking like some queen out of a story.

"Why, Dan," she said. "Why, it's Dan Summers!" She held out both hands. "Dan, we thought you were lost!"

They sat in big cane rockers on the veranda and the two men talked about the years that had slid by since they had last met, and they told each other what they had done and seen and where they had been, while the girl watched them in silence, her dark eyes looking first at one and then at the other, as each spoke. And Dan, glancing at her from time to time, so dainty and fragile and pretty, wondered miserably at himself for having dared to aim so high.

Elmer was full of enthusiasm and schemes. He had done well. He would do better. There was in Browning a future. Dan smiled. No, Elmer persisted, a big future. Property would go up and up. He waved his hands in the air and his wife smiled at him fondly, almost as a mother might smile at a clever child.

"I'm putting up a new store in town. I've got a hay and feed business. I've just bought forty acres cheap—got them away from under old Newsom's eyes, land fit for anything. I'm goin' to make big money, Dan, bags of it. I can't help but make it. Dan, I tell you right now, there's possibilities in Browning you wouldn't get nowhere else in California. Ain't that so?"

She looked at him adoringly.

"Yes, dear. You say so, and you ought to know."

Elmer shouted.

"Ho! Ho! Ho! You get that, Dan. I say so, an' I oughter know. I can't do wrong in Margie's eyes. I just can't. Look at her, Dan! Ain't I the lucky man?"

Dan nodded. Yes, Elmer was lucky. Amazingly lucky. Old Elmer, who had never had another idea in his head but the making of money—and not for Elmer the slow, laborious toil of the desert—old Elmer, with all his hustle and speed, had yet found time to win Margie! Lucky! Yes. What man had ever had such luck as this? And then Dan thought of old Jim, and he wondered if Jim would ever come to him and say that he was going to be married. . . . He smiled. Imagine old Jim Yardley tagging around after a skirt—with a family!

Elmer paused in the midst of a description of another of his enterprises.

"What are you smiling at, Dan?"

"Nothin'," said Dan. "Go right ahead, Elmer."

And it flashed into his mind for the first time that Elmer was strangely like what Jim would be, if Jim had no hard work to do and plenty to eat and a little too much to drink. But then Elmer wasn't quite like Jim, of course, nor could he ever hope to be. Elmer, for all his qualities, missed it.

LATER, when supper was over—and such a supper—fried chicken and thick gravy, creamed potatoes and sweet potatoes, green peas and salad, hot biscuits and butter and strawberry shortcake and cream, and coffee such as Dan had not imagined possible—they sat once more on the veranda in the soft Californian darkness and talked. And Margie came out and played pathetic little Mexican songs on a guitar and sang, while the grasshoppers chirped an obligato and the breeze whispered in the eucalyptus trees and the night was sweet with the scent of orange blossoms and roses.

Finally the girl said that she must go indoors and then Elmer drew his chair near to Dan's.

For a long time neither of them spoke. Dan sat and smoked and pondered in his mind on life and all that life brought. A

man with a wife as sweet and true and tender as Margie, should be full of gratitude. No wonder Elmer was ambitious. Nothing would be too good for such a wife as his. Was Elmer himself good enough? Could he appreciate—Dan put the thought resolutely away from him.

"You're a lucky man, Elmer," he said finally. "But you deserve your luck."

"It's all for that little woman of mine," said Elmer. "Everything. And now—what am I faced with?" He turned and leaning over the arm of his chair stared at Dan in the darkness. "Dan, you ain't guessed then, have you?"

Dan was puzzled.

"Guessed what?" he said.

Elmer sighed like a man who has endured to the utmost of his strength.

"Dan, I'm just about broke."

And then Elmer in a low voice told him the truth. He had money to pay off on his home and on most of his lots in Browning; his orchards were mortgaged; the business was only beginning to show a profit; all his spare cash had gone into the building of his store; his forty acres, even, could not be his until he had made money enough to pay off the balance still owing.

"An' here I am," he said, "a millionaire, maybe, in ten—five years from now, an' yet wanting twelve hundred the worst way. If I don't find twelve hundred by tomorrow noon, Dan, I just don't know what will become of us!"

"Twelve hundred!" said Dan in bewilderment.

"The balance of twelve hundred. There's people owin' me money an' won't pay. And old man Newsom ses if I don't come across by tomorrow—you know what he is, don't you?"

Dan was sorry, but why should Elmer expect him to help?

"If I was rich, I'd help yuh," he said. "But I ain't. Old Jim Yardley, my pardner, an' me come off the desert with a few hundred dollars between us. I'd let you have some willing, but it wouldn't be fair to old Jim."

Elmer agreed. But he hadn't meant to suggest borrowing. What he had intended to imply was that Dan might care to invest some of his money in Browning property.

"It ain't for my sake that I mind," continued Elmer. "But just think of that

poor little wife of mine, trustin' in me like she does—what will she think when she learns that the home's lost to us—"

He rose from his chair and walked to the far end of the veranda. Dan watched him without moving.

It made him angry. A man with a wife as sweet and pretty as his and he went and deliberately risked her happiness. The darn fool! And he would break her heart and make her feel that she could never believe in her husband again.

"Oh, hell!" thought Dan, and was Margie to be made unhappy for the sake of a few hundred dollars?

It was no business of his, of course. He had Jim—poor old Jim Yardley to think of—and yet. . . .

"Elmer," he called.

Elmer walked slowly toward him.

"How much is it yuh want exactly to make up the balance uh what yuh owe?"

Dan could hear Elmer draw a deep breath.

"Seven hundred dollars," said Elmer in a strained voice.

"I'll let yuh have it in the morning."

"Dan," said Elmer brokenly. "I dunno' how I can thank you. You've put me under a debt that I can't repay. You've saved me, an' you've saved Margie."

Dan felt all at once that he no longer liked Elmer quite so much as he thought he did. Elmer was too smooth. There was something in his manner that rang false—just a suspicion that he could not quite shut out. But Elmer was a friend, and a man mustn't go back on his friends, whatever happened.

AND the next morning when Dan came down to breakfast Margie thanked him for what he had done.

"Poor Elmer's been worryin' lately," she said, "and he wouldn't let me know. And last night when he came up-stairs he told me all about it. Dan, no one could have done more for a friend than you have."

And Elmer, the picture of health and prosperity, big and jolly and well-dressed and a trifle florid in appearance, added his thanks, and Dan felt embarrassed and ashamed of himself and he wished that he could have given the money without Margie knowing from whom it came.

After breakfast he gave Elmer a bundle of bills.

"Count 'em," he said.

Elmer held the wad in his hand.

"Dan," he said, "I guess you're the best man that ever lived. We'll go down-town presently an' see about them lots of mine you're goin' to have."

"Forget it, Elmer!" said Dan. "I don't want no lots."

"Dan," said the girl; "Dan, please! If you don't, we can't take the money."

Dan gave in.

In the course of the morning he went with Elmer to the bank where he was given the three deeds duly signed and witnessed and stamped.

"Now, Dan," said Elmer, with the air of one conferring a kindness, "these are your deeds. Take great care of them. Them lots you bought are as good bargains as you're ever likely to get. I'll send the titles on just as soon as ever the Trust Company lets me have 'em. Mind you tell me your address, Dan."

Dan felt dissatisfied. Any one would have thought that Elmer, instead of being indebted to him, had done him a service in letting him have three perfectly useless lots, which he didn't want, in exchange for seven hundred dollars which he wanted very much.

Dan spoke to Syd Turner, the cashier of the Browning State Bank.

"Syd," he said, "look after them deeds for me, will yuh? Elmer, give the titles to Syd when they come. Is that all right, Syd? I'm off to the desert again."

"What about taxes, Dan?" said the cashier. "Are you reckonin' on bein' away for long?"

"Years," said Dan.

He slapped a couple of bills on to the counter.

"Take these, Syd, an' pay the taxes with 'em."

Syd nodded and Dan saw him glance curiously over the brass railing at Elmer, as if wondering how he had managed to dispose of lots so worthless as those he had sold.

"These will pay for the taxes for about four years," he said. "Ain't that too much, Dan?"

"No," said Dan, "an' if I ain't back here by the end uh four years, I guess I won't be back in Browning again, ever."

He left Browning that afternoon for Los Angeles.

"No, Elmer," he said, "I can't stay a minute longer. I arranged to meet Jim this ev'nin', an' I mustn't fail."

He said good-by to Margie on the front steps of the house.

"Good-by, Margie," he said. "If I hadn't come in to Browning again, I should never have known how lucky Elmer was. I've seen you, Margie, an' I know."

The girl gave a happy little laugh.

"Thank you, Dan. I never knew you could say such pretty things. You'll come and see us again soon, won't you?"

Dan shook his head. No. On the whole he did not think that he would. He would be busy out on the desert.

"If I'm anywheres near Browning, though, I'll come sure."

The last impression he had of her—an impression that was to be with him for many, many days—was a slender figure in white standing on the green in front of the house, waving to him.

Elmer was grateful.

"Dan," he said, "you helped me more than you know. An', Dan, if you ever find yourself in need of a helping hand, a grub-stake, anything, don't you forget Elmer G. Prescott of Browning, California."

They shook hands.

"An' your address?" said Elmer.

"Ain't got one," said Dan. "I'll write first."

Mr. Newsom was on the car.

"What's this I hear from folks about you buyin' some property in Browning?" he asked.

Dan, remembering how he had scoffed at Browning, felt uncomfortable.

"Guess I oughter have bought from you, hey?" he said.

Mr. Newsom grinned.

"Not a bit of it, Dan; but what did you want to buy them two lots on Third for? They're nothin' but swamp in Winter, after the rains, an' the business section is goin' to build up right away from where you bought that other lot—right in the opposite direction."

"Then, I've been stung; is that it?" said Dan.

"I wouldn't like to say that, but you must have been awful eager to buy in Browning, Dan, to buy so quick."

Dan didn't care. They might think him crazy, if they wanted to, but he had helped a friend out of a tight place. And he

didn't want the old lots, anyway. He felt furious with Elmer for having forced them on to him. What did he want with lots in a place like Browning?

II

AGAIN and again when prospecting, or tramping across the burning flats, or in some mining-camp with other men for contrast, it would come over Dan how remarkable Jim Yardley was. Beneath the surface roughness, the desert slang, the dirt and grime, there was another Jim, fond of the good things that life had to offer those with money, self-indulgent, perhaps, a heavy spender, a heavy drinker, but refined and cultured and able to talk on topics that left Dan dizzy.

But never had he been quite so aware of this difference between Jim and all his other friends as when he met him in Los Angeles. Jim, in an old shirt and trousers and broad-brimmed hat, on the desert, was a very different Jim from this stout, pink, smooth-faced gentleman in the pale-gray suit and white collar and tan shoes who greeted him when he arrived. But not even clothes could alter Jim's smile or the affection in his funny goggle eyes or his voice, or hide the fact that he was worried and anxious and that later on he would, if left alone, reveal some indiscretion or some fresh cause for worry.

They sat together in the bedroom of the small hotel that Jim had chosen.

"Dan," he said gravely, "you know that I've got friends in Los Angeles, don't you? Well, Dan, as soon as I arrived, I fetched my box from where I had it stored and put on my city clothes——"

"That there's a new suit," said Dan, "anyways."

"I know, Dan, I know. But, listen—Dan, between you an' me——" Jim hesitated and looked uneasy. "It's this way."

"Get a move on," said Dan.

And so far he was merely amused, and the thought came to him that he had been wrong and that Jim was not in the least like Elmer; he was of the same build, but Elmer was flabby and soft; Jim was, in spite of his bulk, as hard as nails, fit and strong and active. Elmer could never have swung a seven-pound hammer to save his life.

"Dan," said Jim, "I guess what I'm go-

ing to say will surprize you. I'm goin' to be married."

Dan sprang to his feet.

"You idiot! You—oh, my Jerusalem!"

"Ain't you goin' to congratulate me?" said Jim.

"The hell I am!" said Dan. "Lemme find the girl an' tell her how sorry I am she got herself tied up to you—you big stiff! Married!"

Jim shifted his weight from one leg to the other.

"Well, Dan, you needn't be so damned rude about it. I'm not marrying into your family, anyhow, thank God!"

Dan sat on his bed, with his head in his hands and his elbows on his knees, thinking. He saw a picture of himself tramping across the glaring, sunlit desert with his three burros, heading for the distant hills, alone—with no one to talk to or listen to, no one to help him in the digging. Poor old Jim! The best partner a man could ever have.

And then he jumped up once more and, running across the room to Jim, beat him lightly on both cheeks, rumbled up his hair and tugged at his tie and called him names and otherwise showed him that even after what had happened they were pals still.

"You ornery, old toad," he said; "you old microbe! You go an' get yourself tied up to a female girl, do you, without a word? Jim, shake, I'm sorry I acted mean just now."

They shook hands.

"All the same," said Dan, "you don't expect me to be terrible happy at the thought of havin' to leave yuh behind the next time I go out into the desert, Jim?"

Jim's expression became a shade less cheery.

"Dan," he said, "that's what I wanted to tell you. I can't quit prospectin'—I wish to God I could, but I just can't. Dan, I didn't mean to tell lies, but when I first met the girl I got to talkin' big—you know what it is, don't you, Dan? And, my goodness, Dan, how could I let folks I'd met at a friend's house think I was nothing but a desert rat? No, Dan, it couldn't be done. I said I was interested in mines—mines, Dan, not just claims! And, then, Dan—and it came about so quickly I can't understand it now—then, Dan, I found that I couldn't live without her; and something told me that she couldn't live without me,

and I asked her to marry me. And, Dan—" Jim's voice rose despairingly— "Dan, she thinks that I'm worth about a million and a half!"

Dan tried to keep his face serious and failed.

"It's all very well for you to laugh, Dan Summers," said Jim, "but, see here, son, it's life or death to me. What am I to do? I said I couldn't get married just yet, I'd some interests out on the desert I had to clean up, but I'd come back to Los Angeles and marry her as soon as I could. An' now, Dan, I've got to get back on to that dam' desert again an' find a claim that will give me the money I want."

He looked at Dan with an expression of hopeless care and anxiety.

And Dan stared back at him, not knowing quite whether he was in earnest in what he said or not. Surely—surely, even old Jim, who was mad enough for most things, wasn't as mad as all this! Surely he must realize how impossible it was! He couldn't do it! Go out on to the desert and find a mine rich enough to get married on! What in thunder was he thinking of?

"You poor, old Jim!" said Dan. And he felt more sorry for Jim than he had ever felt for any one before. The hopelessness of what he had planned to do appalled him. "An' we been lookin' for that bonanza now—for how long, Jim? How many years is it since you an' me been pardners? Jim, lad, you've done it this time."

Jim nodded in deep dejection.

"You can't tell me anything I haven't told myself, Dan. But there's gold to be had out there. Don't we know it? Others have made money, damn it, out of prospects we opened up an' didn't have capital enough to develop. Dan, I've got a hunch that luck will turn. I've found the right girl—all I want is the money."

And Dan, seated on his bed in the little room, with the blue sky showing above the roofs opposite and the breeze flapping the curtains to and fro and the noise of drays and trolley-cars coming up from the street, wondered how Jim, old Jim, should have been so crazy.

"Won't the young lady find out?" he said suddenly. "Won't she get to askin' folks about your mine, Jim?"

But Jim had managed that, too.

"No," he said. "I was careful, Dan. I made no mistake. I don't own a big mine,

or anything like that, you see; a mine here and a mine there—minin' stock an' such-like. Oh, no, Danny, you needn't worry about that at all." He waited a moment and then continued. "And you will help me, Dan, won't you?"

"All right, Jim," said Dan, and he tried, not unsuccessfully, to put some enthusiasm into his voice. "We'll try it. An' if it's possible to win out, why, Jim, I guess we'll do it."

And then he began to wonder what the girl looked like and he thought of Elmer and Margie down at Browning and some of his gloom faded. After all, why shouldn't Jim get married? He was old enough at any rate. Why not? And if he got a girl who would be good to him, who would make him run steady, why what was there to growl at? Only no second-rater would be good enough for old Jim. If she was as good as Margie, why, then, Jim would be all right.

"Dan," said Jim, "I promised the girl you'd come out tonight and be introduced."

Dan groaned.

"I'll come, Jim, uh course."

He felt it was the least he could do.

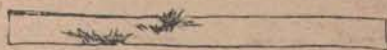
AS DAN followed Jim's huge bulk up the path that led to the front door a sense of awe stole over him. Elmer's home which he had considered so grand was a mere shack compared with this.

Jim must have read his thoughts.

"Some house, Danny!" he whispered. "Remember what I told you. Think of the mines I own!"

Many times that evening was Dan to be amazed by his friend. Jim appeared in a new light, a man at home in society, quite at his ease in the gorgeously furnished drawing-room in which they sat. To look at Jim one might have thought that he had lived in luxury all his life; his manner was perfection—yet in two days' time, old Jim would be loading burros and frying bacon and rustling greasewood for a fire, maybe, and being cursed, perhaps, for a good-for-nothing old mossback for burning the biscuits. Jim, in an old khaki shirt and blue overalls with the knees torn, his face black, bending down, puffing the flickering blaze of a camp-fire.

And if Dan was amazed by Jim, he was still more amazed by Jim's choice of a future wife. He felt, for some unknown



reason, uneasy. It wouldn't do. This was not the sort of girl to make old Jim happy—even supposing that Jim had money. She was handsome, certainly; and yet even her looks counted against her. Her face was too hard; her smile seemed to Dan unreal, her laughter forced. And when he looked into her eyes he saw something cold and forbidding.

"This, Prudence," said Jim, waving his hand in Dan's direction, "this is my old friend, Mr. Summers. Dan, this is Miss Flood."

And Dan, after having shaken hands with the girl who was to marry Jim, seated himself on a chair and prayed that the providence that had guided him for so many years through trials and troubles would not desert him now.

They talked of the theater, dancing, concerts, religion—Dan found that Jim had developed a brand-new God out of his inner consciousness and was bewildered at this fresh proof of his frier.l's diversity—money, the beaches, Californian wines, French wines, the mountains, the movies, Paris frocks, New York frocks, London frocks, jewelry, the cost of this and the cost of that, Los Angeles as compared with San Francisco, and Dan listened in amazement, wondering how old Jim, with his serious manner, whose conversation with him was of quartz and porphyry and schist and granite, veins and ores and outcrops, hoists and compressors and stamp mills, bacon and beer, quarts of beer, and whisky, gallons of whisky, could hold his own in such circles.

It took a man's breath away. And always, whatever the topic, the talk veered round sooner or later to money—money was the axis on which Miss Flood's world turned; and at intervals, when he was least expecting it, Dan would find Miss Flood studying him carefully, his features, his clothes, his shoes, his manner and his voice, as if pondering in her mind how Jim, with his air of prosperity and culture, could have attached himself to this!

And at last Dan began to study Miss Flood surreptitiously, even as Miss Flood studied him. And he wondered if her verdict of him was as unfavorable as his verdict of her. And Jim went on talking as if thoroughly enjoying the sound of his own voice, basking in his glory and the magnificence of the girl he was to marry.

She was a good-looker, all right. Dan came to that conclusion unwillingly, but she wore clothes that had cost too much money; her jewelry was too extravagant and he wondered if the tiny spot of color in each cheek were real and decided not. And he thought of what old Jim would look like if Jim had put dabs of pink on his fat cheeks, and he laughed at the picture. And then, looking at Jim, lolling back in his chair, talking—blast him—of motor-cars and trips to Paris, Dan knew that there was in the matter of personal adornment little to choose between them. Jim's face was smooth and pink and beautifully shaven and powdered, his hands were manicured—the old stiff—he had made the best of his looks, so, too, had the girl.

Dan stifled a yawn. What an evening! Miss Flood spoke to him.

"So you're taking Jim on to the desert again, Mr. Summers. You'll bring him back soon, won't you? It's his duty to come back to me soon, isn't it?"

Her voice was low and soothing and she almost cooed at him.

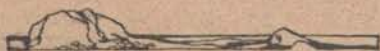
"Yes'm," said Dan.

"Jim has told me that you manage a good deal of his business for him." Here she leaned forward and her eyes, such cold, blue eyes, looked into his with an expression that Dan could afterward regard as being firmness itself. "Mr. Summers, Jim is quite rich enough for me. I don't think he need worry about any more mining properties, do you? He ought to put some of his money into industrials—or securities that are a little more sound. Don't you think so? So, please, don't let him get interested in any more mines."

Dan glanced at Jim. There was a look of entreaty in Jim's face that begged him to say nothing but what was in keeping with what he had heard.

"I give you my word," said Dan, "that just as soon as Jim has cleared up the deal he's on now, then back he comes to Los Angeles, an'—I hope that you'll both be happy, Miss Flood."

Miss Flood condescended to smile. And then, as if her mind were at rest, she looked at the ring she wore. Dan looked at the ring, too—a gold band with a tiny nugget set in turquoises. It occurred to him that he had somewhere or other seen a ring that was exactly similar.



The door opened and Mrs. Flood entered the big drawing-room—a stout old lady with a stern nose and a double chin, dressed in black silk, and with an air, to Dan's notion, of being only a shade less important in the scheme of things than the Creator thereof.

She was overjoyed to see Jim. And why hadn't Prudence told her? Also, his friend Mr. Summers!

Then Mr. Flood arrived: a rather meek, silent, little man, not fat like his wife, but rather lean—friendly, undoubtedly, and anxious to show some kindness but seemingly not knowing quite how.

The chatter of voices increased. Jim talked volubly, as much at home as one of the family, and Prudence talked and Mrs. Flood talked. Mr. Flood sidled over to Dan.

"Are you going out on to the desert again?" he asked.

Dan came to himself.

"Yes," he said.

Mr. Flood sighed.

"Ah! It's quiet and peaceful out there, ain't it? Not too many folks around?"

"Why, no," said Dan. "Not too many."

"I've been dragged to a concert tonight," said Mr. Flood in a whisper. "Singin' an' music. And me the only man in the place, almost. Say, one of these days I'll kick. You see if I don't. Are you glad to be going back on to the desert?"

"Am I?" said Dan. "I sure am."

Mr. Flood lowered his voice still further.

"Say, Mr. Summers, you don't happen to know if there'd be any chance of—for me to——"

"Henry," said Mrs. Flood, "what are you whispering to Mr. Summers for? Bring him over here at once. We're going to have some tea."

WHEN they reached the street and were on their way back to the hotel, Jim slid his arm through Dan's.

"Dan," he said, "thank you for playing up to me. I had to tell her, Dan, just to explain, that you were my—my business manager. You understand, Dan, don't you?"

"I understand," said Dan. "Sure. If yuh hadn't said that, she'd have thought that your friends was purty dam' mean, hey? Not up to the standard they oughter

be! But a business manager, well, he don't count——"

But, although Jim said he was quite wrong and protested vigorously, Dan knew that he was right. Nor did he blame him. There was so much else to blame him for, one lie extra scarcely mattered.

"She's fine, ain't she, Dan?" Jim said presently.

"She is," said Dan.

And what else could he say? Who was he to go criticizing his friend's choice? But he knew that it was always the same. Men were pals; they had the same tastes in everything, until—until there came the day when one fell in love, and then—good-by to everything. He wondered if there had ever yet been a man who admired the girl that his friend had married. And then, with a curious little pang, he remembered Elmer and Margie. But they were different, of course. He had known Margie long before Elmer had.

"Jim," said Dan suddenly, "what was that ring Miss Flood was wearin'?" He looked at Jim and by the light of an arc lamp saw his face take on an expression of gloom. "Ain't that the one that belonged to old 'Pony' Martin who died out at Paradise Crossin'?"

"Dan," said Jim, "I was going to explain that. It sounds mean, I know. I won that ring in a poker game a year ago off Pony. I didn't want it, but he made me take it. And when I got engaged I had to have a ring, so I thought of that one and gave it to Prudence the self-same day."

"Pony told me a dance-hall girl in Mo-have give it him, an' she got it from——"

"Dan, it's the meanest thing I ever done in my life, and I said the nugget came from one of my mines, too. But what else could I do? Dan, when I think how much money I've spent in the past week, I get scared. I've spent like a millionaire since I last saw you."

"Jim," said Dan, "I done the same. I got seven hundred bucks taken offen me this mornin'."

"Seven hundred! Not poker, Dan! Not poker!"

"No, Jim, charity. Or a hold-up masqueradin' as such. I ain't sure which, even now."

III

IT WAS a new Jim who went wandering off once more into the desert—a Jim who worked steadily, who thought of nothing but work and what work would bring. His optimism was amazing. Dan wondered, as he listened to him talking of the future, whether the lessons of the past had taught him nothing. He was crazy, of course.

He planned deliberately to find a mine that would give him a fortune. When he had his fortune he would marry. He spoke, too, as if success must come within the month. Had he no memory? Had he forgotten the years of failure? And Dan, feeling that Jim was doomed to disappointment, liked him all the better for his faith in his own destiny. He deserved to win, if only for the very madness of his scheme. For who in his senses would have tried what Jim was trying?

They went out on to the desert northeast from Herkomer to a claim that they had located the Spring previous.

"The stuff's there, ain't it?" said Jim.

"Uh course it's there," said Dan. "The difficult part is gettin' it."

He felt that it was his duty to keep this difficulty before Jim's mind continually, with the effect that after they had been working for about a week Jim got angry.

"What's wrong with you, Dan? The ore's there, ain't it? Why shouldn't we get it? Sometime or other it's got to be found. What's gold for if it isn't for that? An', Dan, don't think that we're out here to fail! Why should I have met Prudence if it wasn't meant for me to get married to her? And how can I get married unless I have money, hey? No, Dan, there's the gold here waiting for me."

Nothing would convince him to the contrary. He had been guided by Providence to Prudence and the same power would guide him to gold. Such arguments were unanswerable. And Dan felt as he worked all through a blazing-hot September that there was something fine in Jim's trust, something that made him want to do all he could to help him out. His heart warmed to him. Poor, silly, old Jim! And it came to Dan clearly that Jim was a better man in his old, desert clothes, working from early morning until dark,

unshaven and unwashed, than when, clean and manicured and well-dressed, he had sat drinking tea and lying about his prospects in the Floods' home in Los Angeles.

Weeks went by and gradually Dan noticed that Jim's spirits were sinking. He lost his happiness and became gloomy and care-worn. Sometimes without a word he would quit working and seat himself on a pile of rock and, almost as if his thoughts were miles away, examine piece after piece of stone through his magnifying glass until all at once he would spring to his feet and growl at himself for wasting time.

And then Dan realized that their claim—the Golden Hope, Jim had christened it—however good, and it was good, was not going to make them rich quickly. They wanted money for development; they wanted to get some one with capital interested, and that seemed impossible. Looking back on their months of work, sinking and timbering the shaft, the frequent assays, the three shipments of ore in side loads on the burros, and a few miserable dollars in return, it seemed incredible that they could have kept up their hopes for so long.

"Jim," he said, "it's no good."

"I knew it, Dan. I guessed so about a week ago. It ain't what we're lookin' for. We've not got time enough nor money enough to play about with it any longer. No, we must get a move on somewhere else. An' where do you suggest that we go, Danny? North, south, east, west—where?"

And this was another mystery to Dan. More than ever, now that Jim was going to be married, did Jim rely on his judgment. He could do nothing without consulting him. Dan would pull him through. Dan would lead him to a place where there was gold. And when Dan asked him what made him so sure, he would smile wisely and shake his head and have no explanation. Even in writing letters to Prudence he would ask his advice, and Prudence's letters to him, fetched from Herkomer, seven miles away across the desert, he would read aloud and then wait for him to make some comment on what she said.

Prudence's letters were never cheerful. Why didn't Jim come back to Los Angeles? Why didn't he hurry? Didn't he ever intend to think of their marriage?



And after each of these letters Jim would fret and mope and worry and refuse to eat.

And at last when they had been out on the desert for six months Dan felt that they must take action if they wished to dull Prudence's suspicions that all was not right.

"Jim," he said, "write an' blame it on to me. I know she thinks I'm keepin' you here. You say that I am. What's another lie more or less, hey?"

So a letter was written in which Jim said that the reason why he had not returned to Los Angeles was that he had been too busy. Acting on Dan Summers' advice he had put money into what would become one of the finest mines in California. At present, returns were not large, owing to the preliminary work. The mine, however, was rich. In a short time he would be getting heavy profits. It would not be fair to her for him to withdraw his money and so jeopardize—"Good word, that!" said Dan—jeopardize her future prosperity for the sake of advancing their marriage a month or so.

In reply a letter came from Prudence in which she said that she understood and that if the mine were really good she was quite content to wait. But why, she asked, had he put any of his money into any more ventures after he had left Los Angeles? Why had he listened to that Mr. Summers? Had he not best take care how he trusted his advice? Where had he come from? Was he reliable?

They were back in Herkomer when Jim received this letter.

"Dan," he said, "you've made it all right so far as I'm concerned, but that little girl of mine has got it into her head, Dan, that you're up to no good. My God, Dan, I don't know what I should do if you and Prudence were to fall out."

Jim fell into a deep gloom that lasted well on into the evening when he sat down to a game of black-jack in the saloon.

For a while Dan stood at the bar drinking and talking, then he went outside and sat on the sidewalk and looked at the sunset and smoked innumerable cigarets and waited for any train that might pass and so prove that even Herkomer was in touch with the outer world. And to Dan it seemed wonderful to know that the lines of steel that stretched away east and west would

take him eventually to Chicago or New Orleans or New York, or to San Francisco or Los Angeles. And yet, here he was on the desert, short of cash, with a crazy partner, looking for a fortune that might not exist.

Dan was not given to introspection, but he pondered then as to the attraction that the desert life had had for him. Gold had never seemed to him the one aim of existence, as it did to some men. He had never valued money; he spent easily, without regret; he had never saved. What reason had he for saving? When he had spent everything that he had he would go back into the desert and earn more. And yet even Dan had his moments of doubt. Why should he stay out in the desert at all? He was wasting the best years of his life, and at twenty-five his youth seemed to be receding gradually into the past. What was the spell that the desert had for him? He was puzzled by his own contradictions. Was it the wish to possess a fortune so that he might be able to live in a city for the rest of his life, or was it the mere excitement of the search for gold, the gambling instinct, that urged him on?

There arose sounds of scuffling from the saloon and some one shouted—

"Dan, come along an' take that darn' pardner uh yours home to bed!"

Dan strode into the little bar-room lit by acetylene lamps where, in the open space between the bar and the pool table, Jim was rolling over and over in company with a man from Randsburg, hitting and kicking and cursing, and neither doing the other the least damage, while the eight or nine spectators, Herkomer's bachelor population for the time being, stood around and yelled encouragement.

"What's wrong?" said Dan. "What's that old goat uh mine playin' at?"

"Glad carryin' guns ain't in fashion," said the saloonkeeper. "They was arguin' an' then they sailed in."

"It begun along uh Garfield not havin' any money an' borrowin' fifty cents offen Jim to set into the game, an' now he's won twenty-five dollars offen Jim, an' he ses he paid back the fifty cents. Jim ses he ain't."

This explanation given by an interested spectator satisfied Dan. He stooped and seizing Jim by the collar dragged him off. The man from Randsburg rose to his feet

and rushed at Jim, roaring in drunken rage.

Dan slapped him on the face with the flat of his hand. He staggered and sat down suddenly with his back to the bar.

"Lay down an' keep quiet!" said Dan. He marched Jim toward the door. "An' you, you big slob, the best thing you can do is to cut out the booze. You ain't fitten to be left alone for ten minutes."

And then he led him off to the hotel where they were staying and tumbled him face downward on to his bed.

He was drunk, of course. The first time in—Dan thought—the first time for over a year. He needed watching, old Jim did. He was like a kid. If things went wrong, he was sure to drink. He couldn't help it.

And the next morning, when Jim asked if he had been in any scrap the night before, as his head was like a buzz-saw, Dan merely grunted at him.

"You'll get right outer here this mornin', Jim. You're a dam' disgrace to a respectable outfit, quarrellin' an' fightin' last night like a drunken cowpuncher. I'm ashamed uh you, I sure am. I done tell yuh more'n a year ago, Jim, that you'd have to cut out the drink. I'll have no booze-fighter for a pardner."

"Sorry, Dan," said Jim, and he looked very penitent. "Don't happen often, sonny, an' life ain't such a hell of a joke at present, is it?" He yawned wearily. "Won't happen again, Dan."

"Let's go an' see old Pete Harman."

Pete grinned as they entered the store where one could buy anything that one might need on the desert, from beans and bacon and canned goods to overalls, leather gloves, picks and shovels and drills.

"Howdy, boys, heard yuh was in town. Jim, what's this they say about yuh beatin' up another gent because uh fifty cents. In my day, no gentleman would have touched another with his bare fists; fists were good enough for Chinks an' greasers. They used guns in my day, Jim." He shook his head and winked solemnly. "An' how's business?"

"We got money," said Dan, "a little, but I dunno', Pete, how long it will last. What's the show to get a grubstake, Pete?"

Pete plucked at his thin beard and shoved his glasses on to his forehead.

"Well, Dan, I'm good for a little, anyways. You done me a good turn over that

Gold Bug proposition. We got a minin' man interested, an' I heard from old Skipworth, the Los Angeles hardware man, last night that he shouldn't wonder if that mine ain't goin' to be a real big thing."

Later, when they reached the open once more, Jim laughed.

"It makes me want to sit down and cry, Dan. That damned old Gold Bug, an' we sold it—for next to nothing."

"Ain't no use kickin', Jim," said Dan. "We hadn't money enough to develop it, an' if we hadn't sold, you'd never have gone into Los Angeles an' had a good time an' met Miss Flood. An', Jim, there's as much gold in the desert as ever come out of it. So cheer up, an' let's see that smile uh yours."

That night they camped in a little gully in the side of the hills about eight or nine miles from Herkomer.

About two in the morning Dan woke up and saw that Jim was missing. Feeling uneasy he rolled out of his blankets and left the tent. A cold wind blew through the sage-brush and cactus and the full moon, casting its silver light on the desert, made it as easy to see as in daytime.

Jim was standing by himself on a bare patch of ground, gazing out across the gradual descent of the desert to where miles away some tiny specks of light marked the progress of a train.

Jim did not move as he drew near.

"What's the matter, Jim?"

"Dan, I can't sleep. It just come over me sudden—all this." He waved his hand around in a circle. "This damned desert an' the hills an' sky an' moon, an' no houses nor lamps, nor policemen, nor streets—nothin' but desert. Good God! Dan, don't you ever get like this? Dan, it's breakin' my heart. I'm not as young as I used to be, Dan. I'm forty-one next month, useless an' worn-out an' tired. An' here we are startin' off on another trip. Why? Was I mad, Dan? Couldn't I see the whole thing was hopeless? And the girl's waitin' an' trustin'—Dan, where's the end of it all?"

"Now see here, Jim," said Dan grimly, "you gotter stop this kind uh bunk. Don't the girl love yuh? Don't she know that you're doin' your best? All right, then, she'd wait 'till yuh was sixty, if needs be. You go an' turn in an' be sensible."

"All right, Dan," said Jim. "But, then,

you don't know what bein' in love is. Wait till you can't marry the girl you want, Dan, an' you'll know what hell is."

For a long while Dan lay awake and thought. He wondered if Prudence would wait. Was she that kind? The kind that would wait—year after year. Poor old Jim! And then, very sleepily, Dan thought of Jim, rich, and the girl he was going to marry, and Mr. Flood, and Elmer who was, in that strange, far-off way, like Jim, and Margie who had married Elmer—and then he remembered what Jim had said—wait till he couldn't marry the girl he wanted, an' he'd know what hell was. Nobody knew, not even Margie, and then as he dropped off to sleep he felt that life was a very mixed-up kind of affair, badly run on the part of the higher authorities of Heaven.

IV

IN THE months that followed Jim seemed to abandon all hope. Yet when Dan asked him if he would give up the search, he grew angry. Why should Dan think him a quitter?

He settled down to a state of perpetual gloom. He was no longer the old Jim, light-hearted and cheerful and talkative, but silent and moody and likely to take offense for no reason. Also, and this was to Dan the final straw, he began to drink heavily. Even on the desert it was impossible to avoid the small towns that were strung along the railroad; there were supplies to be purchased, food and ammunition, and, from Jim's point of view most important of all, letters to be fetched, letters addressed to Herkomer and forwarded on to other small desert towns near which they might chance to be.

And whenever they touched these outskirts of civilization, Jim would get drunk. He was not quarrelsome; he was not amusing; he was merely stupid. And even when they once more went out into the desert, often a day or two late owing to his being unable to move sooner, he would insist on having a supply of whisky with him.

Argument was useless. He would promise faithfully, and then the next time he found a letter from Prudence waiting for him he would slink off to the nearest saloon and drink and drink, until Dan would find him in a drunken slumber slouching

over a table, or, as often happened, sprawling helplessly in the dust of the street, unable to stand. And yet in spite of his drinking he kept talking of the need to work; they must make haste and find the gold. Prudence was waiting and they had been away from her quite long enough.

Many times Dan thought seriously of leaving him. He was hopeless, worse than any hobo.

They reached Herkomer one evening in November and as they sat at supper in the little thirty-five cent Chinese restaurant Dan spoke of the future.

"I'm gettin' tired uh yuh, Jim Yardley. I've stood by you an' you ain't give me a square deal. I've been tryin' to help you all I can, but yuh don't care—darn it! Yuh don't give a cuss. I don't count. All yuh care about is your belly an' booze. I tell yuh, Jim, right now, if yuh don't cut it out, I quit. You're gettin' soft an' flabby an' mean; you're ready to let me work, an' you—you just drink an' fret an' talk about why can't yuh get married, an' what bad luck you're havin', an' then you're so full uh your own troubles, you just get to drinkin' again. Why, damn it, go over there an' look at your ugly face in the glass! You look like hell, Jim; you sure do. An' you got to quit! I'm tellin' yuh this, Jim, for your own good as much as anything. It's got you, an' what's more you can't even carry the stuff—not like most fellers. If I couldn't take a few drinks without lettin' the booze do to me what it does to you, I'd climb on the water-wagon an' stay there. I'm warnin' you for the last time, Jim. Cut it out, or you get another pardner."

Jim was very penitent.

"I'm sorry, Dan. Dan, I just don't know how to explain—I've been mad, I guess. It's the worry an' the fear that we won't make good, an' the difficulty of explainin' to Prudence, that's made me like this." He stretched out his hand. "Look, Dan, look at it shaking—I'm goin' the same way as I went before." He looked at Dan quickly. "You don't remember that, of course, Dan. That was before I came out here. Dan, I'm quitting right now."

That night he was drinking again. Dan went over to him in the saloon.

"You poor fool! Go your own way, then. I'm through with yuh."

Jim looked at him with glazed eyes.

"Y-yesh, Dan—sher-nly—g-go m'yown way—shure." He frowned as if trying to remember what came next. "A d-drink, Dan—b-b'fore y-you—go, Danny, hey?"

About midnight Dan was awakened by heavy footsteps in the passage. The door of his room was opened.

"You awake, Dan?"

"Who's there?" he asked, sitting up in bed.

A man struck a match and lit the candle.

"We've got old Jim outside, Dan. Shall we bring him in? He seems purty dan' bad. Joe an' me found him in the street."

They put him on the bed and he lay on his back, breathing heavily, with no color in his face and his eyes closed.

"Drink gets 'em like that, don't it?" said one of the men who was none too sober himself. "Do yuh remember old Pony Martin bein' just like this before he pegged out?"

"You get to hell out of it!" said Dan furiously. "What the devil are yuh talkin' that ways for? Here, one uh you go over to the depot an' get Harry to send a message through to Barstow for a doctor. Old Jim's bad. I can't feel his heart hardly at all."

A week later Jim was well enough to be able to sit up and talk.

"Jim," said Dan, "you're goin' down to the coast. That's what you're goin' to do, an' dam' sharp."

"Dan, I can't. I'm not goin' to leave you. I'm so ashamed of myself an' so miserable, Dan, I don't know how to begin sayin' what I feel. You've shown me, Dan, what——"

"Cut it out!" ordered Dan. "The doctor man says you got to get away from the desert for six months. It's the coast for you, old scout, an' no more booze. Otherwise——"

"Does that mean Los Angeles?" said Jim with a faint hope showing in his expression.

"No." Dan was firm. "You won't have no rest an' quiet there; what's more yuh ain't got money enough. You go down south—San Diego way. Find some little ranch town near the ocean an' stop over till you're well."

"Where's the money coming from, Dan? It's going to cost something an'——"

"Don't let that worry you, Jim. I've money left to start you off with, an' I'll let

you have enough every week to live on. An' if you go near Los Angeles, I won't have no more to do with yuh. Any letters yuh want to send Miss Flood, send 'em to me first, an' I'll post 'em on. An' if yuh want her to think that you're movin' around, send 'em to me, an' I'll get the train-men to post 'em on from way up in Nevada. We got to do something, Jim, or maybe the girl's folks will begin to kick. An' we've been keepin' her waitin' now, Jim, about fifteen months, ain't it? We must keep on stallin', that's all."

And that settled that. Jim wrote a week later, saying that he had kept his word and had not stopped off at Los Angeles. He was staying at a little place called Nogal, south of San Diego, near the Bay, where there were lemon orchards, and palms and packing-houses.

For five weary months Dan worked in a mine in the hills, earning, as he put it, good money, most of which he sent on to Jim. And toward the end of April he heard that Jim was coming back to the desert. They arranged to meet at Herkomer.

Dan surveyed him critically when he arrived. He looked brown and well, but there were fresh lines in his face; his eyes had a hunted expression; he seemed older. Yet in spite of everything he was ready and willing to continue his search for gold.

He had liked Nogal, but, so he said, he wanted to get back to work.

"I can't say that I'm glad to be out on the desert again, Dan. I'm not. But we've got to get hold of that mine. Dan, how much longer are we goin' to be, hey? It's a year and eight months now, Dan, since we started in to look for that fortune of mine. Is it any nearer? Sometimes I think it's hopeless to try any longer, an' then—then I think of Prudence an' I know we've just got to keep on an' keep on. But I can't last out much longer, Dan."

"Got any money?" asked Dan.

Jim shook his head.

"No, Dan, I guess I spent all you sent me. An' I didn't spend it on drink, either."

They went to see Peter Harman in his store.

"Well, Jim, how goes it? Better! That's fine. Dan, you're lookin' white. That's from workin' underground, hey? What are yuh goin' to do now?"



"Same old game, Peter. Out into the desert again."

"Why didn't yuh come an' ask me to help yuh, Dan, when Jim got ill, instead uh dashin' off that-a-ways?"

Dan smiled at the old man.

"Savin' it up, Pete. I knew when Jim come out we'd be lookin' about for a grub-stake. Any hopes?"

"You boys always acted square by me," said Pete. "An' I'll act square by you. I seen Mr. Skipworth in Los Angeles two weeks ago an' he ses the old Gold Bug is a-goin' ahead to beat the band. I got hopes uh retiring purty soon, Dan, an' buyin' me an orchard."

Not until they were once more trudging across the desert a day later did Jim mention that he had seen Prudence.

"I just had to, Dan. I stayed over in Los Angeles after I left Nogal. You're not mad with me, are you, Dan?"

Dan glanced at him quickly.

"I ain't mad, Jim, uh course not. What did yuh tell her?"

"I told more lies in those two days, Dan," said Jim, "than I ever told in my life before. Dan, she thinks it's you. She says I shouldn't have trusted you. An', Dan, Mrs. Flood says the same. She told me I ought to have put my money into something safe the minute I got engaged to her daughter. I dunno', Dan, but that old lady didn't give me much peace. She said she thought you oughter be in the pen an' that I was crazy for not seein' through you."

"An' Mr. Flood?"

"Say, Dan, I'm sorry for that little guy. Said he wished he could come out on to the desert and see you. But his wife put the kibosh on that pretty quick. And, Dan, they don't believe I ever had any money. Yet, they're not sure. See! Mrs. Flood said that her husband had been makin' inquiries an' that no one had ever heard of me. An' Dan, though I stuck to that darned story of yours, that my money is tied up an' I can't get it without losin' heavy, the long an' the short of it is, I've got to show 'em the goods."

Dan grunted.

"An' Miss Flood?"

Jim's gloom lightened, and he became almost animated and enthusiastic.

"Dan, she's splendid. Dan, I never knew how splendid she was till I saw her again.

You couldn't ask a girl like that to live in a rooming-house an' do her own cookin'. She's been brought up to luxury. I told her that I wasn't goin' to injure her prospects by takin' all my money out of where it was, just because her mother was tired of waiting. Oh, I was firm all right! Dan, I was firm as a rock. But it was touch an' go. They think I'm—well, I dunno'—rich an' eccentric, I guess, would about explain their feelings." He sighed drearily. "Poor little girl! She's so tired of living at home, she ses; she wants to be married and have a home of her own. An', Dan, I dunno', but it never did seem so hopeless an' mad as it does this minute."

Dan sympathized. Poor old Jim. Mad, of course it was mad! Try as he might, Dan could not foresee anything but failure; more lies, more stalling, and some day, the inevitable exposure. It was a miracle that they had held on as long as they had.

For three months they prospected around some hills where rumor had it there was a mine that had been discovered and lost in the far off '80's, the Rainbow. Some of the assays were good, but in no way wonderful. One claim that promised well, petered out, but they ran a tunnel into a hillside and managed to make a shipment of ore by wagon before they knew that once again they were disappointed.

"It's good," said Dan, "with machinery and capital, an' a spur track across the desert to the railroad, it would pay for workin', but—" He paused and thought hard. "Jim, lad, we'd better try again."

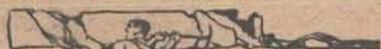
Jim sat at the mouth of the tunnel and stared at the desert spread out before them.

"There's a heap of land I can see from here, Dan, that we've not dug into yet. Let's keep on a-goin'." He gave Dan a searching look. "Dan, you're not tired, are you?"

"I'm with you, Jim, just as long as you want me."

And Dan felt strangely tender toward his partner. He was so big and helpless, so trusting and so confident. They would go on once more and in some other spot they would search for the mine that was waiting for them. And supposing that the years went by and they failed, as others had failed, men who had gone out as full of hope and dreams as old Jim!

And then Dan wondered what would happen if Jim decided to give up! What would



he do? Dan broke off his musings and looked across at Jim, still staring at the desert as if brooding darkly on his fate. What would he do if he lost his partner? Would he still keep on with his prospecting? What else could he do?

It was August again, two years since they had begun their search, and the sun scorched down on them with furnace heat.

Dan wiped his forehead.

"Jim," he said, "wake up, old timer! We'd better be packin' out uh this. Let's try somewheres further east."

V

DAN looked at the little particles of gold that glittered in the bottom of the pan. For a time he dared not speak. Was it possible that now—at last—they had found what they were looking for? It was possible, of course, but not probable. Other pannings had given him color, but never—never before had he got results like this. The rock was rich, richer than anything he had seen in all his long years of the desert. The little specks that caught the sun were all the proof he needed.

He stared at the great masses of red porphyry rising from where he stood toward the crest of the hill, barren and forbidding in the glare of the sun; then he turned and let his gaze wander over the gray monotony of the desert, undulating, covered with huge rocks and boulders, with here and there patches of greasewood and squawberry, a sea frozen into immobility, stretching away as far as he could see to the distant hills, range upon range, to where far off and faint against the blue sky, incredibly clear in that calm atmosphere, was a tiny spur which he knew was Signal Peak, near Death Valley.

And was this the place where they were to find their fortune?

Jim came slouching wearily toward him. He roused himself.

"Jim," he called. "Here."

"Well!" said Jim.

"What do yuh know about this, hey?"

On other occasions during the past two years, Jim had burst into yells of delight, had danced and song and thrown his hat into the air; he had shown his delight in wild transports; he had chanted extravagant praises. But now—now, when he saw before him evidences of gold in greater

quantity than he had seen before, now he merely nodded his head and said under his breath: "My God! and is this it?" He seemed like a man so utterly tired that nothing would rouse him. Yet Dan knew that Jim's feelings were too great for mere outward display. His luck had turned.

"It's come at last, Dan," said Jim.

"It's come at last," said Dan.

"Dan," said Jim, "we'll call it the Prudence. Shall we?"

"Sure thing," said Dan. "Call it the Prudence, Jim, if yuh want to. It don't look no diff'rent from any other place we tried in the last two years, does it? An' yet—Jim, if I ain't deluded myself—this is the richest thing the desert's seen since the Nevada booms."

"My God!" said Jim. "If it only was. If it only was."

Dan roused himself.

"Let's get busy, Jim. We got to stake out them boundaries before anything else."

A MONTH later Dan felt that his expectations were to be fulfilled. When he had entered the saloon at Herkomer on his way to file his location claim he had been asked how things were going.

"Anything in view, Dan? Another bonanza?"

Every one laughed. Dan's bonanzas were notorious. Dan laughed himself.

"Another bonanza," he said solemnly, and he went out chuckling.

No one believed him, of course. But they little knew.

The assayer's reports ran into figures that made him open his eyes very wide, indeed, and shout uproariously at Jim, but Jim merely shook his head.

"Why don't you show some enthusiasm?" said Dan sourly. "You old cripple! Why don't yuh shout? Don't yuh know that this little old Prudence mine uh yours is the biggest thing in the way uh high-grade ore south uh Tonopah?"

"I dare say, Dan—I hope so, anyway. But somehow, Dan, I ain't got a shout or a laugh left in me. We can't be sure, can we, Dan, even now, that something ain't going wrong?"

"What more do yuh want? You've got a mine there, Jim, that 'ull make a millionaire uh you. I wonder what the Selby smelter 'ud show—hey? Jim, before another year's out, lad, you'll be drivin'

around in your own auto an' askin' yourself if yuh ever was on the desert or if you dreamed it."

"That's just it," said Jim. "I don't see how it's goin' to be done in less than a year. There's a lot uh things I never thought of, Dan, when we started—"

"Shucks! You'll have enough to get married on in less time than all that," said Dan. "Don't yuh get to worryin', Jim. We've got what we been aimin' at, at last. An' now let's get on with that shaft of ours."

That evening Dan looked up from the calculations that he had been making on the back of an envelope.

"Jim," he said. "Lookee here. Somebody's got to take three uh the burros an' trot down to Herkomer tomorrer. Would you like the trip?"

"I don't mind if I do, Dan. I'm expectin' a letter from Prudence an' I might as well fetch it. An' what else, Dan? I guess we're short of a lot of things, hey?"

"Jim, yuh gotter go to old man Harman an' ask will he fix us up with some grub an' ammunition. We're short, I'm not denyin' it. Tell Peter in confidence, kind uh, that we got a crackerjack proposition out here. Don't lay it on too thick, Jim, as we don't want him or any uh his bunch hornin' in on us yet—if ever. An' you say that we'll be makin' a shipment purty soon. We need timber, too. Jim, you see what yuh can do with old Peter about gettin' some timber sent out. Just whisper in his ear that you an' me ain't gettin' nothin' outer the old Gold Bug mine that we sold—an' he'll come through with the goods without worryin'."

Early the next morning Jim departed with three burros for Herkomer, twelve miles away, northwest of where the Prudence mine was located.

Dan watched him go striding across the bare desert after his burros, swinging along as if he had thrown aside a weight that had bowed him down. He was happy, Dan knew, happy and yet scarcely able to realize that happiness was within his reach. After two years, the gamble was justified. And what a gamble! The odds against . . . Dan flipped a piece of shale at a bull snake.

"A thousand million to one, old worm, ain't it?"

And the future. . . He wondered.

From where he sat he could see in his mind mine buildings, the dump, the ore bins the dump cars, the chute, the bunk-houses, assay office, blacksmith's, the cook-house, the railroad track winding across the desert following the trail that Jim had taken on his way to Herkomer, and there would be work and prosperity, and the papers would be full of quotations of the Prudence stock, and he and Jim would be rich, and Jim would be married . . . and this brought Dan up with a jerk. Old Jim married to Prudence and settling down to a life in a city with all the comforts that wealth could buy, and a wife who would spend his money . . . and maybe neglect him and let him drift.

And then Dan, not quite so cheerful as before, strolled off up the slope to the hole in the ground which would soon, very soon now, become a mine.

TWO evenings later Jim returned. When he was yet afar off Dan saw him approaching, walking behind the three burros in a cloud of dust. Dan whistling to himself put the coffee-pot on to the fire and began to prepare supper.

He welcomed his hat and gave a yell of welcome as Jim came toward him over the last hundred yards. And then he stopped, startled. There was no response from Jim. He tramped forward steadily, his head downcast, his shoulders bowed—his whole appearance betokening gloom. Also, and this was to Dan something that was beyond all explanation, the burros were not loaded.

When he was quite close to the tent and the fire in its little niche between the rocks, Dan spoke to him.

"What's wrong with yuh, Jim?"

Jim's looks frightened him. His face was gray and ghostlike under its mask of dust; his eyes were bloodshot; his lips were swollen and drawn back from his teeth: he breathed with an effort. Also, he had been drinking, and drinking since he had left Herkomer.

"Jim," said Dan slowly, "what's the matter with yuh?"

"Nothing much, Dan. I'll tell you presently. I've got to see after them burros."

"Burros, nothin'! I'll see after them. You're all in. Set down an' rest."

Jim dropped on to a boulder and sat with his head in his hands without moving, the picture of hopeless despair. Dan was



worried, but he said nothing. In good time, when he felt better, Jim would tell him what had happened. But in the meantime why was it that he had come in from Herkomer without stores? Did he expect them to manage without grub or ammunition?

Jim's hand strayed to his hip-pocket. Dan jumped to his feet and strode toward him.

"None uh that," he said. "Pass over that damn' bottle."

Their eyes fought.

"Come on," said Dan. "Do as I say. Understand!"

Jim muttered something under his breath and then after a few seconds indecision passed him over a flat bottle.

"Dan, for God's sake, Dan! Don't throw it away! Keep it, Dan, an' maybe I'll need it. I'm sick, Dan——"

"You'll be a dam' sight sicker before I've finished," said Dan. He threw the bottle against a stone and watched the liquor soak into the sand. "Now, then, what the hell do yuh mean by comin' back the way yuh are? I warned yuh before—an' you know what the doctor said, Jim. Are yuh plum' crazy?"

"Dan," said Jim suddenly, and he seemed too broken to show any resentment. "Dan, it's all up. Everything. We can't make it." He drew a letter from the breast-pocket of his shirt. "Read this. It's from Prudence."

There was in his face an expression of dumb, helpless suffering that Dan did not like.

The letter began:

DEAR JIM:

Father says I must write to you and tell you that our engagement has lasted long enough. I have waited now for two years and you have kept giving me excuses as to why our marriage should be postponed. Have you been telling me things that are not true? A friend of father's, a Mr. Skipworth, told us that you have been prospecting on the desert for years without success. You did have a claim, he says, which you sold to him and some friends to develop. Mr. Skipworth sold some stock in this mine, the Gold Bug, to father. He says that you are not rich at all. Is this true? Are you or are you not rich? I must know this at once. I feel that you have neglected me and been most unfair. It is not that I care for money myself, but I think that the time has come for plain speaking. Father tells me to tell you that if you can not, within the next two months, prove to us that you have an income on which to support a wife in comfort, then I must do as they

have urged me to do for some years and marry some one else. And although my heart is breaking at the prospect, I feel that I must obey.

Ever yours with all love,

PRUDENCE.

P. S.—Mr. Skipworth says that you never did own a big mine in your life. He knows the desert well and he says that he would have heard about the mine if it had existed—I mean that mine in which that Mr. Summers told you to put so much money. But then he says also that it might possibly be something that had been kept a secret from every one. And he says also that he may be mistaken about you being poor. What am I to think?

Dan whistled softly. He glanced at Jim, seated in the same attitude of despair. Had he guessed? Did he not realize the truth? Prudence was tired—and he was not surprized. After all, old Jim had kept her waiting for two years. But what were two years if a girl loved a man? She didn't; that was plain. She would give him up, poor old Jim, unless he proved that he had the money. And a darned good job, too! A girl who could write a letter like that wasn't a fit wife for a man as good as old Jim. And then Dan remembered the Prudence Mine, and its possibilities, its certainty of success, and he knew that Jim had the money at last, and he felt depressed and sad and uneasy. Jim turned and looked at him.

"Well, Dan," he said. "You've read it, haven't you? She told me that she herself didn't care whether we had money or not. But it's her people. They made her write, and they'll make her marry some other feller. Dan, you know yourself, I couldn't drag that poor girl out here. We're up against it, Dan, unable to do a thing!"

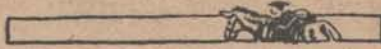
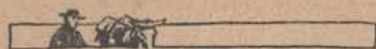
"What's the matter with the Prudence Mine? We've t two months, ain't we, Jim, on the letter's own showin'?"

Jim rose to his feet with a groan.

"Damn it! What's two months to us? We've no ammunition, no grub, no timber, nothin'. We're broke, busted. Why, Dan, we can't even go ahead with that shaft. Timber don't grow on the Mohave, does it? We couldn't make any shipments of ore. We can't even eat, let alone develop. Dan, we haven't got money enough to keep us out here another week, an' you know it."

"But," said Dan feebly, "what about old Pete?"

Jim burst into a hoarse cackle of laughter.



"Oh, my God! Dan, didn't I tell you? Old man Pete wouldn't give me a can of tomatoes, even, only a few beans an' coffee. Didn't you see those burros without a load? Pete ses he ain't a charitable institution for keepin' you an' me out here in comfort. We'll get no grubstake from him, Dan, an' that's a fact."

Dan stared at his partner in dumb surprise.

"Ain't he got the Gold Bug? Him an' his partners, an' we ain't got nothin'."

"The Gold Bug," said Jim, "is flat—as flat as my old face. I couldn't get to understand rightly what had happened, Dan, but it looked mighty queer to me. Some of the bunch got out without losing, but Peter got stung and he's like a bear with a sore head. He says if he meets that Skipworth person there'll be something doing."

"Oh!" said Dan. "So that's it, is it!" He laughed dryly. "Old Pete, hey? There's the Prudence just as good as ever it was, old Pete or no old Pete; don't forget that, Jim."

"What's the use?" said Jim in a tired tone. "Dan, the game's up. Dan, you know as well as I do, better, that we can't go ahead an' develop an' get capital interested without money ourselves. I know it's good, amazing good, an' that makes things worse. Dan, you knew I was crazy two years ago, thinking I was going to pick up a fortune all in a minute, didn't you?"

"Maybe I did," said Dan. "But, Jim, others made fortunes, why not us? An' anyways——"

He broke off and began to think. Money he must have if he were to be able to help old Jim, and where was money to be found? Was there any one in the whole world who would advance him what they needed? And then there flashed into his mind, suddenly, a ray of hope. Elmer—Elmer Prescott, with all his prosperity, his land and houses and orchards and stores. He had helped Elmer. Elmer would help him. He gave a laugh. Things were working out.

"Jim," he said, "if in two months from now you could go to Miss Flood and Mrs. Flood an' show them your assays an' the reports from the smelter an' the minin' engineer's report an' the names uh the bunch you'd interested in the mine, wouldn't they give yuh more than the two

months? Money talks, Jim. Wouldn't they listen? Seems to me, Jim, that we'll pull it off even now!"

"We can't live on nothin', Dan. Where's the money coming from? An' we don't want to sell the old mine, same as we sold the Gold Bug, to some piker who'll give us enough to buy hash with an' inside a year be hirin' a suite at the Fairmont for his wife an' kids. No, Danny, I don't see anything but you an' me pullin' out an' gettin' a job somewhere in a mine. Oh, Lord! Dan, it 'ull just about kill me. An' then—even then, Dan, it 'ull be too late. If Prudence don't marry me, Dan, if she marries some one else, then the darn mine may go to Jericho, an' stay there—I'm through."

"Jim," said Dan, "do yuh remember that time I went to Browning two years ago an' give away seven hundred bucks? Well, the feller that got the seven hundred offen me 'ull see us through. He'll stake us to what we want."

"Dan," said Jim brokenly, "Dan, you're just a wonder! I dunno' why I ever doubted you."

"I'll go to Browning an' see him," said Dan, "an' I'll come back with the money just as quick as ever I can get here. An' what about you, Jim, if yuh go into Herkomer, can I trust yuh? Or are yuh goin' to get on the razzle again?"

Jim reddened under the grime and sweat.

"For God's sake, Dan, give me a chance! Wasn't that letter enough to make a man drink? I won't touch a drop, Dan, till you come back, an' that's the truth."

"What in the world will yuh do when yuh get all that money, Jim, an' don't have to work?"

"It's only the dam' desert that makes me drink, Dan. Once I get away from here—Lord Almighty!" He breathed deeply. "What will I want to drink for, hey? I only go on the jag when I'm worried an' things go wrong—why, there'll be Prudence, Dan, too. Would a man go on the booze with a wife like Prudence an' a good home?"

"Not unless he's about eight diff'rent kinds of a dam' fool, he wouldn't!" said Dan.

For some minutes Jim seemed to be lost in thought. Then he stood up and looked down at Dan.



"Danny, when I'm married, I want you to promise you'll come an' live with us. I've been thinking, Dan, that life 'ud be pretty dam' miserable unless I knew you were handy. Prudence may be a bit prejudiced, Dan, for the time bein', but she'll get to like you, Dan, as sure as you live."

Dan laughed and said nothing. But he wondered uneasily what Jim's married life would be. To Jim, Prudence was the finest and best woman that ever lived, and yet . . . there was that letter. She wanted his money, nothing else. If Jim were poor, she would turn him down flat. And Jim was aching with love for her . . . Poor, silly, weak-minded old Jim! The best old mossa-back that ever hiked across the desert after a burro . . . and a girl like that waiting to grab him and worry him and drive him to drinking. . . .

VI

WHEN Dan reached Browning he found that the Browning of two years ago had vanished. Browning's business section had, when he last stood in the main street, no more than six or seven buildings. Now both sides of the street were lined with stores—some cement, some wood, one with a brick front. The street was no longer dusty and uneven and ill-kept, but of smooth asphalt. The open spaces where he remembered having seen the vacant lots with the notice boards, were all built on; there was a new church; houses had sprung up on every side in the midst of gardens and lawns. And on the brown and parched foothills beyond the green orchards, were huge oil derricks.

Dan halted on a street corner and gazed about him. The bank was now a square, substantial building of cement. Opposite was old Newsom's office, unchanged save perhaps for a new coat of paint and some specimens of Browning grown fruit, lemons and oranges and apricots and peaches in the window. From where he stood Dan could see a butcher's, a bakery, a paint store, a restaurant, two new grocery stores, a harness maker's, a picture theater, no less than one, two, three real-estate offices.

A wagon, drawn by two mules, pulled up by the curb. The driver, a stout, bearded man, whom he did not know, gave the reins to a lad who sat by his side.

"Take these, an' drive to the packin'-house." Then he climbed down from the seat. "Ain't you Dan Summers? I thought so. My name's Harvey. I bought the old Gregson place. Mr. Summers, I want to know if you'll give me the first refusal for them lots of yours. I guess that's what you came in for, hey?"

Dan stared at him without making any reply. His lots! It was only with difficulty that he recollected that he had any lots.

"Come on, Mr. Summers. I'll give you a thousand for the three. Five hundred down, rest payable by instalments at the usual interest."

"Why," said Dan; "why, I hadn't exactly considered—"

A thousand! He felt as if he stood on air! A thousand dollars for three miserable lots that had been forced on him against his will! Was the man crazy?

"Dan Summers!" He turned as some one shouted from the other side of the street. Old Newsom, bareheaded, was running toward him. "Dan, don't you do nothin' rash! You wait for me, Dan."

He reached him, puffing and blowing.

"Come on, Mr. Summers," said the rancher once more. "Don't mind him. What about my offer? Take it?"

"What offer?" said Mr. Newsom shrilly. "What's he offerin' you, Dan? Come on acrost the street to my office an' talk it over."

"A thousand for the three lots, that's the offer," said Dan.

"Dan," said Mr. Newsom, "there's five hundred dollars for each lot waitin' for you the minute you step into my office, spot cash. An' you won't get a better offer than that."

"Don't you believe it!" said another voice. "If you will shout all over the street what your business is, don't blame folks for hearin'. Mr. Summers, my name is Millington. I represent the Browning Realty Company, an' I've been tryin' to find you for the past eighteen months."

Mr. Newsom took Dan's arm.

"Come on over to the office."

Mr. Millington, a pale-faced young man with glasses, gently put his hand on Dan's shoulder.

"Mr. Summers," he said. "Two thousand dollars for your three lots. There! Close with that deal, an' the money's yours within twenty-four hours."

Two other men, one lean, the other fat, also strangers to Dan, came running up.

"Is that Mr. Summers? Are you willing to sell your lots, Mr. Summers?"

"Aw, get to heck outer it!" roared Mr. Newsom. "Why don't you get outer bed in the mornin'?"

"You ain't sold yet, have you?" said the lean stranger.

"Twenty-five hundred, Mr. Summers, for the three," said the fat stranger.

A small barefooted boy ran shrieking down the street.

"Popper, Dan Summers has come back. Dan Summers what owns the lots has come home."

His voice died away in the distance like the whistle of a locomotive entering a tunnel.

Doors opened and people came into the street.

Dan broke loose from Mr. Newsom and faced the little group of men.

"I dunno' as I want to sell, after all. You fight it out among you, gentlemen. I'll see yuh later."

He crossed the street and entered the bank.

Syd Turner threw up his arms and shouted.

"Dan Summers by all that's holy! Dan, I thought you were dead! Where in thunder have you been?"

"What's it all mean, Syd? I don't understand."

"Don't understand! Well, take a look out of that window, Dan!" Syd pointed to the oil derricks on the foothills. "See them, Dan! Oil. Browning's on the map at last. Booming."

"Oh! said Dan. "An' that explains it. An' what about them lots uh mine, Syd?"

"I paid the taxes for the past two years, Dan, of course. But if you mean to sell I want to buy 'em, Dan, well—I'd like to, but I ain't got money enough." He disappeared into the huge safe and came out again with a bundle of papers. "Here are your deeds and titles, Dan."

Dan mused.

"See here, Syd, I'm new to this game. It ain't like minin'. What are those old lots uh mine worth?"

The cashier leaned over the counter.

"Dan," he said, "it ain't nothin' to do with me, I'm neutral, but as a friend I'll give you a word of advice. Don't you

take a cent less than two thousand dollars for 'em."

"For the three?"

"Three, nothin'! For each of 'em. Six thousand the three!"

Dan stared at him with a feeling of bewilderment and awe. Six thousand! Why, he was rich! And old Jim would be able to go ahead—nothing could stop him!

"Here," he said, "it's enough to make a feller feel faint. Lemme get out into the fresh air again an' have a talk with that bunch that's been tryin' to give me money. What's makin' every one so dam' crazy to get 'em, Syd?"

"Well, Danny, that lot of yours down the street used to be off out of sight. Now the business section extends way the other side of it. Your lot lays between the Palmer Grocery Store an' the Browning Realty Company. Both want it. See! And those other two lots down on Third were part of a subdivision of ten acres. Old man Newsom got hold of the subdivision, piece by piece, all but your two lots, an' he owns the ten acres west of it as well. He plans to put up a home some day an' that's why he wants your two lots. He wants 'em bad an' every one knows it. If you sell the three lots together, Dan, I guess you'll get the best price."

Dan nodded and went out into the street.

Old man Newsom advanced, grinning fiercely. Behind were Millington, the bearded rancher, and the two men who had come up later, and a dozen others, gesticulating, shouting, arguing, all apparently hating each other and all united in an intense and overwhelming hatred for old Newsom.

"Now," said Dan, "what's the best offer? I'm in a hurry, and to save time, I'll tell yuh right now I won't take a cent under six thousand dollars for the three lots."

Somewhat to his amazement no one seemed surprised.

And after this all Dan had to do was to lean against the wall of the bank and listen and marvel and wonder at the luck that had been his in having the lots to sell.

A quarter of an hour later, having sold his lots for ten thousand dollars cash to old Newsom, he sat with him in his office and watched the deeds being typed out by a tow-headed girl, who ever and anon gazed



at him with wondering eyes as at one whose existence had long been a myth in the circles in which she moved.

They walked across to the bank and Dan, still in a kind of waking dream, stowed the ten thousand dollars away in his note-book. And not even in desert mining-camps in boom times, when money had been plentiful, had he handled so much currency at one and the same time. And all his own. No one else's, but his own. He could scarcely believe it.

"Well," he said, "on the desert, gentlemen, after a deal of this kind, it's the custom to liquor up. Is there such a——"

Syd Turner shook his head.

"You can't get a drink in Browning, not unless you go an' get bit by old Dad Stringer's pet snake, an' enlightened opinion these days, Dan, is against whisky bein' good for snake-bite, so there you are. We're dry. An' it's just as well for you, Dan, that we are. You want to go an' sleep it off, that's what you want."

"Satisfied?" said old man Newsom dryly.

"You betcher life," said Dan.

"An' you'll know where to come if you want to buy a home, hey?"

"I won't forget," said Dan.

They shook hands and old man Newsom went back to his office.

Dan turned to Syd.

"An' now I must go an' see Elmer Prescott. That's why I came here in the first place."

"Guess you won't, Dan," said Syd.

"Why not?" said Dan.

"He ain't here. He's in Los Angeles."

"Gee-whiz! Don't that beat anythin! I guess he's gone to live on one uh them boulevards with millionaires on each side uh him. I always thought old Elmer would make his pile quick."

"It ain't quite like that, Dan. Tell you the truth, Elmer's been kind of sick an' he left Browning in the Spring an' ain't been near us since."

Dan was puzzled. There was a curious reserve about Syd that was difficult to understand. It was almost as if he had decided not to talk about Elmer at all.

"I'll give you his address, Dan, if you want to see him," said Syd, "but you won't find him quite as he used to be. I guess that illness of his upset him considerable." He scribbled an address on a slip of paper. "An' now, Dan, you come

up to the house an' eat dinner with us. I want you to taste my wife's cooking before you go out into that old desert again."

DAN was still in a dazed state of mind when he reached Los Angeles. He had gone to Browning in search of money, scarcely daring to formulate a figure even to himself, lest he be disappointed, and he came away with thousands.

Their troubles were at an end. They could develop the mine. With ten thousand dollars what couldn't they do? And Jim—poor, old Jim would be able to marry Prudence.

And at the thought of Jim married, Dan grew serious. Would Prudence make Jim a good wife? Of course not. There was the letter to prove it. Yet, if Jim thought that Prudence was everything in the world to him, then there was nothing for it but to let him marry and be miserable for the rest of his life.

But before going on to Herkomer and proving to Jim that the age of miracles was not past, Dan determined to call in at Elmer's new home and ask how he was and to tell him of his good fortune and thank him for having insisted on his taking the lots.

He asked a policeman if he knew whereabouts the street was situated.

The policeman glanced at the slip of paper.

"Other side of the Southern Pacific," he said, and then gave more explicit directions.

Dan, rather startled, thanked him. At first he thought that there must be some mistake.

And when he reached the street, a mean, little street in which children shrieked at their play, and stood in front of the house with the number that corresponded with the number on the slip of paper, Dan was still more troubled and perplexed, and he hesitated quite a long time before he ventured to tap at the door. For the street was squalid and dusty and dark from the pall of smoke from the railroad yards, and the house was small and badly in need of paint. There was a window broken and a huge hole in the lower half of the screen door. Yet the place was neat, and over the tiny porch there grew a bougainvillea with purple blossoms, just like the bougainvillea that had grown on the veranda of



the white house at Browning two years before.

Dan knocked twice and then he heard footsteps and the door was opened and through the rusty, wire mesh of the screen he saw Margie.

"You!" she said in a low voice.

Dan stared at her without speaking and she opened the screen door.

Dan entered and found himself in a small parlor, low and dark and incredibly hot, furnished plainly and poorly.

He looked at Margie and a lump rose to his throat and he felt that he had done wrong in coming. She was gazing out of the window into the street with its crowd of children playing and men in their shirt sleeves sitting on their front porches reading and smoking just as he, Dan Summers, might have sat in front of the saloon at Herkomer.

He did not speak. He could not. He knew now that Elmer had failed and that this wife of his, who was to have had everything that any man could give a wife, who should have been clad in silks and satins or whatever it was that rich men's wives did wear, who should have had people to wait on her, was living in a tiny frame house in a back street, dressed in an old plain skirt and waist, with a big apron, cooking and working and scrubbing . . . and yet looking the same Margie that he remembered years before she had met Elmer and when he himself had had hopes. . . .

And at last she turned and looked at him.

"Well, Dan," she said.

She was paler, he decided, but then not even at Browning had she had much color; her brown eyes met his steadily, trustfully; her lips were set in a wistful, little smile, but she gave no sign to show what her feelings must be.

"I went down to Browning," said Dan finally, "an' they gave me Elmer's address—"

She smiled sadly.

"It's not quite the same as Browning, Dan, is it? Elmer's been ill a long time, but he's getting better, fast." She hesitated as if not knowing quite how to say what she had in mind. "Dan, you mustn't be surprized at the change in him. He's different from what he was, Dan."

Then she opened the door leading to another room.

"Elmer," she said, "here's a friend come to see you."

And Dan entered a small bedroom where, on a low bed facing the window, lay Elmer, worn and wasted and pale and so unlike his former stout and happy self that Dan was horrified.

"Elmer," he said.

Elmer gazed at him with a look of utter weariness in his eyes.

"Dan," he said.

Then he coughed and tried to raise himself on his elbow, but his wife stopped him.

"Lie down, Elmer," she said. She pushed a chair toward Dan. "Take a seat, Dan, an' talk."

"Elmer," said Dan, "I'm awful sorry to find you bad this way. Why, I was lookin' to see yuh hustlin' round Los Angeles buyin' an' sellin' same as you did at Browning."

"I suppose you've been there, hey?" said Elmer. "An' they told you all kind of stories about me, of course?"

"Not a word, Elmer, not a word. Syd Turner give me your address an' said you'd been ill, an' that's all I done hear."

Elmer gave a feeble imitation of his old laugh.

"Why, Dan, didn't they tell you I went broke? Lost everything. And that poor little wife of mine—" Dan saw in his expression as he gazed up at his wife pride and affection and, so it seemed, shame. "Dan, you don't know what she's done for me."

"Now, Elmer," said the girl gently. "Don't, please."

"I will, Marge. I want Dan to know what kind of a wife I got. When things went wrong, Dan, she turned to and worked. She never let me lose hope; she put up with my sulks; she thought out plans; she—why, Dan, I just can't tell you what that little Margie means to me!"

Dan listened with a feeling of the most intense sadness. He had not yet recovered from the shock of finding Margie whose future was to have been so brilliant, Margie who was to have had fine clothes and jewels and motor-cars and happiness, living in this small shack, in poverty!

"How did it happen?" he asked.

"Nothing went right," said the girl, "and Elmer got sick and couldn't look after his business. That was the beginnin'."

"I couldn't pay off my mortgages," said Elmer. "That old rat Newsom foreclosed on me. An' then there was some land of mine I thought maybe had oil in it—anyway, one thing after another went wrong, an' there wasn't one of them that would lift a hand to help me. No, Dan, not one."

It came over Dan with fresh amazement that he had gone down to Browning to ask Elmer for money, and here was Elmer without a cent—and ill into the bargain! Poor old Elmer! And the lots that Elmer had once owned had sold that very day for ten thousand dollars!

The sick man was talking in a querulous voice.

"If I'd had money I'd have pulled things off. It was that what knocked me, Dan, just that. An' how have you done, Dan? Made that pile yet?"

"No," said Dan, "but we've got a mine now that's goin' to be the biggest thing that California ever seen."

"They all say that," said Elmer. "Every one of them." He frowned. "If I could get some money even now, Dan, I'd make good. I would so. I've had hard luck, the worst kind of luck, ain't I? Ain't that so, Margie?"

"Nothing else," said the girl with a little sigh. "That and you being ill. But we're going to begin again, Elmer, an' things will never be like they were before, will they?"

All at once the sick man turned his face to the wall and began to sob.

"Oh, my God!" he said. "My God, Margie, speak the truth! Margie, tell Dan what I was. Tell him what I am—that I'm no good, that I never have been—an' never will be—"

Dan stood up and looked helplessly at Margie.

"It's nothing," she said. "He gets like that at times, Dan. He's not very strong yet, that's why."

She knelt by the bed and tried to comfort him.

Dan waited. He wished he could slip quietly away, but dared not move. And then Elmer spoke to him again.

"Dan," he said, "I've been tellin' lies. It was my fault, everything. Poker an' whisky, nothin' but that. Night after night, I'd land home drunk. Mornings, I'd be too drunk to get up. I was never

sober, Dan. That's the whole story. An' that little wife of mine never let on to folks what she was sufferin', but just did what she could do to make me run straight. Dan, you don't know what Margie went through in them days. She stood by me—she never blamed me, never said a hard word. I knew I was killin' her, but I kept on the same old way, an' the—"

"Hush!" said the girl. "Dan, don't you believe it!"

And Dan thought of the days when Jim had gone wrong and he wondered what would have happened, supposing that Jim had been married. Would Jim's wife have been as true to him as Margie had been to Elmer?

"An' then, Dan, we came to Los Angeles. Margie got a job as a stenographer an' I just kept on with the drink. Why didn't she leave me? God only knows, Dan! An' when at last I seen what I was an' quit, I got ill. An' she's been nursin' me ever since—workin' herself to death for the sake of a useless, miserable—"

The girl leaned forward and put her hand over his mouth.

"You mustn't, Elmer. Now you must stop. You're making things out to be worse than they are."

Her cheeks were flushed and there were tears in her eyes.

"I've learnt, Margie," said the sick man. "I've learnt my lesson at last."

Dan walked over to the window and stared into the dusk. Poor little Margie! A drunkard's wife! He knew now what she had been through. He could remember on the desert the wife of an assayer who drank . . . and the life she led . . . the neglect and the cruelty and the blows . . . what people had thought and said . . . and how she had lied and denied that her husband had raised a hand against her. . . . Supposing old Jim went the same way as Elmer after he married! Jim had said that it wouldn't be possible, not with Prudence for a wife! It had been possible for Elmer, and he had had Margie. There would be no one like Margie to help Jim.

And Dan knew that if he could make Margie happy, if he could lift the cloud from her face and bring back the joy and laughter and happiness that he remembered, he would have done something to be proud of. And if ever a girl deserved

happiness it was Margie. Jim, of course—Jim must be a happy, too. And Jim would be happy. There was the ten thousand dollars and . . . but would Jim's wife do what Margie had done? And, darn it! Would Jim be happy?

He turned and looked at Margie seated by the side of her husband, stroking his wasted hand.

"Elmer," she was saying, "there's no reason to say it's too late. I guess we can fight it out, you an' me." She glanced at Dan. "He's all I have, Dan, so maybe I get a bit anxious about him."

The germ of a great idea was growing in Dan's mind. He had Jim's happiness at heart. But if he could make Margie happy, also, so much the better.

"Are yuh gettin' enough to eat an' drink, Elmer?" he asked. "Yuh need feedin' up. An', Margie, speak the truth, what have you had to eat today?"

"Oh, I'm all right," she said. "I'm going back to work tomorrow, too, Dan."

"I'm leavin' you for the time bein'," said Dan. "I'll be back, maybe, in an hour or two. I want to get you some things. You need feedin' up, Elmer. I wish to heaven yuh could get out the city into the country."

He felt that he must discover, cost what it might, whether Prudence was worthy. Far too long he had been content to be a spectator. The time for action had come. He had watched events mold the lives of his friends, for good or ill, now he himself would shape their future . . . it was within his power.

VII

DAN rang the bell of the front door of the big house where two years before he and Jim had visited Prudence.

The door was opened by a maid in black with a white apron and a tiny cap.

"Good ev'nin'," said Dan genially. "Folks in?"

The girl eyed him suspiciously from head to foot.

"I guess you've made a mistake."

Dan, conscious of an old, khaki jacket and trousers and a sombrero with a drooping brim, grinned.

"I guess I ain't," he said. "Tell Miss Flood an old friend from the desert has come to see her."

The girl showed him into the drawing-room and he waited, surveying the knick-knacks and pictures and furniture with appreciation. Old man Flood might be a weak-kneed little runt, but he sure had the goods when it came to setting up house.

The door opened and Prudence came in. When she saw Dan the expectation faded from her face and she looked annoyed.

"You!" she said.

Was this the wife for Jim? This dressed up doll! Would she understand and make allowances? Would she help him when he was down and out? Would she keep him from drinking? Or even try to? He hated to think of what might happen.

"Howdy, Miss Flood," said Dan.

"Is there anything I can do for you?" she asked. "I was expecting a message from Mr. Yardley."

"Jim don't know I'm here," said Dan.

"But won't you sit down? Do!"

Miss Flood's manner became ever more cold and distant as he drew up a chair and seated himself opposite.

"Miss Flood," he said, "I want to see Jim happy."

And he found time to wonder which of the many possible meanings she had put on his remark.

"Miss Flood, Jim ain't worth a million, an' he never has been. When he told you he was rich two years ago, he knew he would be before long. But things didn't pan out as we meant 'em, an' he's been worryin' himself purty near crazy just because uh keepin' you waitin'. Now, I'm tellin' yuh the truth, Miss Flood, Jim's goin' to be rich. He's got a mine at last that will bring him in all he could wish for, but it's goin' to take time to open up. An' that's why I come here to have a talk with you."

The girl's eyes seemed to be looking right through him. Dan felt that she regarded him as something beneath contempt. He continued amiably, smiling at her, as if at one of his dearest and most trusted friends.

"A girl what loves a feller ain't goin' to let nothin' like money stand in the way uh their gettin' married, an' that's where Jim's been mistaken all this time, ain't it, Miss Flood? What I'm comin' to is this, then: Supposin' Jim don't get that mine uh his developed quite as quick as he oughter, can I tell him he's not to hang

back any more outer a sense uh pride, but that he's to come in right away to Los Angeles an' you an' him get married?"

Miss Flood rose to her feet. Dan rose likewise, smiling as if the interview was proceeding with the utmost harmony and good taste on either side.

"It's better to be livin' on beans an' coffee in an old shack on the desert an' be in love," he said, "than to live in a palace an' quarrel over the champagne an' oysters."

No one, he felt, could have put things more plainly, yet more pleasantly.

Miss Flood spoke at last.

"I think that Mr. Yardley has behaved as no gentleman ought to behave. He's told me deliberate lies——"

Which, thought Dan, was just what the old idiot had done.

"But he loves you," he said. "That's the main thing, Miss Flood."

Miss Flood's eyes blazed.

"Don't you understand," she said, "that I've been kept waiting for two whole years, and now you come and tell me that he never had any money and never will have!"

"Oh! He will have," said Dan. "He will have."

She sure was angry, too. What chance would old Jim have in a scrap with her? The old mossback would take the count in the first minute.

The door opened and Mrs. Flood entered.

"Mother," said her daughter, "it's just as we thought. It's all lies from beginning to end—Jim—Mr. Yardley never had any money at all." She waved a hand tragically at Dan who hung his head and looked penitent and had as much as he could do to keep from shouting. "This man has told me everything."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Flood. "Then I was right."

"And he comes here," said Miss Flood, "suggesting that I should marry Jim and go and live on the desert!"

"Jim's got a mine, ma'am," said Dan, "that will run him into millions."

The stout lady silenced him.

"I've heard that before." She turned to her daughter. "Any thought of marriage between you and Mr. Yardley is out of the question, Prudence."

Dan fumbled with the brim of his hat.

"Then I guess I'll go back to old Jim

an' say that Miss Flood refuses to carry out her share uh the contrack——"

He felt that he did not like these people at all.

"You may say exactly what you like," said Mrs. Flood. "It was only through a mistaken sense of honor that my daughter did not break off the engagement months ago."

"But now I know," said Miss Flood, "I will write to Mr. Yardley and I'll say exactly what I think of him."

"I guess I'll be goin'," said Dan.

The door opened once more.

"Mr. Skipworth," said the maid.

Dan stepped to one side as a stout little man, in a brown suit, with glasses and a bald head entered.

Dan saw him advance holding out both hands.

"My dearest Prudence, I only heard you were in town this afternoon. I simply flew round——"

"Why, Horace, I never——"

Dan saw a signal of distress pass between mother and daughter. It was awkward for them, of course.

"Good ev'nin', Mrs. Flood. Good ev'nin', Miss Flood. Mr. Skipworth, I guess we got a mine now that 'ull make the old Gold Bug look like thirty cents. Good ev'nin'."

And he made his escape.

In the hall he met Mr. Flood.

"Why if it ain't Jim's partner, Dan Summers!"

"How's things?" said Dan.

Mr. Flood winked. Then he opened the front door and let Dan out on to the veranda.

"Say, there ain't much peace these days in this house. I'm just about tired of it. This time last year we were all on theosophy, now we're spiritualists. Say, it gives me a headache. How's Jim?"

"Dunno', Mr. Flood, guess poor old Jim ain't much in favor indoors there!"

"They didn't blame it on me, did they?" said Mr. Flood. "They did, of course! Makes me mad all over, that kind uh thing. Say, it's Jim's own fault for not coming through with the goods. Have a cigar, Mr. Summers."

"Who's Horace?" asked Dan.

Mr. Flood looked warily over his shoulder.

"Horace owns one of the largest hard-



ware stores in Los Angeles. Skipworth's his name. An' I guess, Dan, I guess one of these days, seein' that Jim's dropped out, or so the wife tells me, Horace will come amblin' forward to ask if he may call me popper. An' when that day comes—"Again Mr. Flood glanced over his shoulder—"Dan, you don't think there's any place out on the desert where a feller could rest awhile—no tea parties, no religions, no afternoon recitations—nothin' but men an' the open air and a chance to be peaceable? For that's what I'm aimin' at."

They shook hands solemnly and Dan departed.

IT WAS dark by the time that Dan once more entered the little parlor of Elmer's house.

"Margie," he said, "I want to see you an' Elmer again. It's important."

The girl looked at him queerly and led him into the bedroom.

"Elmer," said Dan, "I've been doin' a heap uh thinkin' since I come into Los Angeles an' I'm goin' to help you an' Margie. I couldn't do it before, as I wasn't sure if things was what I thought they was. Now, I know." He paused and looked at Margie and then back again at her husband. "Do you remember those three lots yuh sold me two years ago, Elmer?"

The sick man looked uncomfortable.

"They were worth nothing, Dan, and I made you take 'em."

"I only took 'em as there weren't no way uh refusin' 'em without hurtin' your feelin's. I made up my mind that I'd hold 'em on trust an' that one day I'd give 'em back. An' I'm doin' it now. Margie, you collar hold uh them." He placed the bundle of bills in her hands. "That's what I sold 'em for this morning. It's yours, every cent."

The electric light shining on the girl made her face look strangely white and worn.

"How much is it?" she asked in a low voice.

"Ten thousand dollars," he said.

The girl gave a hard laugh.

"Take them back, Dan," she said. "We can't keep them. We're not beggars, Dan."

"Listen, Margie, are yuh goin' to throw away the chance uh gettin' Elmer out uh

this into the country an' startin' fresh? The money's yours. I never thought uh the lots as mine at all. If you don't take the money, Margie, I'll set a match to every last one uh them bills. I mean it."

The girl looked at her husband and her husband looked at Dan with a hopeless kind of expression, as if he wished to speak but had neither the courage nor the strength. And outside in the street, the children laughed and shouted, and some one was playing "La Paloma" on a guitar, and Dan thought of the night when two years ago his heart had been breaking and he had listened to Margie singing that same old tune. And then from the railroad there came the shriek of an engine whistle and the clanging of a bell—and the spell was broken.

"Dan," said the girl, "what makes you do it? Why should you come here and give us this money? Why, Dan?"

It was very hot and close in the little room. Dan felt as if he could scarcely breathe.

"Ain't Elmer my friend? Wouldn't he have done the same for me?"

Elmer turned his eyes away from him and stared at the ceiling.

"Dan," he said, "you call me a friend, but I dunno', Dan, I dunno' that I've ever been much of a friend. I'd have written to you about those lots months ago, but I didn't know where to find you. I've acted mean all through. I thought when—"

And because Margie was listening, and it is not right for a man's wife to hear him belittling himself, Dan stopped him.

"Now, Margie," he said, "you put that money into the bank first thing tomorrer."

And then he told them that he would have to leave them. He had a train to catch—he was going out into the desert again that night.

Margie saw him to the porch and in the misty blue darkness she thanked him once more.

"I know that thanks don't mean much as a rule," she said, "but I don't think any one in the world would have done what you've done for us, Dan. Think of all that money! Dan, surely you must need some of it! Dan, you're not rich, I know."

"It's yours," said Dan cheerfully. "Every cent."

"I can't understand," said the girl. "You've saved us, of course. I guess El-

mer would have gotten worse if we'd had to have lived on here—and now—now, Dan——”

She stopped.

“Well,” said Dan, “I guess I’ll be sayin’ good-by.”

“Good-by,” said the girl. “Good-by, Dan, we’ll write when we’re settled. You must give me your address, Dan, before you go. An’, Dan, you’ll come an’ see us again, won’t you?”

“Me!” said Dan thoughtfully. “I dunno’ if I’ll be comin’ off the desert again, Margie, not for a long time.” He took her small, hot hand in his. “Good-by, old Marge. Yuh gotter get Elmer well again, that’s your job. Get him well, old girl, an’ be happy.”

And then to his horror, Margie leaned her head against the screen door and put her hands to her face and began to weep quietly.

Dan turned and made off. At the corner he remembered that he had not given her the address that she had asked for. He hesitated a moment and looked back at the little house. By the light of a lamp he could see that she had not moved. She still leaned against the screen door with her hands to her face.

Dan turned once more away from the house and walked quickly toward the station, whistling.

JIM was still asleep when Dan reached the loft over Pete Harman’s barn. Dan watched him, lying on his side, his hand under his cheek, his face peaceful and sad and worn; and he noticed the gray in his hair and the lines in his forehead and the kindliness and weakness in his mouth. Poor, silly, old Jim! And when he woke up he was to have the bitterest blow that he had ever had, and yet the best news that he would ever hear.

Jim opened his eyes and saw him.

“Dan,” he said. “Why, Dan!”

He sat up in bed.

Dan shook his head.

“Jim, I’m sorry.”

Jim stared at him with an expression of despair.

“Couldn’t—” He moistened his lips. “Couldn’t he let us have anything?” he asked.

“Not a cent,” he said. “Not a doggon’ cent!”

“You did your best, Dan,” said Jim. “You did your best. I’m sorry for poor Prudence, though. Two years she’s waited, an’ now—” He sat with his hands clasped about his knees. “I guess I’ll get up, Dan.”

For a time neither spoke.

“Jim,” said Dan, “I seen Miss Flood in Los Angeles last night. She’s engaged to marry a man called Horace—Horace Skipworth!”

Jim dropped his shoe on to the floor.

“What’s that?” he said hoarsely. “Prudence goin’ to marry——”

“I went and called at the house, Jim, an’ I told her how you’d worked all them years for her sake, an’ that you’d be rich soon. Would she wait a while longer till you’d a chance of opening up that mine of ourn? She wouldn’t hear of it, Jim, an’ that’s the truth. She’s through with yuh. I’m sorry, Jim. I sure am.”

There was a very long silence, indeed.

“They made her,” said Jim finally. “It was her mother. The best an’ truest girl a man ever had, an’ I’ve lost her. An’ my own fault—my own dam’ fault for lyin’. Dan, I don’t blame you at all. I dunno’ what else you could have done. No, I don’t blame you at all.”

Dan felt no remorse. The morality of his action worried him not in the least. Jim might think what he liked. He did not care. Prudence was not going to marry him and what else mattered?

There was a letter for Jim that same day and a small parcel.

“From Prudence,” said Jim with a sigh.

“She must have written directly I left,” said Dan.

Jim studied the letter without making any remark, then he handed it over to Dan.

“Read it,” he said. “It’s all up, Dan.”

He opened the package slowly; inside the paper was a small white box in which was the ring.

Dan read the letter.

You have behaved abominably. I never wish to see you again. Father says that if he meets either you or your partner he will take steps to show you what he thinks of your conduct. I think it right to tell you that I am going to be married to an old and very dear friend early next month. He has been waiting for years. I have felt lately that my affection for you had never been all that I once imagined it. I would never have given you up, however, had it not been for the lies that you told. My suspicions have proved to be correct. The ring I am return-



ing. In conclusion I would like to say that the discovery of your deceit has meant a joyful deliverance from what would have been an unhappy marriage.

"Huh!" grunted Dan. "Purty straight. Well——"

Jim was staring at the ring which lay in the palm of his hand.

A small girl, the daughter of the station agent, came running past in the direction of Pete Harman's store.

"Bessie," said Jim, "here's a present for you. Show it to mother an' tell her it's yours. Say I gave it you."

He yawned.

"Dan," he said, "that mine of ours—I've been thinkin'—that prospect of ours. It can't fail, Dan, whatever happens, an' it 'ud be just as good a prospect whatever we called it. Dan, let's change its name.

Prudence don't sound right. Let's call it the Joyful Deliverance."

"Meanin'?" said Dan.

"Meanin' that Prudence has hit the nail on the head. I guess, Dan, I've been a fool. We're goin' to take a job in a mine, so that we can save up money enough to go ahead developin' the claim. It's the only way to make good, Dan, an' I don't give a darn. I'm free, anyhow."

"An' you feel there's some hope for yuh, Jim?"

Jim turned and looked at him, and a slow grin spread over his round sunburnt face.

"I feel, Dan, that there'd have been mighty little hope if you'd laid hands on that money. It was luck that that pal of yours couldn't let you have what you went after, wasn't it?"

"Just luck, Jim, just luck," said Dan.

The Leopard

YOU rose to lick your keepers hand—
You crouched and fawned upon his feet;
And then your roving eyes met mine
And held them for an instant fleet.

And there was something smoldered there—
Something that flickered, fumed, and died!
'Twas not my fancy that you knew
The gulf between us was not wide!

Cage-born, they call you tame; and yet
Can I forget your eyes' faint fire
That wafted smoke into my face?
That veiled mad light of wild desire?

Born in captivity, and tamed
From kittenhood until today,
You have not known the jungle's paths,
Nor known the need to stalk your prey.

Cage-born, like me; we only know
The ways and laws laid down by men;
But there is something in our hearts
That pulses past our present ken.

You dropped your head; you turned your eyes—
Eyes strange as death and wild as sin;
Your keeper did not see; but we—
O leopard, you and I were kin!

Lydia M. D. O'Neil



The Meeting-Place

WE ARE now well into the story of *Captain Lingard* and his rescue of the English yacht, with all its peril to his own ambitions. Here is Joseph Conrad, as he is pictured by that vivid American critic, James Huneker:

“HE IS not so tall as he seems. He is very restless. He paces an imaginary quarterdeck and occasionally peers through the little windows of his quaint house as if searching the weather. A caged lion, I thought. His shrug and play of hands are Gallic, or Polish, as you please, and his eyes, shining or clouded, are not of our race, they are Slavic; even the slightly muffled voice is Slavic. One of the most beautiful languages is the Polish—the French of the Slav tongues, as it has been called. When Mr. Conrad speaks English, which he does with rapidity and clearness of enunciation, you can hear, rather overhear, the foreign cadence, the soft slurring of sibilants so characteristic of Polish speech. In a word, he is more foreign-looking than I had expected. He speaks French with fluency and purity, and he often lapses into it during our conversation. Like many another big man, he asked more questions than he answered mine. I underwent the same experience with Walt Whitman at Camden, who was an adept at the gentle art of pumping visitors. In the case of Joseph Conrad his curiosity is prompted by his boundless sympathy for all things human. He is, as you may have surmised from his writings, the most human and lovable of men. He takes an interest in everything except bad art, which moves him to a vibrating indignation, and he is extremely sympathetic when speaking of the work of his contemporaries. What a lesson for the critic with the barbed-wire method would be the remarks of Conrad upon art and artists. Naturally, he has his gods, his half-gods, and his major detestations. The Bible and Flaubert were his companions throughout the many years he voyaged in strange, southern seas. From the Bible he absorbed his racy, idiomatic, and diapasonic English; from the supple, shining prose of the great French writer he learned the art of writing sentences, their comely shape, and vigorous

rhythmic gait, their color, perfume; the passionate music of words and their hateful power. He also studied other masters. He is an admirer of Poe, Hawthorne, Walt Whitman, and Henry James among American writers.”

CONRAD has never yet written a romance more interesting than his own life. The name he was born with, which he bore for almost forty years, was Teodor Josef Konrad Korzeniowski. His father was the son of a Polish squire in Ukraine, where Teodor Josef was born in 1857. In the early 'sixties came the last Polish rebellion, “an event in which my paternal grandfather's two sons and his only daughter were deeply involved, and one which affected the future of all my generation and coloured my earliest impressions,” he says. His father's activities in this uprising led to his banishment by the Russian government. Early in this exile Conrad's mother died and Conrad was sent back to the Ukraine to live with his uncle. His father, too ill to be dangerous any longer, was permitted to join him in 1869. The broken revolutionist took his son to Cracow, the old Polish capital, and died there the next year.

There the boy went to school, and there—still a boy—he formed the resolution that determined all his after life. In a land entirely cut off from the sea, and with no more knowledge of the English than he had got from translations from English books, he made up his mind that he would be a seaman, and an English seaman of the merchant service. The objections of his relatives could not change him, and in 1874 he left home to begin a totally new life.

Marseilles—the scene of “The Arrow of Gold”—was what he calls his “jumping-off ground.” His first days there were spent among the Provençal sailors, on shore and in pilot ships. His first contact with an English vessel came one night when he pulled bow in the dinghy that put on board the pilot of the *James Westoll*. Conrad tells about it himself:

“A FEW strokes brought us alongside, and it was then that, for the first time in my life, I heard myself addressed in English—the speech of my secret choice, of my future, of long friendships, of the deepest affections, of hours of toil and hours of ease, and of solitary hours too, of books read, of thoughts pursued, of remembered emotions—of my very dreams. And if (after being thus fashioned by it in that part of me which cannot decay) I dare not claim it aloud as my own, at any rate the speech of my children. Thus small events grow memorable by the passage of time. As to the quality of the address itself I cannot say it was very striking. Too short for eloquence and devoid of all charm of tone, it consisted precisely of the three words ‘Look out there,’ growled out huskily above my head.”

IT WAS three years later than he first set foot in England. In 1878 he landed in Lowestoft, after what he calls his wild oats sowing period—adventuring in the Mediterranean and voyaging twice to the West Indies. For five months he was a collier on a Lowestoft coaster, learning English from sailors and from the newspapers. Then he joined the *Duke of Sutherland* as an ordinary seaman.

From then until 1894 he followed the sea. The Polish boy became a master mariner in the English Merchant Service—he was both naturalized and made Master in 1884. And by 1894, when he left the sea, the master mariner had become a novelist.

ALFRED A. KNOPF, the publisher, tells of the steps by which Conrad found himself a novelist. In the late 'eighties Conrad took a holiday on land, and was bored by it. Some years before, he had become pretty well acquainted with a man in Borneo who stuck fast in his memory and his interest. To pass a tedious holiday he began writing this man's story—the story of “*Almayer's Folly*.” When the holiday was finished he carried the manuscript about with him, to add to as time and inclination made possible. Two years later he was in the tropical forest of the

Belgian Congo, and when he came out he brought with him very little but the makings of a severe fever and the first seven chapters of his novel. He had his bout with the fever and went to Geneva to convalesce, and there he wrote Chapter VIII. In the course of a trip to Poland and then back to England he wrote Chapter IX. Then for three years the manuscript went to sea with him. In all, the writing of the story covered over five years, and while he was writing it Conrad had only a hazy idea of ever finishing it—none at all of publishing it.

But in 1894, feeling rather wretched from the effects of that Congo fever, he began to think of settling down on land. He did not decide definitely, but by way of an experiment he sent “*Almayer's Folly*” to a publisher. He says that if it had been rejected he would never have written another book. It was accepted and published. In the year following he married, and published “*An Outcast of the Island*,” which definitely fixed him in his new career and his life ashore. Since then he has lived mostly in Kent, where he has raised his family and written his books.

IT IS a full life he has lived. Some admirer of his has taken a map of the world and marked on it the places Conrad has used as settings for his stories. It would be hard to find a writer who, without ever moving from his own study, has covered so much of the earth's surface even in his imagination. Conrad has been to these places himself. For twenty years he went up and down the world. How keenly he saw what came beneath his eyes, and how deeply he understood what he saw, you can find in his work. He is the only living English writer who has been seriously compared with the greatest novelists that have lived—Balzac, Flaubert; Meredith and Henry James and the great Victorians; Tolstoy, Turgenev and the big Russians. But he is different from them all. Time will have to fix just where he belongs in the line, but there is no one of them who so combines romantic setting and incident with the utmost realism in digging for the truth of character and human experience.

What he writes is the result of labor of the hardest kind. Here is a picture of the workman side of him, from Robert Lynd, the British critic:

MR. CONRAD has never been in a hurry, even in telling a story. He has waited on fate rather than run to meet it. 'I was never,' he declares, 'one of those wonderful fellows that would go afloat in a washtub for the sake of the fun.' On the other hand, he seems always to have followed in his own determined fashion sudden intuitions, much as great generals and saints do. Alexander or Napoleon could not have seized the future with a more splendid defiance of reason than did Mr. Conrad when, though he did not yet know six words of English, he came to the resolve, 'If a seaman, then an English seaman.'

'He has always been obedient to a star. He likes to picture himself as a lazy creature, but he is really one of the most dogged day laborers who have ever served literature. In 'Typhoon' and 'Youth' he has written of the triumph of the spirit of man over tempest and fire. We may see in these stories not only the record of Mr. Conrad's twenty years toil as a seaman, but the image of his desperate doggedness as an author. 'Line by line,' he writes, 'rather than page by page, was the growth of *Almayer's Folly*.' He has earned his fame by the sweat of his brow. He speaks of the terrible bodily fatigue that is the lot of the imaginative writer even more than of the manual laborer. 'I have,' he adds, 'carried bags of wheat on my back, bent almost double under a ship's deck-beams, from 6 in the morning till 6 in the evening (with an hour and a half off for meals); so I ought to know.'

Conrad himself tells this about the writing of his longest book, "*Nostromo*:"

TRUTH to say I had not known for weeks whether the sun shone upon the earth and whether the stars still moved on their appointed courses. I was just then giving up some of my allotted span to the last chapters of the novel '*Nostromo*,' a tale of an imaginary (but true) seaboard, which is still mentioned now and again, and indeed kindly, sometimes in connection with the word failure and sometimes in conjunction with the word astonishing. I have no opinion on this discrepancy. It's the sort of difference that can never be settled. All I know is that, for twenty months, neglecting the common joys of life that fall to the lot of the humblest on this earth, I had, like the prophet of old, 'wrestled with the Lord' for my creation, for the headlands of the coast, for the darkness of the Placid Gulf, the light on the snows, the clouds on the sky, and for the breath of life that had to be blown into the shapes of men and women, of Latin and Saxon, of Jew and Gentile. These are, perhaps, strong words, but it is difficult to characterize otherwise the intimacy and the strain of a creative effort in which mind and will and conscience are engaged to the full, hour after hour, day after day, away from the world, and to the exclusion of all that makes life really lovable and gentle—something for which a material parallel can only be found in the everlasting sombre stress of the westward winter passage round Cape Horn."

If Conrad is new to you, you will want

to read, after "*The Rescue*," his first two books—the second one first. "*An Outcast of the Island*" shows Captain Lingard in mid-career, when as "*Rajah Laut*" he was the benevolent despot of the Malaysian islands. In "*Almayer's Folly*" he is an old man. "*Lord Jim*" and "*Victory*" are stories of the East, too. In "*Nostromo*" Conrad goes to South America—it is in this novel that he created a whole country for his setting. "*The Secret Agent*" is a tale of London's underworld of spies and anarchists; "*Under Western Eyes*" of a suspected revolutionist in Russia and Geneva; "*Heart of Darkness*" of the mysterious forests of the Congo; "*The Arrow of Gold*" of France and Spain in the time of the "*Last Pretender*." And beside these there are all his stories of the sea—the most famous of them are "*Youth*," "*The Nigger of the Narcissus*" and "*Typhoon*."

THERE hasn't been long enough between the time the first number of *Romance* came out and the time when this number has to go to the printer to hear much from readers. But writers started months ago, when it first began to be rumored that *Romance* was to be, asking "Just what do you mean by *Romance*?" Now and then some one both asks and answers the question.

Here is W. Townend, speaking from Newick, Sussex. In the November issue Mr. Townend had a story called "*Missing*." In this issue is another—"Partners."

I AM very glad to hear that *Romance* has started on its voyage. May it be long and prosperous. I do not think you could have chosen a better name than *Romance*. It has always seemed to me that the ideal life consists of a blend of romance and adventure, and even when we are apt to consider our daily round dull and monotonous in the extreme, there are if we will only use our eyes and ears adventure and romance waiting for us.

I remember when I was still in khaki an animated discussion taking place on the real meaning of the word "adventure." Every man present had been in battle; not one had any delusions left regarding war and the glory of killing—war represented much weariness and discomfort and hunger and cold and misery and horror unspeakable—yet, I suppose, in each man's mind there was a lurking sympathy with the soldier's life, the comradeship, at least. Anyhow—and excuse my wanderings—it struck me as curious that everyone agreed that you could not have real adventure unless the risk of death

was present! Whether this is a definition that would meet with general approval is doubtful, but there it is. Then the talk drifted to the other extreme—romance, and a man said: "Well, if there can be no adventure without the risk of being killed, you certainly can't have romance without the risk of being married!" And that was that!

But I don't think he was far wrong.

HOWEVER, you can get romance without that risk entering in. I remember, for instance, an old woman in Albert during the battle of the Somme in 1915 who lived in her shattered, little old house in spite of all attempts to persuade her to leave. She used to sell coffee to the troops and at times would talk to us in a mixture of French and very broken English. Her story was that everyone she loved was dead, through the war. Her husband had been killed when working behind the line, her two sons had been killed at Verdun, her daughter's husband had been brought home, a cripple, and had lived in the back room behind the kitchen where we had our coffee. And then the daughter and her baby had been killed by a shell one day in front of the house. She showed us where they had been standing when the shell landed. And so she was left alone with her crippled son-in-law. And then he went, also: died in bed. And the old woman was selling coffee to British soldiers and was waiting for her turn to come. She knew she would be killed, sooner or later. She was as much a fatalist as any of the natives of India, or as any soldier. I always felt I should like to know what happened to her.

When we left to go up to the lines, she was still in her old house. I never heard whether she was still alive in March, 1918, when the Germans' expiring effort brought them surging into the town once more. If she were alive, I wonder whether she remained in Albert or consented to leave. I ought to be able to finish the story, but I cannot.

I take it, though, that this would come under the heading of romance.

BUT romance is everywhere, in the factory, and workshop and tenement and ranch and store: romance is that which to many a man and woman, makes life possible. You can't get away from it. And the rum part of it is that half of humanity doesn't realise it. They go to the pictures—"movies," isn't it?—or the theatre, or they read fiction, and they think how lovely it would be if only the romance they see depicted before them could enter into their lives, while all the time they are surrounded by romance, chunks of it.

It's a queer world, anyhow. One man's meat is another man's poison. What is romance to one may be every day monotony to another. I remember hearing a little man who worked in an office in the City of London talking to the second engineer of a tramp steamer who had just landed after a Western Ocean voyage in mid-winter when food had given out and the boats and rails had all been carried away by the sea and the engineers and firemen had been knee deep most of the time in water, and the bilge pumps

had got choked and the average rate of speed had worked out at something round about a knot and a half an hour for days and days and a deck hand had been drowned and the second mate had broken his leg.

The engineer had talked in a matter-of-fact kind of way of the voyage. He was glad to be alive and on shore. Nothing much else was in his mind but that. And the little clerk who had been listening to him sighed deeply: "Ah! it was terrible, no doubt! But how romantic!" The engineer put down his drink and looked at him. "Romantic!" he said in a puzzled way. "You heard what I said, mister, didn't you?" "Yes," said the little man beaming through his glasses. "I did." "And you call it romantic! Well, I tell you, mister, if you'd been there same as I was in that ruddy engine room with the crank pits full of water and no lights working you'd have called it same as I did . . . bloody hell!" Which may or may not be polite, but it was certainly true.

And yet that second engineer, though he didn't realise it, couldn't have lived the life of the little clerk: the office work would have killed him. And the little clerk pined for the change of scene and the comings and goings of the life of a tramp steamer engineer, though he wasn't capable of doing the work: or wouldn't have been, probably, even had he had the training.

CHANGE of scene, travel, meeting fresh faces . . . it's all romance, nothing but romance. Though, as the engineer would have said, plainly and truthfully, if coarsely, had he been asked: "A helluva lot of change of scene I get on my watch below with about a hundred and ninety-nine things to do in the four hours! An' travel! One port is like another, so far as I'm concerned, wherever you are, New York or San Francisco or Bombay or Capetown, there's always the old blinkin' engines that need tinkerin'."

However, it is the man who has travelled, who has seen other countries and other people, that is the most interesting man to meet. Almost imperceptibly his opinions broaden and he has a keener insight into what really counts in this little world of ours. If it were made a law that all men should live for a whole year in a country other than their own, what a difference it would make in the way the nations of the world regard each other.

At present one is inclined to be despondent. Reading the papers now, studying the jealousies and suspicions that are rampant everywhere, one almost wonders whether all virtue went out of mankind at 11 a. m. on November 11th, 1918, when the killing ceased! Human nature is pretty much the same everywhere. (*Loud yells of protest!* but it's true.) But the weird part of it is that men and women are, in the bulk, infinitely better than the politicians who govern them. Without politicians, or politics, or votes, or parties, wouldn't the world be a much more friendly and sociable place than it is at present?

Nothing is sacred to a politician, not even the truth! Anything that may be used to bring in votes must be used! Hence international jealousies.



BUT all this is drifting away from what I had in mind when I began this letter. And talking of romance, where else can you get the spirit of romance better expressed than in Kipling's lines:

See the shaking funnels roar, with the Peter at the fore,
And the fenders grind and heave,
And the derricks clack and grate, as the tackle hooks the crate,
And the fall-rope whines through the sheave;
It's "Gang-plank up and in," dear lass,
It's "Hawseers warp her through!"
And it's "All clear aft" on the old trail, our own trail, the out trail,
We're backing down on the Long Trail—the trail that is always new.

You know it, don't you? Great stuff! Some-day I suppose I shall find myself on a steamer pushing out of Southampton Water in the fog, with the whistles screaming and the tug boats panting up and down, and the Isle of Wight very green and hilly ahead . . . and then, Cherbourg, maybe . . . Queenstown Harbour . . . if the liners still call . . . and old Spike with its barracks and search lights and . . . the open sea . . . and then later on, the Ambrose Channel light . . . and if one morning when you are seated in your office, up to your eyebrows in work, with a string of callers—authors, artists, adventurers of every description—waiting to see you, if just when you are at your busiest you hear sounds of rioting outside and the door is flung open and a disreputable looking old guy in shabby clothes and a battered hat bursts into the room, yelling, don't be surprised! For the disreputable looking old guy will be—rather ungrammatically—me!

Cheerio!

W. TOWNEND.

A GOOD DEAL of the author's own experience must have crept into "The Miniature," some pages back. "Sandy and the Dream Girl" was in our last issue.

I CAME to America from Australia fourteen years ago, after spending eight years before the mast in the ships of all nations. My native country is Denmark. I was born in a little fishing village on the north coast of Zealand. I have been a sailor, miner, pearl-fisher, gum-digger, life-insurance salesman, window-cleaner, lumber-jack, structural iron-worker, copra-trader and—oh yes, opera-singer.

I failed in none of these occupations. That was my misfortune. Had I made one signal failure, I should have started to write five years earlier. At it was I plugged along every one of these vocations and made a fair living.

Five years ago I took up writing. For two years I starved artistically and with abandon. The third year I began to learn—and sell. Today I am doing what I like to do and getting paid generously into the bargain. I sometimes have to pinch myself to see if I'm not dreaming.

I work six hours a day—from nine to three—

Sunday included. Why should I exclude Sunday when I'm getting enjoyment out of it? Sometimes I loaf for a couple of days getting ideas, but even that is part of the routine.

My favorite recreation is deep-sea fishing, and I hereby challenge all comers with a four-ounce sinker and three bass hooks.

As to the genesis of "Sandy and the Dream Girl." I ran away from an English ship, the "Adderley" in Eureka, Northern California in 1906. With my blankets on my back I tramped inland during the night in this new, strange country of yours—and now mine. I could speak just a few words of English. I had not one penny in my pockets. But when dawn came I was in a valley so beautiful that I forgot all about being hungry and broke.

The girl of course is pure imagination; but in every such valley, I wonder, is there not a girl like her?

CARL CLAUSEN.

YOU remember "Sanctuary" in the November issue? The author of it, Norval Richardson, writes from the American Embassy in Rome. Mr. Richardson is a Mississippian who follows the double career of diplomacy and authorship. He neglects to say anything about the fact that he has written several novels—one of them, "The World Shut Out," only just published.

THERE is very little for me to say about my story "Sanctuary" except that it is one of the results of my life away from America—a matter now of ten years. The field for fiction in European or in foreign life is unlimited today, and particularly so when one treats it in relation with Americans living out of their own country. I find it almost impossible to treat this subject convincingly unless I use at least one American character in the foreign setting. I have tried writing entirely of foreign people but have invariably found it a failure as the connecting link—or the point of view of foreign life characters—must always be seen through the eyes of an American to make it seem real. It is my intention to continue using foreign settings and foreign types as particularly now America's interest and relations are so much nearer foreign lands than ever before.

NORVAL RICHARDSON.

CHARLES BEADLE, who wrote "The Inner Hero" for our November issue, also writes this greeting from Paris:

ALLAH yahdik O Romance! as the Arabs would say. However, that's another side of my life than the milieu of "The Inner Hero." Personally I have a theory that a writer should only use material which he has more or less actually lived. Anyway, I work on that principle. I was born at sea somewhere in mid-Atlantic and my people have been seafaring on both sides for some generations back; two grandfathers were North Sea whalers—which doesn't

in the least prove that I know anything about it you will probably say! Well, the tang of the sea seems good to me and I will defy any storm on any ship on any sea to make me seasick. The most exhilarating spectacle in the Universe to me is a storm at sea—preferably in mid-Atlantic—my native heath! Naturally I met with sailors and firemen of all sorts in my childhood, but the principal material for this story was gained during an abortive attempt to become a marine engineer; about twelve months in the "shops" which persuaded me, incorrectly enough, that there was no romance in greasy pistons, valves and what not and set me wandering in Africa for a decade. I'm afraid that this confession won't convince anyone that I really lived that life; that I have done more than walk through a portion of it as it were. But then the whole point depends on what one can see in that walk, the possession of the "seeing eye" as Conrad has it. After all, baldly speaking, that is all writing is (to me); a mania to tell other folk what I see in my walks abroad. As Arnold Bennett, I think, pointed out once, the primitive novelist is the man who insists upon telling all his pals, often to boredom, about the astonishing dog fight he has seen in the street.

CHARLES BEADLE.

NATURAL history is never an obstacle to the true romancer—here is the testimony of one of them:

TIGER LURE was written through a misapprehension. I found a rumor in Venezuela that the jungles held a kind of puma that ran together in flocks like wolves, called the Hunting Leopards.

That grabbed my fancy right off the Christmas tree, and everywhere I went I had a pack of from twenty to fifty leopards right behind me. They were particularly numerous and glowing when I sat down at a typewriter.

During a newspaper career I had learned the symptoms of celebrities who want to be interviewed. It became quite clear to me that these Hunting Leopards wanted to be written up. So I began to pull some characters together to feed to these notoriety seekers. Unfortunately, I had to investigate the character of the Hunting Leopards themselves through a number of natural histories and encyclopedias. Fancy my astonishment and indignation when I discovered there were no such animals. But the fool leopards didn't know they were not. They kept right on hanging around me and my typewriter seeking publicity in movie star fashion. So I changed 'em all into jaguars, conjured up a scheme to draw a lot of jaguars together and let 'em do their worst.

The worst was "Tiger Lure."

T. S. STRIBLING.

FIRST as last, we may as well face the very real magazine problem arising from the fact that truth is stranger than fiction, so we'll do it now while we're getting acquainted with Jack Hines:

OFTEN, after an editor has asked me on my marrow-bones and swear to the episodes contained in the stories of the Alaska malamutes are true, I am to pity to think that they have never had the opportunity to know the beasts of the Far North.

The reader must appreciate that dogs are companions that beguile the solitude of minable Winters in that faraway land. I spent eight years without leaving its clime. The dog-men breed from wild wolves frequent and that occult something that all things possess is gradually developed and finally comes merged in the affiliation between man and dog. I have no words to picture for the devotion that exists between these outcasts from civilization and the servants that great force has placed within their grasp. The malamutes have shown many a man in Alaska the meaning of life and the way to draw peace and happiness from environment and conditions that to many were like a dungeon cell.

Uncomplaining wolf-dogs, gladly do they starve when you starve, or that you may eat. My reading beasts who can hear you think. Dogs with brains that out-guess human beings. Killing is as natural for a wolf-dog as sleeping. Killing to protect a loved one is easier. Do you remember Old Seegar—did the work of several dogs who had gone mad and had to be killed. Yet Old Seegar brought Louis Lane safe and sound into camp. But it cost the malamute his sight and hearing. My yarns are all founded upon fact. Once in "Juno from Irish Hill" I had to sacrifice the truth for fiction. I submitted the story to *Everybody's*. They bought it but said that the part where Juno took five pups to five different men on Irish Hill to be cared for in her absence would have to be changed. They said their readers wouldn't stand for it. Yet that is exactly what Juno did.

Why, I could tell you things, my dear indulgent lovers of animals, that would—well, perhaps I will later.—Cordially,

JACK HINES.

And a last editorial word:

PERHAPS it isn't credible but it's not always a pleasant task for a magazine to sound its own trumpet. Even to state intentions before they have been fully realized carries with it—but let's get it over with. It is merely this:

A new magazine is not made in a day. We here in the office have no apologies to offer for *Romance* but our minds are so firmly fixed upon the *Romance* of a year from now that we can't quite think of it in only its present stage. We are centered on making it better and better as it goes along. To do this we need the help of your criticism and comment and therefore I think we are justified in stating our intention and definitely asking for your cooperation.

Our main field is fiction, and better and better fiction is our main endeavor. But there is also our poetry and it is our ambition to see the day when *Romance* will stand out among all magazines as the one sure place to find the very best in contemporaneous verse and nothing but the very best.—A. S. H.