

THE THRILL BOOK

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Down the Coast of Shadows

By Perley Poore Sheehan

CHAPTER I.

AFTER HOURS.

SWAN, night watchman in the Wycherly Building, put down his can of coffee, hastily wiped his heavy yellow mustache with the back of his hand, and listened. There it was again—the thin, fine shrill of a muted electric buzzer. There was an excuse for it, if the thing seemed incredible to Swan. He had been night watchman in the Wycherly Building for going on twenty years, and this was the first time that anything like this had happened. To conceive of any burglar, or any other trespasser whatsoever, choosing the Wycherly Building as a place for a raid would require more imagination than Swan possessed.

He was a big, heavy man. Massive would have described him. A Swede. In his cap and uniform he was not so much the Viking as he was the ogre—mammoth and pale, magnified by the light of the lantern at his side. A moment before he had been eating and drinking his midnight lunch with the brutal gusto of a hungry giant. There was the look about him now of the roused ferocity of any primitive creature disturbed at its feeding.

He started to his feet. He pawed out a big revolver and held it ready in his hand.

Now, had there been some one to shoot or grapple with, Swan would have been instantly ready. But there was a mental problem involved—a number of them, in fact. And while Swan's brain was capable enough, in an emergency like this it was apt to be slow.



His mind still reverberated with the original shock. What sort of an intruder could this be?

Midnight. The Wycherly Building. The heart of New York's financial district—far within the dead line cast about this part of town by the regular police. The Wycherly Building itself, a thing of awe even in the daytime, because of the man whose name it bore and the power and the craft he represented.

Another buzzer sounded in a slightly different key. That first buzzer had announced that the intruder had entered by the front door. The second buzzer revealed the intruder passing through the hall.

There had been scarcely any delay, and yet a locked inner door protected the hall from the entry, and the whole building was dark. There was no electricity in the whole vast building except that of the small batteries supplying the alarm signals. The building was old. It was so complicated—intentionally so—that no ordinary visitor could find his way about it, even in the daytime, without a guide. Wycherly

had enemies. He lived in dread of assassination. No madman was ever going to drop in on him unexpectedly with a bomb in his hand. Madmen had tried it, and other cranks, merely to be lost in the maze of passages and dragged away before they could find the man they were looking for.

All this was a part of the mental problem confront-

ing Swan.

Another element of the problem was the fact that none of the five or tenscore employees of Wycherly having access to the building would ever dream of coming here at night—not even in the early night, let alone midnight.

It was as if all of them shared Wycherly's own well-known fear of the dark. Not in twenty years or more, or ever, to Swan's precise knowledge, had any member of the Wycherly office force come back to the building after hours.

Another buzzer rang.

Swan cast a final glance about him with his big blue eyes—lantern, unfinished food, dollar clock ticking noisily and unconcernedly at the minute past midnight. He abandoned all this. His slow mind clicked to another point of progressive thought. Still holding his revolver, he reached down with his left hand and unfastened his heavy brogans. He scraped them off. A moment later this cubby-hole of his was deserted.

Outside the cubby-hole there was a corridor. Along one side of this were a number of windows, heavily grated, a little lower than the sidewalk, but through which the street lamps cast an uncertain light. But even without this pale-blue illumination that Swan knew so well, he would have been perfectly at home. It was his habit to roam the building in the dark—through the labyrinth of passages and anterooms, public and private offices.

There was something in his nature that made him braver in the dark—a matter of heritage or training or both—like certain Great Danes that are mere overgrown puppies by day, tigers at night. Not that Swan was absolutely fearless. There was a chill of fear about him now. And yet this fear was not altogether native, either. There wasn't a burglar in the two hemispheres that he wouldn't have grappled with or shot at or clubbed.

But was this a burglar? And, if so, what sort of a burglar?

Instead of following the corridor in a direction that would have brought him to the stairs leading to the front hall, and thus up and back of whoever it was that had entered there, Swan had trotted off in the other direction, around the acreage of storage vaults in the basement of the Wycherly Building. A turn to the left, then to the right, and he would be at the foot of a secret stairway leading up into the very heart of the Wycherly maze—a stairway that had been designed, in fact, as one of the several avenues of escape at Wycherly's disposition in case of danger or annoyance.

Wycherly had never been photographed, never been interviewed, never been served with a process.

Swan crept up the secret stairs.

The faint—the very faint—hum of the alarm signals that had come to him during his silent but speedy progress had told him that the intruder was coming this way. It was this that was so ghostly about it;

not even he, with all his long training and familiarity with this place, and his pass-keys and his general liking for the dark, could have come faster, could have come with greater directness.

Swan pushed the door at the head of the stairs wide open. He was just in time. He heard a quick,

light footstep, then the lisp of a key.

He himself was in the darkness. To the left were the offices of Grierson, Wycherly's factorum and private secretary—a man almost as greatly feared as was Wycherly himself. To the right were the offices of Wycherly. Separating these two groups of offices was this small private passage, one of the myriad. And Swan's mind, slow but sure, had served him well. The passage was one of the best lit in the building—lit whitely and almost brilliantly by an arc lamp just outside a neighboring window, and through this brilliance the intruder would have to pass.

Swan tilted up the muzzle of his big revolver—ready to fire, ready to spring; a Great Dane in the dark, so far as strength and courage were concerned, but a coiled adder in his power of sudden death.

CHAPTER II.

THE WYCHERLYS.

IS that you, Swan?"
"I—I—good heavens—I——"

"You are a faithful guardian, Swan."

The intruder was Wycherly himself. Yet, even while Swan's slow brain was compelled to a belief of this amazing fact, it was compelled to an acceptance of facts even more amazing.

Nor yet was the acceptance complete. Was it Wycherly? Or was it a ghost? Was that Wycherly's voice—Jacob Wycherly's voice? Or was it the voice of that Joseph Wycherly, Jacob's brother, who had died upward of a year ago? In other words, who was it—Jacob Wycherly alive, or Joseph Wycherly dead?

If any one had asked Swan—say an hour ago—if he believed in ghosts, Swan would have laughed at him. He was that type. All beef and brawn. He believed in what his eyes could see and in what his hands could feel, what he could taste and what he could smell. His was the make-up of a perfect night watchman. His perfection in this respect would have been no less had he been the nocturnal guardian of a cemetery or a morgue.

But it was this very quality that was undermining his confidence now. These were facts that he was up against—facts that stood the test of even his hardand-fast ideas as to what constituted facts.

In the first place, how had Wycherly seen him when he, Swan, had been standing in the pitch darkness here at the head of the stairs?

In the second place, how had Wycherly himself come so speedily through all those dark rooms and corridors that separated this place from the remote outer door?

And, in the third place, how came it that Wycherly spoke so gently—so with a voice that was like the all-but-forgotten voice of this Wycherly's dead brother Joseph?

These three questions—and there may have been others—knocked on Swan's brain with cold knuckles

lightly, swiftly in those first few instants of recognition and broken speech. And there was no telling what old dormant superstitions they may not have waked in Swan; for, after all, Swan sprang from a race that had believed in trolls and things down through the ages.

No, it was Wycherly himself—Jacob Wycherly.

He had stepped out into the comparative glare of the light that came from the street. He stood there looking across at Swan with a slight smile, although Swan was still crouched in the darkness. Swan had not had the sense yet, nor scarcely the time, to put his gun away. Swan was still at grips with those facts that were not facts, was still chilling in response to the spirit raps of those cold knuckles on his brain.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Swan.

"Did I frighten you?"

"No, sir, but-"

"My coming was unexpected."

"Yes, sir."

Not like Jacob Wycherly to talk like this to an employee, and him among the humblest. Joseph Wycherly might have done it. But Joseph Wycherly was dead.

The two brothers had looked alike. The thought was Swan's. Both had been small men, spare of build, slightly stooped, lean of face, high of forehead. But no one would ever have taken one for the other. In his heart the big night watchman swore at himself. Why should he be thinking of Joseph Wycherly at all, when Mr. Joseph was dead? It was the voice. It was the smile. It was the soft speech.

"You're a fool," said Swan to himself.

He felt like a fool as he himself stepped forward into the confusing light from the street lamp in his stocking feet. Shoving back his revolver into the holster against his stomach and making a mess of it, his hands were trembling so. He explained.

"I am glad to find that you are so faithful," said Mr. Wycherly, pausing with his hand on the door of

his office and smiling at him again.

"Thank you, Mr. Wycherly."

It was Mr. Wycherly—Mr. Jacob Wycherly—that square-topped derby with the broad brim that the cartoonists had made familiar throughout the world, pulled down to the ears—ears that were thin and outstanding—and down to the eyebrows—eyebrows that were white and beetled. Ah, no! No one would ever mistake Jacob Wycherly for any one else on earth—or off the earth, like that dead brother of his—after one good look into or from the small eyes under those beetled eyebrows.

Yet, even now Swan Swensen was struggling with his facts.

"That's a formidable-looking weapon, Swan."

"Yes, sir."

"And what would you have done had you found —a stranger here?"

"I guess-I'd make him throw up his hands."

"And if he had declined?"

"I'd maybe have had to shoot."

"But who could wish to come here without authority at this hour? There is nothing to steal—certainly nothing worth a human life."

Swan's mind was struggling with these new complications.

"But you've-I've heard it said--"

"Go on, Swan. You needn't be afraid to express yourself. What was it you were about to say?"

"I beg your pardon, sir; but, you know, they do

say you've some bad enemies."

"Eh? Quite so! Well, perhaps I have earned them."

A statement like that, coming from old Jacob Wycherly, sounded so odd that even Swan's slow mind expressed itself almost instantly in a look of added amazement.

"Shall I—light the gas—in your office for you, sir?" Wycherly apparently hadn't heard him. He stood there, slender and stooped, in the pale radiance, his eyes on the floor.

"Perhaps I have earned them," he repeated. His thought must have taken a correlative turn. "Tell me, Swan, do you happen to remember my brother?"

"You mean-"

"Joseph."

"Him who died?"

Swan was trying to cover his confusion by a bush of words. His confusion grew as he saw that his employer was looking at him with a vague smile.

"What's the matter, Swan? Why are you so con-

fused?"

Swan dodged the later question, answered the previous one. "Yes, sir. Indeed I do, sir. Everybody remembers him."

"Ah! Why?"

"He was so good, so kind. Why, it seems to me like only yesterday that he stood here—where you are standing now—and talked to me in this same gentle way. It was that—I was thinking of him—and when you spoke of him—I kind of felt—you won't think me crazy, sir—I kind of felt somehow as if you was him."

The Swede started a laugh—a rueful laugh. But he checked himself at the other's gravity, fearful that he had given offense. Anyway, Swan hadn't really wanted to laugh. He had come too close to expressing a sober—not to say a solemn—truth; and once more it had been as if there were cold knuckles rapping, softly rapping at the top of his head.

"What if I should tell you," said Wycherly in a voice that was sweet—if sweetness in his connection were imaginable—"that—my brother—still lives?"

"Still lives?"

"Aye! Down that Coast of Shadows—where we all cruise a while—before we go out of sight of land——"

CHAPTER III.

WRITTEN IN THE DARK.

THERE are two explanations of what followed. One explanation is that there was one of those momentary failures of electric current or a fault in the carbon or a flare of wind, causing an unexpected shadow to fall across the place where Wycherly had stood. Another explanation is the equally simple, albeit less material, one that Swan's own perceptions had suffered a momentary lapse. Such lapses are common enough—you are looking at the pages of a book, some thought intervenes, and there for a mo-

ment the book has disappeared; or you are listening to a speaker, your attention flickers, and during that instant the speaker's voice is lost.

In any case, Wycherly disappeared.

Nothing but an echo and a memory did he leave behind him—a memory of that shadowy, haunting presence, and then the echo of those strange words of his:

"Aye! Down that Coast of Shadows—where we all cruise a while—before we go out of sight of land—"

Swan Swensen put up a beefy but tremendous hand, and found his forehead damp. He was shaken by a slight chill, and ascribed this—knowing it to be a lie—to the fact that he had been standing here without his shoes. And all the time some other part of that primitive mind of his was throwing up a vision out of his boyhood in Sweden—the shore of the sea, misty, a coast of shadows as ever was, with the illimitable ocean on one side and the illimitable land on the other.

He had a poetic flash: Wasn't life like that?

Then he pulled himself together and was, Swan Swansen, the night watchman, again. He catfooted forward to the door of the private office and leaned his ear against a panel of it. Some one was moving in there. Wycherly! Who else could it be? And what had unnerved him so?

But as Swansen started to withdraw he was unnerved again. He heard his employer's voice:

"Come in, Swan."

Yet Swan was sure that he himself had made no sound. How had the man in the office known that he was listening there? It was but another detail in keeping with all that had already occurred. It was to be followed by another.

For, as Swan opened the door in response to the summons, he was surprised to find the room in complete darkness. There were no windows in this room. It suited Wycherly better so. It was ventilated by a system of vents instead of windows; for windows were dangerous when a man had enemies. Sometimes cranks threw things through windows. And, this time, as Swan stood there on the threshold of darkness he was frankly shivering.

"I think," came the pleasant voice, "you may light

the gas, after all, Swan."

And was he also hearing the scratch of a pen—the scratch of a pen in this dark room? He was. He saw that he hadn't been mistaken the moment that the match flared up, for there at his desk sat Wycherly writing. He had already written half a dozen lines. He went on writing without looking up as Swan brought the tremulous flame to the hood of the desk lamp. Apparently it made no difference to the writer when the hood went incandescent and the room that had previously been so dark took on white radiance, especially the top of the desk.

Still Wycherly went on writing—went on writing as Swan stood there and stared down at him with pale and bulging eyes. Wycherly still had his hat and his overcoat on. He had been wearing gloves and carrying a cane. These lay on the desk at the side of the blotting pad. Swan recognized the cane.

"My best friend," as Wycherly had once called it, as he used it to smash the camera of some overbold

newspaper man. It was a heavy ebony stick with a gold knob.

Then Wycherly looked swiftly up. Said he:

"This was the cane I did it with. Do you think you can remember?"

Remember what? And what had Mr. Wycherly done with this cane? "You are Mr. Wycherly," the night watchman was saying to himself. "There's the long thin face—the long thin mouth—the long thin nose—and the paleness—and the eyes—ah, those bright little eyes looking out from under the over-hanging white brows—like a hungry ferret in winter." But aloud Swan said:

"Yes, sir!"

"This was the cane I did it with," Wycherly repeated. "But there; I hope that you shall never have occasion to refer to it, Swan. By the way, you are alone here in the building. I wonder if—of course I could summon my secretary, but it would be a pity to disturb him—I wonder if—"

Wycherly had been speaking softly. He was blotting what he had already written. He stopped both speech and action in response to a pounding that ran through the silence of the building as of some one trying to break in a door. Swan also had forgotten the queer and nebulous occupations that had been secretly occupying him just now.

"Cavanaugh," he said. "That must be Cavanaugh." Swan knew the sound. "He's the policeman on the beat—a friend of mine. He's a good man, sir—you won't misjudge him—but sometimes he'd drop in—"

"A policeman! A friend of yours! Just the thing! Go let him in. Ask him to be good enough to step this way a moment. I shan't detain him."

Swan was emboldened.

"He's got a big family, sir. One of his children is sick. It would go hard for him if——"

"I'm glad you mentioned it. Go let him in."

Swan hurried away. There must have been some little commotion when he mentioned to Cavanaugh that Wycherly was on the premises and asking to see him.

"'Twould be like him," whispered Cavanaugh, "to report me—get me broke."

"There's something queer about him," whispered Swan.

It was a conversation they were to renew later. Cavanaugh was of a race that has ever dealt with the invisible side of life as much as it has with the visible and material side—more with the invisible side perhaps, although none would have suspected it on looking at Cavanaugh himself. Not quite so heavy as Swan, but stalwart, clean, and pink. And Cavanaugh, even more than had Swan, might have suspected that there was something "queer" about Jacob Wycherly this night. For, as the big policeman, accompanying Swan, came to the open door of the private office there sat the man so many execrated, and there was something about him to suggest the picture of a saint.

For Wycherly had taken off his hat, lifted his face as if in reverie. His thin white hair was glistening in the dusk like a nimbus. There was a whiteness and a chastity about his face seldom seen on any face except in death or in the almost equal detachment of a purifying sleep.

And Cavanaugh thought that he had known Wycherly—had known him as the police knew him—the "Tenement King"—owner of a thousand drab homes and a thousand drab shops, incubus of the very poor, fabricator of the raw human material for hospitals and prisons. Cavanaugh knew no lack of imagination. Also Cavanaugh had known families whom this same Wycherly had dispossessed.

"No, s'help me, it couldn't have been him!" said

Cavanaugh to himself.

CHAPTER IV.

"IN WITNESS WHEREOF."

GOOD evening, Cavanaugh," said Wycherly, coming out of his apparent reverie. "I am sorry to trouble you."

"No trouble, Mr. Wycherly."

The policeman had raised his gloved hand to a salute. His hand lingered to remove his uniform cap altogether.

"But I wanted a couple of witnesses to my signature," said the millionaire. "I couldn't have been more fortunate; two better men for the purpose I couldn't have found in New York."

Swan and Cavanaugh exchanged a swift glance. Here was confirmation, had any been needed, that what Swan had intimated was true enough. Wycherly was glancing over what he had written. His face was still sober and white as he looked up again.

"It won't be necessary for you to read what I have written here," he said. "Of course you may if you desire. But that may be depressing to you. I'd

rather that you wouldn't."

"That's all right, sir," said Cavanaugh.

"Thank you. And, after all, your signatures have nothing to do with the contents of the paper; they merely attest to the genuineness of my own. Is that clear?"

"Yes, sir."

The paper was the private stationery of Wycherly—the official stationery would be the better term—for Wycherly held private correspondence with no man.

"See. I sign here," said Wycherly, and he signed. "You may well watch me," he said, with a slight laugh. "I dare say that this signature hasn't been written out in full for the past twenty years."

"How do you sign your checks?" asked Cavanaugh,

with frank curiosity.

"Grierson does that. A heartless creature, that secretary of mine—as heartless as a machine, but as honest, or should I say exact? There: Jacob—Corlears—Wycherly! I dare say not a dozen persons in New York even know that my middle name is Corlears."

"They mostly refer to you, sir," said Cavanaugh, "as 'J. C.'"

Wycherly smiled. "Yes, 'Old J. C.'"

Swan scrawled his laborious fist onto the paper at a place indicated by the millionaire. It took every ounce of Swan's mental and physical power to write his name. In the present circumstances it did. It was different with Cavanaugh.

There was an intuitional quality about Cavanaugh. Even if there hadn't been, the years that he had spent on the police force had been educational in a way, had made him something of the specialist. The police force had been a university for him, one that had given him a degree, so to speak—Doctor of Humanity. He couldn't help it. He wished to violate no confidence. The rich man had expressed a wish that he should not read this paper that was thus being attested with such formality. On the other hand, it had been expressly stated that there was no objection to such a perusal.

"Shall I sign in full?" asked Cavanaugh.

And already his eyes had sought the top of the sheet.

"Yes, in full."

"J-a-m-e-s-" wrote Cavanaugh. But his eyes of a humanitarian specialist had already taken in the upper lines of the manuscript. First, the place and the date; then the address:

My Dear Mary

"H-e-n-r-y-" wrote Cavanaugh.

He was leaning close to the paper. He knew that Wycherly could see nothing but the back of his head. He read:

For your own protection . . .

And then Cavanaugh got a thrill all his own, one that went right to the core of his Celtic soul. Wycherly had spoken to him.

"She is my-my niece," said Wycherly. "She is

-Joseph's daughter."

"Excuse me," said Cavanaugh.

"That's all right," said Wycherly gently. "Go on and read all of it, if you care to. I said that you were free to do so."

Cavanaugh finished his signature, and straightened up with an added pinkness. There was a good deal of the schoolboy in the big policeman. But he was none the less very much the man.

"I did start to read it," he confessed.

"You also have a daughter named Mary," Wycherly put in. "Be a friend to—this Mary of mine—should she need one." He had drawn an envelope from a drawer. He wrote the name and address:

Miss Mary Wycherly,

13 Segur Place, N. Y. C.

Wycherly folded the paper he had written and put it into the envelope. He started to seal the envelope. He hesitated. He looked up at Cavanaugh, and Cavanaugh was still wondering why the great millionaire should desire that a humble cop show friendship for a member of the millionaire's own family.

Said Wycherly:

"Cavanaugh, I'm going to ask you to deliver this to Miss Wycherly yourself. Ask her to read it in your presence. She may want to ask you some questions."

"Yes, sir."

Cavanaugh took the envelope, placed it in the top of his cap, prepared to return the cap to his head as soon as the interview should end.

"And, Cavanaugh, listen; let no one else read it-

not even-not even-myself!"

As Wycherly completed this odd declaration he closed his eyes, dropped back in his chair. The night watchman and the policeman saw a slight spasm as of pain or sudden recollection ripple across his face. They heard him whispering like a man holding an altercation and not wishing to be overheard.

Both Swan and Cavanaugh may have been a little frightened. Afterward they were agreed that all they could make out were the words, repeated several times: "Not yet! Not yet!" Then Wycherly was seen to tremble. He opened his eyes. He was staring at them.

"You can trust me, sir," said Cavanaugh, referring to Wycherly's recommendation and wishing to put Wycherly at his ease. Cavanaugh had tact. For all he knew—so he was telling himself—Mr. Wycherly took drugs. For all he knew, the old gentleman had taken a drop too much. And Wycherly was staring so.

Swan spoke up: "Shall I get you a glass of water,

sir?"

Then, had Wycherly set upon them with that ebony cane of his it would have been a surprise like this—would have shocked them, startled them no more.

For suddenly, without premonition, Wycherly's eyes had gone fierce. His mouth opened, and the voice that came out was harsh and bitter:

"What are you—you damned—eh? Eh—-"

He had checked himself. Or he had been checked. Again it was the Wycherly who had been talking to them but a moment ago. He smiled at them a trifle

startled, at a loss.

"Oh, yes!" he exclaimed softly and gently. "I pray that you will not consider it a bribe—either of you—but I feel that you have earned an honorarium—a modest honorarium." He arose from his chair, went over to the private safe, knelt in front of it, began to count the combination: "Three times round to thirty-three—"

CHAPTER V. THE RIDDLE.

DAWN came up over lower Manhattan as sweetly as over a land of meadows and woods. In fact there was a smell of meadows and woods in the air—down here where streets were ancient and dark and the high buildings soared and no flower had blossomed for a hundred years. It was as if this quarter of the town were like every other human thing—not all good, nor yet all bad; old to the shocks of misery and violence, yet maintaining through it all some gift of the primitive innocence, something of the child.

"It reminds me of some of the things that I've heard since I joined the force," said Cavanaugh. "There's many a man serving time up the river now who was a kind father and a faithful husband. Crime was his business. That was all. Maybe old J. C. is like that—making money by ways that are dark,

"There's something in that, too," said Swan. "I know of a number of acts of kindness that he's done—all since his brother's death—as if—as if, you might say, he'd been trying to make up for his brother's

being dead. And yet--"

doing good on the sly."

Off and on, Swan and Cavanaugh had talked the morning hours away—ever since they had watched together, while old Jacob Wycherly ghosted off through the darkness of those lonely and deserted downtown streets. Cavanaugh's beat was a short one. It centered about the Wycherly Building. To and fro went Cavanaugh, like some human pendulum, covering his beat, "ringing up his box." But each time that he

passed this way he had stopped and he and the Swede night watchman had talked about the amazing visit of the night. And each time each had felt that the other was holding something back to balance, so to speak, that which he himself was holding back.

Said Swan to himself: "Now what did the old man mean when he said that he 'did it' with that

heavy gold cane of his?"

Said Cavanaugh to himself: "Wurra! Wurra! What the devil is in that message he's given me to deliver? And why did my eyes take in that one word 'killed?"

"We all have sins on our conscience," said Cavanaugh, responsive to Swan's suggestion that yet there were things in Wycherly's career that needed explanation.

"Why did he break out like that all of a sudden

in a rage?" asked Swan.

"It reminds me," said Cavanaugh, "of an old gentleman I once found strolling about one dark night in the darkest part of Pearl Street. He had just tried a door. 'Come out of that,' I says. 'T'ell with you,' he says, and he tries to cut me with his knife. It wasn't the knife that scares me, though. It's the look in his face. I was younger then. 'So it's a fight you want,' and I hits him with my stick. Down he goes. I kneels beside him. He wasn't so badly hurt. I was, though. Such a face! Such a smile! He comes to himself. He says: 'Officer, where am I? What has happened?' as gentle as a lamb, and him that had the face of a fiend two minutes before."

"Who was it?"

"That's what I'm telling you. The papers had been full of his disappearance for a month. For a month, so to speak, he'd been walking in his sleep. 'Twas my rap that woke him up. He was one of the bestknown preachers of the West."

"There was a fellow in my country named Odin," said Swan, "and they tell a lot of stories about him. He was something like that—going around in disguise and giving presents. And also the other way round. He got a lot of people hung, and finally got hung himself—on a tree."

"What I'm trying to get at," said Cavanaugh, "is who was it or what was it that was using the preacher's body, you might say, to go around in?"

"The preacher himself."

"It wasn't the preacher who tried the door, now, was it—and tried to give me the dirk?"

"I guess maybe not."

"Then who and what? And where was the preacher himself all this time?"

"Of course we're all like that to some extent, Cavanaugh. We all got our good points and our bad points, our good days and our bad days. I've known days when I wanted nothing so much in the world as to take one good wallop at my old woman, and yet she's as good a wife as any, since twenty-three years, come August."

"That's only natural."

"But as I was saying. Here's Mr. Wycherly. Off and on, you know, I hear a lot of gossip about him. Before his brother died it was nip and tuck between them, Jacob doing things to make the people howl, Joseph coming around here and protesting in his quiet

way. They all hated Jacob. They felt just the other way round for Joseph. Queer that there should be two brothers so different."

"Brothers are always different. Go on."

"Well, since Mr. Joseph's death it seems as how, every now and then, Mr. Jacob takes an idea to do something, as you might say, in honor of Mr. Joseph's memory—to do something kind, like he done to-night. And then, the first thing you know, he turns right around and gives the contrary orders. There's been a lot of talk."

"I'm wondering how he knew that I had a little girl named Mary. What about this Mary of his?"

"Joseph's daughter. There's a touch of the queer there, too, in line with what I've been telling you. He's treated her rough."

"How so?"

"Well, there was a nice young fellow working here that the girl was going to marry. Mr. Wycherly—Mr. Jacob Wycherly, that is—accused him of theft, had him jailed, fired him."

"He should have fired him if he was a thief."

"But the boy wasn't a thief. The case never came to trial."

"That proves nothing."

"Maybe not. But you didn't know this lad—a gentleman. And it appears that since then—I'm merely repeating what I hear—old J. C. has been following him up, making him lose other jobs."

"It's a dirty lie. Since the way he treated us to-

night, I'd take my oath on it."

"And stranger yet the way he's treated the girl herself. It appears that he's mad that she won't come to live with him. They do say as how that was an old quarrel J. C. had with his brother Joseph; wanted Joseph and the girl to come and live with him in that big house of his up on Park Avenue. You know how he is—domineering—must have his way—goes crazy—and no disrespect meant when I say it—if anybody goes against him."

"He's a right to. 'Tis his own affair."

"Yes, but they say not a month ago he up and sends the girl a check one day for ten thousand dollars. The next day he finds it out and damn' near kills Grierson—that's his secretary—and he sends for the girl and raises merryell; says that he never sent her the money and that, if he did, it was a mistake. And she turns it back to him, all except forty dollars she had spent. Poor! And she starts to pay that forty dollars back, too—three and four and five dollars at a time—and him letting her do it."

"Maybe he slept in the moonlight."

"What's that?"

"My old father used to say that if you slept with the moon on your face there were evil spirits who would come into your brains."

"Those things don't happen any more. They belong to the times when this fellow Odin I was telling

you about was still alive."

"There are as many ghosts in the world as ever," said Cavanaugh. "Sniff that breeze. The wind is in the south. It smells like flowers, and when the wind smells like that—even here in ugly old New York—they say the Little People are about."

"You'll have me believing in them things myself,"

said Swan.

CHAPTER VI.

"THE UNKNOWN GUEST."

THERE may have been a feeling about Jacob Corlears Wycherly himself that he had slept in the moonlight when he opened his eyes that morning. His bedroom was large and of a style that was almost regal in the matter of furnishing. The walls were hung with blue silk. There was a blue silk canopy over his bed. The bed itself was white lacquer.

But there hovered about Wycherly's brain a fog of dream—like a morning mist held over from the night—a miasma, slightly chilling, smelling of death.

"I've been dreaming again," he muttered, "about

those cursed tenements."

Yes, that was it. Through the brain fog that lingered from his sleep he could see the block after block of swarming tenements over near the East River, far downtown; the block after block of similar tenements, only more sinister yet, covering what had once been a gentleman's estate on the banks of the Hudson. That gentleman had been Wycherly's great-grandfather.

Then a peculiar feature of his reflection came to Wycherly. It was as if he could see himself hastening down one of these squalid streets in the dark—the only person visible. He wondered if he had dreamed this, too. It was like a memory, and yet not altogether

like the memory of a dream.

The effort of thought that he brought to this problem was sufficient to awaken him altogether. He gave a start. He sat up. He stared down at his own hand lying there on the counterpane somewhat as if this hand belonged to somebody else, and there was a reason for this, too, for the hand held a piece of paper that Wycherly couldn't explain. He regarded it with a slight shiver.

It was characteristic of Wycherly that before he satisfied his curiosity as to what the paper contained, if anything, in the way of message or warning, he sat perfectly still, listening, watching. There was no untoward sound. Even the noises of the vast city reached him but faintly, for the bedroom windows gave on a deep garden at the back of the house, and the garden was surrounded by other houses where silence reigned—no children, no noisy servants, no hurdy-gurdies or vociferous hawkers—and the avenue itself, in front of the house, was as sumptuously silent as a country road.

Nothing but wealth—vast wealth—could have commanded a silence as complete as this here in the heart

of the city.

And one would have thought that such wealth would have insured a perfect protection as well. Perhaps it did, against all the known and visible dangers. But there for a moment Wycherly—even Wycherly, who believed in nothing that his eyes could not see—had a feeling that there was some danger that he could not see. It must have been a bit of that mental fogginess handed over by his dream. So he told himself.

But there was the paper in his hand.

He looked at it—did so cautiously and keenly, as some old cashier might have looked at a suspicious bank note. His private stationery. He had recognized it instantly as such. But the kind that he used

exclusively downtown, at his offices in the Wycherly building. How did it get here? Folded thrice, like a letter with a little of the ink showing through, for the paper was cheap. No use to waste good paper on people he detested! No use to buy paper that his clerks would steal for their private correspondence!

Still he did not read what was there.

He put the paper on the small table at the side of his bed. With infinite caution, avoiding all noise, he got out of his bed. He was like one of those mummies occasionally discovered in the land of the Incas—a mere dried relic of what once was man, but this wrapped up in the untarnished glory of ceremonial robes. He was small and shrunken, mummified to a degree, but clad in a sleeping suit of the softest blue silk. He put his feet into quilted Morocco slippers. He drew about him a lavender dressing robe, also of quilted silk.

Again he listened.

He went over to a door that led into his dressing room and considered it. The key was in the lock on his side of the door. The door was not only locked, but bolted.

He studied all the windows. They were fastened with brass, burglar-proof clamps that no power on earth could have operated from the outside short of an acetylene lamp or dynamite. He went into his bathroom. The window there was barred like the window of a prison. There was another door. It was a sliding panel ingeniously concealed in the wall—a sheet of steel covered with silk—and giving access to a private stairway leading to the large library and residential office on the floor below. This door also was bolted on the inside, simply and effectively, by the dropping of a steel molding across the base of it.

For Wycherly was one of those men who feared a number of things and lived perpetually prepared. He hated to be alone. He hated the dark. Yet he himself was the only one he would trust in the dark. He had taken this into consideration when he had planned this house. This bedroom of his was a citadel.

How had it been invaded? Had it been invaded? He answered his questions: "By no one but myself."

And not until he had settled all this would he go back to the table where he had left the paper. From a drawer of the table he took his reading glasses. He adjusted these with care. He bore the still-folded paper to one of the windows. He opened the paper.

"My handwriting!" And he didn't know whether this confirmation of his deductions brought him relief or an added touch of disquiet.

This was what he read:

I am learning how. It is as hard for us of this side as it is for those who have not yet "gone out of sight of land." Last night was the longest. I visited much of the property. I went to the office and got off the letter I have so long been wanting to write to Mary. Dear child! She is like her mother, of those who will never see, of those who will never hear. Jacob—Jacob—though it lose your body and save your—

"There quavered back into his thought a whiff of that foggy memory that was with him when he awoke.

"Have I taken to walking in my sleep?"

He thrust out his lower lip. His narrow breast began to heave. Those who knew Wycherly best were aware that these signs meant battle.

For this wasn't the first time that something like this had happened to Wycherly. There had been, sure enough, those peculiar kinks in his will referred to by Swan Swansen, the night watchman. And, if the truth were known, these had caused consternation to Wycherly himself more than to any man. But he was fighting—fighting mad. He would have been madder yet had he guessed the complications that even now were piling up.

CHAPTER VII.

13 SEGUR PLACE.

CAVANAUGH had found at last the obscure street mentioned on the envelope that old Wycherly had

given him-Segur Place.

"Tis New York and not New York," he meditated. He was in civilian clothes. Perhaps that added a little to his sense of strangeness. And yet that characterization of his, "New York and not New York," would have struck more than one old Gothamite as apt. There were the familiar bridges across the East River, but seen from an unfamiliar angle, no longer friendly, towering strangely huge and somehow terrible far overhead, magnified, moreover, by the smallness and age of all the buildings hereabouts.

"'Tis like an old ladies' home for houses," said

Cavanaugh to himself.

He was right again. These houses also looked shrunken and aged, neglected of youth, neglected of the rich, forgotten of fortune. It was one of those neighborhoods, several acres in extent, as land goes, which, by some freak of the expanding city and new thoroughfares brought into being by the new bridges, had had misfortune stamped upon them—too hideous for any one to live in who had the price to live somewhere else, too inconvenient for any but the most penurious of trades and shops.

And of this desert place in the rich land of Gotham Segur Place was the quintessence. But there was a clean little old woman in front of No. 13, and No. 13 itself looked clean, if poor—again like the woman herself. It was a little old house, not more than a story and a quarter in height, one of a row, each with a little square of earth in front of it and obviously intended originally for a garden. But of the row of such inclosures the one in front of No. 13 was the only one that bore a trace of flowers or of verdure of any kind.

There was a small plot of petunias in front of No. 13. Around this there was quite a lush growth of

unclipped grass.

Cavanaugh noticed all this while he was drawing near. For some reason or other, it brought him a shade of satisfaction. It was a pleasant memory he had brought away with him, albeit a trifle strange, from that interview he had had last night with the millionaire, and he didn't want to have it spoiled by finding the millionaire's niece—"Dear Mary"—in such squalor as he had feared. Then Cavanaugh was speaking to the little old woman of the broom.

"Good morning, mother."

She was old enough for that—old enough to smile.

"Good morning," she said, with a pleasant accent on the first word.

"And will you be so good as to tell me whether Miss

Wycherly is in?"

The old lady had been inclined to go on with her sweeping. Now she stopped and looked at Cavanaugh.

"Miss-who?"

"Miss Mary Wycherly."

"Are you sure—you've the right name?"

Cavanaugh smiled down at her. He wondered why she was trying to evade the question. Lying was about as much in her line as safe-blowing.

"This is No. 13, ain't it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, this was the address that was given me."

"By whom?"

"What's the idea, mother? I'm honest. I have a wife—one of the best—and three children."

"May I ask what your business is?"

"Why, certainly. This hasn't anything to do with business—this errand—but there's my badge." He showed it to her playfully.

The old lady looked at the badge. She raised bland eyes to Cavanaugh, studied him for a moment. There was no anger in her voice as she spoke, just a shade of reproof:

"Don't you think that a nice, clean young man like you, with a good wife and three beautiful children

"Thanks! They're all of that."

"——would be better engaged than in hounding a young woman?"

"Hounding—a—young woman!"

"Do you deny that you're here at the behest of Mr. Wycherly—Mr. J. C. Wycherly?"

"You guessed it right that time. But why the

'hounding?'"

"'Hounding's' the word," said the old lady, with a hint of indignation, and with rather more than a hint of tears. "She's been hounded and hounded."

Cavanaugh was the policeman again, for all his civilian attire. He felt a glint of heat in his breast.

He dropped his banter.

"Hounding, is it? Say, tell me about it. Let me find anybody who's been hounding her, and I'll hound him. Why, I'll eat him alive. So will a lot of the other lads—any of them, for that matter. I'd do it, anyway. So would they. But, say, after the way Mr. Wycherly spoke to me last night, and what he did for me—"

"What did he say? What did he do?"

"Listen! For one thing, he found I was living in one of his own flats, and he gave me an order on his agent to have the place all fixed up."

"Jacob Wycherly did that?"

"Sure! And—I didn't want to take it—but he gave me—keep this to yourself—five hundred dollars, so that I could send the wife and the kids to the country for the summer——"

"So that you'd do-his dirty work!"

"No, no! You've got him wrong. A lot of people have. Why, there's a Swede night watchman, a friend of mine, and when Mr. Wycherly found out that old Swan had been taking care of the building nights for twenty years and never a night off he gave Swap five

hundred, too, and an order on his agent for a little farm up the river that Swan had been saving up to buy—saving about a nickel a year; wanted to raise hogs."

The old lady found her broom insufficient to prop her up. She tottered a step or two and leaned against the paling fence of her garden.

"Do you mean," she said, "J. C. Wycherly?"

"Jacob Corlears Wycherly! He even told us what his middle name was. Some one hounding his niece? Say, lead me to him! Hounding the niece of that good old man—"

"Good old man!"

"Yes, ma'am. Mr. Wycherly!"

"Wycherly!"

"What's the matter?"

"Why, it's him that's been hounding her—has driven her to the verge of suicide! Go back and tell him so, if you love him so much. Tell him God'll punish him. Tell him Amanda Carson told you so. That's me. Tell him I said God'll punish him if his fellow men don't."

She expressed her gentle old wrath with a few dabs of her broom at the already swept sidewalk. She expressed it even more, perhaps, by the tear that trickled unexpectedly from one of her gentle eyes.

"Hold on," said Cavanaugh softly.

"I've held on about long enough," said Amanda Carson.

"But he mentioned you, too; said that he thought I'd find you with—"

"I don't want to hear it."

"But he sent you this." Cavanaugh plunged a hand into his pocket and pulled out a bank book. "Look! It's got your name on it."

"Where—where'd that come from?"

"He just happened to find it when he was looking in the safe."

CHAPTER VIII.

OUT OF THE PAST.

THE bank book that Cavanaugh had brought away with him from that amazing midnight interview of his in the Wycherly Building showed that there had been deposited to the account of Amanda Carson in a certain savings institution a sum upward of two thousand dollars. As the old lady looked at the book and let her mind struggle with the realization of all that such a sum meant to her, Cavanaugh himself was not without a mental struggle.

There were still more things about all this that Cavanaugh couldn't understand—plenty of things.

For example, there were those subsequent interviews he had had with his friend Swan Swansen. That was after Mr. Wycherly had told them good night. And Swan had spoken about the queer way in which Wycherly had entered the building; how Wycherly had seen him in the dark, and, while still in the dark, had written the first part of that communication he had given Cavanaugh to deliver.

Again, there was that disquieting reference Mr. Wycherly had made to his dead brother, Joseph, saying that perhaps Joseph wasn't dead, that living and dead alike cruised along some "Coast of Shadows," before passing "out of sight of land."

And Swan, who had known both Wycherlys, had told how he himself had believed there for a moment

that this Wycherly was not that feared and hated brother who survived, but the gentler brother who was gone.

Ghost stuff! That appealed to some essential of

Cavanaugh's nature.

But here was something now before his eyes which was different—related to all that had already happened, and yet which was different. It required no detective training to see that Amanda Carson was poor, extremely poor. There was every indication that she had been in touch with Wycherly, and him with her. So, how could Wycherly have forgotten that he had this bank book representing the old lady's fortune? It was her fortune. He could see that. About Amanda Carson there was that unmistakable look of one who has recovered that which was lost.

"Didn't you know that you had this coming to

you?" Cavanaugh asked, sympathetic.

"I hoped. I believed. I had about given up hope and belief." She was still a little dazed. "I can't believe it yet," she added. "I've been keeping boarders here—poor girls. It's been hand to mouth. They couldn't pay me much. I've tried to give them the best."

She was groping about blindly in her mind, saying things that didn't matter very much, while her thought was occupied with the present revelation.

"But why didn't you ask Mr. Wycherly about this

bank book?"

"I did."

"And what did he say?"

"He said that there was no such account."

"He must have misunderstood."
"No, he understood too well."

"But you must have known what bank it was. You could have asked there."

"I didn't know. This money was deposited for me by the other Mr. Wycherly—Joseph—the one who died. And when—Mr. Jacob told me that there was no such account I was afraid—God forgive me afraid to investigate for fear—"

"Of finding out that Joseph had used the money for himself. Look here, Mrs. Carson——"

"Miss Carson."

"Look here, Miss Carson. I've got a little time on my hands. There's something about all this that I'd like to have cleared up."

"But you come from—him!"

"I do. But the 'him' I come from can't be the 'him' you mean." He stopped a little short as there glimmered into his mind a recollection of that uncanny moment, back there in the private office, when the millionaire seemed to be having some sort of a struggle within himself. He recalled that "Not yet! Not yet!"

"But this," said Miss Carson, "comes from that

other."

"You knew the other?"

"Knew him and loved him. None knew him who didn't love him." She searched Cavanaugh's face. "Why were you looking for his daughter?"

"The neighbors are beginning to stare."

"Come in."

There was a tiny parlor, scrupulously clean—not only clean, but with an unexpected air of refinement about it. To this refinement even the prevalent poverty had been forced to contribute. One table, two

chairs, a narrow divan—all white and attractive, albeit painted by an amateur hand; white cotton curtains at the windows, a few colored prints framed in dark cardboard against the whitened walls.

"Her room, when she's here," said Miss Carson.

"And how long has it been since you've seen her?" asked Cavanaugh, feeling that, after a fashion, he had already seen Miss Wycherly herself from having seen her room.

"A week."

"Why did she leave?"

"She thought—that she'd bring down her uncle's wrath on me by staying here."

"Her uncle's wrath!"

"Is it possible that you still believe him to be a good man?"

"I'm telling you the truth," said Cavanaugh, "when I tell you that I don't know any more what I believe. If you can straighten me out, I wish you would. I admit that I had heard plenty about Mr. Wycherly that was not to his credit. I've been a tenant of his for the past five years; I've seen the families dispossessed; I've even been stationed in front of some of the houses that belonged to him when we were trying to clean up the town; and I know—or thought I knew—how he works the courts and the inspectors and such with dirty money. But, I tell you, when I saw him last night—saw the kind look in his eyes, heard his soft voice, found him so generous—"

"One would think," said Miss Carson, "that you

were talking of his brother."

"The brother who died?"

"—in my arms."

"Tell me about it."

"Two years ago this autumn. I was his cousin by marriage—a cousin of Mary's mother—and had kept house for them ever since Mary's mother died."

"Were they rich then?"

"Rich enough. Joseph was a student and a writer. I suppose that most people would have called him poor. Jacob considered him poor. But Joseph was the happier of the two. He had friends among the great in half a dozen countries. He had written a book."

"The wife likes to read novels."

"This was no novel. It was a learned book. Joseph had devoted the better part of his life to the making of it. I think it was about this that Jacob quarreled with him. Jacob called it all nonsense. He threw the manuscript into the fire, right in front of Joseph's eyes. And then, when Joseph tried to rescue it, he fell and struck his head——"

"There, there," said Cavanaugh; "be the brave lady.

And where did all this happen?"

"It was in that big house Jacob had built for himself up on Park Avenue—and where he still lives alone—alone! And he insisted that Joseph and Mary come to live with him there. He knew people hated him and loved his brother. But Joseph didn't want to move. We were living in an old house on Tompkins Square, where Joseph was making all his experiments."

"What sort of experiments?"

"Occult."

"I don't get you."

"Psychic phenomena—spirit manifestations."

Cavanaugh had the feeling that a hand of light, cool fingers ran up and down his spinal cord.

"So that was it! And he wrote a book about

them?"

"Yes; he called it: 'Down the Coast of Shadows.'"

CHAPTER IX.

THE HOUSE ON PARK AVENUE.

ONLY one of finer vision, though, would have thought of Jacob Wycherly as now being "alone! alone!" in that big house of his up on Park Avenue to which little old Miss Carson had referred. To the ordinary observer it would have appeared that he was anything but alone. There was a flanky who stood watchful just inside the heavy doors of bronze and glass that gave entrance from the street. There were other servants scattered elsewhere through the shadowy places of the big halls and chambers, in the wide kitchens and in the semidetached garage.

It pleased old Wycherly, if anything could please him, to give the lie to that persistent legend that he was one to sell his soul for money. Hence the style, although he hated it—hated it as he hated charities, hated almost everything. But it was the greatest hate of all because touched with fear; that was the real reason why he kept so many people about him. It had been the mastering hate of his life. It was precisely that hatred—and fear—of being "alone! alone!"

It was this that had been his motive—unconscious, perhaps—in becoming the landlord of swarming tenements. Had he lived in the old times he would have owned slaves—thousands of slaves—and thus otherwise have thrust the fibrous rootlets of his being into thousands of lives, feeding on that which he killed, like some prodigious upas tree.

He was alone now. He hated to be alone. He thrust his thumb down on one of a number of electric calls on the top of his desk.

He fidgeted about with his hands.

There was a large marble fireplace, and in this a couple of logs were crackling, although outside the air was that of early summer, mild and clear. But there was hardly a day when a fire wasn't burning here, and when a fire wasn't necessary one would have said, because of the chill or chills, that glanced about the place.

Wycherly jabbed the call again.

"Where is that cursed monkey?" he exclaimed.

Thus far there had been only a momentary delay, but even such a delay was unusual, gave an added note of savagery to the already atrocious mood that Wycherly was in.

Suddenly he gave a quick glance over his shoulder in the direction of the fireplace, as if he had suspected the presence of something there. He clamped down his hand on the battery of call buttons, so that he must have been ringing half a dozen of them at once.

"Grierson!" And his voice was a mere squeak.

"Here, sir," and Grierson hurried toward him from an inner door.

"Why don't you come when you're called?"

'I beg pardon-"

"You're quick enough to grab your salary." It gave Wycherly a twinge of pleasure to see Grierson slinch.

Grierson was easy to hurt. That was one of the reasons why Wycherly kept him—besides his manifold capabilities and all-round cleverness. Once Grierson had been a violinist, and Wycherly had converted him to this! "Speak up! What kept you?"

Grierson was a smallish man, blond, with curly hair. It was a certain feminine quality about him that made Grierson himself terrible when he passed on to others the tortures Wycherly inflicted on him.

"Nothing, sir. I was just——"

"You're lying to me!"

"The hall man, the housekeeper, and the butler had all come in a hurry in response to that multiple call, and were at the door. They grinned nervously, not without a feeling of relief, when they saw that it was Mr. Grierson who was to be the victim of the old man's humor. They all hated each other.

"No, sir, I---"

"Don't contradict me!" Wycherly raised his voice so that the others would be sure to hear. "I tell you that you're lying to me. And I'm getting sick of your lies. You're losing your mind. You can't even tell an intelligent lie any more."

"I thought-"

"You don't know how to think. If you could think I'd made you butler long ago and have had Jonas, over there, to take your place."

The butler, seeing that it was up to him, let out

a discreet guffaw.

Wycherly addressed himself to the butler: "How about it, Jonas? Grierson's a liar. Isn't he?"

"My word, sir!"

"Well, he is, isn't he?"

"It must be as you say, sir."

"Tell him so."
"Really now--"

"Say it!"

"Say wot, sir?"

"Say 'Grierson, you're a liar.'"

"Er—now we all of us 'as our misconceptions—"
"Out with it! You said Grierson was a liar when he said that I left this house last night. Didn't you?"

"By your leave, sir, I said as 'ow it was likely—"
"—he was lying again. And a man who would lie would steal. Don't look so agitated, Grierson. It spoils your appearance. You're safe. They've arrested the night watchman, and I guess they'll be satisfied with that for a while. But I say that when you come to me with a cock-and-bull story about my having been out in the middle of the night, and that when, at the same moment, they're finding my private safe open, and you and I the only ones who know the combination—

What are you getting so pale about, Grierson?"

"Of course, if you suspect me-"

"You're a fool, Grierson. Here, Jonas! Get Mr. Grierson a glass of port. Mr. Grierson seems to be taking this matter to heart."

Grierson looked like a man with the neuralgia.

"I was quite sure that I saw you go out," he said.
"I had come into the library from my room. I saw you—or thought I saw you—standing here at the side of the fireplace—that I heard you talking to yourself, and that you then turned, without noticing me, and walked over there past where Mrs. Shattuck is standing and out into the hall."

Mrs. Shattuck was the housekeeper—a thin, cold, middle-aged woman dressed in black, emotionless, or almost so, keeping her present situation because she liked the atmosphere of this house. She smiled a hard smile. She was alone there for the moment, the hall man having returned to his post at the door, the butler having gone to seek the wine.

But Grierson seemed to have found courage—and reconfirmation of what he believed to be true—in the sound of his own voice and in his rehearsal of

what had happened.

He faced his employer with a movement of appeal. Curious as it may seem, Grierson felt a measure of affection for this man.

"Let me tell the rest of it!" "Go on! Who's stopping you?"

"There was something analogous happened a moment ago, when you rang for me. I thought some one else must have rung. I thought that you-I thought that I had seen you-"

Grierson paused, turned, looked sharply in the direction of Mrs. Shattuck. And right then-or maybe it was an instant afterward—the unemotional Mrs. Shattuck gave a shuddering jerk, let out the rag of a frightened screech.

TO BE CONCLUDED.

THE THING THAT WEPT.

By Charles Fulton Oursier.

WHEN Joe Blunt was apprenticed to his Uncle Jacob, who was an undertaken seen a corpse.

This is not so surprising, when it is considered that Joe was born on a farm and had never been more than ten miles away from it since he was born. There were many other things Joe had never seen besides a corpse. He had never been to a movingpicture show, did not know how to talk through a telephone, and did not believe in air planes. His folks were old-fashioned and did not hold to giving a boy too much rope. So on the farm he remained until he was sixteen years old and too lazy for plowing.

Then his father bundled him on the train, and Jacob Blunt, the uncle and undertaker, met him when he got off at the city station. On his way to the embalming establishment, which was far up in the residential district, Uncle Jacob pointed out a thousand

wonders to the pop-eyed Joe.

They arrived at Uncle Jacob's funeral parlors about noon. In the dining room, which immediately adjoined the chapel, they ate a cold meal, and then Uncle

Jacob got down to business.

He explained carefully to Joe the nature and scope of the undertaking profession. A point on which he laid particular emphasis was that it was a sure business; everybody had to die at some time or other, and the mortician had a first mortgage on the insurance. He winked an eye as he hinted that the profits were high. He sketched, with some detail, the process of embalming, so that Joe would have an idea of the kind of work he was to do. Then he took Joe into a darkened room at the rear and showed him a body.

When Joe recovered consciousness Uncle Jacob remonstrated with him gravely on his weakness, but

seemed reassured when Joe confessed it was his first sight of a dead man. The uncle then continued with his elucidation of first principles. He took Joe into the front office, where he had an elegant coffin near the window, flanked with palms.

He showed Joe the telephone, and carefully impressed on him what he was to do when the telephone rang in Uncle Jacob's absence. He was to take the name of the person calling and the address, and write it on a pad. Through the remainder of the afternoon Joe answered telephone calls, and finally Uncle Jacob said he would do. Then they had supper.

Immediately after the meal Uncle Jacob announced that he was going out and would leave Joe in charge for an hour or so. Joe requested that he lock the door on the dead man before he left, but Uncle Jacob only gave him a reproachful scowl, and, with parting

cautions and instructions, went out.

Joe drew his chair as near the front door as he could. In all undertaking parlors the light is burned low as a business principle. Joe wished it were brighter. After a while the ticking of the desk clock grew monotonous. The cracking of the furniture made Joe jump and start. He fidgeted in his chair; he whistled and stopped in the middle of the tune; he got up and walked around the office. Every second or so he glanced at the half-open door in the rear. Finally, with a burst of bravado, he walked to the door and looked in. He got a second glimpse of the body in there, and with a howl sprang back to his post at the door.

Just then the telephone rang. Still shaking, Joe forced himself to answer it, and blundered through the conversation desperately. When it was over he set the receiver on the desk with a gasp. Apprehensively he gazed over his shoulder. He was convinced the dead man there might come out after him at

any moment. The silence was startling.

A low sound reached Joe's ear. It was soft, like the purring of a cat. He glanced rapidly around, trying to find from where it came. With a bound. he dropped to the floor, looking under the chairs, under the desk, under the coffin, for the cat. The soft, purring sound continued. But he saw no cat. Then, with a sinking of the heart, he remembered a casual remark of Uncle Jacob—that undertakers never kept cats; they wouldn't do around dead people.

Dizzily Joe rose to his feet. The purring noise was growing louder. It rose to a high-pitched whine, and it twisted and worried itself as if it were some lost thing in pain. Joe could stand it no longer. He scrambled awkwardly to the door, flung it open, and rushed out into the street. He almost fell into the

arms of a policeman. "What's a matter?" demanded the offended guard-

ian of the peace.

"Somethin'—in there!" cried Joe. "It's ha'nted!" "Get out of here!" snapped the policeman. "Don't try to kid me!"

He brushed past the panting Joe and strode in the door. For a moment he paused, then walked up to the desk. He rearranged something, and then reappeared, glowering, in the doorway.

"Say, you!" he growled. "Whadidja leave yer receiver off the hook fer? That was central jazzing yer

buzzar-ya poor fish!"

Profit by Loss Clarence L. Andrews CHAPTER I. A BELLOW of steam-throated warning, accompanied by the roar of water churned

the roar of water churned in revolving paddle blades, announced the Newark's departure for Oakland. As the big ferryboat began to back out from her slip a stalwart young man ran at top speed down the pier gangway; eluding two guards who stepped out to intercept him, he leaped the gradually widening space. A woman on the upper deck caught her breath with a choked gasp; some one shouted in hoarse alarm; others stood tense as the runner's heels barely cleared the apron edge; but all relaxed with audible sighs of relief when the impetus of the

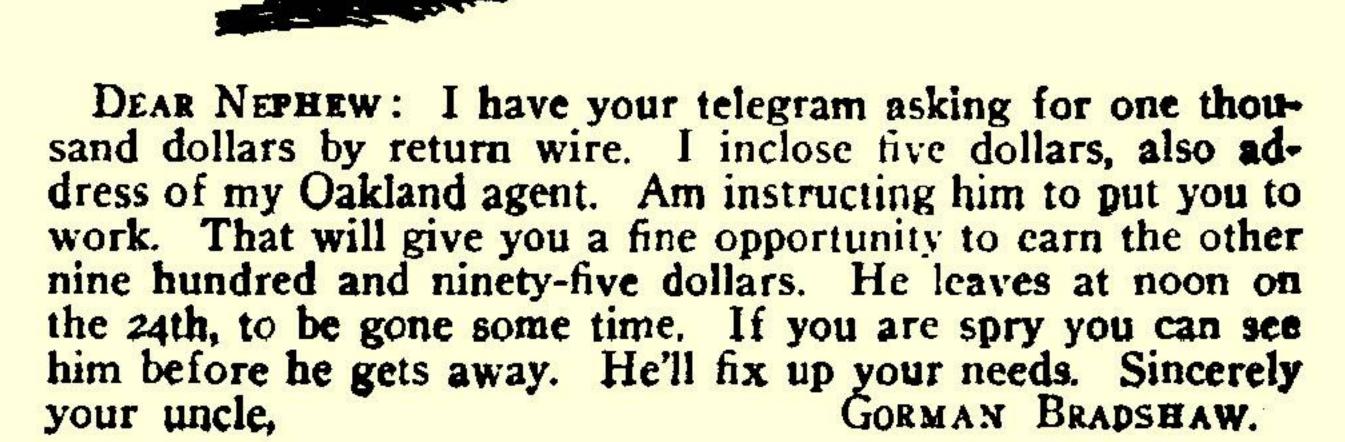
reckless fellow's leap sent him, half sliding, half

rolling, past the barrier rope.

In falling he nearly upset a plethoric-cheeked gentleman who was standing by the rope. Immediately following this collision, letters and personal effects littered the deck. Several items went skimming overboard; at the same time a five-dollar bill, caught up from the scattered papers by the stiff breeze which was blowing, hovered a taunting instant in mid-air, settled slightly toward its loser, then fluttered into the swirling, foam-flecked waters astern.

The young man, scrambling to his knees, lunged at the vanishing objects already far beyond his reach. Growling an imprecation over their disappearance, he grimly picked up the remainder of his breeze-tossed possessions. Then, aware that he was the cynosure of many curious eyes, he hurried into the maze of vans and trucks which lined the deck runways.

When the young man's back was no longer visible, the plethoric gentleman stooped and secured an envelope upon which he had slyly placed his foot after the runner's fall. This envelope, bearing a Seattle postmark, was addressed to Mr. Harold K. Jeffry, Palace Hotel, San Francisco. After reading the superscription, the stranger darted a keen, sweeping glance at the few passengers near him. Had he chosen to look up he might have detected an Oriental face glaring at him from the upper deck; but, satisfied with his scrutiny of the after deck, he withdrew the envelope's contents—a single-sheet letterhead—and read its typewritten lines, wholly unaware of the blazing eyes above him.



An ironical smile, faint yet perceptible, flitted over the reader's sleek face as he returned the letter to its cover. Puffing out his beardless lips, he studied the postmarks. A moment later he placed the envelope in his pocket and made his way leisurely forward.

The younger man had halted behind a screen of trucks long enough to dust his clothes, then had proceeded to the open deck forward. There he sought an isolated spot by the starboard rail over which he leaned to stare in glum silence at a convoy of hungry gulls. As an outward vent for inward turmoils he kicked the deck surface with the toe of his shoe, alternating by thumping the rail with his fists. A voice sounded at his elbow, but under the spell of his bitterness he failed to hear it.

"Pardon me," repeated the voice, "but is this Mr. Harold K. Jeffry?"

With a frown of irritation the younger man turned to face the speaker. Noting the man's respectable and somewhat impressive appearance, his frown smoothed to a look of inquiry.

"Yes-that's my name," he replied.

"You dropped this letter when you fell; I regret

my inability to recover your money at the same time," commiserated the stranger.

Jeffry accepted the proffered envelope with a muttered word of thanks—not that he meant to be ungracious, but the letter itself was the thorn that rankled. A pause followed during which the stranger appeared to be taking critical stock of Harold.

"Pardon the inference," ventured the stranger. "But does your loss leave you—ah—embarrassed?"

Jeffry scowled. His eyes steadied in a glance of suspicion; his questioner, however, was apparently gazing into space.

"Embarrassed is correct!" he grumbled. "I'm suffering a severe attack of the beastly malady—that ungrateful piece of currency was so lonesome it rattled

in my pocket!"

The stranger clucked his lips in sympathy and

tapped his gloved knuckles together.

"Are you employed in any way?" he asked. "Or may I assume that you are looking for a lucrative position?"

Jeffry made no immediate answer; he seemed to be revolving some weighty problem in his mind.

"Well," he replied at last, jamming his hands to the full depths of his trousers' pockets, "I'm willing to strike up a speaking acquaintance with a comfortable

salary, if it should invite me out."

"That's good news! As matters stand I can put you in touch with an undertaking which undoubtedly will be to your liking, both as to its nature and salary. Would you object to traveling?"

"First class, no; otherwise, yes."

Smiling at such bluntness, the stranger inquired tentatively: "And how about danger, personal danger, such as risking your life—would that make any difference?"

There was a veiled challenge in the words that had a desired effect. Although holding a preference for adventures sans roughness, Jeffry had great muscular strength and never side-stepped an opportunity to exhibit his prowess. His reply reflected his pique.

"Why not trot out your danger program and let me look it over? If I'm not expected to kill a villain in every alley I come to, and the pay is good, I'm your man."

The stranger's face beamed with admiration, yet Jeffry was puzzled. There was a glint in the older man's murky eyes that was not in harmony with his otherwise placid features.

"That's the sort of spirit I admire," purred the stranger. "I believe you and I will get on nicely. My name is"—he fingered in his waistcoat pockets, hesitated, then dropped his hand—"I've no cards with me; no matter, though, my name is Rippe, formerly of New York, though during late years I've divided my time between Buenos Aires and Calcutta. But that's a story that will keep until later. In the meantime would you object to telling me something of your own circumstances and difficulties?"

In a whimsical manner, slightly tinged with sheepishness, Jeffry told of having spent his first year out of Tech disbursing a liberal inheritance from his father's estate. Then, after his last dollar had rolled into the coffers of popular cabarets, and numerous debts of questionable size and nature had accumulated, he wired to his mother's brother, requesting a loan.

But old Gorman Bradshaw, whose extensive lumber interests covered a generous portion of the Northwest, was a veteran dollar saver of the canniest sort, as proved by the letter which had resulted in the meeting between Jeffry and Rippe.

As a companion disaster to the letter the hotel management had suggested that Jeffry give up his expensive suite of rooms before his bill grew to greater proportions. They had also volunteered to take exceptional care of his luggage until he should find himself better able to cope with the situation.

Desperate, he had sought out some of the friends who had assisted him in scattering the fruits of his father's toil. But as the warmth of summer vanishes after the first blight of frost, so did the sun-dodging leeches wither away before the news of Jeffry's reverses. His last call had nearly resulted in a violent quarrel, and had detained him so long he came near missing his last opportunity of reaching his father's agent before the latter left his offices.

The waiting-room exits had just closed when he reached the ferry building, and he would have given up the trip had he not seen an attendant passing through the employees' special exit. This chance he had seized without an instant of hesitation, and had dashed for the departing boat only to meet with fresh misfortune.

"Well, now, Mr. Jeffry, you should consider that a most profitable misfortune," reproved Rippe smoothly when Jeffry concluded his narrative, "because what I am about to offer you will repay your loss a thousandfold; yes, even more!"

Jeffry favored the other with a skeptical smile.

"What's your bonanza like, may I ask?"

Rippe, without appearing to do so, carefully surveyed the surrounding deck. No unbidden ears appeared to be closer than ten paces; yet, as before, Rippe's survey did not discover the dark Oriental face only a few feet above his head. Satisfied with the semiprivacy of his position, he began to speak in a tone intended solely for Jeffry's ear:

"What I desire is a trustworthy messenger to perform a secret errand for me. It will necessitate a journey to New York City, and the trip will be very apt to entail unforseen dangers which the messenger will have to ward off unaided. If you are willing to undertake such a trip, I'll explain further."

"Go ahead; I'm hired," breathed Jeffry.

"Good!" beamed Rippe, though again the smile seemed out of harmony with the glitter in his eyes; Jeffry wondered why.

"I had better mention first," continued Rippe, "that I am playing a lone hand against a pretty strong force of enemies. These enemies are exerting every effort to rob me of a sacred treasure which I am bound upon honor to deliver to its rightful owner, who sails for India from New York within five days. Known as I am to those who are constantly shadowing me, it would be folly for me to attempt to carry the treasure myself; neither dare I trust it to mail or express. Yet if I fail to deliver it in time, I shall be in greater peril than ever. My one hope now is to engage a strong, fearless messenger like yourself, about whom

my enemies know nothing; then I'm sure they can be outwitted with little or no trouble.

"Would you be able to start this afternoon?"

"This minute," succinctly.

"But your luggage; pardon me, I had forgotten." Eyes closed, Rippe pondered in silence.

"How is your memory?" he suddenly inquired.

"I distinctly remember each one of my creditors, also the amounts which I owe them."

"I ask because you will please remember the instructions which I am about to give you; on no account are you to write them down in any form," explained Rippe without heeding Harold's flippancy.

He glanced around once more; then continued: "As soon as you arrive in Oakland go to the Magnate Tailoring Company and introduce yourself; for secrecy use the name Richard Milne throughout the entire trip. The clerks will have instructions to furnish you with your actual needs in the way of a traveling wardrobe. After your measurements are taken you will be free to do as you choose until three o'clock, but do not fail to return to the tailor's at that hour.

"Whatever is then given to you, either in luggage or instructions, exhibit no curiosity; ask no questions. You are to dress for the journey in one of the establishment dressing rooms. Money for traveling expenses will be handed to you before you leave. Your route will be provided for, all reservations made, and

your tickets will be with the money.

"At the same time the secret packet will be intrusted to you, and I must caution you to guard it as you would your own life. Trust no one on your journey. If any person attempts to rob or arrest or hinder you in any manner or on any pretext, defend yourself as best you can, but create no scene; make absolutely no uproar. The vital thing is to get through with all possible speed; to be delayed on your trip will mean an irreparable loss to both of us

mean an irreparable loss to both of us.

"Look well to the luggage and clothing which is furnished you; they are to be one of the many ways in which you will be known to the owner of the treasure. Upon your arrival in New York pick out an obscure telephone booth and call Gramercy 46975; if a womans' voice answers you with the words 'It is Said,' you must reply 'Kahn it be.' You will then be directed to the rooms where you will meet the one who speaks to you. Hand the packet to the one who greets you with a kiss; obey explicitly any orders which she may give you, and make no effort to investigate what may seem to you to be a mystery.

"When you have faithfully carried out your part you will be given five thousand dollars; then you are to go and forget. Have I made everything clear?"

Jeffry nodded, but with a quizzical smile he asked:
"This—er—kissing stunt——"

Rippe held up a cautioning hand. The boat had entered the Mole slip, and the forward deck was filling with passengers. Jeffry swallowed his inquisitiveness in a hasty gulp.

"Remember, I'm placing exceptional confidence in you, a stranger; don't attempt to betray it," warned Rippe, adding: "I might seek a revenge that you would not soon forget."

Two slender, dark-featured men sidled out of the crowd and stood with their backs almost touching Rippe and Jeffry. Rippe opened his lips to say something more; catching sight of the strangers, he scowled in surprised anger. Without a word he bowed and hurried aft, leaving Jeffry to muse over his windfall and its probable requirements.

When the boat docked Jeffry lingered, hoping to catch another glimpse of his new-found friend; the two dark men lingered also, though their actions meant nothing to Jeffry as he strolled up the gang-

plank in front of them.

On leaving the boat train he went at once to the tailoring firm as directed, but with half an idea that he was the victim of some joke. He left with all doubts dispelled, yet more mystified than ever. His treatment at the hands of the obsequious clerk who received him as Richard Milne was flawless; his every need seemed to have been fully anticipated.

When at last he emerged upon the street two men brushed against him on their way in. A transitory gleam of memory recalled to his mind the two dark-featured strangers on the ferryboat; then his more recent experiences drove the incident from his thoughts. Already he had forgotten his uncle and the letter.

After strolling several blocks, lost in meditation, he paused to observe himself in a mirrored display window. A critical examination of his clothes revealed no sign of his recent tumble, and his chin and cheeks were still smooth from his morning shave. Lifting his hat to inspect his hair, he discovered another face reflected beneath and behind his upraised arm—a peach-bloomy, oval face out of which two violet eyes sparkled with momentary amusement.

He whirled eagerly about, but as quick as he was the violet eyes had vanished amid the surging throng of shoppers. In their stead was a thin, swarthy face set with ferretlike eyes which bored Jeffry with their gaze for one fleet instant; then they, too, disappeared.

"Steady, old boy!" muttered Jeffry to himself as he stared in each direction. "Is this metamorphosis stuff real or must I consult an oculist?"

Both faces were familiar; the former had smiled at him once before and he had sworn that she should smile at him again—and speak his name. He had met girls—and girls. In his estimation, however, those violet eyes that had just smiled back from the mirror were the very ones his heart had been seeking throughout the twenty-four years of his joy-burdened existence.

But that other face, the face of one of the strangers who had brushed against him at the clothier's door—who was he? The glitter of those beady orbs portended no good purpose, and he felt a worried desire to know why the stranger was following him so persistently.

As if in answer to his own question a paper was suddenly thrust into his hand by a news urchin who shrilled, "Poiper, mister!" then scampered from sight.

Nonplused, Jeffry stared after the disappearing boy; then, as his eyes came back to the paper, an extra fresh from the press, he muttered an exclamation of astonishment.

In crude, penciled leters above flaring red headlines which proclaimed San Francisco's most recent murder, were the words: "Castles of sand and a man who gives his service to a stranger are alike!"

CHAPTER II.

MYSTIFIED by the enigmatic message, Jeffry did not read beyond the headings which coupled robbery with murder. Had he even given his attention to the subheadings, he would have had sufficient cause to feel uneasy and less inclination to muse over eyes of violet hue.

As it was, he did not learn that the double crime had been committed on the eleventh floor of the Claxton Building and in the offices of a wealthy commission broker—the same offices from which he had

dashed to catch the eleven o'clock ferry.

Two minutes after Jeffry's unceremonious departure, Jason Thadeus, the broker, had returned from a business call, and on entering his private office had discovered a bank messenger's corpse stretched on the floor. A moment later the broker's clerk had entered with a police officer; almost on their heels came the broker's niece, accompanied by the chief tellers of the Drovers' and Growers' National Bank. And details gleaned from this surprised group by reporters wove a net of damaging evidence around a stranger who answered to Jeffry's description minutely.

At ten o'clock Jason Thadeus had sent his niece, who acted as his private secretary, to the post office and to the bank, while he stepped out to attend to other business matters himself. At ten-five the broker's clerk had stepped across the corridor to the office of another broker. He was gone less than five minutes, yet when he returned the stranger was seated at the clerk's desk, apparently having just hung up the telephone. During those same five minutes the Drovers and Growers' National had received telephonic instructions to send a messenger to the broker's office at once with two hundred and fifty thousand dollars in bills of large denomination.

The stranger inquired after Jason Thadeus; then, on being told of the latter's absence, had settled himself to wait until he returned. At ten-thirty the bank messenger had arrived in company with a special officer. Ignorant of the telephone order, but on the supposition that Thadeus had given it before leaving, the clerk instructed the messenger to wait in the broker's private office, the special officer returning to the bank in the meantime. From that moment the stranger had become ugly and abusive, so much so that the clerk had left the room on a trivial pretext, then had made haste to bring an officer for protection.

In the interim the broker's niece had visited the bank, where a casual remark made by her to the teller aroused instant suspicion as to the genuineness of the telephone order. But without sounding an immediate alarm the chief teller had accompanied the girl back to the broker's office, only to find that their fears had been aroused too late.

Occupants of neighboring offices on the same floor had overheard angry voices quarreling in the Thadeus offices. Added to this was the testimony of two other brokers who were conversing near the elevators at the time the tragedy occurred. These men had stood in full view of the Thadeus entrance, and had witnessed the clerk's departure when he went for aid; directly afterward Jeffry made his hasty exit, catching a down-bound elevator from that floor. They had remarked Jeffry's worried appearance and extraordinary impatience as he waited for the descending car. And during the short interval which elapsed between the clerk's departure and Jason Thadeus' arrival no person other than Jeffry had entered or left the Thadeus offices.

The details wound up with a statement by the clerk to the effect that the stranger had claimed to be in desperate need of money, and his purpose in calling upon Thadeus was to secure an immediate loan.

With this positive evidence to start with, the police and detectives were scouring both cities for a man

who would fit Jeffry's description.

And wholly unconscious of his contracting sphere of liberty and unable to derive a plausible meaning from the singular message, Jeffry pocketed the paper, heading down street as he did so. With nearly two hours of leisure to spare, he sauntered from store to store, keeping on the alert for another glimpse of the eyes that had greeted his own in the mirror.

Intermittent shudders of horror swept over Mildred Thadeus as she stood by the office window listening to the murmur of voices in that adjoining room of death. The shock produced by her one brief glimpse of the murdered man had left her half faint and trembling, but the description which the clerk had given of the suspect seemed to strike numbness into her very thoughts; it had shorn her secret idol of his halo.

The clerk entered from the inner office and picked

up his hat preparatory to going out.

"Please tell me, Mr. Thrippert," she begged, tugging nervously at the corners of her handkerchief, "was the stranger that you mean that nice-looking

fellow who called on you several times?"

"Sh-h-h-h!" cautioned the clerk. "Don't give these people in there an inkling that I know young Jeffry. I'm claiming he's a stranger to give him plenty of chance to get away. He was up against it for money; fact is he was in bad all over town. If he'd just made it a case of robbery, his uncle would have squared it, but he's fixed himself a proper mess with this murder—"

"Does he live in the city?" interrupted Mildred.

"No, he stops at the Palace-"

Jason Thadeus suddenly appeared on the threshold, frowning in a way that sent his clerk hurrying from the office. The broker appeared to be more upset than either his clerk or his niece.

"Mildred," he called in an irritated tone, "why aren't you on your way home? Do you want to miss

your train to-night?"

"But, Uncle Jason, the train doesn't leave till four, and—"

"Well, then, all the more reason you should be home to help your aunt with the packing," grumbled Thadeus, shuffling some letters on Thrippert's desk. "Here are your tickets," he added, as suddenly diving his hand into his pocket, he produced an envelope.

"Take them and run along; don't let this deplorable

affair spoil your holiday trip."

He circled the room in a nervous fashion, mumbling to himself while Mildred prepared for the street.

"You can tell Aunt Ellen that I'll meet you at the ferry building at three-thirty, in case I don't get home before then. And"—he halted by the water cooler, where he gulped down two glasses of water in audible haste—"I guess that's all," he finished.

"And, Mildred," he called as she opened the outer

door,

Just then there was a general exodus of detectives from the inner office. Her lips parted with a quick intake of breath when she caught the words: "Get busy, you fellows, and bring me that chap who has been playing the bright lights so strong lately!"

Jason Thadeus evinced added nervousness at these same words. Stepping quickly to Mildred's side, he whispered: "You needn't say anything about this trouble to Aunt Ellen; I forbid it." Aloud he said: "Go home and rest for the afternoon; I'll bring home the news this evening."

"I'm taking this flower vase along with me, Thadeus," announced the chief detective brusquely. "It's what the murderer used, and there's finger marks

on it that I want to have a good look at."

The outer door clicked shut and Mildred was gone. "Yes, yes, yes, finger prints; to be sure, take them along," assented the broker, mopping his round face as if he were unusually warm.

In a down-bound elevator a bold inspiration came to Mildred. When she reached the street she glanced about for a taxicab; finding none, she hurried down Market Street toward the hotel, driven by an inexplicable impulse to warn the fugitive before the law rendered escape impossible.

At the hotel, her half-running approach to the desk

created no little astonishment in the lobby.

"Mr. Jeffry has just given up his rooms and left," announced the politely surprised clerk in answer to her breathless question.

"But you might find him at this address," he added on noting the look of despair that whitened her face. "He asked to have his mail forwarded there."

Mildred accepted the card of Gorman Bradshaw's agent with a hasty word of thanks and hurried back to the street.

"Ferry building—and please do hurry!" she cried to the nearest taxicab driver as he closed the cab door behind her.

And with almost a repetition of Jeffry's spectacular dash she boarded the Newark on its noon trip toward Oakland.

Yet for all her haste, disappointment awaited her at the address she sought; Mr. Jeffry had been expected, but no one by that name had yet put in his appearance, she was told.

Utterly at loss as to what course she should pursue next, she mingled with the noon-hour crowds on Broadway. Harboring a vague wish that Jeffry might appear, and striving to reason out what a detective would do in the same case, she began to scan the faces about her. Jostled by the crowd, she nearly collided with a dark-looking foreigner. As she stepped aside to avoid him she sighted a familiar figure and halted with a thrill of triumph; preening himself in front of a display window was the man she was seeking.

The sight of his open vanity caused her sense of humor to bubble involuntarily to the service; but, realizing that her smile had been caught by him, she flushed and darted into a passing group of shopgirls.

From this shelter she ventured a peek over her shoulder. Jeffry was not following, and she maneuvered to a position from which she could watch without being seen. She saw him accept the paper from the newsboy, but misinterpreted the angry scowl that darkened his face when he espied the strange message.

A pang of sadness smote her as she saw him glare at the paper. He could be doing nothing else than reading the account of his dastardly act, she assured herself. But why was he loitering, when every precious minute was lessening his chance of escaping the law's clutches?

He turned suddenly and came in her direction, passing so close that he almost brushed against her. Her carefully rehearsed warning went a-glimmering, her courage likewise, and she averted her face to avoid recognition.

When he was well past, the temptation to spy upon his movements prompted her to follow him. Thus for several blocks she never lost sight of the broad shoulders which towered so conspicuously in the crowd.

Then she became aware that some one else was also keeping pace with her. A sidelong glance told her that it was the same foreigner whom she had dodged at the moment of her discovery of Jeffry. She slackened her pace to permit him to pass; to her surprise he did the same. She made a detour to avoid him and hurried ahead, but to no purpose; he remained right at her heels.

Provoked, she turned and crossed the street, her errand forgotten in the face of the foreigner's annoyance. No sooner had she reached the opposite curb, however, than he stepped in front of her.

"The lady should not of me be afraid; I wish only a favor to ask," he said, his ferret eyes re-

garding her with an unsmiling look.

Her color heightened by mingled fear and anger, she hastened into a near-by drug store without even favoring him with a look. Once inside, a glance at her watch brought a gasp of dismay to her lips; she had wasted two hours in following the dictates of her romantic impulse. Entering the telephone booth, she called her aunt, to whom she made an evasive explanation of her absence; then she started for the boat train.

As she stepped to the street the stranger again confronted her. With no more time to waste in evading him, and the dread of a scene quelling her temptation to call an officer, she flashed him an angry look and attempted to pass.

"If the lady would him save on whom she smiles, she would give her ear to words of warning," purred the stranger softly, obstructing her path. "I would

The stranger's words ended in an Oriental oath as a hand seized him by the shoulder.

"If this coffee-colored gent is annoying you, madame, I'll jar him loose from his intentions," announced Jeffry, who had suddenly materialized out of the crowd.

Gratefulness shone for an instant in Mildred's eyes as she looked up at Jeffry; then they widened in alarm when the stranger's hand slid suggestively beneath his coat. Jeffry saw the move, too, and, administering a savage twist to the shoulder he gripped, he growled: "Guns and knives are barred in this town, old-timer; beat it home and use 'em on yourself!"

Thus defiled by the touch of a white heathen, the stranger began mumbling unintelligible jargon, slinking away as he did so, but there was a message of death in the backward glance he bent upon Jeffry.

Only Mildred caught the significance of that look;

Jeffry's eyes were upon her.

"I'm glad I happened along," he declared. "I thought at first that fellow was on my trail, but it seems he was seeking fairer company. How long has he—"

"Mr. Jeffry!"

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Mildred's hand flew to her lips as if she would smother the words that were about to follow the utterance of his name.

"At your humblest service, I assure you," replied Jeffry with an elaborate bow.

"Mr. Jeffry, why do you parade the street so openly —why are you not escaping while you have time?" she asked in an excited whisper.

"Escaping!" repeated Jeffry, regarding her with a look of amazement. "Why—er—how can I escape

your smile?"

"Oh, how brazen you are! This is no time to be flippant. Here I'm sacrificing my self-respect and violating the law to warn you of your peril. Have you even murdered your own sense of shame? If you start without another moment's delay you may yet escape the punishment which you deserve, and—please try and save yourself; go to some other land and lead a better life!"

A suspicious tremor was coming into Mildred's tone, and with her last word she darted into the crowd, leaving Jeffry to stand in stupefied amazement.

CHAPTER III.

WON'T some one please tell me if I'm climbing a spiral stairway?" muttered Jeffry to himself when the last glimpse of Mildred's turban vanished.

Under the stress of his bewilderment he stood in the center of the sidewalk for ten minutes debating whether or not to follow her and demand an explanation.

Turning, he paced thoughtfully uptown, striving to locate some flaw in his past speech and actions that could account for Mildred's hints and urgings that he should escape. At last, with a devil-may-care shrug of his shoulders, he wheeled and retraced his steps to the tailor's.

Although it was not yet three o'clock when he presented himself to the clerk who had attended to his wants, the latter ushered him to one of several dressing rooms ranged along a balcony. In the act of entering, he chanced to glance down into the main salesroom, where, just within the main entrance, his eyes rested upon the two dark-featured strangers.

His involuntary grunt of surprise brought a ques-

tion of curiosity from some one already in the dressing room. Stepping inside and closing the door, Jeffry found Rippe seated in one corner.

"Having any trouble?" the latter inquired.

Jeffry told of the apparent intentions of the two strangers to follow him, and when he exhibited the paper with its penciled message Rippe became excited.

"Change your clothes, but don't leave this room till I come back," he commanded, after putting several brief questions. "Don't show even your face at the door," he added; then hurried out.

Twenty minutes later he came back in a breathless condition.

"My original plans will have to be changed," he panted. "You'll have to step lively now to make connections."

"Follow me," he commanded, after a cautious inspection of the salesroom.

At the rear of the balcony, he rang for an elevator. Both stepped in when it appeared, Rippe giving orders to descend to the basement. In the basement he gave further orders to Jeffry.

"Go back to the alley entrance; stand inside till an auto horn sounds one long and three short blasts; then hurry out and step into a gray car, which you will find by the top of the steps. The chauffeur has your luggage and tickets; he will take you to where you are to board your train. You were to leave direct from here, but it's too risky now; my enemies have suspicioned something and are watching the depots. Keep your eyes open and your mouth shut—and good luck to you!"

More mystified than ever, Jeffry groped his way to the dimly outlined alley door. Five minutes dragged by as he waited, his mind a tumult of conjecture; then the signal sounded. Jerking open the door, he mounted a short flight of steps, to where a long, squat car stood, its motor purring in fretful impatience and speed radiating from every line and curve.

Even before he had fairly seated himself beside the chauffeur, the machine was gliding rapidly down the alley. With actions more automatic than human, the chauffeur guided the car in a southwesterly direction, zigzagging from street to street until the city limits were reached and passed.

A misty drizzle was beginning to fall, for which reason comparatively few vehicles were met along the highway. Under the chauffeur's practiced touch the motor purred, hummed, or roared as the locality and occasion permitted. Frequently the speedometer ran far above regulation figures, despite the slipperiness of the roadbed.

Jeffry noticed that the chauffeur, who did not utter a word during the first few miles, studied the windshield mirror intently, glancing at intervals back along the highway. At length he requested Jeffry to keep an eye on a car that was following far in their rear.

"If you see she's gaining, let me know."

A single moving object was just visible when Jeffry twisted himself about to obey. As he watched he felt his own car pick up speed, the follower soon fading from view as a result. He announced this fact and started to face the front again.

"Keep your lamps peeled just the same, fellow," commanded the chauffeur. "If any one cops a sneak

on us now, it'll mean a sure pinch; they're dead sore

as to speeders on this pike."

Jeffry renewed his lookout, mulling the chauffeur's words over in his mind. The car swept around two curves, then opened up on another long tangent. Just as they struck the next curve Jeffry reported a car in sight behind them.

"Can you tell her make or color?" inquired the

chauffeur without turning his head.

"No-they're too far back."

"Wait'll we shake this next burg; I'll get a line on

their game."

Keeping the indicator at its fifteen-mile mark, the chauffeur guided the car through a small village; then opened up to a fifty-mile clip. But in spite of this pace Jeffry was able to note that their follower was gaining.

"My hunch was good, but watch me lose 'em!"

muttered the chauffeur after Jeffry reported.

The machine caught more speed with a leap. Jeffry glanced apprehensively at the speedometer—sixty-five, seventy, eighty, and higher! His pulses throbbed as he recalled Rippe's intimation of dangers to be encountered.

"Looks as if the ball had opened!" he breathed to himself.

Darkness was settling early and fast; the drizzle had now increased to a steady downpour. Jeffry, still watching, began to feel uneasy. Unless their pursuer—if such the other car proved to be—showed lights, the darkness would enable them to approach dangerously close without detection. He mentioned this fear to the chauffeur, whose answer was to advance the throttle.

For thirty minutes the car maintained a varying high rate of speed, almost reaching the hundred-mile figure on one stretch of good road.

"I'd give her full head," vouchsafed the chauffeur, "but we dassn't worry the traffic bulls too strong; you

can stand for no pinch now."

Scattered lights, mere blotches of murky yellow glimmering through the rain, loomed and drew near. Again dropping his speed, the chauffeur circled through the side streets of Stockton and on into the country beyond. When well past the city limits, he wheeled to one side and came to a dead stop, the first since they had started.

"Watch the road while I juice up, mister," he commanded, climbing out and unlashing some cans on the running board. "Don't guess at none of 'em; can't tell who's who in this bunch of gloom; gotta

keep in the clear of 'em all."

With gas tank and radiator refilled, the car went streaking through the night once more. After a mile or more of silence the chauffeur reached into his pockets and produced a silk-covered package, a leather wallet, and a heavy automatic.

"Your boss has given you orders about that package," he explained as he laid the articles in Jeffry's lap. "Your money and tickets are in the wallet; the gat's for you to use if you're cornered before your job's done. Keep your lamps peeled for the dinges on your trip; don't let 'em play their knives from behind!"

Jeffry stowed the objects in his own pockets without comment, though a nervous fussiness was manifest in his actions. This done, he leaned out for another survey of the rear, only to whirl back with an excited shout. A car was so close that its headlights almost revealed their own machine.

The chauffeur had seen the danger at the same time, and the terrific burst of speed which followed nearly snapped Jeffry's head from his shoulders. Cutting out the rear light and dimming the head lamps, the chauffeur humped himself over the wheel. Jeffry gulped, shifting uneasily about as the car cut into the storm at a dizzy pace.

"Watch 'em, you!" growled the chauffeur.

Through the rain-streaked window in the back curtain Jeffry was able to see the oncoming lights as

close as ever, gaining, if anything.

"There's a suit case in the tonneau for you; get it out," commanded the chauffeur when Jeffry reported the situation. "Now set it between your feet; if I tell you to jump and run for it, don't leave a thing behind."

Jeffry nodded his acknowledgment, and turned for another view of their pursuer. For a moment he saw nothing; then twin lights came into sight with all too suggestive speed. Far ahead another sea of mistfiltered yellow was tinging the darkness.

"That's Sac," muttered the chauffeur. "If I don't

hit anything, we'll make 'er with bells on!"

"Get this, mister," he added, after they reached the suburbs and skidded into a cross street on a perilous arc, "I'm going to drop you uptown and send a taxi after you; if I don't, whoever's on our trail will be hep to this car, and like as not queer your chance of catching the train—sabe?"

Jeffry inclined his head, uncertain whether he was excited or flustered. Two short blocks; then the car headed downtown, stopping at the edge of the business

section.

"Out with you," growled the chauffeur, "and don't move from this corner till a taxi stops in front of you!"

Jeffry stepped out to the curb, the car speeding away before he could turn around. Less than a minute later another speed-eating machine spluttered past In it were three shadowy forms, but his glimpse was so brief that he could not make out their faces. The next instant a closed car spun around the corner and stopped in front of him.

"Grab on, big fellow!" wheezed a new voice, its

owner unlatching the tonneau door.

Tossing in his suit case, Jeffry grabbed. For a few blocks he watched the car's progress; then he endeavored to examine his new possessions in the half shadows of the cab. The examination ceased abruptly when the car, lurching into a side street, drew up at the depot curb. He remained seated, expecting further orders.

"Say, big boy, if you're making the Overland, shake

a leg; you ain't gotta minute left!"

Even as the chauffeur spoke Jeffry heard a stentorious "Bo-o-o-o-aad" echoing through the train shed. Half bewildered, he picked up his suit case and stepped out, only to hesitate again. Midway of the train shed a long string of Pullmans was already moving; vestibules were slamming shut.

"Run, you mutt!" snorted the chauffeur.

Jeffry threw up one hand and sprinted. At the same

instant a slender, dark-complexioned individual sauntered out from the waiting room, and with apparent unintention stooped in front of Jeffry as if to pick up some object. So suddenly was this done Jeffry escaped a disastrous fall only by pure luck. As he tripped over the stooping man something struck him a numbing blow on his ankles. He fell to his knees with painful force, but a stubborn desire to win buoyed his effort, and with a fresh spurt he stumbled up the last available sleeper steps just in time to block the falling trap.

CHAPTER IV.

SICK with pain and gasping, Jeffry tripped on the upper step, butting his head into an astonished porter who had turned to close the vestibule.

"Where to, sir?" inquired the Pullman conductor,

who was also in that vestibule.

"Eh?" panted Jeffry, struggling to his feet and endeavoring to marshal his thoughts. "Oh—why—I'm going to—er—Chicago, I guess," he stammered as he fumbled for the wallet.

In the wallet he found an envelope marked "tickets." This he opened and took out a folded slip and several cardboard checks. Without a glance at their limitations he passed them to the conductor.

"So you're the party for lower twelve in car five; thought we'd missed you," remarked the latter as he thumbed over the tickets and handed them back.

"They tried hard enough to make me-"

Jeffry, his brain clearing, realized what he was about to say and checked himself; then he shrugged his shoulders and finished: "You can't lose me; I'm a demon on catching you fast boys."

Shown to his berth, he began a systematic examination of his outfit. The suit case, an old one, much worn, was labeled with many foreign posters; its contents consisted of changes of linen and other traveling necessities, all new, but unmarked.

He withdrew the secret package from his pocket. In outward appearance it looked like legal documents securely sewn in a waterproof covering. He fingered the packet inquisitively, balancing it on his finger tips; then, with a grunt of satisfaction, replaced it in an inner pocket.

The wallet next claimed his attention. One compartment contained a single leaf torn from an Eastern time-table; the only marking on it, aside from the printing, was three words written with a blue pencil over a limited train schedule between Chicago and New York. This, coupled with previous instructions, was self-explanatory.

In the bill flap he found a single, crisp five-hundred-dollar bill—nothing more. Not a hint or an enlightening message of any description; all was secrecy, puzzling, mysterious.

Unsatisfied with the result of his search, he reexamined his tickets, though the results were no better than before. The ticket, including sleeper reservations, entitled him to transportation between San Francisco and New York; it was real enough, so real, in fact, that he experienced a sense of awe.

His mental review of what had so far happened was interrupted by the conductors who called for

his tickets. Afterward the realization that he had not eaten since breakfast sent him to the wash room and then to the dining car.

While lingering over his meal he groped for some logical excuse for his roundabout trip through mud and rain when he could have boarded his train in Oakland.

"Surely this Rippe guy has some tight lid on his secrets to have me playing all these back-door stunts," he muttered into his coffee cup.

Under the soothing influence of his dinner, his thoughts drifted away from the mystery of his errand After all, he mused, why worry? The world was looking rosy and green once more—to him at least—and traveling de luxe was no uncomfortable treat; he smiled as the wording of his uncle's letter popped into his mind. It would be genuine pleasure to tell that frugally rich old Scotchman that the brine-pickled five-dollar bill was to be multiplied one thousand times in less than a week.

Deeply absorbed in his gloating, Jeffry would have scoffed at the idea that his coming experiences had been foreseen by Robert Burns more than a century before.

The number of diners had dwindled to a scattered few by the time that Jeffry called for his check, and, although the totaled slip submitted by the waiter bore no evidence of economy, he produced his three-figured yellowback with satiated gusto.

Two tables behind Jeffry sat a man wearing amberlensed spectacles. A casual scrutiny of the man's face would have led one to believe him a victim of dyspepsia or nervous trouble; yet there was a stoutness in his build which belied such symptoms. A distinct birthmark covered his left cheek, and his left eye was hidden by a black patch, creating the impression that the member was either injured or missing.

This stranger had paid little attention to his surroundings until the green-and-saffron bank note passed from Jeffry to the waiter; then the unobstructed right eye widened and glared, seeming to recognize something in the transaction which surprised and angered him.

While the waiter counted out the mass of change which the steward supplied and while the lone eye behind him continued to glare at his head, Jeffry leaned back in his chair, puffing contentedly at a fragrant cigar—at peace with the universe.

Across the aisle two men were discussing the robbery and murder of the morning. Jeffry smiled as he tipped the aproned darky; whether his smile had aught to do with the news he overheard or was the external reflection of his contentment was a matter for conjecture.

The one-eyed man lingered until Jeffry rose and sauntered toward the rear; then he gave a visible start of discovery and gave close attention to a San Francisco paper by his plate. After reading the columns pertaining to the robbery and murder he pocketed the paper and started back through the well-filled sleepers.

Meanwhile Jeffry sprawled languidly in car five's smoking compartment until after the train pulled out of Blue Cañon, then he retired to his berth. Sleep, however, was long in coming. As he lay listening to the labored puffing of the engines, all that had

happened since morning came surging back into his mind.

Except for an occasional creak and clank of trucks on sharp curves, the car was quiet; yet the slightest sounds began to disturb him. Rippe's hints regarding unforeseen danger kept his nerves at high tension.

Once he sat up and removed the secret packet from between the mattresses, where he had first hidden it, and pinned it inside the blouse of his pajamas. His wallet gave him less concern; the revolver he slipped beneath his pillow.

Footsteps pat-patted through the car as he again settled himself. Four long blasts wailed back through the frosty mountain air as the lead engine called for the block. A chimelike woo-woo of acknowledgment followed, then stillness enveloped the car once more.

Jeffry, his eyes wide open and sleepless, continued to lie with his face toward the aisle. Suddenly, unpreceded by any warning sound, the curtains moved. He watched with bated breath until they moved again; but as the slit of dim light where they joined broadened, then narrowed, he felt tempted to laugh.

"You big boob—getting wrinkles in your backbone because a pair of harmless curtains are obeying the law of gravity!" he jeered at himself.

But, no! In that case they would swing in and out; the motion he detected was caused by some one lifting the bottom of the curtains.

Rippe's advice revived itself in his mind subconsciously. Faint, yet distinguishable, a bulge appeared in the curtain; something scraped against the arm of the seat; some one breathed heavily.

Jeffry's hand slipped to the automatic; gripping it by its muzzle, he struck at the bulge. A stifled grunt rewarded his effort. He sprang up to open the curtains, bumping his own head as he did so. The sight that met his eyes when at last he succeeded in yanking the curtains apart was both harmless and startling.

Kneeling amid an assortment of shoes, his ebony face drawn by pain, the car porter rocked on his hips, nursing his left shoulder.

"Was that you I hit?" demanded Jeffry in an astonished whisper.

"Hoe-eee, boss, you shore done use a pow'ful lot of emfsis when you swats a man dat's jes' atta yo' shoes!" groaned the injured porter.

"Smoly hoke, porter, call the foolish wagon; the joke's on me!" mumbled Jeffry sheepishly. "And me thinking I'm playing hero to a villain. Oh, well, old boy, cheer up; here's some salve for it," he added, producing a five-dollar bill, which as a pain soother proved more effective than excuses or apologies.

His feeling of relief was such that he was again tempted to laugh. Notwithstanding its stab at his vanity, the incident served to put him in an easier frame of mind, thus paving the way for genuine difficulties which were soon to follow.

By now the train had topped the summit, and the smoothness of its descent soon lulled him to sleep, sleep that would have been less peaceful had he known of the presence of three other passengers in that same car.

Nothing occurred until after Reno was left to the westward and trainmen ceased to pass through the sleepers. Then the sleep demons began their orgies

in Jeffry's dreams. Again he was in an auto fleeing for his life from a host of brown-skinned, beady-eyed foes. Mile after mile he raced, only to come to a crashing standstill against some huge obstruction which rose in his path. His car seemed to fold up around him, crushing the breath from his body. Fight and struggle as he tried, his muscles were powerless under the grip of his nightmare.

Then, in the throes of his dream-inspired combat, his head struck the window sill. The blow awoke him, but for a few precious seconds he was unable to reason out his position. At first it seemed as if he had pulled the bed covers over his own head, An attempt to move gave him an instantaneous clew to his trouble; some one was striving to smother him with his own blankets! His arms were pinioned at his sides and his ankles were bound!

For a moment he struggled in a frenzied desperation without gaining the slightest advantage, leaving him dizzy and gasping. Cunning, rather than strength, would accomplish more, he reasoned, and, pretending to be in great agony, he gathered his body in a huddled position. It was an advantageous move, for it prevented his assailant from drawing the blanket tighter without releasing the imprisoned arms.

One breath of fresh air would have turned the tide of the struggle. His lungs bursting, Jeffry maneuvered to place his bound ankles under or against his antagonist. Inch by inch he edged himself around that his shoulders might have leverage against the window sill; each second stifling him into insensibility; his arms already numbed beyond sense of feeling by the merciless grip which held them. Just as the last spark of consciousness deserted him he put all his ebbing strength into an outward thrust with his feet.

"Did you ring, sah?"

The words came to Jeffry as from a hazy distance. He opened his eyes to find the berth light turned on and the porter's black, puzzled face bending over him.

"Golly, boss, you shore done had a right pow'ful dream to tie yo' head all in de blankets dat-a-way!" whispered the porter.

"Did you see which way he went?" demanded Jeffry.
"The fellow that was choking me," he explained when
the darky's eyes bulged in amazement.

"Lordy, boss, dar wasn't nobody chokin' you; an' Ah done come's soon's yo' bell rung, sah! Yo' feet done stuck out in de aisle, an' de blankets wuz all tied round yo' head lak a ball when Ah got hyah."

Jeffry stared keenly at the porter. Not knowing that in the struggle his own head had pressed the bell button, he was striving to fathom the depths of the black man's actual intentions. And having no knowledge that his last desperate thrust had sent his assailant sprawling in the aisle and that when the porter arrived in response to the bell, the would-be assassin was safe within his own berth, Jeffry gave full rein to his suspicions that the porter had attacked him for his money—possibly the packet.

"If you jes' take a seat in de smokin' room, sah, Ah'll make up yo' bed again," suggested the porter.

"You can just get back where you belong, and that in a hurry. Never mind me; I'm well able to fix my own bed," growled Jeffry, reaching for his wallet and

automatic, which had been uncovered by the struggle. His motion was sufficient for the porter, who ap-

plied speed to his departure.

Left alone, Jeffry satisfied himself that his possessions were still intact. His watch told him that it was three o'clock. Too thoroughly aroused and angry to sleep, however, he snapped off the light and lay back, wakeful, vigilant. The attempt to smother him in his berth, and the endeavor to block his progress at Sacramento revealed a phase of the game which proved that Rippe had warned in all seriousness.

Nevertheless, Jeffry was far from intimidated; the only fear he experienced was that he might miss a chance to wreak vengeance on his mysterious enemy. The longer he pondered the more inclined he was to eliminate the porter from suspicion and to assign the attack to the pair who had spied upon his movements

in Oakland.

He arose early, breakfasting as soon as the dining car opened in order that he could make a quiet canvass of the passenger list as soon as all passengers were up. On returning from breakfast, he found his own section put to rights, but as there were no other early risers in evidence in the car he idled away the next hour in the smoking compartment.

When he again returned to his section he discovered a folded newspaper lying beside his overcoat. He seated himself leisurely, opening the paper as he did so. Then he swore under his breath. It was a San Francisco paper two days old, and on the top margin

of the front page was penciled:

"A wise man will heed a warning, but a fool goes to his own destruction!"

CHAPTER V.

GRIM-FACED and precise, Jeffry refolded the paper, placing it in his overcoat pocket. The lettering was identical with that of the previous day, proving conclusively that its writer was the one to find before the question of his assailant's identity could be decided.

He gave up the idea of searching the train. Speedier results could be obtained by preparing an ambush for the enemy when night came again; a thin-lipped smile flickered around his mouth as that idea urged itself upon him. It would afford him great pleasure to best a thug that had twice tried to foul him, and if the enemy had designs on that secret packet he would be sure to try again under cover of darkness.

The day passed with no excitement to vary the monotony. An invitation to an after-dinner whist game furnished him with diversion until midnight; then he went direct to his berth. Hours slipped by, as did the miles, yet his preplanned vigil was unrewarded; not that the enemy was reluctant to attack, but there appeared to be more than one who had conflicting designs upon layers to be the layers.

flicting designs upon lower twelve.

Back in the shadows of the car corridor lurked the one-eyed dyspeptic whose frequent attempts to approach Jeffry's section were frustrated by the evident desire of the occupant of lower seven to leave his berth at the same time. And the latter, who also had lower twelve in mind, was continually blocked in his scheme by the actions of his competitor in stealth.

Thus, when daylight put an end to all surreptitious maneuvers for the night, Jeffry fell asleep in an exhausted and disappointed frame of mind.

He slept late in consequence, rising barely in time to breakfast before the dining car closed. Breakfast over, he decided that an hour or so in the open on the observation platform would banish the sluggishness which he felt.

On entering his car he had a fleeting glimpse of a familiar, girlish figure vanishing through the state-room door at the end of the aisle. He approached his seat in deep thought, striving to recall the exact one whom he was reminded of, and also bothered by the impression that she had darted from his seat the instant of his appearance.

When his eyes reverted from the closed door of stateroom A to the overcoat in his seat he discovered another folded paper. This time a late Salt Lake City

daily, bearing a third penciled message:

"A fool's mind is like a stagnant pool, but Buddha is merciful. Destroy what you carry, return whence you came, and no harm shall befall you. Destruction lies ahead, and your end shall be before another sun if you do not heed. Buddha's hand has closed the book of warning!"

Jeffry read the lines twice, then slammed the paper

back upon the seat.

"Whoever that boob is, he talks like a fish!" he muttered, grabbing up his overcoat and continuing on his way to the rear. "I wonder if he thinks I'm simp enough to fall for such guff?"

Out on the observation rotunda, he promptly forgot all trouble as he drank deeply from the frosty air. There were no other passengers occupying either the lounge or the rotunda at that moment, and for several minutes he stamped to and fro in keen enjoyment.

After a time he stopped, and, leaning with his elbows on the railing, he watched the snow-bordered road roll out from beneath the car like a flying ribbon.

The car door opened stealthily; then closed with the Oriental occupant of lower seven outside. Jeffry,

his thoughts elsewhere, gave no heed.

One catlike step and the newcomer poised, turning his malignant face for a view of the lounge, which was still deserted. Another step placed him directly behind Jeffry. With lightning rapidity he stooped. Seizing the unsuspecting victim's ankles in a sinewy grip, he attempted to heave him head foremost from the train.

Caught without warning, Jeffry's position placed him at a perilous disadvantage. Instinctively he grabbed to save himself, failing to secure a hold with his hands, but managing to twist sufficiently to hook his left leg over the railing.

Head downward, hampered by his heavy overcoat, the skirts of which obscured all view of his antagonist, his end seemed a certainty. Gripping the drawhead with his right hand, he tried to clear his eyes with his left.

The assailant, balked for an instant, endeavored to break Jeffry's leg hold by a series of cruel twists. It became a battle of brute strength. What the former lacked in size he possessed in wiry tenacity, and by the time Jeffry found anchorage for his left hand the stranger was breaking the leg hold.

By superhuman effort Jeffry wrenched himself into

a less agonizing position, yet the rush of blood to his head, accentuated by his frantic exertion, threatened to overcome him with dizziness.

Fifteen seconds had not elapsed since that unexpected attack; to Jeffry they seemed minutes. He prayed that he might free his right foot. In sudden rage he tried to jerk it loose, but the assassin's grip was unshakable.

Steadily, without pause or mercy, he felt himself forced nearer the flying blur of ties and ballast. With a gulp he realized that his hold was weakening; already his left hand had slipped till only the finger tips held to the iron grille.

A sudden lurch of the car gave him transitory respite by upsetting the stranger's balance. His hope revived as the grip on his right ankle relaxed; he kicked blindly, viciously, almost sacrificing his own slender hold. The first kick missed, the second grazed the assailant's shoulder, gaining Jeffry a fresh grip with his left hand.

The stranger bent forward and downward in order to imprison that flailing foot. His head appeared within Jeffry's line of vision. A savage desperation prompted the latter to grab with his right hand. It was a dangerous shift, yet he accomplished a strangle hold that his foe could not hope to loosen.

And still the advantage was even. Although the stranger was now incapable of doing further harm, Jeffry could neither regain his feet nor dispose of his antagonist, nor dare he relinquish his grasp on the other man's neck.

The stranger's body soon grew limp, but at the same time Jeffry knew that his own consciousness was ebbing with equal rapidity. The sound of clicking wheels became fainter and fainter in his ears. Little by little his left leg slipped over the platform railing. His mind seemed tired, drowsy; he tried to rally his thoughts. Something heavy slid down over his face; then—

"Well, well, young fellow, what's all this stunt you're entertaining the landscape with?"

Returning reason brought Jeffry the knowledge that he was sitting in a chair and that a stocky, red-faced man was shaking his shoulder.

"What were you doing—taking your morning exercise, or did you get an idea you'd fall overboard?" persisted the stocky man.

Jeffry shook his head feebly, peering from side to side, the questions penetrating his mind without significance. His eyes finally rested on the new man's face with a perplexed stare.

"Groggy, eh---"

"No," interrupted Jeffry. "I'm all right—I guess. But who are you? Are you the roughneck that just tried to ditch me?" There was a touch of anger in his last words.

"Ditch you! Easy, boy; your engine's missing! Ditch you? Why, if I hadn't taken a notion I wanted to smoke out here, I guess you would have been ditched. What's your idea in pulling off one-legged trapeze acts from the end of a cannon-ball limited?"

Jeffry stared hard at the other man before answering, but saw only a shrewd-eyed man who would have passed anywhere for a typical plainsman.

"Who else did you see out here besides myself?" he asked at length.

"Still groggy, eh? Well, boy, except for your acrobatic self, this platform was as lonesome as the home of the guy that's been trying to wear Bonaparte's shoes."

Jeffry again shook his head, and felt for the lump beneath his coat which told him the packet was still safe. When his nerves were once more composed he rose and started inside, the stranger following.

"Smoke?" queried the latter.

Jeffry nodded, whereupon his rescuer led the way

to the nearest smoking compartment.

"My name's Smith—Bill Smith—and I climbed aboard at Cheyenne with an idea of looking Chicago over. I wasn't raised to know what a stranger was, so why not introduce yourself and let's be sociable, Mr.—er——"

"Milne," answered Jeffry, determined to let the stranger do most of the talking.

And to all appearance that program was entirely to the self-introduced Smith's liking. If Jeffry had not been overconfident, he would have noted that his host's volubility was literally mined with subtle questions.

Without seeming to do so, Smith soon learned that as Richard Milne, Jeffry was en route from Seattle to Boston in the interests of private business, the latter secretly congratulating himself upon the ease with which he cloaked his real mission.

The two talked until lunch time, Smith then insisting that Jeffry should lunch with him. When lunch was over Jeffry found that his rescuer was becoming too companionable for comfort, and excused himself on the plea that he intended to take a nap.

As he reclined meditatively in his seat the door of stateroom A opened and two women sauntered down the aisle. Preoccupied with thoughts of his mission, Jeffry failed to notice them until they had passed. His idle glance became a fixed stare; then a puzzled frown creased his brow. There was something strangely familiar about the mass of pale-gold hair which crowned the younger of the two her elderly companion striking no chord of memory in his mind.

After they passed into the car ahead he resolved to remain in his seat until they returned. At the end of what to him was an interminable wait they came strolling back, the younger woman in the lead. Jeffry leaped to his feet in pleased surprise the instant his gaze rested upon her face; she was the girl who had smiled in the mirror!

Attracted by his hasty action, Mildred Thadeus favored him with a startled look, her cheeks aflame. After a barely perceptible pause she controlled her panic and moved on past section twelve in stately silence, the elder woman observing the incident with a severe frown of criticism.

Another in the car was also disturbed by the tableau. From behind the pages of a magazine the dyspeptic-looking occupant of lower two was watching Jeffries actions, his lone eye blazing with malevolence.

Lost in perplexed wondering, Jeffry's eyes were trained on the door of stateroom A for several minutes.

"Do I deserve all that arctic sunshine or does she just have a stock of it for mater's benefit?" he muttered when at last he faced to the front.

Later he consulted the porter, who could give no names, but his statement "Dat de ladies am gwine troo to Chicago" gave Jeffry a grain of satisfaction; he would yet have time to accomplish an explanation of the girl's changeable attitude before the terminal was reached.

When the dinner hour drew near he tried, through the medium of tips, to pave a way to the table which she of the violet eyes would occupy. In this he was innocently frustrated by Smith, who would not

be refused in his desire to play host again.

With no other recourse than a deliberate rebuff, Jeffry accepted in glum silence, doubly irritated by the fact that his seat placed him with his back to the Diana of his thoughts. And throughout the meal Smith's jolly persiflage failed to restore a sense of either content or humor to the mind of his guest.

After dinner the two adjourned to car five's smoking compartment, where, as a gentle hint to his host, Jeffry requested the porter to make up his berth

quite early.

Just as he was about to excuse himself from Smith's presence Jeffry heard a soft, feminine voice speaking in the corridor:

"I'm just going to the lounge a few minutes, auntie."

"Me also," breathed Jeffry, and after a short wait Smith was abruptly left alone with his tiresome geniality.

As he passed into the lounge car Jeffry determined that boldness must mark his course.

"I beg your pardon-"

Mildred glanced up from a magazine she was reading, startled by Jeffry's greeting; then her eyes clouded

and her lips pressed into a straight line.

"—but as you already know my name, I shall take shipboard liberty—" He completed his sentence by an unmistakable glance at the chair on Mildred's right.

She flushed somewhat angrily; then, with an arch, upward glance, replied: "Boldness that apparently

brooks no refusal cannot be denied."

"Do you know," announced Jeffry as he seated himself, "my bump of curiosity has swollen to an abnormal degree since you so kindly advised me to take a long and swift journey. Will you please have pity now and translate your advice into words that I can understand?"

"Does not your conscience enlighten you?"

"My conscience is honestly bothered by a pair of heavenly eyes, and has been ever since they smiled into mine the day we first met. Do you know, you have dodged me three times now, but I'll give you fair warning—you shall not escape me this fourth time. You can speak my name, now are you going to be so ungenerous as to forbid me a pleasure kindred to yours?"

"Excuse me, Milne, but I won't intrude, will I, by taking this chair?" boomed Smith's jovial voice.

Jeffry gulped and colored. Mildred bit her lip to check a startled exclamation. Had the window behind her been opened to admit the cold snow which pelted against the glass. she would not have experienced a greater chill.

Smith at once launched forth in a hodge-podge of small talk, Jeffry maintaining an angry and Mildred a nervous silence. Something in Smith's words be-

gan to gain Mildred's attention. With an intuitive keenness, which Jeffry lacked, she sensed a hidden purpose in the talkative man's conversation. Her interest banished her timidity, and throughout Smith's rambling narratives she slyly studied Jeffry's face, which was reflected in the mirror opposite the trio.

"Hardened and unfeeling!" was her sick thought, seeing no outward expression on Jeffry's face to indicate that he caught the significance of Smith's in-

nuendoes.

Mrs. Thadeus put an abrupt end to the one-sided conversation by appearing and escorting her niece back to their stateroom. Smith urged Jeffry to join him in the smoking room. Anxious to be alone with his thoughts, he declined with curt brevity and hastened to his own section.

Although his berth had been made up long since, there was something in its condition that appeared unusual when he snapped on the light. Assigning it to overhaste on the porter's part, he partially disrobed; then delved into his suit case for pajamas and revolver. To his surprise the automatic was gone, and no amount of search brought it to view.

CHAPTER VI.

SLEEP did not come quickly to either Jeffry or Mildred. Not only did each figure prominently in the thoughts of the other, but Smith had ruffled Jeffry's feelings almost beyond endurance, and the latter's opinion of that loquacious gentleman was neither polite nor complimentary. In addition to this the missing weapon was a disturbing feature.

Yet, for all these incidental troubles, the fact that he had not been molested the previous night, together with a chance remark overheard between conductor and porfer anent the mysterious departure of lower seven's occupant, assured Jeffry that he might dismiss all anticipation of danger for that night.

Composed by this decision, he was soon lost in healthy sleep—but not for long. His slumber was broken by some one shaking his shoulder in no gentle manner. As he batted the sleep from his eyelids he felt a cold ring pressing against his left temple. Darkness rendered everything indistinguishable, yet no illustrated interpretation was needed to tell him he was at the mercy of a gun.

"Come across with that plant of yours! Show

speed!" growled a muffled voice.

Jeffry's first reckless impulse was to resist; the chilling pressure at his temple argued for discretion. Furthermore, he remembered that he had forgotten to unpin the secret packet from his dress shirt when he retired. For the intruder's benefit he began a slow, fumbling search beneath the pillows.

"It's gone!" he whispered at length. "Somebody's

robbed me already-"

"Cut your stalling; dig it up!" rasped the unknown, a harder pressure on Jeffry's temple emphasizing the order.

"Search for yourself, if you don't believe me. I stuck it under the pillow; now it's gone," bluffed Jeffry.

The robber ran his free hand over and under the pillows. Anger was apparent in his heavy breathing. "Turn your face to the wall!" he growled.

Jeffry obeyed, the ring shifting from temple to shoulder blades while the robber searched through the layers of bedding. Some one passed in the aisle. Jeffry was sure the footsteps paused an instant by his berth; he could feel the robber stiffen. A door latch clicked.

The robber, still keeping his weapon at ready, peered past the edge of the curtains; then, to Jeffry's relief, disappeared in a single noiseless leap.

Jeffry disentangled his feet from the bedclothes and crawled quickly out of his berth. He was positive that his assailant had gone through the rear corridor, yet he found the smoking room vacant except for the blanketed form of the porter; a gargling snore announced his condition.

After a glance into the vestibule Jeffry returned to his berth to discover Smith, enveloped in a gaudy bathrobe, shuffling down the dim-lit aisle. That Smith was an occupant of the car ahead did not occur to Jeffry; nor did he suspicion anything amiss when that individual whispered:

"Happened to look out a minute ago—saw some masked fellow cut loose from here in a hurry. Been robbed?"

"Not that I know of; something scared the man

away. There's nothing missing."

"Sure? Better take a good look; I'll help you. We can't afford to let any robbers get away while there's a show to catch them," advised Smith.

Jeffry flashed him a look of suspicious anger. Smith snapped on the berth light himself.

"I'll do my own searching, if you please," growled Jeffry, crowding in front of Smith.

He flipped back the pillows to expose his watch and wallet as he had left them. Next he withdrew his dress shirt from the net hammock, merely intending to note that the packet was safe without exposing it to Smith's observant eyes. The garment felt light; no weight at all. He ran his hand down over its folds, then swore; the packet was gone. Even the pins which had held it had been carefully removed from the shirt.

"Nick you after all?" queried Smith.

Jeffry nodded, a lump clogging his throat.

"Anything valuable?" Smith's voice rang with sympathy too well assimulated for Jeffry to penetrate.

Realization of what the packet meant to him awakened Jeffry to the fact that he dare not explain what it was or was for. His fee depended entirely upon its faithful and secret delivery. Smith, with his usual persistence, fell to researching the berth.

Jeffry glared down upon the broad back, suspicion fanned into greater flame by memory of Rippe's advice. He consulted his watch; less than six hours more and the first lap of his journey would end. The packet must be recovered in that time, else his mission would spell misfortune in blacker letters than before. Gritting his teeth, he wished that Smith were buried, together with his inquisitiveness, in the snowdrifts through which the train was then passing.

"I'm going to roll in," announced Jeffry sourly.
"I'll thank you to leave me to myself. My loss does not amount to much; the thief is welcome!"

Smith exhibited genuine surprise. Then, with what

Jeffry construed to be a derisive chuckle, scuffed away in the direction whence he had come.

Jeffry crawled back into his berth to battle with his disappointment. An examination of his wallet showed that a major portion of the five hundred still remained.

"You're a mighty sick-looking substitute for five thousand," he muttered irritably as he slammed the wallet back behind the pillows.

Sleep was out of the question. Rolling to the inner edge of the berth, he buried his face in his arm and

gave way to bitter reflection.

The ceaseless motion of the train was gradually soothing his overwrought nerves when fresh trials began. Again something moved behind his head. He listened without breathing. Convinced that the gunman had returned, he changed his position in time to see four slender objects showing in bold relief against the background of dark curtains. The objects shortened to mere spots. He realized that they were finger tips disappearing where the curtains joined; but to avoid a repetition of his first night's error he waited, every muscle tense.

The train struck a sharp curve, causing some person or object to lurch against his berth. He clutched at the protuberance in the curtain, his fingers closing around an arm—an arm with flesh too soft and yielding to be a man's. Instantly there was a frantic struggle. He tried to pull the intruder into the berth, but the thick, stiff curtains hampered his grip and the arm soon slipped away. By the time he parted the curtains the aisle was empty.

He seized his overcoat, with the intention of exploring the entire train, halting, however, as his eyes rested on the door of stateroom A. For several minutes he stared without moving, his mind actively reviewing the incidents in which the girl had played a mystifying part.

At last he returned to bed in no enviable temper, and dozed in fitful naps until after seven. Then ill fortune showed its claws once more; his wallet was gone.

Stunned, he ordered the porter to put away the berth at once, watching anxiously as each sheet and blanket was shaken and folded, yet the wallet did not materialize.

A curse of despair welled in his heart. This last misfortune was sickening. The loss of the packet was bad enough, but he would now land, ticketless, moneyless, two thousand miles from home, a thousand miles from his destination. Settling heavily into his seat, he buried his face in his hands.

An hour slipped by, though he did not move. The porter approached, armed with whiskbroom and brush. The Limited, now within the city limits, clattered through yards, rumbled over street bridges, echoed past snow-covered buildings.

Jeffry declined with an apathetic shake of his head which the porter did not heed, but proceeded to wield his dust weapons vigorously, at the same time whispering: "De fat man am a detectif, boss!"

A perplexed light supplanted the shadow in Jeffry's eyes as he caught the import of the darky's words. The latter was adding an extra touch to the polished shoes; he regarded the bent form with a doubtful stare.

What did a detective want with him? Was it some new trick to defeat his purpose? What difference did it make, anyway? Jeffry's smile became cynical. Let them come! His cause was lost, the packet stolen, his money gone-

"Am dis yo's, sah?"

The porter rose and held out his hand. Jeffry wanted to shout, for the hand contained the missing packet.

"Where did you get it?" demanded Jeffry.

"Under yo' seat, sah."

Jeffry examined the packet. It appeared to be in its original condition, and he accepted the porter's statement without comment,

Some light object struck the back of his head. Facing about, he was just in time to see Mildred shake her head and vanish through the door of stateroom A. Before he could concentrate his thought on this peculiar action a voice boomed behind him:

"Well, Milne, we'll soon be able to stretch our legs on solid ground again; never did like long trips my-

self. Picked out a place to stop yet?"

Smith, ready for the street, had entered from the forward car. Jeffry scowled his displeasure; the stocky man was proving to be a vexatious pest despite his jocundity.

"I've some business calls in mind; my plans afterward will depend upon results," replied Jeffry after a pause, coolness dominating his tone.

Smith grinned good-naturedly.

A shadow darkened the car as the Limited entered the train shed, the aisle filling immediately with eager passengers. Smith moved toward the rear, pressing against Jeffry as he did so. Anxious to be alone, Jeffry stepped aside to permit those behind him to pass; to his disgust Smith halted also.

"Tis sort of crowded, ain't it?" chuckled the latter.

"Guess I'll wait myself."

"Wait till you choke!" muttered Jeffry, and aggressively shouldered his way past Smith, heading for the front door.

Another chuckle caused him to see red; it warned him that Smith was still tagging his footsteps.

"Had breakfast?"

The words were uttered almost in Jeffry's ear as he strode toward the exit gate. Out of the tail of his eye he saw Smith at his elbow.

"No !"

"Better come with me; my treat, you know."

"No, thanks, I haven't the time," answered Jeffry, adding to himself, "nor the inclination."

"Suppose I insist?"

The cords on Jeffry's lean jaws tightened; his only

answer was to quicken his stride.

"Not so fast, young man!" Smith's voice, no longer jovial, had a steely ring. His eyes, too, were bereft of their humorous twinkle. "Better accept my invite quietly; it'll save a scene if you do."

"Kindly mind your own business!" snapped Jeffry,

beginning to show fight.

"You've said it. I'm doing that very thing. Just step over to headquarters with me and explain some things they'd like to know If your conscience is clear, you needn't worry; they won't detain you long," answered Smith. "But don't start any rough-house stuff unless you want to be ironed with all this crowd

looking on," he warned.

Jeffry wheeled, planting himself directly in Smith's path. Their eyes clashed, the former's blazing with intense anger, Smith's cool, imperturbable. Jeffry caught his breath to say something, but Rippe's everpresent advice checked the words. In addition the occupants of stateroom A passed, a world of pity and anxiety registered in Mildred's eyes.

The expression was not lost upon Jeffry, who moved

on, fighting for self-control.

"Just one question," he demanded of Smith as the two entered the concourse. "Have you the authority to detain me?"

"Surest thing you know, and it's backed by the A. B. A. and the Brann Detective Agency!" responded Smith.

Jeffry's eyes widened; then gradually became normal. Though he made no comment, his mind was too busy. Smith piloted him to Madison Street and into the nearest taxicab.

"Moon Building," he ordered as the chauffeur closed the door. Turning to Jeffry, he vouchsafed: "We'll run up and see Brann first. If anything's turned up in your favor, you may dodge central station after all."

Jeffry paid no attention to Smith's prattle; matters of greater weight occupied his mind. The clock in the concourse had indicated nine-ten, which meant that his scheduled New York train would leave within an hour and a half. This furnished food for deliberation.

He now had the secret packet, yet an opposing factor lay in the loss of money and ticket. Under these circumstances a dash for freedom would avail little or nothing. Nevertheless prompt action was urgent, for delay simply courted failure.

He entertained no personal fear over his arrest; all he desired was a chance to deliver the packet on time and receive his fee. His sense of responsibility thus relieved, he cared little for whatever charge had been trumped up against him.

While he pondered the cab whisked over the bridge, crept along with eastbound traffic, turned south into Dearborn; then, passing the post office, wheeled to the west curb and stopped.

He decided to make his dash the instant he left the cab, but he reckoned without hope. Too wary a veteran to leave such loopholes open, Smith backed out first, waiting till Jeffry joined him. In crossing the walk he crowded so close to his captive that the slightest tensing of muscles would have warned him of any undesired move on Jeffry's part. Both entered the same sector of the revolving door, emerging into the rotunda together.

A waiting express elevator whisked them upward, stopping at the twelfth landing in response to Smith's request. Smith then led the way to a door far down the hallway, where profuse lettering announced the place to be headquarters for the Brann Detective Agency.

Within, Smith piloted his man into an inner office, apparently a filing room and tenanted by an all-tooevident human watchdog. From beyond one partition came sounds of loud male voices punctuated by detective phraseology.

"Brann in?" inquired Smith of the lone man in

sight.

The latter nodded, whereupon Smith crossed the room and rapped on a closed door. A buzzer sounded and the door swung inward, Smith indicating with a toss of his head that Jeffry was to enter.

As both passed in Jeffry noted that the door jambs and edges were padded and that thick linoleum covered the floor of the last room. Two windows opened upon a narrow alley, revealing the roof of a lower building beyond. A desk stood between these windows, and seated in a swivel chair before it was a wiry-looking man whose iron-gray hair rose from his heavy forehead in a bristling pompadour.

"Good morning, Brann. Meet Mr. Jeffry, alias

Milne, of San Francisco," greeted Smith.

"Pleased to meet you, Jeffry; indeed I am! Have a seat." The pompadoured one fixed his disconcerting eyes upon Jeffry's face and pointed to a chair at the end of the desk.

Jeffry gulped in spite of himself as he accepted the seat. There had been an ominous click when the door closed, and the deadness of sound within the room was apparent.

"Got your instructions Wednesday in Denver just in time to make Cheyenne for the Overland. Found your man trying to play some Brodie stuff off the end of the train. He's got me fussed up on a few points, but I guess he'll be willing to explain 'em to you. Here's his bank roll and artillery."

Smith deposited the missing wallet and automatic on the desk, the sight of them bringing Jeffry to his feet with an angry shout. Brann darted him a threatening look, then inspected the large-calibered weapon.

"You believe in traveling well heeled," he sneered. Jeffry subsided, wisdom rather than fear controlling his impulse to wreak vengeance upon his captors.

"I'll thank you to show me by what authority you deliberately rob an inoffensive passenger on a public train!" he demanded of Smith.

Smith merely chuckled in his inimitable way.

"Take off that overcoat, young fellow; then you won't feel so warm," advised Brann.

"Not till you thugs answer my question, as any gentleman should!" Jeffry would have been a formidable antagonist in any other spot than where he was.

"It happens that answers are not in our line," retorted Brann. "Our business is to ask questions; you do the answering. Get that?"

Jeffry's contempt was plain in his eyes.

"Ever hear of the Drovers' & Growers' National Bank out where you came from?"

"I might have."

"What was your reason for pulling out of Frisco in such a hurry?"

"None of your business!"

Brann's thin lips tightened. He exchanged meaning looks with Smith; then, picking up the wallet, dumped its contents upon the desk. The penciled words "Thursday without fail" on the time-table leaf attracted his attention.

"Not much time left to make your train in," he remarked, looking at his watch.

Jeffry remained silent. Smith seized the suit case

and opened it beside the swivel chair. Brann removed and inspected each item it contained. When through, he commented in a tone designed to chafe the raw spots of his captive's temper: "Traveling unlabeled, eh?"

Still no reply.

"Inclined to be stubborn, are you?"

Jeffry, hoping against hope, chose silence as his barricade.

The swivel chair creaked, and Smith caught a significant gesture from his chief.

"Take off that coat!" snapped Brann.

Jeffry's heart sank. This meant a bodily search, and the final end of the packet. He rose to his feet as Brann and Smith began a whispered consultation. The sight gave him an idea. Withdrawing his left arm first, then half turning to screen his act, he quickly transferred the packet into the right sleeve of his sack coat, and shed the heavier garment entirely.

"Hand it here," demanded Brann. "Now look

him over, Smith," he ordered.

Smith went at his task with good-humored thoroughness. Not a pocket escaped him; he fingered the linings of coat and vest, squeezed the shoulder padding, passed his hand under the armpits and down the trunk, even removing the captive's shoes. But the wisest of detectives are not immune to mistakes, and because Smith overlooked that right coat sleeve his search was not a success.

Neither did the overcoat reveal any clew to Brann, who rose menacingly to his feet when Smith finished. The latter understood what was to ensue, and stepped

behind Jeffry's chair.

"Sit down!" thundered Brann, striving to intimidate Jeffry with a look. "Now what have you done with that money you took from the bank messenger?" he demanded.

"The money I took—what are you giving me?" exclaimed Jeffry, surprised into speech by the unexpected question.

Brann made a signal. Smith grabbed Jeffry's col-

lar jerking him back in the chair.

"Don't lie to me!" roared Brann. "You rob the Drovers' & Growers' messenger in Frisco Monday morning; Thursday morning I catch you with less than five hundred dollars. Speak up, you crook! Where have you planted the rest of that two hundred and fifty thousand?"

Amazement rendered Jeffry dumb. Smith tightened his grip until his prisoner was half strangled, and for two nerve-racking hours Jeffry sat through a gruelling third degree, coming off temporary victor.

"Take him over to Central!" ordered Brann at last, hoarse and exhausted from his useless effort. "Book him on a fugitive warrant till a Frisco man gets here."

Smith tapped Jeffry's shoulder. "Sorry, old top, but orders is orders. Get your junk together and we'll ramble. If you agree not to get hippeconorious, I'll take you along informally."

"Suit yourself," muttered Jeffry. "You seem to have it your way now, but, mark my word"—his voice rose—"when my turn comes some of you fresh guys are going to eat some of your own poison!"

After he donned his overcoat and jammed his

possessions back in the suit case he added: "Do I

get my money back?"

"All in good time, son," grinned Smith. "I'll let Central's desk sergeant put it on ice for a while; you might get reckless and go broke, you know."

As they passed out into the hall once more an A. D. T. messenger brushed by them on his way in. A descending car stopped when they approached. Smith waved it away and pressed another button, saying: "We'll take an express—less crowding."

Suit case in hand, Jeffry stared at the nearest indicator, beneath which glowed a red light—16—15—

"Oh, Smith!" called a voice down the hall.

Smith turned to face the caller, who was coming toward him. The express elevator stopped; its door banged open.

"Down?"—impatiently.

Smith shook his head, his attention on the approaching clerk. Jeffry, between his guardian and the elevator, sensed rather than saw the golden opportunity about to vanish. A single, lightning leap and he was in the car, its door grazing his back as it slammed shut behind him.

CHAPTER VII.

IT makes my partner sore when I don't wait for him," grinned Jeffry to the operator as the echo of a wild yell wafted down to the descending car.

With a face otherwise impassive the operator craftily drooped one eyelid, causing Jeffry to sober in alarm. The instant the elevator stopped he bounded out, plunging through the revolving door at a run. A northbound trolley was just passing; he caught it by sprinting, only to recall his financial condition the moment he stepped aboard.

Keeping his eyes focused on the Moon Building entrance, he made a pretense of searching his pockets. When the car crossed Jackson Street he breathed an excuse to the expectant conductor, who let him off at Quincy. Simultaneously Smith catapulted from the Moon Building entrance, a performance which sent Jeffry hurrying toward State Street.

Realization that he had no definite course outlined caused his footsteps to lag, while his mind groped for a way out.

"Taxi, sir?"

The voice drew his attention to an unengaged cab he was passing. It was a chance to get out of the danger zone, and without hesitating he jerked open the door, exclaiming: "Yes. To the—ah—Park Row Depot. Hurry!"

Shut in from prying eyes, he found himself better able to study the situation. He had taken a blind plunge. From now on he would have to trust to his luck and wits to bring him to the surface in less troubled waters.

As the car spun into Michigan Avenue it dawned upon him that he was staring straight at an inspiration. Tucked in the window at the chauffeur's back was a folded paper, its exposed column displaying the time schedule of a New York limited, a train that would land him in New York even earlier than the time set in his instructions.

A glance at his watch apprised him that it was

then twelve-ten; the Limited would leave in thirty minutes.

But where was his ticket to come from?

The question struck his rising hope like an icy douche. An idea guided his hand to his watch, his most cherished possession; he fondled it lovingly. If he won, his sentiment would not suffer. The chance was worth taking; it must be taken.

He tapped on the window, motioning for a stop. He was out on the running board before the car

reached a standstill at the curb.

"Say, driver," he cried, "you're in a position to make or break me. I've got to be in New York by morning or lose five thousand real dollars. Last night I was touched for my money and ticket; now just burn the ground to the best hock shop you know of or we both lose!"

The chauffeur leered with skeptical sarcasm. Reassured in spite of precedent by Jeffry's unflinching eyes, he stepped on the clutch and turned northward. When the car again stopped, Jeffry found himself in front of the welcome watch-and-diamond cluttered window of an embarrassed man's haven. Crying "Wait!" to the driver, he disappeared within the gilt-lettered doors.

"A hurry loan, uncle. How much on this watch?" he panted to a jaundiced edition of an ancient race.

With slow, methodical caution, born of years of crafty experience, the pawnbroker delved into the solid-gold time piece which Jeffry deposited on the counter mat.

"How mooch you vant?" inquired the loan merchant, his inspection concluded.

"Fifty will do"—eagerly.

"Fifdy tollars! I couldn't do id!" The wizened old man snapped the cases shut and pushed the watch back.

"But, uncle, you aren't going to lose a bean; it'll only be for a couple of—"

"I couldn't do id; id's too mooch moneys," whined the other with a typical uplift of his hands.

Jeffry cast a nervous glance at the big regulator, which was creeping to the twenty-five-minute mark.

"What the devil are you scared of?" he grumbled. "Why, it's worth five times fifty! On top of that I'll have five thousand by this time to-morrow, if I don't miss this next train to New York. Come, jar loose! I'll pay you back seventy-five—yes, a——"

"I couldn't do id."

Jeffry's anger boiled up. In desperation he added, one at a time, his watch chain, cuff links, scarfpin, card case; lastly his class badge. As he laid each article beside the watch he flashed a pleading look at the bespectacled pawnbroker's face. Each time the latter shook his head.

Five more minutes had slipped away. Jeffry was actually perspiring.

"For the love of an iceberg, what will you give?" Again the old man repeated his provokingly slow inspection, weighing, testing, examining. Jeffry could see the chauffeur peering anxiously toward the door from the cab; he waved a reassuring hand.

"I'll gif you twendy tollars."

Jeffry stared in speechless anger. He was tempted to choke the old shylock, but reason urged him to remain cool if he would expect to win his point:

A compromise was reached at twelve-thirty. At twelve-thirty-two Jeffry lunged back into the taxicab, shouting: "Pennsylvania Depot. Step on her hard!"

As a narrow-margin train catcher he was becoming an all-star performer. In his mad rush for the ticket office he bowled inoffensive people right and left, almost falling headlong down the depot stairs in his haste.

Then, grasping the last lone remnant of his recently acquired capital in one hand, his suit case in the other, his ticket in his teeth, he stumbled up the steps of the New York sleeper as its wheels began to turn.

The following morning, as the Limited rumbled through its North River tube, Jeffry was far from satisfied. In spite of his successful escape from Smith's clutches, nothing short of the expected five thousand would have served as a stimulus in his present mood. Having eaten nothing since his last dinner on the Overland, his compulsory fast since then was not conducive to cheerfulness.

In anticipation of luxuries soon to be enjoyed he ascended to the concourse and strode toward Thirty-third Street with something of his former buoyancy. That he was still being shadowed never occurred to him.

A counter thought halted him as he gingerly fingered his last five-cent piece; then, with a shrug, he wheeled and sought the telephone exchange. True to Rippe's prediction, a feminine voice uttered the mystic words in answer to his call. Eagerness was vibrant in his tone as he repeated his words of identification, his excitement preventing him from noting the speaker's peculiar accent when she told him to come at once to her flat in Washington Street.

He stepped out of the booth, breathing long and deep as the accumulated weight of four strenuous days began to slip from his shoulders. Tempted to whistle some gay tune, he handed his lonesome nickel to the operator and started away.

"Mr. Jeffry, just a minute!"

Jeffry glanced aside at a keen-looking stranger who had touched his elbow. "Were you addressing me?"

"Yes; if you are Mr. Jeffry, of San Francisco, the

inspector wants to see you at once."

Jeffry regarded his informant with a dubious stare, noting at the same time a second stranger who stood suggestively near. Their uncompromising looks chilled his momentary elation.

"If this inspector can wait thirty minutes, I'll favor him; right now I've got an engagement that——"

"You'll have to accept the inspector's invitation

first; we are his officers."

Again Jeffry sensed defeat when victory appeared almost at his finger tips. Everything seemed to revolve in dizzy circles as the detectives elbowed him toward the street. To add to his misery a familiar pair of violet eyes, moist with compassion, grave with reproach, met his as he stepped from the entrance. Dully he noticed that she was making a furtive gesture for his benefit, but before he could interpret them the detectives became suspicious and hurried him to a waiting cab.

At the inspector's headquarters, he was again subjected to a rigid search, which failed to overlook the secret package. Its silk covering was ruthlessly ripped open before his eyes; then, not Jeffry only, but all

within the office received a shock of surprise. The contents consisted of neatly folded strips cut from old newspapers and magazines!

Mrs. Thadeus scolded and remonstrated in vain. Heedless of the bustling crowd, Mildred stood as if transfixed on the open sidewalk, her gaze oblivious to all but the bowed head and drooped shoulders flanked by double escort.

From the car window she had witnessed Jeffry's wild dash for the Limited in the Chicago depot, and had surmised that he was endeavoring to make an eleventh-hour escape. Twice, en route, she had brief glimpses of him, but had misconstrued the cause of his haggard face and worried preoccupation. And on ascending from the train she had seen his visit to the telephone booth, followed by his arrest a moment later.

From the moment she had stammered her warning to him in Oakland mixed emotions had kept her heart in a turmoil. In alternate moods she would first chide herself for harboring such unaccountable interest in a criminal; then her heart would rise in his defense, protesting his innocence with passionate fervor. Repeatedly she had vowed to banish the incident from her memory, convincing herself of the folly of her act, but with undeniable persistence thoughts of him remained uppermost in her mind.

A sensation of anger stirred her being as she watched the detectives usher him into the cab; she breathed a fervent wish that he might again outwit

his captors, regardless of his guilt.

Suddenly her lips parted and her eyes dilated as a daring idea took definite shape in her mind; if it lay within her power to do so, she would end all uncertainty by proving or disproving Jeffry's innocence.

Whispering to her aunt to wait just a moment longer, Mildred disappeared within the depot. Her objective was the telephone exchange, where, by means of an artful excuse, she succeeded in obtaining the telephone number which Jeffry had called. Then she rejoined Mrs. Thadeus, whose matronly grumbling did not cease until long after both were settled at their hotel.

Anxious to learn of Jeffry's latest fate, Mildred searched the afternoon papers, in which she found brief details concerning his escape in Chicago and his incarceration in the Tombs pending an investigation. One point served to tangle the threads her mind was intuitively weaving; that was the revelation of the mysterious packet's contents.

Toward evening she stole down to the office exchange and ventured a call for Gramercy 46975. The operator's statement, "The party has moved,"

again upset her secret calculations.

After a somewhat restless night Mildred determined upon a bold stroke. With an almost willful disregard of her aunt's protests she visited the Tombs, intending to have a frank interview with Jeffry. In this she was disappointed; no one would be permitted to see the prisoner until officers from the West arrived.

Thus balked, but not discouraged, she inquired at telephone headquarters for the address at which 46975 was located. Learning that it was in apartments of no little prominence, she went direct to it

in an easier frame of mind. On arriving there, however, she was told by the switchboard girl that the woman tenant of that particular apartment had moved

at noon the day previous.

This announcement had a depressing effect upon Mildred. That Jeffry should be in league with a woman, that woman a possible accomplice, a companion even, was a phase of the mystery that had not once occurred to her. Her zeal blasted in a single breath, she turned to go, the horizon of her hope no less dark that the leaden sky which canopied the city.

"She was a white woman of refined appearance," the operator was saying, "but her callers were all foreigners—Indians and Hindus they looked like. You and another caller yesterday were the only white people to inquire after her."

The mention of the other white caller halted Mil-

dred's departing steps.

"Was this caller a-woman?" she asked.

"No-a man."

Mildred felt her heart sink.

"He had the ugliest face; I had the creeps for an hour after he left——"

"Was he a large man?" interrupted Mildred in

spite of her effort to appear disinterested.

"Yes, quite stout. He wore a patch over one eye, and a birthmark on his cheek made him positively hideous."

Mildred's face brightened, and she stepped closer. "He called three different times," continued the girl. "He seemed so anxious to find the woman I gave him the address where her trunks went—down on Washington Street, where all the Hindus live. She called herself Madame Said Abu Khan. Some name for a white woman!"

"May I have her address?" begged Mildred eagerly.

"Certainly; that is it, but—"

Mildred seized the proffered slip of paper and hastened to the door, breathing her thanks over her shoulder. The words of the little foreigner who had accosted her in Oakland took on an added significance, increased by the presence of the man with a birthmark and a patched eye on the Overland. The lure of the chase coursed afresh in her veins.

Back at the hotel, she coaxed her aunt to accompany her on a tour of the Oriental quarter, giving a dozen whimsical pretexts as her reasons. Still suffering a nervous reaction resulting from the overland journey, Mrs. Thadeus gave only a deferred promise and reduced her niece to a fever of impatience.

A message from her uncle in no way abated Mildred's unrest. Jason Thadeus' vague intimations, given in choppy telegraphic style, forecasted a quick and drastic fate for Jeffry if evidence were not immediately forthcoming to establish his innocence.

Between her own impatience and the intermittent scolding and complaining of Mrs. Thadeus, Mildred worried through a gloomy afternoon. Finally, taking advantage of a nap which her aunt was taking, she stole from the hotel, resolved upon visiting the strange woman that night.

Evening was well advanced before she succeeded in locating the address she sought, but it was not until she had twice circled the block that she mustered sufficient courage to pass within the building's dingy portals. For several minutes she stood in the lower hall, fighting against a temptation to flee in abject fear.

Uncertain of her bearings, she accosted an urchin who appeared rodentlike out of the hallway darkness. After repeated attempts upon her part to make herself understood, the urchin finally led her to a door in an upper hall.

A heavy tread approached in answer to her timid knock; then the door was jerked open. The sudden flood of light dazzled her for an instant. To her dismay, she saw, not the woman she expected, but the traveler with a disfigured cheek and a patch over one eye.

The startled surprise seemed mutual; each shrank involuntarily on recognizing the other. The man was first to speak.

"G' evening," he muttered thickly.

Mildred shuddered as she caught the fumes of whisky.

"Who you want?" he asked, his one eye half lidded and trained upon her with a glare of suspicion.

"I was told that Madame Khan lived here," answered Mildred, her thoughts clarifying, her voice calm.

"She has—who tell you?" The lone eye popped open.

"The people where she was living previous to yesterday." Mildred's reply was naive, though her mind was puzzling over an elusive resemblance she noticed in the stranger—that profile—if he would only turn his head a little more.

"Madame Said, she go one minute, come back soon; you come in, I call she."

The stranger spoke with exaggerated politeness, yet the conviction that he was shamming grew upon Mildred. She wanted to decline and rush from the building, but was stayed by the fear that an open exhibition of terror would invite danger, which could be averted by appearing trustful and unsuspicious.

"I can only stop a minute. You will please tell the madame that my friends are waiting and to hurry if she can."

if she can."

Again the lone eye glared with distrust. A distrust that was echoed in Mildred's heart as she stepped into the room. The bare, greasy floor and lack of furnishings did not compare favorably with her mental picture of a woman who had just moved from expensive apartments.

The stranger did not ask her to be seated, an oversight which Mildred appreciated after one glance at the squalor about her. Aware that he made no attempt to move, she turned to where he was leaning against the closed door.

"Why you come—who send you?" he asked, keep-

ing his disfigured cheek and eye toward her.

"Why"—innocently—"I have a message for her."
Her answer had an unexpected effect upon him.
After an uneasy start, he stepped toward her, his
eye shifting avariciously from her face to the chatelaine bag dangling from her wrist.

"Have you got a package for her?" he asked in perfect English, then cursed as he realized his slip.

Recognition was plain in Mildred's horrified eyes as she shrank from his advance.

"You!" she gasped. "You-of all people! What will-"

The man leaped, seizing her by the throat, choked back her words, then threw her brutally into a chair.

Too terror-stricken and unnerved to breathe, a call for help, her head drooped limply backward. When she raised it he had a revolver at her temple.

"Come across with that purse!" he growled, snatching it from her before she could comply with his

demand.

One glance at its contents and he dashed it to the

floor, cursing his disappointment.

"Where's the money? Come—dig it up and be quick about it! If you don't, you're going back to your aunt in a coffin!"

Half faint, moaning, Mildred pressed one hand against her bosom. The man leered in triumph as he saw and mistook the gesture of pain.

"That's a good hiding place, but you can just hand it over at once or I'll take it away from you!"

Mildred shook her head. "I can't-I have--"

She attempted to say something, but the shock of

his attack had left her almost speechless.

He waited a moment, though with manifest impatience. As she recovered, she gauged the distance between herself and the door, her mind seeking some excuse to turn his attention for a saving instant.

With a blasphemous curse, his hand again sought her throat as he caught the meaning of her look.

Murder blazed in the single eye of her assailant; then the film of unconsciousness began to glaze the pleading horror in her own eyes.

CHAPTER VIII.

rest and mental misery within the Tombs. Each time a jailor appeared Jeffry would ply him with innumerable questions, though their terse replies brought no assurance. An officer from San Francisco was coming for him, they said, and, as far as their knowledge went, he was up against some pretty stiff charges.

Bewildered, a prey to unnamable fears, Jeffry resigned himself to await the hour of his enlightenment. Late the second evening, just as he was falling into a doze, his cell door swung open and he was ordered to the office.

As he stood blinking at the desk lights, the keeper handed him his suit case and overcoat, and he was informed that he was free to go.

Although gladdened by his unexpected release, Jeffry begged for a reason. In reply they escorted him to the street, gruffly advising him not to ask foolish questions. They could not tell him that Western authorities had requested his immediate release and that a Western detective had arrived who would keep him under strict surveillance pending further orders.

A nasty, sleet-laden wind chilled the night as Jeffry emerged upon the street. Bundling himself up, he headed aimlessly uptown, his mind brooding over his unenviable situation. He had not a penny left. Every ounce of jewelry was in pawn in Chicago. Worst of all, the secret packet, having proved worthless, was no longer an open sesame to the five-thousand-dollar reward. At the very best it looked like a night in the streets for him.

His disconsolate steps led him into Union Square, where, sheltering himself from the wind, he fell to exploring his pockets. It was wasted effort; they were as poverty-stricken as the proverbial cupboard was boneless. He thought to pawn the suit case, but a glance at that travel-worn piece of luggage disabused all hope on that score.

The alternative of telegraphing his woes to his uncle lay open to him; twice he was on the verge of doing so, only to spurn the temptation. His hazardous crosscountry journey had aroused a dormant streak of

stubborn pride.

With a defiant toss of his shoulders he struck out for Washington Street, resolved upon discharging his sense of responsibility and honor by explaining his loss to the strange woman. After that he would relieve his financial strait by the first honest means which he might find to tackle. In his own muttered words, "He would show them all!"

He reached Washington Street through Christopher and turned south. As he passed from door to door in search of the address, which he still remembered, the sudden transition from a modern world into an Orient of other decades gave him a sensation of uncanniness.

When at last he halted in front of the number he sought, he gazed upon the grimy-looking building, distrust in his eyes. He would have felt less uneasy had the structure appeared more pretentious; his entrance into its dark, foul-smelling, unheated hallway did not increase his confidence, But bolstering up his courage, he started up the rickety stairway. At the third landing, he paused, muttering: "Now, the third door to my right. Brrrrr! Here goes before I lose my goat!"

A thin seam of light was visible beneath the door which he counted off as the third one. Before raising his hand to knock he listened for some sound within. Everything seemed quiet. His hand trembled, and the light tap he administered was far from bold.

There came a sudden, violent scraping as of feet; then profound stillness. He tapped again, louder. Something dropped upon the floor, yet no answer was forthcoming. After considerable hesitation he raised his hand for a third rap. A sibilant whisper checked him.

"Who come?" it asked.

"It's Jeff—uh—Milne—er—no; it's Khan it be!" he stammered.

A startled exclamation reached his ears; he listened for advancing footsteps which did not come.

"Say, whoever you are," he called, "I'm Rippe's man, and I want to see the party 'It is Said' right away; I've had some hard luck."

A near-by door opened so stealthily he failed to hear it; a pronounced creak on the stairs, however, set his nerves to tingling. He wheeled, back to the wall, striving to penetrate the darkness.

"You no go; I open door-soon," repeated the whis-

per, seemingly beyond the door.

Jeffry grunted and dropped his suit case with a thud, a thud that drowned the scrape of stalking footsteps. Another interval of silence roused his anger. He groped for the doorknob, at the same time stooping to recover his suit case. It was a fortuitous move, for something whistled through the air where his head

had been, the release of pent-up breath warning him that the thrower was close at and.

A moan, followed by a gasping cry for help, issued from the room, diverting his thoughts from his own danger. He gave the knob a quick turn, to find the door locked. Another gasping moan decided him; one heave with his powerful shoulders and he was through.

The sight of Mildred, bound in a chair across the room, startled him into a transitory pause; he had expected to find a stranger. He had just time to note the relief in Mildred's eyes when an object hurtled from a doorway behind her; striking an oil lamp which stood upon a broken dresser, it plunged the room into Stygian blackness.

The crash of broken glass sounded above Mildred's faint scream. Instinctively Jeffry crouched, attempting to shed his heavy overcoat and at the same time keep the points of direction fixed in his mind.

A pencil of light from a flash lamp illumined him for one fleet instant; then some one leaped upon him in the darkness which followed. In his crouched position he had the advantage. Expecting to feel the searing thrust of a dagger point, he dropped over on his side.

The assailant tripped over him and stumbled against the opposite wall. Now free of the cumbersome overcoat, Jeffry listened intently for the location of his enemy; Mildred's sobbing respirations was all he heard. He moved stealthily in her direction, not daring to speak, but anxious to protect her.

An audible intake of breath close to his ear caused him to stiffen. The next instant something struck his head a terrific blow, a dazzling flare lit the room, a thunderous roar shook the walls; then oblivion.

For a long time after consciousness began to revive Jeffry's mind he lay without moving, his eyes closed, his hazy thoughts groping after the lost thread of memory.

He was aware that he was dressed, but lying upon a bed, that the room was warm and clean smelling, that his head was bandaged and ached, and, except for a dull, muffled rumble of traffic, that all was quiet.

He opened his eyes, sitting bolt upright in astonishment as he recognized a man who was sitting beside the bed. It was Smith, whose broad grin expanded into a chuckle at the sight of Jeffry's surprise.

"'Smatter, old top? Are you thinking I'm hard to shake?" queried Smith in a jovial way.

"Well, say--"

"You bet—I say you ought to see how foolish you've been to run away from me so ungratefully and get into all this slam-on-the-bean racket. Here it is, sun-up, and you wasting a whole night coming out of your trance. Bul-lieve me, though, you're some lucky guy! That fellow put plenty of effect into his affection when he caressed your dome with the butt of his gun! How do you feel?"

"All right—I guess." Jeffry fingered his bandaged head, surveying the room as he did so. "But what place is this, and what are you butting in again for?"

"Heigh, ho! Listen to him growl, when, if I hadn't butted in, he'd be garnishing a morgue slab instead of a bed in a first-class hotel!" cried Smith in mock offense. "Old boy, I drifted into that Hindu joint too

late to save you the knock-out, but I stopped his intended carving operations with a bullet."

"I'm not disputing your word on that point. What's bothering me is why you were there at all. What's your idea in trailing me around like I'm a criminal? Put me next to your reasons, then maybe I'll thank you—"

"Ah! Now my headstrong friend is beginning to talk rational," interrupted Smith. "Well——"

"Where is the girl—who is she and how did she get there? Was she hurt?" fired Jeffry as full memory came back to him with a rush.

Smith's eyes twinkled wisely. "Down in front, boy! Don't get excited. She's liable to tell you herself later on. In the meantime I want some info myself. You've got an uncle up Seattle way that's some log roller, haven't you?"

"If you mean Gorman Bradshaw—he's my uncle."

"And you tried to touch him for a thousand, but he only slips you five bones and some good advice, eh?"

"Yes, but---"

"And you're tamping Frisco pavements trying to pull down from some of the spongers that helped you blow your stake, but none of 'em is able to speak above a jitney whisper. Am I following your trail?"

Jeffry nodded, though resentment gleamed in his

eyes.

"And a young piker by the name of Thrippert, who works for old Thadeus, has harpooned you for so much good money that you give him a hurry call. He can't see you at all, so you exchange some impolite words; then you go tearing for the ferry like a peeved bull.

"All this time you're so anxious to make big money easy and quick that when a con man plays you as a fall guy on a big steal you swallow the whole can of bait just because he says you're to get five thou for running a little errand. I'm not making any mistake, am I?" purred Smith.

"No," muttered Jeffry, decidedly uncomfortable.

"All right, then. Listen to this." Smith leaned forward in his chair. "That nice old man you meet on the ferryboat is young Thrippert's dad; he just chopped the head and tail off his name and called himself Rippe."

Jeffry looked his amazement.

"Yes, indeed," continued Smith. "And this Rippe, we'll call him, believed in living by his wits as long as the system didn't land him in jail; but, like all of his kind, he finally played the wrong card. He was strong on traveling. Over in India he gets in with a white woman who had married a Hindu, thinking he was rich. All he had, though, was a lot of land with a mine of some kind on it, and when the wife demanded him to turn the mine into cash the trouble bus drove in loaded to the roof.

"It seems that the mine was located on some ground that those Hindus claim is holy; they say one of their high moguls passed in his checks and was buried there back in Noah's time. This white woman's hubby—Said Abu Khan's his name—promised 'em he'd always hold the place sacred to his nibs, the mogul.

"Things go all right till friend Khan takes a notion to die; then wifey calls in a lawyer and has the whole business, mine and all, cinched in her name. After the funeral she tries to sell out, but everybody in that neck of the woods is wise to the trouble it would start, so the only sucker she can find is Rippe. He hasn't any capital himself, nor any credit, which she doesn't happen to know. However, he looks the proposition over on the Q T, and sees a fat million in it if he can make a deal with her.

"Meanwhile the snake charmers wise up to what is coming off and block the game for a minute by running Rippe and the woman out of the country. The two land here in New York; then he tries his flim-flam tactics on her. She had his number, though; sets her price at two hundred and fifty thousand and sticks to it.

"That puts old Rippe to scratching his noodle and gives him the idea of getting his son to help him out. He rigs the woman out in a comfortable apartment, then hikes for Frisco, giving her to believe that he's going to raise money on his Western property. All this time the coffee-colored fanatics have their noses right on his trail.

"When father and son talk the proposition over they can't scheme out any legitimate game for raising the money, so they dope out a plan for sticking up the bank. Young Thrippert has been with Thadeus for several years and stands solid with his boss and the bank, too; so, knowing that Thadeus always sent his niece to the bank every morning at ten and then went out himself, the young fellow figures to pull the stunt the next morning.

"As soon as Thadeus and the girl left, Thrippert sends in the phone order, which goes because the boss has done it before with smaller sums. The idea was to have Rippe waiting down at the entrance to the building; then, when the messenger arrived, Thrip would knock him over when he wasn't looking, rush to the street, slip the coin to his dad, then call in the police, giving them a gag about a masked man holding up the office.

"You butted in with your tale of woe just before the messenger arrived. Thrippert was sore because he was afraid your presence was going to queer his game; that's the reason he showed fight. Along comes the messenger and is ushered into Thadeus' private office; then, after you and Thrippert call each other some more names, young Thrip ducks out to the corridor and slips into the private office that way; he's just lucky enough to do it without being seen. He does it so easy that the messenger, who is reading a paper by Thadeus' desk, didn't even look up.

"Thrippert didn't aim to kill the messenger when he hit him, but in the excitement and hurry he hit too hard. You played right into his hand by making that wild-man get-away yourself after he had taken the money to his dad and called the police. He told his story to suit the occasion.

"Rippe got to the ferry ahead of you, intending to go through to New York with the money himself. He changed his mind when he spotted a couple of Hindus who were on his trail. The letter you dropped when you made your grand-stand leap to the boat gave him a fine idea. I'm guessing, though, that if he'd known you had just called on his son he'd 'a' dodged you like poison.

"When you signed on with him he tipped the woman off by telegraph that you were coming, starts you on

the road, then lays low until he can shake the Hindus and get through to the woman himself a day or so later.

"The police picked you as the man they wanted, so between them and the Hindus on Rippe's trail you have a nice little run for your money, and, by the way, didn't one of them cranks try to get you that morning out of Cheyenne?"

"Yes; that is, I guess it was one of them--"

"I thought so. A freight crew picked him up later his neck was broken.

"Well, about two hours after you shake me in Chicago we hear from Rippe; the Hindus got him just as he was leaving the city. He lived long enough to make a confession that explained a good deal, but didn't quite clear you; then he goes out without telling anybody where that two hundred and fifty thousand went to.

"Along with this news comes an order from your uncle; he's got wind of the rumpus and went at the police red-eyed, declaring you were a damn fool but nothing worse. I got my orders to get hold of you and make things right if you were actually innocent. You were released from jail in hopes that you would lead me to the money; I didn't figure you had it after the packet showed up phony, but I had a hunch you'd be making a bee line for the party I did want.

"My hunch wasn't exactly correct, although it did you a good turn. When we washed all the paint and other disguises off the chap I shot down on Washington Street last night we found young Thripper. He didn't have much talk left in him, but before he slipped his cable he explained most of the tangle. He told how the trick was worked, and how scared he was when he found he'd killed his man.

"As an excuse to make a quick get-away he pretended to be upset because he had so foolishly left the messenger unprotected while he went after the police. He begged Thadeus to let him hunt you down by himself. When the old man consented Thrip performed an expert job of disguising and left on the same train you took.

"He said he saw you making a flash with large bills, and, knowing nothing about his dad's arrangements, he thought you had actually gotten the loot yourself. He told me he tried two or three times to stick you up in your berth.

"He knew the woman's address, but when he got to New York he found that the Hindus had enticed her away to Washington Street. Down there he learned that they had run her off and had set a trap to catch you when you arrived. Your arrest blocked their game and they disappeared.

"All this made him desperate, especially when he got the tip that you were supposed to have the money. For that reason he made up his mind to wait a few days down at the Hindu layout to see if anything would turn up; his idea was to nick you for the roll and get out of the country—"

"But what has the girl got to do with the game? Is she the niece of this broker, Thadeus? You've told me your yarn without explaining why I find her roped down to a chair where I'm supposed to find this Khan the Said woman or whatever you call her," interrupted Jeffry, sitting up in bed.

"You'd better ask her that question; maybe she can answer it more satisfactorily firsthand," replied Smith with a droll grin. "She seems to have a sisterly interest in you—wouldn't let 'em take you to a hospital—but that's in her story, not mine. What I'm wanting to know is, have you the least idea where all that coin has disappeared to? Didn't Rippe give you any hint?"

"Not a tip, except the traveling expenses which you lifted in Chicago and the five thousand I don't get after all the abuse I've stood for," grumbled Jeffry.

"Your luck is certainly noticeable for its tough-

ness," sympathized Smith, sobering.

"Muchisimo tough, I call it," corrected Jeffry.

"Here I am, a busted head and pocketbook, my collateral hocked, my wardrobe on my back—not even a clean shirt left—"

A gentle tapping on the door interrupted.

"Come in!" called Smith.

The door opened to admit Mildred Thadeus, followed by a bell boy with the bepostered suit case. The sight of Jeffry sitting up disconcerted her.

"How are you?" she asked, halting just within the

door.

"Instantaneously cured," declared Jeffry, his eyes

saying far more.

"I—well, I felt so grateful for your timely interference last night that I wanted to repay you—"
She hesitated. The bell boy put down the suit case and left.

"All I could find to do was to bring in your suit

case," she finished with an embarrassed laugh.

Jeffry stood up and favored the suit case with a sour grimace. "I assure you both," he said, addressing his two visitors, but bowing to Mildred, "that I appreciate your kindness. If you will pardon me, though, I'm going to express my heartfelt opinion of Rippe and all of his ilk. This is what I wish I could have done to them."

Demonstrating his words, Jeffry swung a savage kick at the suit case by Smith's chair. It struck the dresser, spinning, caromed from there, and smashed against the escritoire, where it seemed literally to fall apart.

"Suffering fleas!"—Smith.

A squeak of excitement from Mildred.

Jeffry gaped in silent amazement.

Scattered around the escritoire was a miscellany of masculine wearing apparel and toilet articles, plentifully intermingled with a mass of green-and-saffron bank notes.

"That—must—be——" Jeffry started to whisper.

"The missing loot!" finished Smith, advancing to where Mildred was already kneeling beside the precious wreck.

For a moment no one spoke, while Mildred deftly

gathered the bills into a pile.

"Ah, I gotcha now!" exclaimed Smith suddenly. "Old Rippe was leary of the woman; so, instead of trusting her with the money before he gets the deed, he plants it in this suit case and tells her to hold his baggage until he can join her. The phony package is a joker—a blind for the messenger and a cute little dummy for anybody that tries to play robber. How's that? Some fox, that Rippe!"

"And to think that I'm packing all that money and

postponing a lot of good meals at the same time!" grumbled Jeffry, adding: "It wouldn't have helped none, anyway. It's the bank's money, and back she goes; I'm no crook to want to keep it."

"Good enough sentiment, boy," chuckled Smith, but what are you going to do with the twenty thousand that'll sure enough be yours for returning the

pile?"

"No, Smith," answered Jeffry soberly, "that kind of a reward would never sit well on my chest. If you'll be kind enough to return the four hundred you lifted off from me in Chicago, I'm going to trek it back to Uncle Gorman."

Mildred flashed him an approving smile.

"And may I send this money back to Uncle Jason?" she asked eagerly; then, dropping her eyes, she nervously fingered the stack of notes.

Smith saw in Jeffry's yearning look no reflection of money, and in the flood of telltale color which was visible on Mildred's ears and neck he read the reason.

"You might take it, but my orders explicitly stated that I was to give it up only to the woman who kissed

me!" announced Jeffry.

A pronounced chuckle rolled from Smith's lips as he strode to the door. On the threshold he paused; two people were coming down the hall in friendly conversation—Gorman Bradshaw and Mrs. Thadeus. Smith faced about to give the warning. Three times he ahemmed before a pair of shining violet eyes peered out to him from beneath a coatless sleeve.

"I say, Jeffry, nobody has ever been named after Bill Smith yet; I hope you two will remember that

some time!"

THE HAUNTED HOUSE.

By Harry Kemp.

It is vacant in the daylight,
There is nothing living there;
But at night THE FOOT OF SOMETHING
Goes UP and DOWN the stair.

There's a fence of rusted pickets;
In the yard the tangled grass
Clutches at the feet in warning;
Every pane's a shattered glass;

On a plot where burst a fountain Prone a marble naiad lies Staring up in sun or star shine With unseeing, soulless eyes;

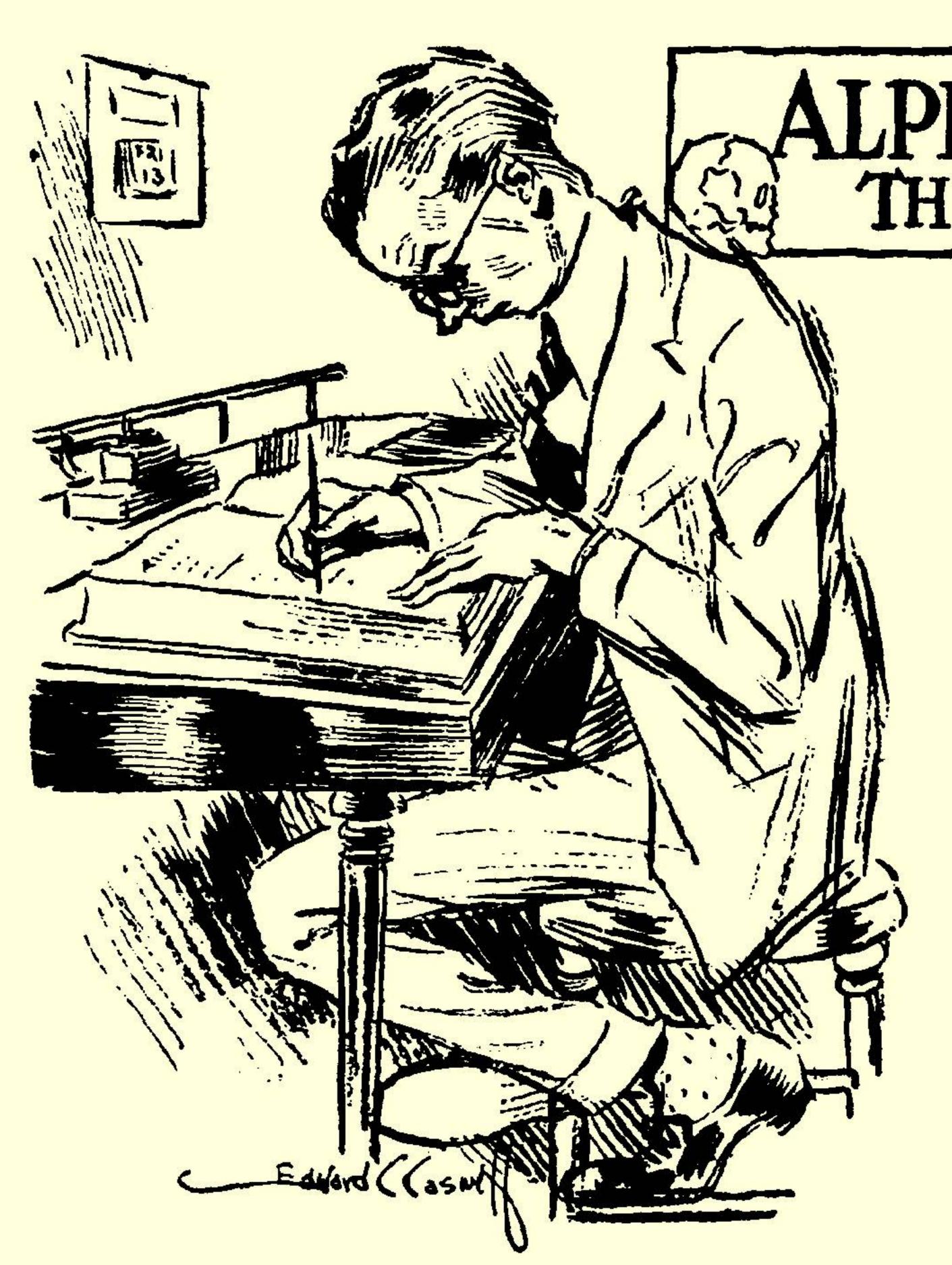
Ancient weeds have choked the flowers
That in patterned order stood;
Step by step, with sure encroachment,
Edges in the gloomy wood

It is vacant in the daylight,

There is nothing living there...

For at night THE FOOT OF SOMETHING

Goes UP and DOWN the stair!



ALPHEUS BINGS - THRILL HOUND

By RONALD OLIPHANT

I.

The Death's-Head Mystery

A T the age when a youngster likes marbles and tops,

And indulges in bull's-eyes and pink lollipops,
A certain young person named Alpheus Bings,
Showed a positive bent for more serious things.
And nothing was able so strongly to rouse his
Attention and interest as old haunted houses,
And graveyards and specters with skeleton
features

And goblins and such supernatural creatures.

Now when he attained man's estate, and the rank

Of a shiny-sleeved, pen-pushing clerk in a bank,

By day he filled ledgers with stunts in addition,

While at night, he'd fare forth on some thrill
hunting mission.

From outward appearance, you'd never have dreamed That our hero was anything more than he seemed—A spectacled clerk, with a rather weak chin, A high, bulging forehead, and feet that turned in, A prominent nose and pale watery eyes, And a definite passion for loud socks and ties.

Now. Alpheus Bings had been told of a place, Where a curious vision—a death's-head face, Would appear ev'ry night like an evil eye, To scare timid persons meandering by. The night that he heard the tale, Alpheus went To the house which the specter was said to frequent-A lonely old shack in a sparse-settled section, It stood in the moonlight inviting inspection. He had gone at an earlier hour of the day To examine the cottage and find out the lay Of the land from a neighboring factory watchman— A surly old son of a gun of a Scotchman, Who said he'd been twenty-odd years on his post, And had never observed any sign of a ghost. When told about others who'd seen it, he laughed, Then shifted his pipe and opined they were daft. The hut was locked up all the time—not a doubt of it; Not even a ghost could get in or get out of it!

Twas midnight when Alpheus Bings traveled back
To take up his vigil around the old shack.
Approaching on tiptoe, he strained ears and eyes
In the hope that he'd catch a stray spook by surprise;

But nothing rewarded his earnest endeavor.
The shack was as dark and deserted as ever.
And then he walked briskly, with firm swinging stride
Around to examine the opposite side.

He gasped in amaze. The sight was too horrid! A cold perspiration broke out on his forehead. His knees knocked together; his wisdom teeth chattered. His wits momentarily left him and scattered. For, clearly revealed—though the moonlight was dim— A grim, grisly death's-head was grinning at him! Closer and closer young Alpheus came, Till within just a foot of the shack's window frame. Then he halted abruptly, again seized with fear, For a weird groaning sound was assaulting his ear. 'Twas not overloud, yet how plaintive and sad! Like the moan of a soul that has gone to the bad. His panic passed quickly; his heart again reckoned Its usual quota of pulse beats per second. The joy of the thrill hunt imbued him deliciously. Discarding all fear, he advanced surreptitiously.

Another tense moment—then Alpheus lunged
And straight at the specter courageously plunged
As it squatted there grinning in horrible mockery.
A crash of glass followed; a clatter of crockery.
The weird groaning sound ceased abruptly and then
He heard a voice shouting: "Hoot, mon! Do ye ken?
If ye want to come in, there's the dure o' the shack ajar.
Ye spook-huntin' loon, ye have broken my 'bacca jar."
He followed the words with a haymaking swing
At Alpheus' head, which began then to sing,
And dizzily hum in a set of gyrations,
The while he saw dozens of bright constellations.

The watchman, it seemed, had a habit of shirking, And snored in the shack when he should have been working. His tobacco jar, fashioned to look like a skull, He kept on the window, so that he could lull His overwrought nerves with a pipeful on waking; And this was the start of the ghost story's making.

One thing, though, is clear, you can say what you wish. You can even call Alpheus Bings a poor fish. You can censure his conduct throughout the whole history, But you can't say he didn't unravel the mystery!





By George C. Hull

HE commanding general of the Philippines had not invited Major Compton, chief of the bureau of military intelligence in the Orient, to dine with him without a purpose. The other guests had been gone an hour, and still the two men were in

conference in the general's private office.

"The gist, then, of the whole thing is this," the general was saying. "The state department has some foolish information that Japan, secretly backed by some great European power, has called a secret conference in Shanghai for the purpose of forming an 'Asia for the Asiatics' combine, and they want us to lend them an agent known as 'Z-2,' who, it appears, is the only man they believe can make any headway in getting information as to this conference. Is that correct?"

"I believe so, sir."

"Frankly speaking, Compton," continued the general judiciously, "I consider the whole thing rather absurd. I virtually dismissed the matter when I read your report at headquarters to-day, and yet---"

"And yet you sent for me," Compton finished with

a smile.

"Because out here we cannot take any chances, and

to give you an opportunity to convince me."

"I am prepared to do that," said the chief of the secret service earnestly. "In a few minutes you will meet 'Z-2,' who has a fair idea of what is brewing in Shanghai, and who, with your approval, will leave here to-morrow morning for China as a delegate to this secret conference."

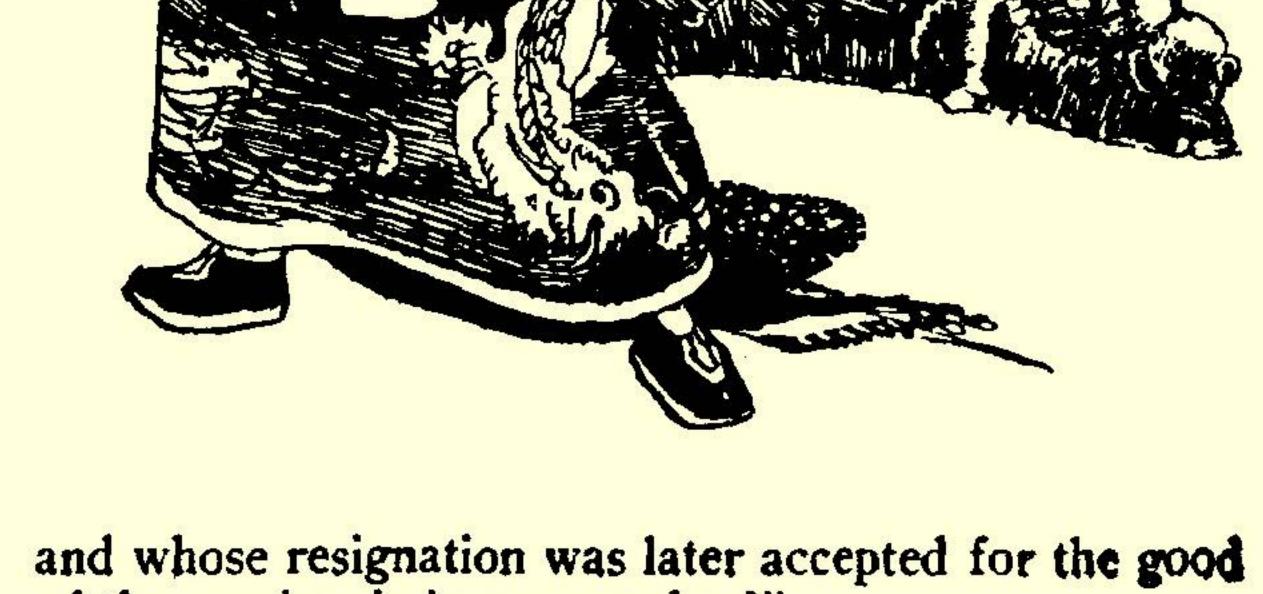
"And who is this man?" snapped the general. "Some two-faced Oriental taking money from both sides?"

"On the contrary, sir, a white man, and the best in our service," replied Compton somewhat stiffly. "He is so well versed in the languages, customs, and characteristics of a dozen races that when in disguise he can pass muster as a native son of any one of them, and in fact has done so repeatedly to our great benefit."

"Do I know this paragon?"

"If you have known him you won't when you see him to-night, sir," chuckled Compton. "So in confidence I will tell you that to us he is known as-Captain Nullus Nemo; to the state department, which he has served at times in the past, as 'Z-2,' and to you, if you ever knew him, as Captain Sidney Carleton."

"Carleton!" exclaimed the general, half rising from his chair. "You don't mean to tell me that the officer who disappeared from the Presidio a few years ago, supposedly in the train of a Russian ballet dancer,



of the service, is in our employ?"

"I certainly do, sir," laughed Compton, "and I might add that, as Nemo suspected, the lady in question was far more interested in a new explosive being tried out at the Presidio forts than in the Imperial Russian ballet."

"I've heard strange tales of Carleton's career since he left the service," observed the general thoughtfully; "that for a time he held a commission in the Russian army and later appeared as an officer of the Emperor of China's bodyguard. With the fall of the empire we heard nothing more of him, save a wild report from an officer with whom he had once been rather intimate and who, returning from leave spent in Japan, declared that he was certain that a Japanese coolie who spoke to him on the bund at Yokohama one day was this same Carleton."

"Not only possible, but highly probable, sir," commented Compton. "It's all in his day's work, but---"

The office door swung open, and the general's orderly appeared. "Begging pardon, sir," he said, "bu! there's a Chinaman out here who says he has an appointment with you and won't take no for an answer."

The general's bushy eyebrows shot up in surprise. "A Chinese with an appointment at this hour? Tell him he's--"

"I think, sir, that he is the man we are expecting," interposed Compton, and as the general nodded assent the doorway framed the figure of a tall, well-formed Chinese attired as a coolie from the shaven head, cheap cotton shirt, and knee breeches to bare legs and sandals. He closed the door and kotowed to the two men. "Behold Chan Hui Chang," he murmured; then noting the look of amazement on the general's face, "or I have other names," he added politely.

Compton broke in with a laugh. "General, permit

me to introduce Captain Nullus Nemo."

"Gad, sir!" exclaimed the commanding officer as he shook hands with his visitor. "I would never dream that you were anything else than a Chinese coolie, save that no Oriental ever had a grip like yours."

"I trust my make-up doesn't do the real Chan an injustice," grinned Nemo, "and as for my grip I ought to have one, in view of the fact that for the past three months I've been a Japanese handling a hoe with my little brown brothers in the Hawaiian cane fields."

"As to the real Chan Hui Chang," said Major Compton, "perhaps I had better explain, general, that he is the son of a Manila silk merchant, educated at a military college in the States. Since his return, some months ago, he has developed into a firebrand leader of the younger Chinese. Recently he has been preaching 'Asia for the Asiatics' and associating with Japanese and others, under suspicion, so our agents have been watching him rather closely. Captain Nemo will tell you why he has assumed the garb of a coolie and Chan's name."

"The reason," drawled Nemo, "is that I have not been invited to this conference to be held in Shanghai. One Chan Hui Chang has been honored with an invitation; therefore, for the time being, I am Chan."

"And the real Chan?" queried the general.

"That young man has departed on a long journey. No, not that!" he exclaimed, noting the general's start of dismay. "He is simply taking a trip to Australia on a sailing ship, although I don't suppose he realizes it as yet. You see, the young fellow had a bundle of credentials which it was vital for me to have in assuming his name and mission. So I sent a friend of mine, Runjeet Singh, in the guise of a Thibetan lama, around to get acquainted with him. They visited a tea house together, I believe, and Chan passed into a deep sleep-harmless drug, you know-and in this condition was placed aboard a vessel bound for Melbourne, articled as the ship's cook. He will not return for some days. Runjeet Singh secured the credentials. He also learned that Chan planned to sail for Shanghai on the Tres Hermanos to-morrow morning.

"In order not to excite suspicion here, the Chinese was to stowaway. His manner of traveling, together with his credentials, were to prove his identity to those who await him in Shanghai, none of whom, it appears, has ever seen him. Apparently he had but little real information as to the purpose of the con-

ference."

"This Runjeet Singh?" questioned Compton. "I am unable to place him; must be on your own particular staff."

"He is," assented Nemo, "and he's by way of being my other half. Quite an unusual Hindu. He was a member of the secret service of the Indian empire for several years. I met him during a Hindu-Mohammedan riot in Calcutta, when he fancies I saved his life. He has been with me ever since, and if I don't come back from Shanghai he will, and with a full report."

"Now, captain," said the general, "what can you

tell us of this supposed Asiatic conspiracy?"

"I know little, but I suspect much," replied Nemo gravely. "From what I have learned, I believe that taking advantage of the great war, some Japanese have originated a plan whereby, under the guise of an Asiatic confederacy, they hope in time to secure complete domination over the yellow and brown races of the Pacific islands and the Far East. Steps have already been taken to develop this plan. China has been forced to agree to a number of Japanese proposals quite recently, among them being the employment of Japanese military and financial advisers by China and the policing of parts of the republic by the soldiers of the mikado. China will be admitted to the confederacy on an equal footing with Japan, but will remain so only until she is no longer needed save in the rôle of a vassal. The same with the other countries interested—all are being lured into the alliance by the slogan of 'Asia for the Asiatics.'

"There will doubtless be a figurehead to mask the real powers behind this alliance formed to make common cause against the white races, but the master spirit who will guide, control, threaten, and cajol will either come from Tokyo or from the capital of an

empire of the West."

"You think, then, that in the supposed interest of a united Asia these races will be ready to forget blood feuds of a thousand years' standing and to bury all hatred, envy, and distrust?" inquired the general doubtfully.

"Meeting on the same ground, I do," said Nemo

promptly.

"And that ground?"

"The religion of Buddha as preached by the lamas from Lhassa, and which has millions of followers in all the countries of Asia. Depend upon it, the priests of the Yellow Pope will play a large part in forming this confederacy. Runjeet, in his rôle of a lama, gathered that much from Chan. And now that it is almost daylight I must be going. If I don't return within two weeks, major, you will find Runjeet a valuable man for your staff."

The general arose and extended his hand. "Compton can tell you that I was rather skeptical at first, but now I believe you are right. Good-by and good

luck."

II.

ROUTED from under the canvas tover of a lifeboat on the deck of the Tres Hermanos, two hours after the fortress island of Corregidor, guarding Manila Bay, had dropped behind the steamer's stern, Captain Nemo, resembling a dejected Chinese coolie in every detail of garb and appearance, was kicked up the deck by a Visayan first mate, arraigned before the Filipino captain as a stowaway, and sentenced to hard labor in the steerage galley for the remainder of the voyage.

Night had fallen for the first day out, when the faithful Runjeet Singh, slipping like a phantom through the dusk, found his master stretched on a strip of matting outside the galley door, the only bed

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that had been allowed him. "All is well with me, captain sahib," whispered the Hindu, squatting on his heels, "but it is of great sorrow to me that thou art beaten and maltreated. Twice when this dog of a Visayan mate passed me to-night has my hand gripped the knife concealed in my cumberbund, but remembering thy strict orders I stayed my hand. However, this ship will abide for some days in Shanghai, and perchance the weazen of this fellow may be slit in a street brawl. It is not meet that a Sahib Bahadur should even wipe his shoes where this swine layeth his head."

"And if it is thou who think to slit his weazen, dismiss the thought," ordered Nemo sternly, as he reclined on an elbow. "There may be blood to let on this, our mission, but it will be shed for the good of many, not to satisfy the hatred of one. When thou didst serve the British Raj in playing the Great Game nothing mattered but attainment of the end, and so it is with us. Now this is the order. Speak no more to me on this vessel, but when we reach port follow to the place where I shall be escorted, taking care not to arouse suspicion. I am of the belief that I will not be permitted to wander abroad, so it is thy part to find a way to have speech with me before the time of the gathering that I may give thee instructions. Fail me not in this."

"Hearing and obeying," murmured the Hindu, and

disappeared in the steerage.

Scarcely had the Tres Hermanos dropped anchor off Shanghai than the Visayan mate appeared at the galley door and called Nemo. "Stowaway, you are in luck," he sneered. "The captain was minded to return you to Manila, inasmuch as we need a helper in the galley, but a fat Chinese, who has just come on aboard, has agreed, O Scum, to pay for your passage hither, having but lately taken another wife and needing a scullion for his own household. Come, he must not be kept waiting."

Nemo followed, and at the gangplank found an elderly, richly dressed Chinese, who surveyed him with an appraising eye as he motioned him into a boat alongside. Not a word was spoken until the twain had been landed at a rickety wooden pier far removed from the steamship docks. Then the Chinese touched the arm of his companion and whispered, "Where is Chan Hui Chang?" Mindful of the instructions taken from the person of the real Chan, Nemo pointed out to sea, toward the shore, and then at the wooden planks of the pier under his feet. "Neither on sea nor dry land."

"He awaits you," murmured the Chinese deferentially, and a few moments later the captain was whirling through narrow streets in a ricksha which, after numerous sharp turnings, halted before what seemed to be a large stone godown in the heart of the native city of Shanghai. Nemo alighted, and strode up to the great iron-faced teakwood door which barred the entrance. He was about to knock when a wicket in the great gate opened, and he heard the whispered inquiry: "Where is Chan Hui Chang?"

"Safe at the door of his father's house," he replied, and the barrier swung open noiselessly. Entering, Nemo found himself in a courtyard. It was deserted, but from behind the latticed windows facing on it there ran a sound of whispering. From the dusk of

a corridor appeared a servant, who bowed before him. "I have orders that the guest be attired and refreshed before seeing the master," he explained.

In the chamber, furnished with Oriental magnificence, where his guide left him, the secret agent found food and a princely costume, which the servant, before leaving, indicated that he should put on. Donning the embroidered silken robes, Nemo went to a window. The courtyard, so empty when he had entered, was swarming with men in yellow hoods and red robes engaged in various employments, and Nemo heaved something like a sigh of relief as he recognized the costumes. "Runjeet was not mistaken," he ejaculated. "Priests from Lhassa, the sacred city; I've been plunged into the heart of things at once."

"The master awaits thee," came the summons from behind him, and, turning, Nemo saw a Yellow Cap

beckoning him to follow.

III.

BEFORE a portal half hidden by silken hangings the lama halted, bowed, and withdrew. Nemo parted the draperies and entered. He found himself in a room the walls and ceiling of which were covered with purple satin. The only relieving color was the yellow robe and scarlet sash worn by a wizened old man who sat facing him behind a massive ebony table, his clawlike hands clasped together on its ivory top, his eyes staring fixedly at the ceiling. Captain Nemo bowed ceremoniously. The man behind the table took no notice of him.

What seemed minutes went by, and the secret agent was about to risk speaking to break the uncanny silence when his trained eyes caught a faint stirring of the hangings behind the table, although no whisper of air came through the two small windows of the room. A delicate, intangible fragrance drifted to his nostrils, one shadowly reminiscent of some event in his past. He was striving to recall it to memory when the old man, with a birdlike motion, flitted from his chair and drew aside the curtains behind him, showing an empty passageway. "Eyes may see what ears should not hear," he chirped as he looped back the hangings, and Nemo realized that some one concealed behind that satin screen had been studying him from the moment he entered.

"Now, child of the clan of Chan, which thou thinkest thyself to be, has thou no message for the 'One Who Never Dies?'"

Even as he heard the words, Nemo dropped to his knees and made humble obeisance to the Yellow Pope, known to his millions of followers as the Dalai Lama. "Pardon, Holy One," he faltered, "but I have had my wretched being in a far country where the chief of the faith comes not."

"Rise, thou art forgiven," said the Grand Lama

curtly, "and now the message."

The fictitious Chan drew from his robe a small flat jade tablet taken from the Chinese by Runjeet. Its two surfaces were covered with characters which even Nemo, with his knowledge of the languages of the Orient, had been unable to decipher. "He who asked for a message was to receive this," he said.

The Grand Lama bent over the tablet, while the secret agent pondered. Here was corroboration indeed. In very truth religion would be the common

ground of meeting, for the very presence of this pontiff would cement the conspiracy of the East. Yet what had induced the Yellow Pope to leave his cloistered seclusion and engage in a plot the outcome of which could be nothing but relentless war? Was it a desire for revenge or—was the man a pawn in the hands of the farsighted statesmen of the Western empire? "I shall soon know," thought Nemo; "that is, if I am able to play my part to the end. If they penetrate the disguise? All the refinements of Oriental torture!"

The old man in the yellow robe was speaking. "Thou art the one of whom this is written," he declared with a thin smile. "Being so, there is much for your ears," and Nemo noted that the Grand Lama had been comparing the tablet with one apparently its duplicate. "First," continued the speaker, "much will be required of thee, and there can be no drawing back. Thou must endure or die."

Nemo bowed his head. "Who am I?" he murmured. "My poor life is at thy service."

"Know, then, that for our purpose thou art not the son of Chan, the silk merchant, but Dargar Khan, eldest born of a prince of Mongolia who has passed into the other world. Stolen from thy home when a babe, the Oracle at Lhassa directed us to find thee in Manila, as a man not known in the land of his fathers, one versed in the arts of war and the ways of the fan kwei—the foreigners from overseas—one instructed also in his own religion, and so suited to the purpose. Thou wast sent for.

"And this the purpose! Thou knowest that the foreign devils have invaded our sacred sanctuaries, scorned our customs and traditions and mocked our religion. Armed men have trampled the forbidden soil of Thibet and defiled the sacred city. Mourning under these afflictions, we have heard the sighs of others of our brothers, groaning under the yoke of the fan kwei. Now those that murmur are uniting and soon will come a mighty wind which shall sweep all of Asia clear of these accursed ones. Afterward the armies of the faithful become conquerors of the world, for so the Oracle hath spoken."

"And my part, Most Worshipful One?"

"That of a son of Ghenghis Khan, for from that great conqueror art thou sprung in direct line. The time is near when he comes again. For six hundred and fourscore years he decreed that he should slumber under his golden tent on Mount Khanola with his arms beside him. But two years remain until he awakes and we would be ready. Until he comes thine the hand that wields the sword of Ghenghis Khan. As the Hidden Emperor thou shalt reign in secret, but the whisper of thy name shall make nations tremble."

"And whose the brain that directs the hand?" queried Nemo bluntly.

The pale eyes of the pontiff closed in reflection, while his fingers sought the beads of his prayer chain; then softly: "My son, much has already been done—many lands have been visited, and this the work of three. Of these the chief is Count Tasega, of Japan. The others are Prince Feng, who speaks for the royal blood of China, and myself. We shall be thy counselors."

"And the other delegates, Most Holy One—have they full knowledge of the plans?"

The Dalai Lama frowned. "Thou art overready with question. To-night through thee their pledges in writing shall pass into the keeping of the Golden Buddha of the Temple of the Ten Pagodas. Until this has been done, it has not been deemed wise to instruct them in detail, but——" He hesitated, then in a sibilant whisper: "This for thine ears alone. Know that to make our plans certain of success it has been necessary to secure a powerful friend in a quarter which, if known at this time, might give rise to unjust suspicion among a few."

"And this powerful friend?" ventured Nemo blandly, and was rewarded, as he saw a flash akin to confusion in the hitherto immobile face of the

Yellow Pope.

"Not now, not now," flashed the reply, "but on the day of Tsgan Gar—at the White Feast of Buddha, when, with mystic rites, thou are crowned as Hidden Emperor—all will be revealed to thee. To-night thy part is one of unquestioning assent. Holding the sword of Ghenghis Khan, and proclaimed Hidden Emperor, thou shall accept the pledges, and with humble bearing and propitiatory words, amid the smoke of incense and the chanting of the mystical prayer, place them upon the knees of the Golden Buddha, and take heed that thou fail not in this!"

"Of a truth, Most Holy One, it seems that in this adventure I am to be naught but a puppet," demurred

Nemo.

The face of the pontiff darkened. "Such a one was needed, and so thou art here," he rejoined, with something like a sneer. "Obey and all will be well; otherwise"—his bloodless lips set in a cruel line—"the death of a thousand wounds. Go now and seek a few hours' repose. Provision has been made for thy appearance to-night." He struck a sweet-toned gong, and a yellow cap appeared to usher the secret agent to his apartment.

IV

SCARCELY had Nemo bolted his door than the hangings before one of the windows parted and a yellow-capped lama appeared. "What means this?" demanded the secret agent. "I have no present need of thee. Get hence!"

"Captain sahib," whispered the intruder. Runject

had found a way.

"It was of nothing," declared the Hindu. "I saw the men in yellow caps swarming in and out of this place in the manner of ants after a rain. In a near-by shop I acquired like garments. Passing into the courtyard, I saw thee at a window. Entering, none stopped me."

"Pray thy gods thou has like fortune in leaving, for there is much to be done. The assembly to-night is in the Temple of the Ten Pagodas in the hall of the Golden Buddha. Dost thou know the place?"

"I have heard of it," replied the Hindu. "It is on the river bank, and without doubt, as in other temples on the river, there is a secret passage to the water for the use of the priests. I will find the entrance."

Fail me not Now list

"Fail me not. Now listen: The Western emperor plays the game with Japan, the twain against the

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world, for the partition of China. In this they are aided by a traitor Manchu prince and the Dalai Lama. The Asiatic confederacy is a mask and the delegates are but unwitting tools. They will be led to fan unrest into insurrection, so supplying a reason for action. Then they will be destroyed.

"The Western emperor will have a secret agent at this conference, for he gets his reports firsthand, and the man will be Nazimovoff, half Tartar, half Teuton, chief of spies in the Orient, and, gad!" Nemo sat up suddenly as he thought of the perfume in the yellow room and some one behind the curtain. "Now I remember Sophie von Harlingen and the fragrance distilled for her exclusive use; 'Garden of Omar,' she called it. Cleverest of all the international spies. The last time I inhaled that odor was in Petrograd, when she sought to kill me on learning that, instead of being an infatuated lover who had thrown away a career at her nod, I was a loyal American who had wrested from her the stolen secret of the high explosive. Sophie von Harlingen here!" Nemo took two abrupt turns about the room. "And her parting gift; Runjeet thou has remarked it before—the brand of the three-edged dagger!" Pushing back a flowing sleeve, he disclosed a perfect triangular scar showing dead white on his brown-stained forearm. "It makes it interesting, playing opposite to her again."

"It is an evil thing," breathed the Hindu; "many

should know thee by that mark."

"Supplies excellent identification," assented Nemo, "and, Runjeet, this—the palace of the Dalai Lama even now shelters, according to my belief, this woman spy of the Emperor of the West, and she works in accord with this priest in planning the delusion of the delegates who are to be kept in ignorance of the part the Empire of the West plays, until, through written pledges in the hands of their betrayers, they are hopelessly ensnared. Possession of these pledges means great power for good or evil. In the hands of my government they mean the continued life of China and the peace of Asia. I must have them. Now they are to be delivered to me as Hidden Emperor of the confederacy, which I shall be proclaimed to-night, but I am instructed to place them upon the knees of the Golden Buddha. To my mind, there is a trick here whereby the papers will disappear."

"Assuredly," smiled the Hindu. "Know thou that this great idol is undoubtedly hollow, after those of India, and in its belly there is a hidden door. At the proper moment, when the worshipers have laid their offerings before the idol, a great smoke of incense rises, the light is cut off from above, and a priest, hidden within the idol, emerges and gathers up the offerings. When the light returns they are gone; the god has accepted them! So would these pledges

vanish."

"Now I see," said Nemo thoughtfully; "therefore these papers I will hold. There will be confusion and surprise, for I am held to be a willing tool. Do thou gain entrance to the idol and take the place of the one hidden there to seize the pledges. If there is fighting, as it is certain there will be, I will stand with my back to the idol, and then is thy opportunity to open the secret door and receive the pledges from me. If I fall before this let it be thy concern, my brother,

to see that a full report of all I have told thee reaches those thou knowest of. Depart now ere suspicion is aroused."

"By Vishnu, the Protector! It is a good plan, Bahadur. My life be forfeit if I fail to reach thee," exclaimed the Hindu, and glided from the room.

V

BORNE to the Temple of the Ten Pagodas in a sedan chair, and escorted by a guard of yellow-capped torchbearers, Nemo, on his arrival, was met by the chief priest of the shrine, who, bowing deferentially, conducted him through a maze of passageways to an immense vaulted chamber under the temple. As he entered he saw, looming through a haze of incense, a giant golden Buddha, represented in a sitting posture before the farther wall. The figure was bathed in a light which came from an aperature in the ceiling, but the remainder of the room was in shadow.

Before the statue, on a throne hung in purple, sat the Yellow Pope. Below him, ranged in a semicircle, were some twenty men, the delegates of Asia, the secret agent supposed. The assembly had evidently been waiting his coming, for a hush of silence fell as he advanced to the steps of the throne. "Om Mani Padmi Hum," intoned the Grand Lama, extending the scepter of his power—a silver lotus in the heart of which flamed a priceless ruby. "O the Jewel in the Lotus," Nemo repeated the occult prayer, and those behind him reechoed the words.

At a sign, Nemo ascended the dais and stood facing the audience as the pontiff, presenting him, declared: "Behold the prince of the blood of Ghenghis Khan, of whom the Oracle hath spoken, saying: 'He shall bind together the nations of the East against the enemy. He shall wear the sword of Ghenghis Khan and reign as Hidden Emperor until the Conqueror wakes!"

"Hail to the prince of the blood of the Conqueror!" chanted the delegates, while Nemo's eyes wandered over the assembly, seeking in vain for the disguise which might shroud Sophie von Harlingen. Immediately before him, he recognized the fiery Count Tasega, of Japan, at whose right sat a man in the garb of a Manchu prince. As Nemo's eyes rested on this delegate his heart pounded with sudden knowledge, for the insolent face, half shaded by the velvet headdress—the beak nose, the cruel mouth—were those of Boris Nazimovoff, Teuton and Tartar, whose path Nemo had crossed in a score of European cities and capitals; Nazimovoff, head of a thousand dark intrigues in behalf of various imperial masters. He had been mistaken then, misled by a perfume, and Sophie von Harlingen had no part in the game.

And now the Dalai Lama took from the knees of the Golden Buddha a naked sword—a yataghan with a hilt of jade and gold in which one great diamond blazed. "The sword of Ghenghis Khan!" he proclaimed as he placed it in Nemo's right hand.

"Hail to the Hidden Emperor, the Spreader of the

Faith!" shouted the assembly.

"I accept the trust, O men of Asia!" cried Nemo, and was aware of a slight, mocking smile on the face of Nazimovoff. "He scoffs at the puppet, but there is no recognition in his eyes," thought Nemo as he

took his seat in a carved ebony chair at the right hand of the Dalai Lama.

Count Tasega made low obeisance before the Hidden Emperor. "It is permitted me," he said, "to explain to the Most August One, and to these others assembled, what has been done. I have here a copy of a secret treaty signed between China and Japan and which was a necessary step toward establishing the confederacy.

"China agrees to install Japanese as military and financial advisers and to permit the garrisoning of certain zones with the soldiers of the mikado. China further agrees to give Japan, alone of other nations, the privilege of developing its resources, and agrees, when the moment is ripe, to cancel all concessions

made to foreigners.

"Further, I hold a general agreement, signed by Japan and by China, by Asiatic rulers, with those who would reign should they be possessed of their lands now held by foreign despots. This agreement calls for relentless war against all the nations overseas who hold territories in the East or in the Pacific. They are to be driven from these countries and the ancient rights are to be restored and maintained through the Asiatic confederacy.

"As the cause of a common religion has ever been powerful in uniting the peoples of the earth, the keystone of this confederacy shall be allegiance to the true faith, and, as its spiritual head, the One Who

Never Dies shall hold sway.

"As the people look for great things from those of the blood of conquerors, we have found the prince of the house of Ghenghis Khan, who, as Hidden Emperor, shall be the temporal head. None but a chosen few shall have access to his presence or have knowledge of his residence. When, incited by a myriad lamas scattered over Asia, rebellion against the rule and domination of foreigners sweeps the countries of the East, all shall be done in the name of the Hidden Emperor. When, on the insistence of foreign governments, search is made for the instigator of tumults which cannot be quelled, he will not be found. Their strength sapped by the Great War, they will be unable to restore order themselves, as in times past, and then —the confederacy strikes.

"To carry on the work the Most Holy One pledges the vast treasure gathered through six centuries at the sacred city Lhassa. These moneys will be used in equipping and training armies and in the building of fleets of fighting ships, all under the supervision of Japan. I present these pledges to the Most August One for his approval." Placing the documents in Nemo's hands, he bowed and returned to his place.

The secret agent glanced through the parchments, keenly alive to the fact that at least three pairs of eyes were watching him intently. He saw the signatures of China and Japan, of rulers of petty kingdoms in Hindustan, and of princes deprived of their territories by Western powers, but the name of the mysterious Manchu prince nowhere appeared.

As Nemo looked up from the parchments the Dalai Lama spoke suavely. "Men of Asia, it has been agreed that these sacred pledges of so great moment be held in the keeping of the Golden Buddha, so that no one of this assembly will have evil power over another through possession of these writings, or be

so witless as to withdraw the hand extended in behalf of our great purpose. On the knees of Buddha shall they be placed by the wearer of the sword of victory. Receive them into thy keeping, O Jewel in the Lotus!" From a score of braziers rose swirling clouds of incense, hiding the benign face of the great idol. "Om Mani Padmi Hum," chanted the assembly, but the Hidden Emperor, sword in hand, stirred not, ignoring the imperious gestures of the Yellow Pope.

With kingly serenity, Nemo eyed his amazed audience. "I may not do this," he said in a level voice, "while from this sheaf of papers one is missing. I would know what a Manchu prince of the blood royal does in this assembly since his name is not signed to the pact, nor have we pledges from him."

"Hush, fool!" whispered the Dalai Lama angrily. "We have seen his credentials and are convinced."

"But I am not convinced," declared Nemo loudly. "There is a secret within a secret here, and it is hidden from me, although I am to be the scapegoat when the rivers run red. His credentials must lie with the others!"

A murmur of approval ran among the delegates, and Tasega hurriedly whispered in the ear of the spurious Manchu prince. The latter smiled grimly, and, advancing, handed Nemo a folded paper. "Read, Most Exalted One," he said aloud, and then in a low voice, "and, having read, puppet, remember it is thy death warrant."

"I see the name and seal of a mighty emperor who should have no part in this confederacy, and I read the doom of China," replied Nemo coolly, and, with a swift movement, put the paper with the others in the breast of his robe.

"Men of Asia, ye are betrayed!" he shouted. "Japan and this deceitful priest deal with the Western emperor for the division of China. Yours the blood that is to be spilled on battlefields that ye may be freed of your present masters only to become serfs of Japan, whose emperor plans, through this secret treaty with a fan kwei nation, to become ruler of the East. Men of Asia, already the dice has been shaken and your countries divided!" With a bound he cleared the dais and stood with his back against the Golden Buddha.

He was not a moment too soon, for Tasega, short sword in hand, was creeping toward him. In the shadows beyond the pale of light the delegates swayed backward and forward in a frenzy of anger and fear, while the Dalai Lama, frantic with rage, danced on his purple throne, screaming: "Heed him not; the man is mad!"

"I am not mad," roared Nemo. "If ye wish proof, strip the robes from this false Manchu prince and ye will find Nazimovoff, the spy who plans only for the glory of his present master—the Emperor of the West."

"Kill the yellow pig!" stormed Nazimovoff, strug-

gling forward through the press.

Nemo, whirling the sword of Ghenghis Khan, struck down Tasega with the flat of the blade, and at this the Yellow Pope dropped his dagger and fled, calling his lamas of the yellow caps to the rescue. Nazimovoff won free, and Nemo, whose sole dependence was on his sword and the coming of Runject, saw with dismay that he was armed with a

pistol. Standing just outside the range of the circling blade, the agent of the emperor raised his weapon. "The pledges and the papers," he demanded crisply; "throw them to me. Drop thy sword, and thou shalt be spared the torture before death."

Drawing himself together, the man at bay raised his sword for one last desperate lunge, when, from the idol behind him, came the muffled cry of a woman: "The scar, Boris; the scar on his arm! It is the

American spy!"

Nemo saw a flash of savage joy on Nazimovoff's face, and then the light over the idol snapped out, something gave way behind him, and as he fell backward into darkness he felt the pang of a dagger striking over his shoulder, even as his nostrils caught the fleeting fragrance of the "Garden of Omar."

TY/HEN Nemo, of the bureau of military intelligence, regained consciousness the pleasant ripple of running water was in his ears, and above him the stars were paling into dawn. His head throbbed and his body ached from a stinging pain in his side. Raising himself stiffly on his elbows, he ascertained that he was in the bottom of a boat. In its stern, at his feet, sat a bareheaded, shrouded figure paddling swiftly. Memories of the night flocked back confusedly. Instinctively he sought for the documents. They were gone! He groaned. At this the paddler shipped his oar and bent over him. In the dim light Nemo recognized him. "Runjeet, the papers?" he questioned hoarsely.

"Ai, captain sahib, I have them, and they saved thy life, turning the point of the she-wolf's knife so that it slipped around thy ribs, and the hurt is but

slight."

"The she-wolf?"

"Ai, the woman who has all the blood thirst of the goddess Kali and a very great fondness for the knife—the woman of whom thou didst speak."

"Thou didst not kill her?" queried Nemo sternly. "No, captain sahib, and therein was I grievously at fault, for, fearing that thou wouldst not approve, I held my hand, and so was almost too late."

"Peace, brother; once more I owe thee my life.

Tell on."

"And it please thee, I shall row while I talk, for there is a flitting of torches about the shrine, and, the American gunboat whither we are bound is some distance down the stream. Because of my acquaintance with temples, Bahadur, it was no task to find the secret entrance of the priests on the river bank. Creeping along the passageway, I came to the stone steps leading up to a narrow platform in the idol. On this, behind the hidden door, and peering through the spy hole was a man of Japan."

"Japanese!" exclaimed Nemo.

"Ai, sahib, for this is a tale of duplicity, showing that those of Japan and the empire of the West sought to outwit each other and gain possession of the pledges. Also there was one of China who sought to save his country and died for it. I stumbled over his body at the foot of the steps. He had been stabbed in the back, and I was of the mind that he was first in the idol and that the Japanese had removed him to make room for himself.

"But as I prepared to come upon this man from behind and gain his place I heard the soft sound of feet approaching, and so withdrew to a niche in the wall where bales of incense were stored. But I could see, and so beheld the woman who wore the red robe of a lama. When she saw the dead Chinese she faltered not, but, gliding up the steps like a shepanther, drove her dagger into the Japanese, and he died without a cry. Pushing his body aside, she took his place. Then was I sore perplexed, and debated whether I, too, should not use the knife, but feared thy wrath.

"At last I thought to choke her with my turban, but ever she turned her head like a frightened bird, and there was no opportunity until, through the spy hole, she saw the scar on thy arm, and, crying out, opened the door and stabbed thee just as the folds of my turban dropped around her throat. When she was senseless I bound her with my turban, designing to kill her if thou were dead, but I found thy wound of little moment, and that the blow on thy head when falling had deprived thee of sense. So I left her bound, and carried thee to this boat which I had in hiding. Captain sahib, there is naught else."

"Runjeet, my brother," and Nemo's voice quivered with emotion, "for this night's work thou shalt gain

great honor and recompense, and shall stand among the first with Compton Bahadur, which is no small thing."

"It was of nothing," murmured the Hindu, as the boat, scraping the side of the gray war vessel, was challenged by the watch above.

THE KING.

By Vail Vernon.

NOTHING unfound and all the world his own. Women of slender hands with scented flowers; Sad violins to lull him in those hours Of pomp when in a crowd one dreams alone; Gay cavaliers and arms and hosts unknown To do his princely conquests; titan's powers; Plowed fields; cities; mines; castles; high towers;

Yet once it was that he was young . . . he kissed A lady's fingers on his bended knees, Begging a token of lace about her wrist;

Huge subject nations yoked about his throne.

But glancing o'er his back the young king sees Her eyes give promise to a youth fame missed . . . How dull are then his tawdry victories.

FREEDOM.

By Arnold Tyson.

THE night is full of chance, the day Is full of wondering . . . Ah! let us as we go our way Have done with loitering.

The laugh of fate is like a song To him who goes a swinging Down dusty roadways, free and strong, His heart aroused and singing.

Soldiers Sailors
Personal
Relief Section

Conducted by a former officer of the Adjutant General's department, U.S. Army.

Our discharged without jobs immediately at hand, most of them actually threatened with want, depending on the patriotism of private individuals and facing conditions which the stoutest heart might dread to conquer.

Some sort of means should be provided to maintain them while they are searching for adequate employment and to keep them from having to accept all sorts and kinds of work at ridiculous wages that the typical hard employer may force upon them.

They are walking the streets—literally thousands and thousands of them—men who went across to defend our democracy, men who entered service and were not given an opportunity to see actual warfare.

Are you interested enough in your returning hero to sit down and write to your Congressman or Senator concerning the matter? Don't stop with this. Write to your paper, to your governor. What is needed is action—prompt action. It is not

so much the amount of money, but the fact that money is needed by these men.

Make your patriotism a working, practical matter. The soldier, sailor, and marine need your help. Sign the petition below and mail it at once.

PETITION FOR CONGRESS TO SEND SOLDIERS, SAILORS, AND MARINES HOME WITH EXTRA PAY.

Sign this slip and send it to your Congressman, Senator, or Governor.

The undersigned feels that the discharged man in uniform should be granted adequate, extra pay by the U. S. Government to cover the period after separation from service, so that he can obtain a suitable position without embarrassment to himself, family, and friends. This petition is made in the urgent cause of our returning heroes.

Name.		• •	 •	•	•	• •	•	•	٠	٠	•	• 0		٠	•	7 .	٠	•	•	٠	•	•	
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A. T. R.—Question: My mother has not been receiving her allotment, and as I am discharged I would like to know what action to take in order to recover this money due her.

Answer: Write to the Bureau of War Risk Insurance, Washington, D. C., laying the entire case before them. Be sure and give your full name, your rank and branch of the service, and also the full name and address of your mother, including the date that you first made the allotment, and all other facts relating to your case. Write logically and concisely. If you do not receive an answer at once, follow this up with another letter.

OBSERVER.—Question: What does the red chevron stand for?

Answer: The red chevron denotes honorable discharge, and is worn on the left sleeve.

L. O. S.—Question: Is the insurance paid in a lump sum?

Answer: Insurance is not paid in lump sums, but only in monthly installments for a period of two hundred and forty months.

"Around the World"

EPISODE OF DEATH NOT A PAINFUL ONE.

By Sir Oliver Lodge.

I am absolutely satisfied existence is not limited to this present life on earth.

Death now seems to me something rather to look forward to than to dread.

Clearly it is an interesting adventure, and usually I don't really think that the episode itself is a painful one.

Recovery from an accident or from unconsciousness—the "coming to"—may be painful, but the passing away usually is not.

I don't like the word spiritualism myself, except as a term in philosophy. In so far as Spiritualists constitute a sect and hold religious services, I don't belong to it and have no sort of connection with it.

On its scientific side spiritualism is commonly known as psychical research. The research began as an inquiry into unrecognized or partially recognized human faculty, and still continues on those lines; but incidentally the discovery of telepathy rendered probable the deduction that the body and the mind were not inseparable, and hence that one might survive the other. And further experience has led some of us to regard the fact of survival also as now at length scientifically demonstrated.

I doubt if ever the proof will be so clinching as to overpower the hostility of those determined to think otherwise.

I don't pretend it is an easy matter to conceive of the personality and the memory surviving the destruction of the brain. All I claim is that if they are as a matter of fact found to be so surviving it will amount to a demonstration that the brain is only an instrument or organ, made use of by something not material at all—something which exists in the psychical, not the physical region, something which was only developed or trained in association with matter.

I will try to give an idea of what is called the popular proofs of survival.

A fairly large number of bereaved people go anonymously, by arrangement made for them, to some reputable and trustworthy medium. No normal information is desired by such mediums, and none is given; they prefer to be in complete ignorance regarding their clients.

Sometimes such a bereaved person is accompanied by an experienced note taker, who records all that is said throughout. In many cases—I should say in the majority of cases dealt with by aid of a strong medium in good form—the evidence for the identity of a deceased communicator, who is represented as anxious to get in touch and to send messages—messages of affection and messages of identification—is felt to be strong, and occasionally it has been overwhelming.

The risk of possible mind reading can hardly be

settled in one case or a few cases; its discussion involves a good deal of experience. The body of evidence which has now accumulated is very great, and the hypothesis of mind reading from the sitter has to be stretched to near breaking point in order to counteract the dramatic semblance of the whole and reduce it, not indeed to normality, but to something less important than actual conversation with the intelligence and personality of the departed.

Inasmuch as a large number of men have only recently been facing death for our sake, it is perhaps only fair that the fact, as I consider it, that death is but an episode in continued existence, and that the interest and enjoyment of life after death exceed what has been experienced here, should be made more widely known; and on that ground I may be excused for giving a rough summary of the popular evidence.

Take, for instance, a young fellow killed in the war, and suppose his parents succeed in getting into touch with him. He will greet them in his accustomed manner, calling them by the name they are used to from him. In some cases "Pater," in others "Dad," sometimes by an unusual nickname, such as "Erb," sometimes simply "Father." Whatever had been customary, that is employed in the most natural manner by the dead son.

He may ask after his brothers and sisters by name, or at least by initial, for names are sometimes trouble-some things to get through. He may give characteristic touches or comments about each, sometimes thereby showing that he knows in a general way what they are doing. His own appearance can be described by the medium, and little trivial peculiarities or blemishes are often noted, such as scars or marks of an identifying character.

As to incidents—I remember one case where a young deceased communicator said to his parents that he had made an appointment to meet his brother in France at a certain bridge, but that when they got to the rendezvous the bridge was no longer there—it had been blown up.

A subsequent letter from the surviving brother in France completely confirmed this statement. The parents had known nothing about these facts at the time of the sitting.

Here is another case: Three brothers were all killed. The medium gave the names of all three to mother and sister, who were present, and one of them, the youngest, was represented as the spokesman, ultimately sending a message to his father—"Tell him that I have not been talking all the time." The verbal exuberance of this particular member of the family had often been humorously suppressed by the father.

In another instance a boy spoke of something in a waistcoat pocket which he wanted given to his young brother. His clothes had been folded and put away, but on examination a coin was found in the place described.

A frequent test given is a description of the old house where the family had lived, small details and peculiarities being emphasized, arrangements of furniture, pattern on wall and sometimes even the books in a bookcase being remembered.

Another incident concerns two boy friends who died of illness within ten days of each other, but separated by a considerable distance. The death of the first boy, named Herbert, was kept from the knowledge of the second; yet, when he, too, died, his friends report that he smiled and said, "Why, Herbert, I am glad to see you!"

Some good incidents were published by Mr. Wilkinson in the London Magazine for October, 1917. They are rather typical instances of the kind of thing that occurs. The name "Poger," for instance, and reference to a bronze thing like a coin, in his satchel.

A similar case is related by Sir William Barrett in his book, "On the Threshold of the Unseen." A young officer who had been killed said he wanted a pearl tie pin, which would be found in his kit, sent to a lady whom he named at a certain address, saying that he had been secretly engaged to her. Nothing of all this was known by the family; but the communication was so clear that they wrote a letter of inquiry to the address given. The letter came back marked "Unknown," and the whole thing was thought to be imaginary or a meaningless fabrication.

When his kit came back, however, a pearl tie pin was found in it, and when later on his will was discovered the young lady's name, just as it had been given at the sitting, was mentioned as his residuary legatee, and his engagement to her was admitted. Everything was correct, therefore, except the address. Why the address was wrong I don't know. The fact that it was wrong perhaps allowed the other portions of the communication to be verified in a more gradual manner.

But usually in cases of this kind there is some little part of the communication which is wrong, and it is most charitable to attribute the error to difficulties in communication or to unsuspected lapse of the medium into normality; like a sort of momentary waking up in the middle of a dream, and then continuing it again after an interval of imaginative inventiveness not justified by anything in the main dream, nor by anything for which the main communicator was responsible; indeed, he might not know that it had been interpolated.

Some striking examples of messages at first thought wrong or meaningless, but subsequently found justified by rather laborious inquiry among comparative strangers, are given in the books of J. Arthur Hill—"Psychical Investigations" and "Man Is a Spirit."

"I have come across singular cases of this kind myself. In such cases telepathy from the sitter, as an explanation, is absurdly impossible. The survival hypothesis, in practice, works; all others require straining and supplementing and using alternatively on different occasions.

If people have a reasonable knowledge of what to expect when they find themselves suddenly transferred to other conditions, the transition is hardly even a shock.

It is surely desirable that people who face great dangers should be prepared for what may happen to

them, and take it as a part of life's experience. It is certainly wrong, and desperately misguided, to seek that experience prematurely; but sooner or later it is bound to come, and if it come in the course of duty and in a struggle for a noble cause, they may be happier to whom it thus comes than we who will soon encounter it in a more prosaic way. They may be happy in the opportunity. The readiness is all.

When You Think They're Dead in Mexico They're Not.

To the average reader or to the less than average thinker Mexico is known primarily as the land of revolution. To many it is known merely as a southerly nuisance which has long meant ill and done no good for itself or for the world.

Yet Mexico, aside from its importance as one of the greatest potential treasure lands of the earth, is the nation of a thousand strange incidents, a stellar one of which is the strange phenomenon which develops through a combination of primitive burial methods and deep-lying superstition.

Now Mexico has produced a new "miracle." It was related some time ago in the columns of La Prensa, the Spanish-language daily newspaper of New York City. Under the caption "A Case of Resurrection," La Prensa says:

"In Culiacan, republic of Mexico, a strange incident occurred a few days ago. A man named José Martinez died suddenly. After the physicians had declared that he was quite dead the family, with all the pomp customary in that place, prepared to make the interment. Friends and relatives kept vigil beside the body during the night, and on the following day, at ten o'clock in the morning, the cortège began its march to the cemetery. When the journey was half finished the mourners noticed that the coffin moved. A few moments later the supposed dead man, giving unquestioned evidences of life, opened the cover of the coffin by means of powerful blows, sat up, discarded the shroud, and returned running to his house."

The disposition of most Americans, as skeptical as most Mexicans are credulous, will be to pooh-pooh such a miraculous tale. But it must be remembered that there is no embalming in provincial Mexico and that the native physicians often are careless and incapable.

Here is the tale of a Mexico City beggar which was told in the newspapers of the Mexican capital some fifteen or twenty years ago, and has some sound supporting testimony:

A beggar, one of the horde of prosperous mendicants that infest the capital, died, or supposedly died, of a disease the sanitary-department authorities did not take the trouble to determine. At the time paupers were buried in a cemetery far out from the city. This beggar's savings probably were commandeered by the first person to learn of his death. At any rate, he was consigned to a pauper's grave.

The Latin American custom proper is to have streetcar funerals. A single track runs to the cemetery. The line is never used except for funerals. The coffin is placed in a funeral car, usually decorated like a hearse, and the mourners follow on ordinary street cars. On saints' days special cars are run out to the cemetery for the convenience of mourners for those already buried. In the case of paupers it was the custom in Mexico City to consign the body to a plain box and place it on a flat car, such as is used for hauling ballast for the railway. The flat car was drawn by a mule, in the sole charge of a peon employed by the cemetery corporation.

In the case of the Mexico City beggar who died penniless—strange fate for a Mexico City beggar—such was the funeral. It was an autumn day, with a warm sun, and the mule jogged along, wagging his ears contentedly. The peon sat on the edge of the flat car, swinging his legs and humming a verse or two of "Valentina," a peon love song. The end of each verse ends with a sentiment which might be translated thus:

"If they are going to kill me to-morrow why does it matter? I must die some time, anyway."

Despite the words, the song is a happy one, although it is said that because of Valentina's love evil will follow.

The singer stopped swinging his legs, both of the mule's ears stiffened, with their position sharply to the rear. A voice! The car was sliding quietly over the tracks far from the city, between fields where no man lived and no bird sang.

The driver looked around and saw the body sitting upright in the coffin, holding the cover to one side, as if he had just opened a door and was standing on the threshold. The driver stared. The mule stood stock-still.

"Hurry, coachman, we shall be late to the ball," said the dead man. The beggar always had been a funny fellow.

The driver promptly swooned. He fell forward between the flat car and the mule's hind legs. The mule looked around and brought his ears sharply to attention. He was a cemetery mule, whose only occupation was hauling paupers' bodies and supplies for the cemetery. Whether he was frightened by the sight of the dead man sitting upright or by the driver's fall behind his legs was never determined. At any rate he ran away, something a Mexican mule, especially a Mexican cemetery mule, will not do except in the last extremity of fright.

The body leaped out of the coffin and grasped the reins. He stopped the runaway after a heroic struggle. Then he walked back and picked up the driver, who had been killed by the wheels of the car or the heels of the mule, superinduced by sheer fright. The dead man carried the driver's body over his shoulder back to the car, where the mule, fatigued by his exertion, stood resting. He deposited his burden in the coffin, seated himself in the driver's place, and said, "Let's go" to the mule. At the cemetery the dead man dug a grave with the shovel brought by the driver, buried the driver's body with due care, said a prayer over the open grave, tumbled in the earth, and drove the mule back to the city and reported to the proper authorities the regrettable accident.

The Mexican authorities said that the beggar had been stricken with tropical "sleeping sickness," shrugged, and paid no more attention to the matter.

He Kissed the Spirit of His Departed Sweetheart.

Doctor H. A. Cross, a Chicago dentist who claims to have had some weird experiences, declares that the reason more people do not communicate with the departed is because the laws governing their acts are not understood.

"I have seen spirits, talked to them, touched them, and felt them. I believe the most vivid of all my experiences was a spiritual kiss," said the doctor while

discussing the life beyond the grave.

"It was at a meeting held some time ago in a Park Avenue home. A number of us were assembled in a room which was light enough to make all objects clearly discernible. Quite a number of spirits had appeared, and among those most immediate to me my mother and father.

"After a while there came to me the form of a beautiful young woman I had known years before. She had left this earth at the age which I then saw her and she spoke to me in whispers—always whispers. But I knew her. She was the first love of my life. She reached her arms toward me and I approached her.

"She told me that she must go, but first kissed me. Then I put my arms about her and kissed her, but as I did so the young woman—who was as completely material as anything could be—melted away into atmosphere.

"Of course I have had many other experiences, but I regard this as the most impressive. I would say the touch of a spirit hand is as that of a baby's. It is soft as a rose leaf. It is something—nothing."

Mrs. Cross also spoke of remarkable experiences in the spirit world. She said that some years ago, after the death of an infant son, the child reappeared to

her exactly as he had been in health.

"It is not only in connection with those who have gone before that the spirits have come to me. Some time ago I was strongly impressed that I should take a trip to New Orleans. I did not want to go; in fact, could not afford it at the time. But when I resisted the impression I became nervous, and I soon changed my mind and went.

"I was passing out from under the heavy curtains that divided the dressing room from the rest of the car when I was turned suddenly around. A voice said: 'Stoop down.' I did so, and there on the

carpet at my feet lay a diamond ring.

"I have made all possible efforts to find the owner."

Mrs. Lena De Long, a maid in the emp

Mrs. Lena De Long, a maid in the employ of the Hotel St. Francis, 1570 Hayes Street, San Francisco, Cal., was electrocuted as she was taking her bath one morning recently when a small electric heater which she had placed on the edge of the bathtub fell into the water.

The body was discovered shortly before nine o'clock, when Philip Brochue, who lives in Mrs. De

Long's flat, returned after his night's work.

Brochue, upon discovering the bathroom door locked, and receiving no response when he knocked, entered by an outside window. He barely escaped electrocution himself when, in the belief that the woman was still alive, he attempted to lift her body from the tub.

Girl Does Not Know Identity.

Another mystery was added to the long string now in the hands of the bureau of missing persons of the New York police department, when a strikingly handsome girl, well dressed and bearing every evidence of refinement, was found wandering aimlessly in the vicinity of Broadway and One Hundred and Fourteenth Street. She was evidently suffering from amnesia, and while she gave her name as Frieda Emerson and her address as Purdy Avenue, White Plains, police of that place have notified the New York department that there is no family by that name living on Purdy Avenue.

She wore a dark-blue velvet dress, a black coat with fur collar, black silk stockings and black shoes and a taupe satin hat. Her eyes are very large and blue, and she has blond hair and is of light complexion. She is five feet four inches in height and weighs about one hundred and fifteen pounds. The police think she is about seventeen years old.

A group of six teachers from De Witt Clinton High School were questioning the girl when she was first seen by Patrolman Cammer. They had not been able to obtain any information from her, so she was taken to the West One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street station, where she was questioned by Detective Sergeant Mack Donnell. To him she said that she had left a girl friend, whom she called Pearl Travers, at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel earlier in the afternoon, but further than that she could remember nothing.

She carried a package beneath her arm containing a pair of new brown shoes and a pair of pink silk stockings. She said that she had taken off her evening clothes and left them in a dyeing establishment, but could not remember where it was located.

The girl told Detective Donnelly that she wanted to write a note to her mother, and when she was given pencil and paper she wrote three times the name "Frieda Emerson" and the words "Purdy Avenue, White Plains." She said that she knew a family by the name of Brumberg, on West End Avenue, New York, and that at one time she was private secretary to a well-known lawyer here.

The girl carried a purse containing a twenty-dollar bill and some change. She was later taken to Knick-erbocker Hospital. The teachers who first discovered her on Broadway will look after her until she has been identified.

Mrs. Wilcox Talks to Dead.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox has so long been associated with all that is beautiful in the spirit of poetry that it is interesting to hear of her conversion to spiritualism.

When she talks of this newly found faith she becomes transformed, and her bright eyes fill with mystic light.

"For a whole year after I lost my husband," said the widowed poetess in a recent interview, "I searched in the Valley of Sorrow for this new light. Before he died he promised me I should have knowledge of him—if it were possible.

"God has no secrets. He does not intend to share with those who are adventurous enough, reverent enough, patient enough, to seek the way of knowledge.

"The world war has prepared the minds of human beings as nothing before ever prepared it for the study of the worlds beyond. A spiritual awakening has begun which will leap over the barrier set by creeds and dogmas—seeking its own trail of truth."

A triumphant note crept into her voice as she continued to explain it was her mission to give the knowledge she has gained to a world never so willing to

receive it as now.

"It was the ouija board, worked by a friend who had previously no idea she was a medium, which made it possible for me to communicate with my husband.

"My friend and I, sitting together, were suddenly shaken by a power which beggars description. It was like an electric shock. The board seemed to be a thing alive. It moved with such force and speed that at first we could not follow it. Then we read:

"Brave one, keep up your courage. Love is all there is. I am with you always. I await your

arrival.'

"At last I knew my message had come, for after experiencing the electric shock of its transmission I was in touch with Robert! He had kept his promise.

"I asked how long I must wait in the body before

going to him. The answer was:

"Time is naught. Hope for bliss with me. I am incomplete without you. Two halves make a whole."

"I attempted to obtain advice about business, but

was told: 'Material things are unimportant.'

"I then asked questions regarding my health, and the reply came: 'Fill yourself with God. Health will come.'

"Death does not make souls omnipotent. Immortal life is a matter of slow growth toward greater power and knowledge."

Doughnut Leaps From Table.

When Miss Angeline Sweet, who is boarding at the Stone Hotel in Sweeney, N. Y., entered the dining room the other morning for breakfast she seated herself at a table, as usual, and while waiting to be served saw a doughnut on an opposite table leave the plate and fall to the floor. Her curiosity was aroused. She went to the table and was surprised to see the doughnut running around the room.

She called to the waiter, who chased the animated "sinker" into a corner. Investigation revealed that a mouse was wedged into the hole of the doughnut

and could not extricate itself.

The mouse was killed, but none of the boarders are eating doughnuts just at present.

Vcst Button Stops Bullet.

Oscar Henderson, clerk in an Italian fruit and candy store in New York City, owes his life to his lowest waistcoat button. The cloth-covered metal button deflected a bullet fired at such close range that the powder scorched a spot as large around as a saucer on the waistcoat. The impact of the bullet left a slight black and-blue mark on Henderson's body, but it could hardly be called an injury. A crazed man did the shooting. He was arrested.

Straight From the Shoulder

It is no doubt clearly understood that a magazine, like a newspaper or a national government, must have a policy. Magazines are laid down on definite lines. They are organized to supply a distinct need. True, all institutions deviate from their settled ideals, but unless they do they are becoming static. The sign of growth is gradual change. THE THRILL BOOK has but one policya fundamental one—to procure the best fiction that is written, no matter what it costs or how hard it is to get. We are not going to have illustrations or useless departments. Every page will be devoted to the cause of the fiction lover. Every issue is planned with the utmost care. We look at it entirely from the reader's point of view. We have asked ourselves: What does the "new" reader want? Our answer is The Thrill Book. As actions carry farther than promises we offer these early numbers as an example of what can be done when real efforts are made. We are not afraid to admit that this magazine is making good. Not only have we our own inner feeling of satisfaction because of a "job well done," but we have the numerous words of commendation that pour in to us in greater numbers each day.

The cause for a feeling of satisfaction lies in the knowledge that we have progressed instead of retrogressed. We are performing constantly more than you or any one else had reason to expect. It is setting a pace difficult to follow. It is, however, the only pace we want to set. It is either this or nothing.

We contend that the great healthy mind of the American public demands more than the inane stories appearing in ninety per cent of the magazines. The modern periodical must stand squarely on its own feet—determined to do one thing and that is to publish what it claims to publish. It needs a stiff backbone, an intelligent grasp of the readers' demands, a high-powered policy to produce only real fiction, and the honest, clear-eyed intention to hold to this policy.

THE THRILL BOOK is coming to you now regularly twice a month. We come straight from the shoulder—are you satisfied with it? Does it contain what you have long desired to read? Does it print what interests you as an individual with a mind all your own? Do you like the unusual story, or are you one of the people who are still content to read the dull, the usual, the ordinary? We ask this as your representatives in the fiction of America—as the official publication of the Worldwide Fiction Readers Club. We want the truth. Don't be afraid of hurting our feelings. We can't grow if we are afraid of criticism, and, between ourselves, we are here to grow! If our stories are good to-day, we want them excellent to-morrow, and splendid the day after. We want you to take a moment to sit down in order to write to us. If you are interested in the idea of a magazine which is "not dead from the neck up," join the crowd and become a regular reader.

The Editor.