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The DEVIL'S OWN

by Chester L. Saxby

MADE IN MASSACHUSETTS

by Robert W. Goodwin



THE THRILL BOOK

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Crawling Hands

By P. A. Connolly

CHAPTER I.

WE VISIT HEDGEWOOD.

MR. HAYDEN, I will take that dictation now." "Don't let me catch you at it," I growled, as I banged down the top of my desk. And, snatching up my cap, I dashed past a startled young lady, and almost over a diminutive messenger boy, who loomed suddenly in the doorway.

He held out a telegram.

"And this is where my joy ride is knocked in the head!" I exclaimed savagely. Tearing open the envelope, I read the following:

Will arrive to-morrow, ten a. m., to inspect Hedgewood. Meet us. F. S. AVERY.

"Us?" I muttered. "How many is us?" With the message in my hand, I rushed into my partner's room, happy for the excuse the telegram offered.

"Jim," I said hurriedly, "get your hat and come, quick! We're going to take a spin into the country."

Jim glanced up out of lazy eyes, his big form sprawling all over his large, easy swivel chair.

"Sorry, old man," he drawled, "but we can't both neglect the business. You run along and take your pleasure trip, and I will stay here and perform my daily toil." Jim's "toil" usually consisted in jollyng reluctant customers.

"All right," I said, darting to the door. "I'll wait two minutes in the machine."

I had cranked up, and was sitting at the wheel, when Jim sauntered leisurely out of the lobby.

"Jimmie," I said, as I threw the clutch into the slow

speed and threaded carefully through the downtown traffic, "do you believe in spirits?"

"Only in the wet, Dickie. You're not going to get extravagant and buy me a drink, are you?" he asked wistfully.

"No, Jimmie, I'm not; but I am going to take you out to the haunted house."

Jim's eyes lit up. "Have you heard from Avery? Are they going to take the place?"

"I believe so," I said, handing him the telegram. "Their correspondence would indicate it, and they certainly wouldn't come way out here if they didn't mean business."

"Good," said Jim. "I am glad, however, that we shall have a chance to inspect the old house before it is taken over. What shape is it in?"

"The object of this trip, my boy, is to find out. Mr. Orland said, however, that he would leave it in first-class condition; and as he has been gone only a week, I don't imagine it will need anything but an airing and dusting."

Jim bent over to light a cigar, as I increased the speed. "Dick," he asked, "why not take advantage of this opportunity to try to unravel the mystery that surrounds Hedgewood? What do you say to staying there all night?"

"You don't mean to say," I exclaimed, "that you take any stock in the absurd stories that are floating around, about Orland and his house?"

Jim smoked in silence for a full minute. "Yes, Dick, I do," he replied finally.

I glanced at my companion, in surprise. His face was serious. Light-hearted, frivolous Jim Akins, society and all-round good fellow—a believer in ghosts! And old-fashioned, conventional ghosts, too!

I let this thought sink in as we ran smoothly and quietly along the deserted country road.

"What is your version of the story?" I asked at length. "I have heard so many, I can't keep track of them."

"Mine? Oh, mine is the orthodox one. The Orlands always had a bad reputation. They are said to be a family of stranglers—that is, once in every second or third generation one of them has been born with this mania. The first one to develop it choked his wife to death, and was effectually cured of the habit by his father, who cut off both his hands. The natives here say that it is his spirit which now haunts the place, seeking its lost hands."

"Bosh, Jim!" I said. "That is mere idle superstition."

"Maybe; at the same time, I——"

"I also believe, as you know," I interrupted, "in psychic phenomena, and, curiously enough, it was my article on demonology, in last month's *Observer*, that caused Orland, who is an investigator, to place the business in my hands."

"Did Orland come to you in person?" asked Jim quickly.

"Yes."

"The present Orland is said to have inherited the curse, and to have the Orland hands."

"The Orland hands?"

"Yes—immense, hairy, spidery things——"

My involuntary start swerved the machine toward the ditch.

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing," I replied, and lapsed into silence.

As a matter of fact, Jim's last words had given me a disagreeable sensation. For ten days, ever since John Orland's visit, I had been struggling with an uncanny feeling, which threatened to become an obsession, and which was induced wholly by the singular malformation of which Jim had referred.

I had found in Orland a refined, highly cultured gentleman, well past middle age, charming in manner and appearance. At the time, I had noticed nothing peculiar about him, except that during the whole of our interview—which lasted, perhaps, thirty minutes—he persistently kept his hands hidden beneath his slouch hat, which he held in his lap.

When he was going, he arose suddenly, and his hat dropped to the floor, exposing his hands. At the sight, I had instinctively recoiled. Never before had I seen such hands.

Large they were—singularly large and bony, and possessing monstrous power. It was not, however, their size which had impressed me so disagreeably, but the fact that they were in constant motion. The fingers writhed and twisted about each other like snakes—or, as Jim expressed it, like huge, hairy spiders.

I recalled how he stood, regarding me curiously, coldly, but making no further effort to conceal his deformity. Then, without a word, he had extended his right hand, and without volition on my part—indeed, against my will—my own hand had been drawn to arm's length, and dropped, inert and lifeless, into that huge, hairy clasp. I shuddered then, and I shudder again now, at the recollection. Imagine such a hand at one's throat. Ugh!

It was this, and a certain promise which he had exacted from me, and which at the time seemed absurd, that gave rise to a vague uneasiness and mistrust. Not that I apprehended any difficulty or danger; but the thought persisted that I was dealing with a madman—one who, under certain circumstances, might prove to be a dangerous customer.

But little was known about John Orland, and nothing of an evil character, except that which always attaches to any man who presumes to live entirely to himself. He had always occupied the old house to which we were going, as had his ancestors before him. With an old servant, who was now with him in Europe, he had lived in the strictest seclusion. This fact, and the vague rumors of which Jim had

spoken, were sufficient to keep the townspeople aloof—a result which he evidently desired.

The exhilarating rush through the clean, sparkling air soon banished the senseless feeling of uneasiness which I had been harboring, and I gave myself up to the enjoyment of the ride. Life may hold better things than a smoothly-going automobile, a good country road, and a bright June day, but I do not know where they are, or what.

Hedgewood was situated about ten miles from town, but we reached our destination all too soon.

As we approached the property, we slowed down, in order to get a better view.

The land had a frontage on the road of about one thousand feet, and ran back for perhaps twice that distance. It was, so far as we could see, entirely surrounded with a high and impenetrable hedge fence, broken only at the entrance by two square stone columns, which supported a heavy iron gate.

Through the bars of this gate, we could see a man at work among the shrubbery.

"Hello!" I called.

The man looked up, and, upon my signal, came reluctantly toward us. He was a young fellow of twenty, or thereabouts, with a rather stupid expression, which gave way to distrust when I demanded entrance.

"You can't come in here," he said. "This is private property."

"Yes, I know," I answered. "But Mr. Orland has put the place in my care."

Upon my answer, he slowly produced a key, and, inserting it into a padlock, swung back the massive gates.

"Do you live here?" I asked.

"No, sir; I work here in the mornin's, takin' care of the grounds. But I'm goin' to quit. It's too skeery."

"Well, it won't be so lonesome, after this. There will be some people down to-morrow, to take possession. And, by the way," I added, "I wish you would help us fix up things at the house, before they come. Jump in."

He shook his head vigorously. "You couldn't get me in that house. It's bad enough out here."

"Why, what's the trouble?" I asked.

"I ain't had no trouble, an' I ain't huntin' any. I'd find it quick enough, if I went in there." He jerked his thumb toward the house.

"What would you find?" I asked, smiling.

He came closer to the car, his dull face looking ludicrous under its mask of terror.

"Ha'n'ts!" he whispered. "Big, hairy things that crawl around the floors like rats or spiders. Only they ain't—they're hands!"

CHAPTER II.

JIM TRIES THE DOOR.

WITH a snort of disgust, I threw in the clutch; and we darted toward the house, leaving the rustic staring after us, with his scythe suspended in mid-air.

The front part of the grounds was covered with a heavy growth of forest trees, amid which, and about fifteen hundred feet from the entrance, stood the building—a massive structure, of colonial style, and

in a good state of preservation, in spite of the fact that it had been built in Revolutionary days.

We pulled up at the wide veranda. Leaving Jim in the machine, I ran up the steps, and finding, after some trouble, the proper key, I threw open the door, and entered the large central hall. The house was dark and stuffy.

Jim joined me, and we went from room to room, raising the shades and windows. We had both experienced a feeling of depression upon first entering the house; but this soon wore off, under the refreshing influence of the light and air.

The rooms were large, with high ceilings, and well furnished, most of them in the fashion of a bygone day; but the living room and library, and several of the bedrooms, were fitted out in the most modern style.

On the library table, I found an envelope, containing a key and a letter addressed to me, which read as follows:

MR. RICHARD HAYDEN.

DEAR SIR: You will remember, when I left Hedgewood in your charge, with instructions to find a suitable tenant, that I requested that neither you nor your tenant should enter the room with the red-paneled door. I now wish to emphasize that request, and to remind you that you gave me your word of honor that my wishes in this respect would be obeyed to the letter.

I am inclosing herewith the key to the room, to be placed with the others you have. You will give it to your prospective tenant, with the same instructions you have received. It is unnecessary for me to explain why I do this, except to say that I expect you to use the same care in selecting a tenant as I trust I have shown in choosing an agent. It is a mere matter of honor, or the sure penalty that follows a breach of honor. Yours very truly,

JOHN ORLAND.

"Well," I said, as I strung the key on the ring with the others, "this is a nice Bluebeard proposition to put up to a practical, twentieth-century business man! The old fellow is plumb crazy."

It was while we were on the second floor, going from room to room and opening the windows, that I had my first view of the door with the red panels. Jim was close to it at the time; in fact, he had started for it when I called:

"You can't get in there, Jim. That door is locked."

He continued, however, and, reaching the door, turned the knob. I saw him twist his body, and give a sudden wrench. He turned, as I ran up, with a puzzled look on his face.

"Try that knob, Dick," he said.

"No use, Jim; the door is locked. And, at any rate, I have orders not to allow any one in that room. It is Mr. Orland's private apartment."

"Well, try the knob, anyway," he insisted.

I took hold of the knob carelessly, and gave it a slight turn. I dropped it, and looked at Jim. His eyes had a queer look in them.

"What do you make of it?"

"Nonsense, Jim! Come away." I took him by the arm, and started with him down the hall.

"Dick," he said, stopping short, "there is some one in that room!"

"You're crazy, man! The knob is rusty from disuse. Now, get busy. I'll go down and try again to get the boy, and you start in to dust some of the furniture. We've got a big job in front of us, if we want to get back before dark."

I had been gone about ten minutes, and was returning with the boy, whom I had persuaded, after some effort and a generous tip, to help us in the house, when I heard a roar from Jim, on the second floor. At the same instant, I noticed that the bunch of keys, which I had left on the library table, had disappeared.

At Jim's cry, the boy with me ran down the steps and across the lawn, while I mounted to the second floor two steps at a time.

My suspicions were verified; for, as I reached the landing I saw Jim's figure pressed against the door with the red panels, which was part way open, and endeavoring vainly to crowd through the small aperture.

I called to him sharply, and ran hurriedly to pull him away, but suddenly he uttered a shriek of fear, and, releasing his hold, fell backward to the floor with a crash. And the partly opened door closed to—and snapped shut!

Jim sprang to his feet, and, with a cry of rage, threw the whole weight of his body against the heavy door. He was frantic with fury.

I leaped upon him, and by sheer strength carried him, kicking and cursing, to the end of the hall, where I threw him upon a settee.

"There, you confounded chump!" I shouted. "For two cents I'd punch your fat face in! What do you mean by disobeying my orders?"

We glared at each other for a moment, and then a sheepish look crept into his face.

"I'm sorry, old man," he said, "but I was dead sure there was some one in there, and I wanted to find out who, or what, it was."

"Well, I hope you found out to your satisfaction!" I sneered.

"Not to my satisfaction—no. But I found out that there is some one, or something, in that room."

"Jim, are you getting crazy, or is it just plain drunk?"

"It's neither, Dick, and you know it. And you also know there is something on the other side of that door, and if you were half a man you would help me find out what it is."

"I'm man enough to keep my word—and that, I hope, will be the final word on this subject. Your fool yelling has scared the boy into a panic, and I suppose we'll never see him again."

With that, I marched him down to the main floor, where I started him to dusting the furniture, hoping that he would not forget the cobwebs in his brain.

But I am free to confess that I cast more than one curious glance at the room with the red-paneled door.

CHAPTER III.

AVERY'S PROMISE.

BEFORE the inspection of the premises was half completed, on the following day, Mrs. Avery declared enthusiastically in its favor. She was young and pretty and romantic; and the fine old place, with its historical associations, appealed strongly to her nature.

On the way back to the machine, Jim detained me

with a look. When we were out of hearing of the others, he turned to me impetuously.

"You are not going to rent that house to those people," he asserted.

"I am not?" I asked, raising my brows.

"No, you are not!"

"Why, Jim?" I asked softly.

"Because I won't have it," he declared. "It would be criminal."

"Jim," said I, retaining my temper admirably, "since when did you acquire the right to dictate the policy of the firm?"

"Damn the firm, and you, too! I say you will not allow that pretty young thing to live in this devilish place. It might mean her death, or worse. I stopped here last night."

"You?" I demanded in amazement. "How did you get in?"

"Window," he announced.

"And did you go into the forbidden room?" My anger was slowly rising to the boiling point.

"No, I did not—simply because I couldn't get in. I tried, I'll admit. And I guess I'm glad I didn't succeed. Now, Dick, see here. You just cool off and listen. I felt and heard things last night queer enough to convince me that that room is occupied by something that is not human!"

"By what?"

"I don't know what. I wish I did. You believe in the supernatural, Dick—only you call it by some other name." This with a sneer. "Put these people off for a week, and let's investigate. It is worth the effort, and it might save a tragedy."

"I can't, Jim," I said, somewhat impressed and considerably mollified by his serious manner. "They have taken the place and are going to remain to-night and have their effects and servants come on from New York at once."

"Then," said Jim, with decision, "I'll tell Mrs. Avery just exactly what has happened and scare her off."

"Jim, you're a fool!" I retorted. "Can't you see that Mrs. Avery is just the kind of a woman who would be delighted to have a 'ghost' in the house? You just leave this to me. I'll tell Avery the whole affair and your suspicions, and advise him to keep it from his wife. I'm bound to tell him about the room, anyway, and intrust him with the key. It will be a matter of honor with him, but, judging from his looks, his curiosity won't get the better of it. I wouldn't say the same for his wife. Not that she isn't strictly honorable, you know; but a woman's curiosity——" I shrugged my shoulders. "By the way, Jim," I added, "what did you see last night?"

"Nothing. I *felt and heard*," he said. "But I won't tell you what. You politely suggested yesterday that I was drunk or crazy, and I don't care to invite a second criticism of my habits or mentality. I'll simply say this—the danger, or evil influence, is confined to the one room. The rest of the house seems to be free from it."

I left Jim brooding, and rejoined the Averys, somewhat worried, I admit, and regretting the restrictions which prohibited me from entering the room. I had always taken a deep interest in all that pertained to

the supernatural, but had never had any actual demonstration of its existence. All matters pertaining to the unknown or unseen life, or to life after death, held a strange interest for me. Not that I was a spiritualist in any sense of the word—or, at least, not in the sense in which the term is generally understood—but I did believe that there were unseen forces, not human, constantly present and working among the children of men.

That this influence or power worked for both good and evil I had no doubt. What these forces were—whether they were human souls after transition to the spirit form, and shackled for some unknown cause to the earth life, or the product of some other sphere; or whether they were purely demoniacal—I did not know, nor do I now. I simply know that they are, that they exist, and that they exert a constant influence upon mankind.

That something out of the ordinary was amiss with the room with the red-paneled door, I had no doubt. Mr. Orland's peculiar attitude and conditions, and the extraordinary effect made upon Jim—hard-headed, practical Jim—convinced me of this. But what was it?

On some pretext I got Mr. Avery away from his wife, and told him all the circumstances.

He looked annoyed at first, and then anxiously at his wife. Finally he burst into a hearty laugh.

"All right," he said. "I'll accept the key and the secret, and will agree to keep both from my wife. I don't take a bit of stock in all this rot your friend has been telling you. At the same time I know what effect this story and these conditions would have upon my wife, who is emotional and very romantic. Furthermore, I don't want anything to interfere with the pleasure of our honeymoon here."

And when I left them, envious of their happiness and beautiful surroundings, I breathed a prayer that, if any sinister presence were in that house, they might not come under its baneful influence.

CHAPTER IV.

WE FORCE THE DOOR.

THE summer passed uneventfully, with no word from our tenants, save the formal letters accompanying the monthly remittances.

Then, one morning late in October, as Jim and I were preparing to make a visit of inspection to several properties, I was called to the telephone; and in answer to my response a voice, which, in spite of the tremor and excitement in it, I recognized as Avery's, asked me to come immediately to Hedgewood.

It was not until we were in the car that I told Jim, who was driving, to head for Orland's place and to put on all speed.

"What's the trouble?" he asked, obeying my wishes, but taking time to cast a curious glance at me.

"I don't know. Avery telephoned me to come quick, on a matter of great importance."

It was only good fortune that kept Jim from arrest for breaking the speed law; twenty minutes later we drew up in front of the gate at Hedgewood.

Avery was there to meet us. His face was pale, and his eyes had in them a look of horror.

"What's the matter?" I demanded, as he jumped into the car and we drove to the house.

"Brooks is dead—murdered, I think."

"Who is Brooks?"

"My brother-in-law; he came last week to spend a few days with us, and——"

"Was he in the secret room?" I demanded.

He flushed and stammered: "Yes—yes. I told him the story, and showed him the key, but put him on his honor not to use it. I didn't think he'd do it. But it seems he was interested in that sort of thing. And—and——" His voice trailed off, then suddenly rose; and he turned on me in a fit of fury. "What the devil do you mean by putting us in a house like that?" he snarled. "What devilish thing have you got in that room? It might have been my wife—my wife, do you hear!" He stood over me with distorted face and threatening gesture.

"Sit down!" I commanded coldly. "I told you the conditions. I know nothing of the room, other than that which you know. Where is your brother-in-law?"

He sank back in the tonneau, his face twitching nervously, while the car drove slowly toward the house.

"He is still in the room," he whispered, with a shudder, "and I can't get him out."

"Can't——"

"No—I am not a coward, but I dare not go into that room. I tried once, and—and——" He buried his face in his hands.

Jim turned and looked at me queerly. "I know why he can't go in," he said. "The *thing* that's in there won't let him."

By this time we had reached the front porch.

"Where is your wife, Avery?" I asked, laying my hand on his shoulder.

He looked up haggardly. "My wife?" he asked vacantly. "My wife? Yes, my wife. Thank God, she is safe! She is visiting in town, and knows nothing of this."

Jim had shut off the power, and darted to the front door. I followed closely, with Avery behind me. In this order we ran—leaped, rather—up the broad staircase and down the upper hall. Breathless, we paused at the room with the red door panels. The door was tightly closed, but the key was in the lock. Jim grasped the knob and turned the key; we all heard the bolt shoot sharply back. With all his strength he threw the full weight of his body against the door, but it resisted all his efforts.

Forgetting Mr. Orland's instructions—forgetting my word of honor—I, too, added my strength to Jim's, and slowly, slowly, the door yielded. Distinctly I felt the pressure of a resisting force on the other side.

Then suddenly, when the door was half open, I heard a horrid, half-strangled shriek from Jim, and, at the same moment, felt a cold, clammy hand at my throat—an enormous hand! The fingers reached round and met at the back of my neck.

When I came to, I found Jim and Mr. Avery bending anxiously over me. I sat up, and instinctively my hand went to my throat. A dull ache persisted there.

"Did you see anything when Jim and I forced the door?"

Jim looked puzzled. "No, I can't say positively. I thought, just before you both screamed, that I saw a pair of enormous hands shoot out from the doorway and clasp each of you by the throat."

Avery broke in. "Circumstances alter cases and vitiate promises sometimes. And, besides, a plain duty lay before me. There is a dead body of a man on the other side of that door, and he must be gotten out."

"How do you know he is dead?" The thought suggested the question.

Avery was still under strong nervous excitement. "I was part way in the room before my throat was clutched. I saw his body on the bed, his head hanging over the side, his mouth open, and eyes staring. He was dead!" A convulsive shudder shook him as he recalled the picture.

"Gentlemen," I said, "we have got to get the body out." I turned to Jim. "And you and I will solve the mystery."

"I'm with you." Jim's lower jaw clinched.

"If this is the work of human beings—which I strongly suspect—the matter will be comparatively simple, although more dangerous. If it is of supernatural agency, it may not be so easy. Let me say to start with, gentlemen, that I believe in the supernatural. I believe there are unseen forces about us with power, at times, to inflict harm upon human beings. This may be one of the times. The only way to counteract or overcome the power of one of the beings of the outer circle is by an absolute freedom from fear. A brave front alone will not do. There must positively be no shadow of fear in your heart. Do you understand, Jim?"

"Yes," he said, and I saw by the look on his face that he meant it.

"And you, Avery?"

He was sitting with his face in his hands, his whole attitude one of utter misery. "I'm not up to it, boys," he muttered, without looking up.

"Then you go down to the lower floor—or, better still, go out into the grounds. The air will do you good. We'll join you presently."

"Jim," I said, in a low tone, when Avery had shuffled down the stairs, "we will put this in the form of a test. If there is a man in that room, we will meet with the same powerful resistance when we attempt to enter. If it is not a man—if the force in there is of supernatural origin—there will be little, if any, opposition, so long as we show that we are entirely unafraid. Do you understand?"

He nodded impatiently. Jim had been a famous football player in the old college days, and I knew him to be a man of undaunted physical courage. I could not ask for a better companion in any venture requiring cool nerve and daring.

Together we approached the door, and this time it was my hands that grasped the knob and key.

"Jim, you have no fear." I asserted it as a fact.

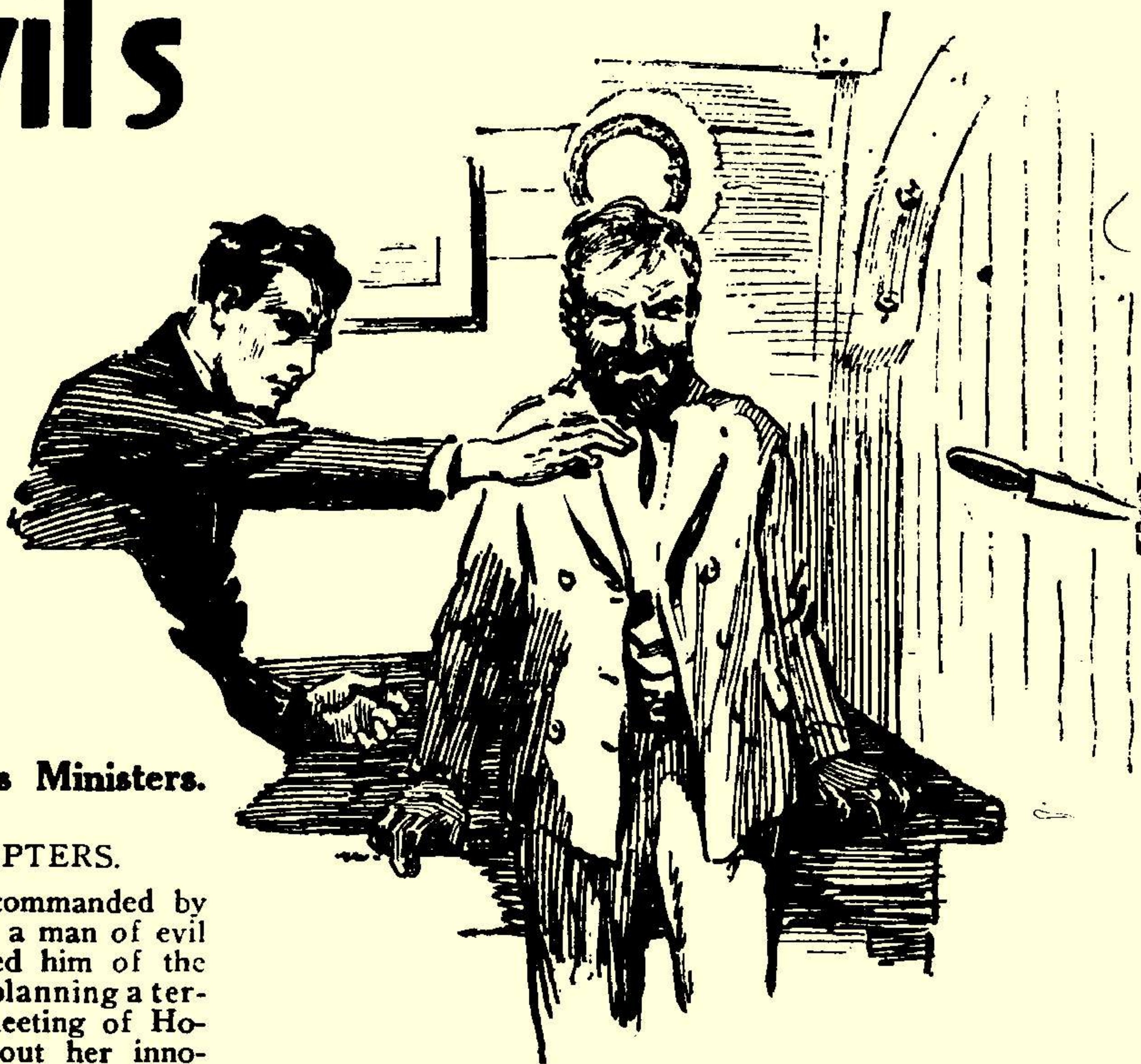
"No!"

"Nor have I. Come!"

TO BE CONCLUDED.

The Devil's Own

By
Chester L.
Saxby~



A Two-part Story of the Sea and Its Ministers.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

Malin, a young man, ships aboard a ship commanded by Jeval Hogarth. He soon finds that Hogarth is a man of evil ways and is looking for the man who robbed him of the woman he loved and mistreated. Hogarth is planning a terrible revenge. Part two opens up with the meeting of Hogarth and the woman. Malin is puzzled about her innocence, but already he is thoroughly aroused over the brutality of the ship's captain.

CHAPTER IV.

THE woman before me, the man not fifty feet off in another room—and I, the unwilling confidant of both! Here was a pretty turn of affairs. Fate was drawing me into hot water with a vengeance. A bestial man in peace and the Devil's Own in fury; that was Hogarth, and I had small compassion for him. But here sat the woman who had wrapped his animal love about her only to throw it off as a worn garment; a golden woman with a heart and soul of fickle flame. She was shaking with abject fear, but why should compassion urge me to protect her? As she had sowed, so had she reaped; and the judgment seemed near at hand, too near for my own comfort.

"Jeval Hogarth comes to find the woman Loraine and a bearded man who robbed him of her," I bluntly informed her. "Where is the man with you?"

"Señor—señor! Swear to Heaven that you will help me! What you say only frightens me more. Jeval has told lies to you, señor. He told you it is love. And Giferth—he can do nothing against Jeval. I am alone. You look honest and—and manly, señor." I overlooked the compliment. I wished to get at the bottom of things.

"Has he deserted you so soon? Has he run from Hogarth?"

"No, no. He is here, but Jeval would break him, bone and body. Giferth is no match for him. You are big and strong. You are of Jeval's ship?"

"I am mate to him by the lure of gold," I frankly admitted, "but I wish you no harm, madam, though it seems I can't help you. You play a heavy game.

I would not be in your place nor in the place of Giferth Barthold."

"He is an ogre," she said, and I knew she meant Hogarth. "He has told you he loved me. He used that lie once before. But he wants no love, only what he calls revenge. Giferth offered me riches and all that a woman craves—life. I love him not much, but he is honorable, and I have decided to go with him. Will you take Jeval from here and let us escape? I ask no more, and—and you are kind, señor."

"I was never called so," I grimaced. "Yet I dislike blood-letting and perhaps worse than that is in Hogarth's mind. I will begone and say nothing, so that he will have no suspicion of your being here. But I warn you to leave Cadiz at once." I got up and strode toward the door. My eyes turned for a glance at her there, and her warm beauty forced the blood galloping through my veins. I left her unwillingly and started through the doorway, when a figure loomed ahead, and I saw that it was Hogarth.

"What the devil keeps you?" he began. My face must have revealed something of what I strained to conceal. "Eh, who is there with you?"

"There is none with me," I blurted. "I am ready now. Where do we go?"

"Not so fast," he growled. "If you are lying to me it's an unprofitable business. Let me by. I'll have a look to satisfy myself."

My feet blocked the passage. He put out his hand to thrust me aside, but I resisted and tried to turn him, mumbling that we must hurry and that he was mad to be aroused over nothing. With a snarl he exerted his strength and flung me to the wall. I regained my balance, and, hot with dread of the inevitable, rushed after him.

He had stopped just inside the door and was staring straight ahead. A woman's scream came, short and stifled, and a man's laugh, equally short and hollow. Hogarth had found his prey. Then the woman's voice broke coherently on the silence, sobbing as she spoke:

"Jeval! Have I no right to go where I will? What do you want with me?"

As he moved nearer to her, I was able to reënter the room. Watching and waiting I stood, and well I knew that Hogarth felt me at his back.

"Where is Barthold?" he asked her. His voice was husky, thick as the voice of a man in drink. "Where is the fool who exacts no promises?"

"How do I know, Jeval?" cried out the woman. "I owe you nothing, and you can claim nothing. Have you come to do me harm? I never wished you harm."

I saw his lips twist at this. He was regarding her evenly, expressionlessly. He seemed a cat watching a mouse, ready to spring, yet staying his eager pounce.

"I am not looking for you," he said, "but for Giferth Barthold. Tell me if he is here. Tell me where he is. We have something to talk about, he and I."

Her lips were closed, I thought, over chattering teeth. Faint with fear of him, she was forced by moral weakness to do what she willed not to do.

"Then leave me, Jeval—go!" she said hysterically. "Giferth is up—he is upstairs. Oh, what is it you want? Jeval, say that you mean him no harm. Say it to me! You will not go to him in an evil temper." But Hogarth laughed aloud unmusically and wheeled to me in evident consciousness of my presence.

"She is a pretty bird, eh, Malin? A pretty bird, and no mistake. But there is no faith in birds. I leave her to your tender mercies; I have business upstairs. Be tender if you will, but a beautiful bird must not flutter away—see to it!" With these words he flung about, and would have left us where we stood—the woman and myself—but she broke from her cowering attitude and launched toward him, grasping him by the arm and calling:

"Jeval! Jeval! No, no! Not that way; not that way! Tell me! Swear——"

Her jerked cry was halted by his brutal arm that whipped out to fling her from him. He drew away from her huddled form, lying where it had fallen on the floor.

"I'll not be touched. Your fingers burn me. Keep away!" He made for the door, raging of eyes, red-flamed of cheeks, and I pictured his inward raging in a yet darker hue. He vanished like a tongue of fire.

"Señor—señor! Stop him! Oh, Jesu of Mary, he goes to kill! Stop him any way, but be quick! Do you stand there?" She was stark with fright.

"Madam," I told her, "a man must fight for himself. I do not envy rushing into this affair hot-handed. Somehow I trust to help you. I cannot think you——"

"For me! For me!" she implored. "That is, later; but Giferth now. You will not go? Then I——" She plucked up her skirts and ran to the door, choking with her emotions, darted through the passage, and was gone. Aroused to the possibility of her finding Hogarth, I sprang after her, and, led by her

light footsteps, gained the stairs. They were deserted, but I could hear her pressing through the hall above, and I paused not a second to think. Down the corridor her nimble figure was disappearing swiftly. I put on speed and lessened the distance betwixt us. She was before a door. She had opened it and was out of sight. I arrived at the door and found it wide. From deep in the room onto which it gave came spasmodic issuings of a man's voice. The next moment I was face to face with the bearded man, who looked with manifest surprise from me to the woman in the middle of the room, and from the woman back to me.

"Giferth," the woman answered his look, "Jeval is searching for you. He is here—here! You must hide, do you hear? Be quick! He has missed the room."

"Jeval!" murmured Barthold, and the hollowness of his tone smote on my ears like the note of a funeral dirge. "You have seen him, Lorraine?"

"He is here—here in the hallway. Giferth, don't ask questions! Hide—hide! A back stairway—no use to lock the door; leave this place. Get as far away as possible. I will find you somehow. Giferth, why do you not move?" For he was seemingly unminded to accept her advice to flee, and was regarding her, not in a stricken stupor, but, after the one pronouncing of Hogarth's name, seriously and collectedly. In that instant of observing him I felt a frank admiration go out to him. He stopped the woman's riotous pleading to wave to me.

"Who is this gentleman?" he asked quietly. "Is he of Jeval's company?"

"Yes, yes," she hastened. "But he has no love for him. He will not tell where you have gone. To talk will ruin you, Giferth. Hurry away!"

"But I am not going, Lorraine," he soberly stated. "Would I leave you here for that fellow? Lorraine, am I such a coward then?" The intenseness of his gaze might have been caused by the predicament he was in, but the odd smile that lighted all his face disproved that. The rebuke of his voice—so he loved her that much! She shivered, her eyes devouring him, her breath going and coming fast.

"Not going! But you are no match for him. He is a wolf for strength."

"I know his strength," assented Barthold. "Perhaps he will not find us here. If this gentleman is friendly, we will do what we can. Not so loud, Lorraine, my love!"

But she was not to be frustrated. Her hand leaped out to grasp his wrist.

"I will go. Come! We will both go. It must be the rear stairs, or he will discover us. Come!" She was urging him to the door. "Down to the kitchen and then into the alley where are many——" Speech ceased while her gaze was on him. She was backing toward the door, and the look in his eyes as he gazed past her froze the words in her mouth. As she turned, I turned and stood dumb. Hogarth bestrode the entrance, showing the effect of hard running; but, except for his hectic color and heavy breathing, he was outwardly calm.

"Giferth Barthold!" he uttered ominously. "Giferth Barthold—good!"

"I am here, Jeval Hogarth," returned Barthold. "What do you want of me?"

"I want nothing of you, Giferth Barthold, that I can't take with my two hands. You fool! You miserable, treacherous fool! Go back. You can't go this way."

The woman's face was pasty white. Gently, with a huge sigh which seemed to bear away her spirit, she slipped down and lay motionless at Barthold's feet. My own legs turned weak, for I had known Hogarth's craving for this hour. Barthold exhibited no fear, but a sort of woebegone grimness as he obeyed and backed slowly into the wide space at the center of the room.

"You won't forget the woman is here, Jeval." That was all; no word of right or wrong; no hint of asking quarter; no cringing or protesting of innocence. If ever I had felt under Hogarth's raging that this man was a hound of deceit I forgot it now.

"I don't ever forget the woman," responded Hogarth's thickening voice. "I don't forget anything. She'll have to see what she brought on us. You, Malin, watch her till this thing is done. I give you the chance I take, Giferth. I give a blabbing informer the use of his hands. But I'm going to close your mouth." He pulled the door to behind him, turned the key, and thrust it into his pocket. "Now say what you've got to say, Giferth Barthold. I'm fair with every man, whether he's a man or a skunk."

"There is nothing a man could say to you, Jeval Hogarth," replied Barthold. His eyes were upon the woman's form, seeing which I knelt and straightened her and chafed her hands. She sighed and opened her eyes, chill with horror. "I played you no wrong. You don't care to hear that. What is your mind, Jeval Hogarth?"

"What's my mind?" Hogarth moved toward him with a movement, neither swift nor slow, of a jungle creature stalking his prey. "What's my mind?" In a lurching motion of his long and terrible arms he had gripped Barthold about the head and right arm, a rough and fiendish trick learned perhaps of an Oriental, and was bending both with a suddenly charged fury. The woman had turned her face and was watching with fevered vision. But I saw that the faintness had left her, and so I straightened, the better to keep Hogarth within my observation. The uncouth ship's master was gathering a devastating storm of rage that was likely to consume whatever lay in his path. I had witnessed more than one moment of his diabolical temper. I witnessed now the most brutal of his passionate moments. He was utterly the slave of undisciplined wrath that destroyed in white heat. His face partook of a distorting animosity; his coarse lips overlapped, the lower over the upper; his head, forced down in the outbearing of his arms and shoulders, obliterated his squat neck. A madman he was and a creature of primeval savageness. And close to that repugnant visage gazed the haunted eyes of Barthold, not at the oncoming terror, but across and down, fairly into the congealed expression of the woman. He seemed most concerned with the unholy thought of her witnessing his accepted misfortune. With his lips fading in hue to a bloodless gray, he spoke to her over Hogarth's swaying shoulder:

"Loraine, go away! Go away! Get into the closet! Turn your back!"

"Giferth!" her answering cry rang out. "Giferth, fight! You must! The fault is mine. Fight—oh, your face! He is killing you! Jeval, here am I—see?"

But Hogarth gave her no attention except a blighting oath, and dug in his nails the harder, setting his feet against the strain, grunting and mumbling inchoate sounds that ceased only when he drew in his breath. And Barthold's hot pain at last rose in a lingering groan, making even my hardened stomach lift in the sickness of it. However, it was the woman's look that determined me. I acted without thought, and strode to Hogarth, wrenching at his torturing arm and calling on him to stop his cruelty. The tenacious fingers were not loosed from Barthold's head and wrist as he writhed free of my detaining hands.

"Back with you, Malin! Out of this now! Mate of the brig—six dollars!" He bore down as he spoke. Barthold's face was glistening with perspiration issuing onto his forehead in great round drops. His groans quavered in the stillness, then were checked in the violent grinding of his teeth. The man in him was surging up to give battle. Self-preservation was gaining possession of him.

CHAPTER V.

I WOULD gladly shut the eyes of my memory and relate nothing of what happened further. I would spare the chronicling of distasteful detail and suffice myself with stating the outcome alone. But that would be to tell only half the truth, and I am resolved to rid my heart of the whole accursed matter. I have said that this is not a nice tale, and I cannot shirk one particle of the shameful matter.

Barthold had been almost pliant in Hogarth's grasp, but now he was fighting, grim battle in his glare that was already glassy with suffering. His left arm went out and pressed against Hogarth's temple, succeeded in bending back the heavy jowl, yet in the next instant had lost its purchase, and slowly Hogarth's stubbled face resumed its forward listing. Failing here, Barthold drew back his fist and sent it, hammering again and again, to the unprotected boldness of jaw. Oh, he was weak, weak as I had been to make an impression on that granite feature. The dull blows beat, beat, beat until for very weakness they ceased, and Barthold's legs crumpled beneath him. Down he went, Hogarth over him, the jar of their fall breaking his hold. They writhed together, heads cracking on each other, arms interlocked, feet flailing. A gurgling protest went up from the two, a suffocated entreaty of pent breath. Hogarth's hands had found Barthold's throat and were cutting off his wind.

The woman, close to me, beat her hands against her breasts and made spasmodic moans. I saw her eyes roll upward in prayer. She was a golden woman no longer; she was gray. At that, I spat out some articulation and launched upon Hogarth's body where it lay uppermost. I attacked him with aimless hands, tearing at his shoulders, cursing him, kicking him, fastening to him, and writhing when he writhed. It was weird; it was primordial; it was ghastly with depravity. Hogarth's voice bellowed commands, but I cared not for that. I cared not for anything but the ending of this unwholesome lust after a man's life. His threshing head moved aside. Barthold's face was

revealed to me, blood-filled, darkening moment by moment. I knew what this meant, and I swerved my attack to squeeze in betwixt them, jerking at Hogarth's set fingers, elbowing back his ruthless arms. Like the darting of a lightning bolt, one of his hands broke loose and twisted about my neck. A blackness yawned about me as my neck was turned in the irresistible vise of his crooked arm. There was a minute of excruciating suffering; I could neither cry out nor hold at bay the thousand points that stabbed my spine. The minute ended; I fell clear of the two and lay in a half-awake lethargy. Gradually this lifted. I pulled myself up to lean against the bed.

The fog cleared before me, and there were the two, partially rising, Hogarth on his knees, Barthold held in his mighty hands, the poor fellow's stricken fingers rapping limply on the floor. Then Hogarth flung him at arm's length from him. I blinked and fought off the lethargy, stumbling to my knees, thence to my feet. I went toward them, but even as I stretched out my hands the thing was over; the appalling climax was reached. Barthold lay still.

The whole room was plunged into intense quiet that vibrated to the humming of my pulse. Hogarth, tipping on unsure legs, stood watching. The eyes of the dying man gyrated in their sockets with the fight for air. Barthold raised himself and showed a blackened visage, swollen temples, and a tongue hanging loosely from his mouth. And from this mouth came three words:

"Lorraine!" The voice was thick. He was searching, but it was plain that he could not see. "Graff—" One arm pointed laxly upward. "God!" He sagged down and groveled with his face to the coarse boards. A shudder; then all motion ceased.

My eyes strayed from the miserable heap to where the woman had stood. I was prepared to discover her in a dead faint from the horror of it all, but she was crouching in the corner, and in her wide eyes, far too conscious of her surroundings, burned a more vivid and wilder light of personal fear. She was chafed to awareness by the fate of her consort in guilt, if guilt it could be called, and this I began seriously to doubt. There followed the dread thought that if there existed in this man and this woman no guilt, what a crime, too great for punishment, had just transpired! Was it not an underlying compassion for the solitary figure that had kept me thus far in my rather detached companionship for Hogarth? But now that emotion was utterly smudged by his brutal ruthlessness, by his inhuman behavior. A man lay murdered close at hand, murdered by an unreasoning and totally bestial temper. I hated this criminal.

Hogarth let his gaze rove at will through the room. For a passing second it was on me, and I know that my spirit congealed with dread of it and as quickly flamed white-hot with defensive anger. But Hogarth had no thought for me. His eyes glared at length straight on the face of the woman who, as though finding, in this fierceness of gaze, a surfeit of her enormous fear, breathed a heavy sigh, and, supported by the wall, got to her feet and faced him. In the ashes of her dead-colored cheeks the fire was rekindling. She even spoke to him in a mounting voice:

"Is he dead, Jeval Hogarth—if that is still your

name? Have you killed him?" She waited in a stark silence for the reply, while Hogarth continued to contemplate her as if her question had failed to reach his ears. But slowly his gaze fought clear of her and back to that silent form on the floor. He dropped his eyes to his hands, spread like talons that, having destroyed, widened again with their appetite.

"He's as dead as I meant him to be," he ventured in a normal tone. "His lying tongue is still now." His dilated eyes belied his even voice.

"He didn't lie—to you nor to any one," rose the woman's frantic voice; "but you killed him. He's dead!" Hogarth bent his gaze once more on her. "He's dead! He's dead—and he loved me." Then seeing Hogarth's wolfish look: "What do you want, Jeval? There is innocent blood on your hands. What do you want with me?"

"Shut up!" spat Hogarth in a recurring fury. "Giferth Barthold used his mouth too freely. But he played against his luck when he tried to cross Jeval Hogarth. But he plays no more, luck or no luck. For you—" He swung about so violently that I felt myself crouch to meet the spring that should bring him upon the woman. He only glared at her at his distance. Without ending his thought, he crossed to the door. Unlocking it, he held it open. "Come, Malin!" he growled, frowning, it seemed, to hide his physical weariness. "We'll get out of this."

I went to the door, and the woman followed me, keeping close. I strode over the sill. She would have done likewise, but he pushed her back roughly and slammed the door to, thrust the key into the lock, and turned it. I grasped his arm, and he stared back without vindictiveness. The key he replaced in his pocket.

"She's safer there," he explained. "And she'll raise no noise with the look of murder in the room to be laid to her account. For God's sake, come! It's got me! I must have tonic in my veins. His breath in my lungs—ugh! Mister Malin, there's work to be done—hurry!"

"There's foul work done already," I answered him. "That man—is it worth murder to love a woman that another man loves?"

He appeared stupefied, and frowned to discover reason in my utterance.

"Love a woman! Who said I loved—oh, aye!" He checked himself clumsily and fell to parrying. "Does a man yield all without a battle? The woman was mine, and I will have her. I'm within my rights, Malin."

"What! You'll make her go with you? You love her now? Bah! You'll have me believing you. What will you do with her? I will know that." But he grasped my wrist and pulled me on with him, and no word more would he utter until we fell into seats at the inn's private table. I was holding down the struggling fear of Hogarth's crime being apprehended and all of us thrust before a hot-blooded Spanish tribunal, and so I cast calculating eyes upon the individual who answered Hogarth's hoarse demand for whisky, or I had taken greater thought for the seeming inconsistency of this teetotaling ship's master's sudden desire for alcohol. The servant was stupid, and besides but half awake, and by his lackluster expression

it was at once evident that no sound of the late death grapple had come down to those below. For this I thanked God and set to watching Hogarth pour out huge glassfuls of the vilest and strongest rum and gulp it off as if it were the weakest water. I drank nothing; I could not have swallowed milk.

"Ah! Ah!" aspirated Hogarth. "This rank stuff burns down and stops the last strength from leaving me. I must think, and this will clear my brain. There is none about? Look carefully, Mal—Mister Malin. We are alone in the room?"

"Aye, so far you're born to luck," I said in morbid challenge. "And for that other, since the one is gone—I would know your intent."

His eyes glinted fire in the blackness of them. He showed no resentment for my manner. Another great measure of the deadly liquor was poured down his throat.

"For the other," he said slowly, "there is the reward of her duplicity. I will not kill her, Malin. No—no. I can't do that. Could I strike her, I would; but I loved her once, and my hands shrink and sicken at the thought of touching her body with worse than love the purpose." He raised the jug and refilled his glass. I marveled at the capacity and withstanding power of the man. "Then how may justice be paid off? Give me your counsel, Malin. Advise me, mate. What's to be done?"

"There's a quick retreat to be made," I sharply reminded him. "After murder comes the law, and my head would go with yours if we were discovered. Do you hear that? Will you sit here when time is approaching to hem us in?" I leaned forward and thrust each word at him, for his attention was lapsing to a mere shadow of interest. Fading was the glitter of his usually hypnotic gaze, fading fast like the wilting of a plucked flower in the hot sunlight. Over his eyes was drawing a film as of preoccupation; his mind was wallowing in far sloughs of the past, I thought, or—the grim whisky was doing its work. When he lifted his hand and the glass in it to his lips, hand and glass trembled in indecision, and the whisky splashed down on the table. He laughed at that, as a silly, half-grown child laughs at his own puerile weakness of movement or error of judgment. He was the masterful, quick-witted Hogarth no longer; he was pushed down and conquered by the stronger demon of the jug.

"The damn' thing slipped," he sniggered sheepishly. "I had it tight, but it jumped out. Good stuff, though. Better than the whisky they give you in Chicago." He halted his tongue at sound of it and essayed to control himself. I almost fancied that he displayed fear for just an instant, but the instant was gone, and he downed the drink. A prodigious yawn attested to his condition.

"Hogarth—Hogarth!" I bawled close to his ear. "Sit up! Settle this thing! Listen! The woman will cry out in that room upstairs and bring help. We will be surprised and taken. You filthy hog!" I suddenly finished, and tore the glass from his grasp. He looked over at me with a frown, and reached for the glass.

"Don't talk damn' foolishness, Malin," he attempted to reason without much vigor. "Just one more drink. I'm burning up. One more drink, and I'll listen."

The change in him nonplused me more than I can describe. This form of him was unreal. The whine in his voice astonished me utterly. I stared and wondered, and, more through unconsciousness of what I was doing than through purpose, surrendered the glass. I watched him lift the jug and spill the whisky on the table and in his lap in a sightless effort to refill the glass.

"Giferth won't bother us—Giferth Barthold—he won't talk any more—he's dead," he rambled as he occupied himself. "Leave it to me—didn't I get him—eh? If they knew in Chicago that I got him—got him like I said I would! He wouldn't let me be, don't you see, Malin? Don't be hard on me—I had to do it—it was his own fault. Why'd he tell on me? That's gospel, Malin—he squealed—and he's dead. You saw him, didn't you? His tongue's hanging out for air. Let him try; he can't find air in hell. What makes it so hot, Malin?"

I rose and shook him tensely, mad with disgust.

"Get out of this!" I growled. "What will it be for the woman? Answer me that! The brig's waiting, and her mate is for pulling out of this. Unless you act now, I'm for letting this woman go and getting aboard the brig for quick sailing." I spoke harshly and succeeded in partially waking him.

"Ssh!" he cautioned me. "Listen, mate! We'll carry her to the brig and up sail for some waste coast—hold the glass still; it jumps so I can't run the stuff into it. Not with my hands will I do her hurt, but her mouth won't rave and draw me to what I've tasted before. What say, mate—maroon her!"

"You devil's cur!" I reviled his evil grinning. "It'll be murder first, and not hers, either. She's her own mistress. She can talk of what she likes."

"Easy mate! She talks of me, and so did Giferth Barthold—he's dead. He squealed, and I did for him. There's only Loraine stands between me and an honest life. Nobody can know but you and me. The hands—I'll shoot down the man that sees her brought aboard. But they won't see her, not a mother's son of them."

While he spoke there ran through my mind most vividly only the ambiguous mention of Chicago and of Giferth Barthold's too great talk and of hers. What did he mean? How did their talk concern him? There was but their flight, and that had been frustrated by a swift and terrible retribution. Above us the man was lying even now. How he lay and what that crazed woman must every moment look upon iced my spine. And now Chicago! Half the world separated us from Chicago, and I had found him farther yet. Had he known a different life from cruising among palm-beached waters of a tropical wilderness? An American he was—his speech, his manner. It was not a far call to the next thought, for that thought lay gnawing in my brain for explanation.

He sat staring straight before him, his eyes closing beneath the pressure of weariness and whisky. Deeper and deeper he was settling into his chair. I bit my lip and clenched my hands in preparation for what my effort might bring.

"Arthur Graff!" I hissed my experiment. "Arthur Graff, they're coming!"

Like a dash of northern water full in the face, the sharp words worked a miracle in the man's dozing.

His eyes snapped wide open, likewise his mouth, and he jerked erect, babbling a maudlin protest that shivered through the stillness of that hot room. He shot inquiring glances to every side and swung his gaze upon me.

"Where? Where are they? Did you see how many—who's coming?"

"I thought I heard them outside," I evaded. "Will they know you, Graff?"

His hands stroked his face and tumbled his hair. At his chin they paused.

"I shaved it off." He laughed in an abandon that was born of the whisky. "They never saw Jeval Hogarth. Arthur Graff is dead—died at sea; whole ship went down."

"But the woman knows Arthur Graff," I pressed him, relying on my only worthwhile conjecture. "The woman, Graff! Think! Will she tell them?"

Hollowly he glared in return, cudgeling his slow wits for the key to the situation, it seemed. Finally he found it and showed his teeth.

"She's locked in that room. Giferth is there with her. No, he'll never tell anything. And I have the keeping of her." He dug deep into his pocket and brought up the door key. At this he stared a while in unsound reflection. "Aye, she would tell if she could. Aye, aye, damn her, she did tell, and Arthur Graff had to drown himself with a whole ship's company off the Bahamas. She told—do you hear? She never loved me, and she told. She'll never tell again." He started up in consternation. "What's that noise? Are they here? Do you see them, Malin?"

"Not now, but there's no time to waste. She told on you, did she? She went to the police and gave up, did she? And why did you do it, Graff? Why did you do it?" I was leading him on as I might. For a moment he regarded me with determined dislike for my inquisitiveness. But this faded into a nod.

"I'll tell you, Malin. Why did I do it?" His bleary eyes were unutterably weary. "Money—aye, that's what I was after. Money! Heaps of it, all for the moving of my fingers." He checked himself and batted his eyelids. "But Arthur Graff's dead and a whole ship's crew with him—died at sea in a storm."

"But you killed Barthold. He didn't know," I urged. "He didn't know."

"Didn't know?" he mused dreamily. "Aye, he knew more than she did. He knew about the—the other things. She told, but it was Giferth told *her*. God, I got him! I know what I'm saying. They told me in Kakaman two months ago. Old Joe, he told me. I heard it from his mouth; and old Joe, he got it straight. He never trusted Giferth Barthold. He hated him like I did. Giferth double-crossed me. And Loraine—never trust a woman, mate. They're all alike. They're crooked and black."

"She told you they were running away? She wrote to you to say that?"

"Huh! She wrote to me? What the devil are you driving at?"

The mystification in his face was genuine. He was jerking to keep erect.

"Don't you remember?" I tapped him on the arm and spoke slowly and clearly. He strove against the overwhelming desire to sleep and listened. "You

showed me a letter from her, from Loraine. She told you she was going with a man who exacted no promises. She said she was through with you. She said she wouldn't wait."

A light of understanding broke over his face. He laughed drunkenly.

"She never wrote me a letter. I wrote that. I wrote it to you, mate. And you answered it. It was a joke on you, Malin—a damned good joke!"

The anger that rose in me choked my throat. I had been hoodwinked then. He had lied to me, and perhaps he was lying now. I would find out that and more.

"A fine joke—ha! ha!" I counterfeited as best I could for the blind passion that billowed through my blood. "And you never loved her at all, eh? Ha! ha!"

"Don't remember," he mumbled, shaking his drooping head. "It's a long time ago. I fooled you, Malin, all right. You thought I was lovesick and I wanted her." His head slipped lower and lower, and his eyes flapped shut and open, but still the anger growled in his mouth. "I wanted her heart, anyway, mate—aye, it was her heart——" The last word came through closed lips. His head sank to his shoulder. He was sound asleep and snoring.

CHAPTER VI.

I SAT a while stupidly summing it up. No wonder he had not wanted whisky brought aboard the brig! The game he played was a shrewd one. He needed his faculties. He had fooled me—and why? He had lied to me of the reason for following the woman; here in Cadiz he admitted it. He had brought me here, had held me to him when I wished nothing better than to be rid of him. He had insisted that these affairs concerned me as well as him. Then he was determined, evidently, that I should have a part to play; he was not paying his mate a captain's price for ship duty alone. And for what other reason would he overlook my insubordination and my late attempt to halt his murderous strength against Giferth Barthold? But what was to be done that he in his individual power could not accomplish? Had it to do with this woman?

With Hogarth's drunken form slouched in its chair across the table from me, I found almost my first opportunity for uninterrupted contemplation of my predicament. For days—aye, for weeks now—I had been satisfied in an indifferent way to let hour follow hour, and had given little enough care to the chain of events which so grievously affected this stupor-quieted fiend with whom I had signed for devil's pay and—I saw more clearly—devil's work. True, I had grumbled at his insistent demands that I know his misfortune, and I had observed and noted and clapped away for future reference his looks, his strange manners, his moods. But this was all by the way; of personal moment there had appeared nothing. Now, as I conned over the day's incidents one upon another, the seeming carelessness was not lost to me. I saw the planned reason for signing me to the voyage to Cambela, for increasing my pay to a munificent six dollars a day, for keeping me within easy reach, and for bringing me ashore, and at last for drawing me out

of that room of death where the woman might otherwise work a hurtful change in my superficial allegiance to him. I was here for a purpose, and that purpose was unveiling itself. I thought I saw at last.

First, then, Hogarth had lied to me of his inability to write. Also, he had deliberately deceived me as to the letter from the woman, and in his unguarded drunkenness had admitted his authorship of it. This partially explained the concealment of his penmanship; he would otherwise have exposed the writing in the letter. But to my new enlightenment there was a larger reason. What he hid from me he was hiding from the whole world because—he was *Arthur Graff, convicted of the crime of forgery*. With this knowledge came another more gruesome shaft of light; his statement concerning the woman's former love for him was likewise a cold and malicious lie. But why did he trouble himself to lie thus at length and in particulars? Only, I surmised, to rouse my sympathy and transplant in my heart the hatred of the woman that existed in his. Then he was preparing me for something, for some definite function in his revenge, and this in spite of the fact that half his revenge had been effected without assistance. Somehow those gorilla arms which had so easily crushed out the no-wise puny life of the man were not effective enough to exterminate the woman. Sudden inspiration fed my probing mind. If it was not physical power he lacked, was it mental or moral? Had a former passion for this woman rendered him powerless to wreak his desire? His words I recalled to help me: "There's only Lorraine stands between me and an honest life. . . . Not with my hands will I do her hurt, but her mouth won't rave and draw me to what I've tasted before." And I knew that Jeval Hogarth, whom no man had been able to call *coward*, was coward before a woman.

He had talked of marooning, and I scoffed at the remoteness of the plan. There was too much risk of a lost soul turning up again. I felt sure that even in his drunkenness he had essayed to trick me again; that he would not divulge the real plan because I was deeply mixed in it. Heavily it came to me that I, not he, was to be the *actual murderer*. Well, we would see as to that. He had measured me a reckless, daredevil, money-loving rogue. And so I was, but I was not a criminal.

Armed with this solution, I cautiously rose from my chair and proceeded to advantage myself of his helpless plight. Without disturbing his heavy breathing, I put my hand into his pocket and helped myself to the door key of that room upstairs. On tiptoe I made from the dining room and to the threshold that had been crossed by death. Fearfully I unlocked the door, stepped within, and swiftly closed it.

The room was in the same disorder. Past the high-posted bed still awkwardly sprawled the lurid pantomime of death—the scarecrow twist of body with outflung arms, the purpled face distorted and staring, staring, the jaws agape and the lips black. I had to glance twice before I made out the woman, sitting in the far corner, sitting immobile, her eyes glued to the horrible thing at her feet; charmed, no doubt, by its impelling clownishness. Even when I stood fairly

at her side, she failed to apprehend my presence. It was not until I spoke that she moved.

"Madam, I have come to help you."

She did not unleash her agonized gaze from that lifeless thing. She did not start, nor did she utter a single exclamation. As she had been sitting, so she held herself rigidly, every muscle frozen; but her body stiffly bore to the right and silently fell to the floor.

I hurried to pick her up, and carried her to the bed. There I chafed her hands, loosened her clothes somewhat, and poured some water over her white face. She responded slowly, so that for a time I dreaded that she had died of fright. But she opened her clenched hands and let the blood come back into them. She sighed and vacantly inspected me. Recognition brought renewed terror.

"Señor—señor! Take it out of my eyes! His face—Jesu Mary, his face! Black—oh, so black! Let me die! Let me die! Where is that devil?"

"Below—drunk!" I tersely explained and began carefully: "Madam, try to be quiet and listen to me. To help you I must know certain things."

"Yes, yes. I will try. But, ah, señor—his face! How black! No, no—I will listen. What shall I tell you, señor? Take me away."

"What other name had Hogarth, madam? How else do you know him?"

"Name? Ah, yes. His name is not Jeval Hogarth, but Arthur Graff. I swore I would never speak that name aloud, but he has murdered Giferth, and next he will kill me. In America he was Arthur Graff, señor. Will you take me away?"

"You knew him there, madam? You knew him for a forger and betrayed him to the police? And he once loved you? Tell me that."

Her stare was blank with innocence. Had Hogarth lied about this, too?

"I betray him, señor? What are you saying? I loathed him always, but I would not betray him. I met him on the sea. He made evil love to me, señor. Giferth never did that; he loved me. His face—oh, his face! Giferth told me when I married him about the other things. I had known of the forging, but I kept silent."

"Giferth married you!" I felt myself echo. "You were his wife! The damned hypocrite! The foul liar!"

"Señor!" she cried wildly. "Giferth never lied. And he was good to me."

"I mean Hogarth," I roughly replied. "Swear that you not once mentioned Graff's crimes. Swear on what is sacred to you, madam. Swear! Be quick!"

"Yes, señor! By the Holy Virgin Mary I swear it. You believe me, señor?"

"Aye," I hoarsely answered her, "I believe you. But why did you run before him? What had you to fear? Ah, it was for Barthold's sake! Barthold told, did he?"

"Giferth told nothing, señor. But that brute laid it to him—that was all."

"What! Hogarth killed Barthold without knowing? Impossible!"

"It has been so before, señor—other men; Giferth told me of them."

My revolting senses were at the breaking point with this information. I saw that Hogarth had taken rumor for his guide, and surely matters had gone well for his wily scheme. Ignorance and innocence were being stalked by cold savagery. I cast a rapid glance over the room, avoiding what lay on the floor.

"Can you walk, madam? You have no choice but to hide until we are gone. After that——" I wondered what was left for her afterward.

She sought to rise, but immediately fell back, and a look of consternation reappeared in her eyes. Her weakness alarmed her, I could see. The delicate lines of white brow and warm mouth were indented with furrows, but she was speechless. As gently as I might, for I was unused to the handling of gentlewomen, I raised her in my arms and strode to the door. Anywhere was more free from danger than here, where Hogarth might wander when the power of the whisky had subsided. I came with her into the hallway, which was palely alight with the late morning sun streaming through the thick dust of a high casement. The hallway was clear, and, although there was the sound of scraping footsteps at a distance, they came no nearer. I would have time to discover a way from the inn without passing that room below, where Hogarth sprawled.

A strange, alluring perfume breathed from the woman in my arms. I became more keenly conscious of her proximity, for she was a woman such as aroused in a man the wonder for her kind. Soft to the touch, she lay pressed to me, her head resting on my shoulder, her right arm so tightly clinging to my coat collar that it brushed my neck with each movement of mine. She was breathing heavily. She had offered no objection to my bold lifting of her. I knew by this that she had surrendered any hope she may have had of getting out of this tangle alone. I felt that she was reposing all her abused faith in me, and my heart beat savagely to meet that faith and bring her into permanent safety. Turning my head, I looked into her eyes, so near, so deep with golden wonder, so open with wide fear and horror. A gentle shivering possessed her from head to foot. How long would it be before those frayed nerves were soothed to their natural calm? She looked back into my eyes, tried to smile her confidence, and only moaned. I ground my teeth in rage. When I tightened my grasp of her I felt her heart pound close to mine. Veritably my roughness fell away in the contact with a wholly feminine woman. Then the realization came over me that I was more than passingly interested in this creature of misfortune. Aye, truly, I was falling in love. The thought overcame the practical need of the moment and made me thrill as I had never thrilled before. It was unalloyed sweetness, but I was recalled to the present.

"Do you know this inn, madam?" I asked in a low voice. "Which way to the back of the house? Hark! Where do those steps go? Ah, they've turned off!"

"To the left, señor," her voice vibrated tremblingly in my ear. The mad caprice to kiss those warm lips forced me to say no more, but stride rapidly to the left. Her pointing hand guided me. We approached a closed door which, when I lowered her, she was able to open, and in we pushed. The interior was

small and narrow and exceedingly dark. I thrust out a careful foot at each step and met the dropping off. However, the steps down were few and were followed by a circuitous passage. In the dusk I felt her right hand draw closer, as did her head, in a sort of childish fear of the shadows. Instinctively my two arms pressed her to my chest, and in the next moment I was ashamed of such emotion, but the doing of it was lost on her.

"Oh, señor! What is that sound ahead of us? Who is coming?"

I stopped short and listened. It was true that some one was in this same passage and making for the place where we stood. We must not be discovered here. I tried to think of escape. My elbow touched the wall on the left. My knee prodded the wainscoting on the right. The feet that came on were shuffling. Neither of us spoke. She was trusting to me. I began to retrace my way, keeping my elbow brushing the wall to find a diverging passage or at least an angle in which we could lose ourselves. At the foot of the steps the wall broke off. I turned there, and immediately came face to face with a door. At my whispered word she tried the knob. It refused to yield. She caught a sob in her throat and stifled it. Aided by the wall, I supported her in one arm, and myself attempted to force an exit. That this could not be done I realized with a single effort; rust, perhaps, had secured it as firmly as iron bolts. Barely in time I faced about and held the woman as close as possible. But it was not close enough.

CHAPTER VII.

THE shuffling steps were upon us. In the gloaming the figure loomed to the height of a tall man, and before he was abreast of us, the further sound, as of hard hands rubbing over coarse plaster, told me that he felt his way on either side. Then a click of indrawn breath, and he had paused in front of us. His left hand still moved on and bent around the angle of the wall directly to us. It touched my hair. It did not pause, but crept down and across my face, and still I held my breath, and no one spoke. To my shoulder, thence to my arm, stole the hand, a great, horny hand that was ready, doubtless, to double into a flying weapon of offense. It had almost reached to my waist, and there it encountered the skirts and limbs of the trembling woman. She groaned her pent despair, and in the echo came his hoarse oath, and with it the loosening of a whisky-soaked breath.

"Malin!" he blared, and again: "Malin! Answer! Is it you, Malin?"

I did not answer, and his hand leaped back. I set myself for the blow that would crash out of the blackness, but instead the darkness itself dropped away in the flaring of a match. The light revealed Hogarth's glassy eyes and puffed face.

"It's my own little Loraine," he grunted, but his teeth were bared. "I thought you were locked up, but the key is gone from my pocket. Thought you might come this way. Aye, it's Mister Malin, too. I guess well, eh, Malin? Where do you two go? Are you lost, as I am? What a dark hole! Is the lady dead?"

"No," I gave him back. "She's not dead, and I

mean her to live, Jeval Hogarth. I took the key. Stand out of the way! We go the way you came."

"Good! I can go that way as well. I'm lost, you see." His manner baffled me. I thought him still stupid from the effects of the whisky. Why else should he stand staring at us and keep that smile about his lips? He did lurch and sway dizzily. Besides, a man can't fight off so soon a potion such as he had drunk. "Lead on, and I'll follow." He waved and fell back. "At the end of the stairs turn to the right. It's at the left I came into this infernal blackness. You want the other way."

I ventured no opposition, and set off. Was he so drunk, after all? He kept behind us, silent now. My teeth were clenched with the instinctive awaiting of a knife blade betwixt my shoulders, for he would never forgive this attempt at escape. But we compassed the passage without incident. The woman was clinging to me no longer. She had fainted when Hogarth voiced his first oath.

A flight of steps interrupted our going. We went down them and turned to the right. After a little a door halted us. Hogarth thrust me aside and put his shoulder to it. It broke open. Warm sunlight blinded me. Here was outside air, and, judging from the smell, an alley. Straight ahead, in a moment, I made out masts and tops moving easily in a gentle surf.

"No," said Hogarth with firmness untouched by drink, "we won't go till it's dark. We'd draw a crowd. A long wait, Mister Malin, but you're rather to blame for that yourself. Set her down in the corner. She won't wake up. Be easy, mate."

"She doesn't go to the brig," I told him while he softly closed the door, plunging us into immediate darkness. "I don't fancy that marooning plan."

"That's all right, Mister Malin. You'll come to it. Be easy. You're a good man to have; aye, a good man, Mister Malin. Get some sleep if you can."

I saw the uselessness of disagreement. There would be ample time for consideration in the hours before darkness intervened. I laid the woman on the bare floor, but supported her head on my knee. I could not see her face, but her hair was soft and thick, and the touch of it sent my heart thrumming. Hogarth sat down beside me and prepared to wait out the intolerable time. I stared into the dark and thought.

Hogarth had no immediate intent of doing away with her. His very inactivity proclaimed that. It further proclaimed that I was right in believing him powerless to commit a violence against her. Then she was temporarily safe. But he had kept the purpose to take her aboard the brig. Well, and if she were taken there, where lay the harm? And might there not be good instead of harm? A port more adapted to losing oneself—aye, or a ship spoken on the sea! In Cadiz one could find no help or even understanding. It were useless or worse to ask. Why not seem to fall in with Hogarth and his marooning until the moment came for certain escape? He would awaken to my hostility and to the object of my being in the passage—if he did not already comprehend it, which I felt that he did. But I had become important to him. Despite my obvious friendship for the woman,

he appeared to suffer no change as to my future worth. God, what a fool I was to reason thus!

And so the time dragged by, hour after hour, with only a shifting of position in one or the other of us, until the woman groaned and sat up, uttering a queer little cry at the blackness. I felt a desire to hold her close and soothe her.

"We are yet in the passage of the inn, madam," I said. "When the night comes we will go. Jeval Hogarth is here and wishes you no harm. Quiet yourself."

I groped about to find her hand, and pressed it in the dark. I think she gained some sort of courage from that, and remained still, but she was trembling.

"Aye, Jeval Hogarth is here!" answered that harsh voice. "There need be no fear, so long as they don't find Giferth's body in that room yonder."

She shook as with ague at these words; then followed absolute silence.

At length, when an infinite time had elapsed, the gloom deepened to shadowless nothingness. From the crack of the door the single smutted ray faded little by little. I put out my hand, and, staring at it, saw nothing. Night had fallen.

Hogarth moved first, and cautiously consulted the alley. He came back and spoke in a whisper. I drew up my legs, stiff with sitting, and leaned down for the woman, but she held herself off and questioned me fearfully.

"We are not going with him? You will not betray me, señor?"

"Never," I swore for her ear alone; then, so that he might hear: "Can you walk or must I carry you still? We have a fair way to go."

She struggled up and reached the door, where, but for my quick catching of her, she must have fallen. I picked her up as before and bore her along, Hogarth making no offer of assistance, as well I knew he would not. The alley was full-darkened. The night was cloudy. At the end of the way the shipping lay outlined against a hazy horizon, but the skiff in which we had come ashore was tied farther down the harbor. We found it unhailed and cast off. Some sacking Hogarth snatched from a warehouse door and flung into the bottom. During the journey the woman had spoken not a word, but hid her face in my greasy coat to choke back, perhaps, the torrent of fears that beset her. Her helplessness brought a twinge to my emotions that was as profound as it was uncommon. Once I managed on the way to drop behind a dozen steps and so whisper close to her ear that her ignorance of the goal might be in part known and her dread thereby abated.

"Ssh!" I prefaced my hushed words. "We go aboard Hogarth's ship, for he will have you by. But I swear to a rescue, and not one hair of you shall be hurt." The speech was new to me and strange, but she showed that it had been happily made by pressing my arm. Aye, and I loved her for it and was satisfied.

At the wharf lay the skiff. Seeing it, she turned upon Hogarth fairly.

"Jeval Hogarth," she said, "there is no choice but that I go with you, yet I have never worked you wrong, and I deserve no such treatment. What you

may do no man might know, but to bring me hurt will blacken your soul, Jeval Hogarth—your soul!"

Hogarth spun round and flung his hands to his hips to keep them, I thought, from resting elsewhere. His eyes gleamed wickedly; the whisky was no more in power.

"My soul, is it? What is that, and what may you know of a soul? Be sure Jeval Hogarth will rejoice in hell for ridding the world of a blacker than his." His lips shut tight, and he swore in his throat. Aye, he had said too much for his purpose!

We got into the skiff, Hogarth motioning me to the stern sheets with the woman, himself taking the oars. The surf was but a harmless roll, and soon we were beyond it. Past hulk after hulk we were thrust by his prodigious pulling, when of a sudden he ceased to row and leaned toward us.

"Mister Malin, bundle her into the sacking and be quick! You, Loraine, keep your mouth shut and make no sounds; for the first outcry there is ready a speedy knife. Do you hear? Mister Malin, when you swarm aboard, swing her over your shoulder like a sack of clothing. There's to be no knowing of this." He spoke strongly and after the manner I knew in him. I felt that I was under severe watchfulness; that the woman's fate was mine as well.

We obeyed silently. I took the sacking he flung and entirely enveloped her from head to foot. She lay in the skiff's bottom, a lifeless cargo. Hogarth pushed on and hailed the brig's deck. Some heads were craned over the side; then down came a rope ladder. Hogarth went up first, and I heard his voice cutting off the various expostulations at his long absence. I hoisted the sacked woman to my shoulder, managing to whisper a word of encouragement, then up I swarmed, one-handed. As I came over the rail, willing hands went out to relieve me of my burden, but Hogarth's stentorian tones burned their way with a swift effect:

"Hold off there! Let him be, damn you! Take your hands to your pockets!" Then to me: "Throw the stuff into the cabin, Mister Malin, and I'll sort it later."

A dozen eyes scanned the burden with more than common curiosity, and Hogarth stood back with a beady tenseness of gaze for every man of them. I swung easily through them and down into the captain's cabin, where I loosed the coarse fiber from the exhausted woman and left her to dispose herself in uninterrupted rest.

On deck Hogarth was receiving a report of the unloading. It appeared that the entire cargo had been taken off and accounts rendered, but that the oil and wool for which Hogarth contracted had not come aboard. Hogarth was in a terrific mood, volatile and unapproachable. The men kept clear of him, but his choleric swearing rang from stem to stern, and when I presented myself he hauled me aside.

"The brig is light," he said, "but we'll chance no more days here. South again, and that to-night. We go in ballast. Pipe all hands and make ship. And mind, sir, it must be done in silence! Just the jib and royal; that'll drop us down to the point." His voice sank to a whisper. "Where is she?"

"In the cabin, resting," I said shortly. "Where will you stow her?"

"Your business is on deck," he curtly responded, and turned on his heel. I held my anger and set about to up anchor. The men went at it with a will, and in no time two bits of canvas were drawing what wind there was. We stole out past darkened vessels to the glimmering point. An hour later Cadiz was far behind; the mainsail was fluttering out, and the fair sea gamboled past our bows as we frisked through to the west. Then it was that I looked about for Hogarth. There was no sign of him above decks. I chafed with various conjectures of his absence. What could occupy him below? Might I have mistaken his proneness to keep his hands from the woman, and were my words of trust availing her nothing at this very moment? I fixed the ship's course and then stealthily made down the steps to the captain's cabin.

One glance sufficed to tell me that the woman was gone. At the farther wall, a thin makeshift of single laths, beyond which was a carpenter's workroom, with his head bent to the glittering knife in his hand, stood Hogarth, knit of brow. My fear for the woman bounded up past my control, and I cried out to him:

"What have you done? Good God, where is she?" I pointed to the knife.

A slight start at my voice—that was all—and he stared so evenly at me that I think he was gauging me finally. He held the knife carelessly. It gleamed cleanly and showed no trace of blood. In another moment he scowled and spoke:

"You talk too loud, Mister Malin. She is where I would have her. What do you want here? You're on duty above. Be lively, sir! The wind is freshening."

But I did not move. The man there; the woman gone; the air of mystery; the knife tapping his palm. Suddenly the rebellion thus far held down blazed too hot for concealing, and I lost my head.

"Jeval Hogarth——"

"Mister Hogarth," he corrected me in no uncertainty.

"Jeval Hogarth," I said again, and there was fire betwixt us, "I'll not be put off this time. This is a rotten game you play, and, by God, it's going to stop. That woman is clean of any plot against you. Old Joe lied to you. She never opened her mouth to hurt you. You're on the wrong track, and you've murdered an innocent man."

"Mister Malin," too gently rose Hogarth's voice, "you're talking to your superior. I don't like your tone, Mister Malin." His eyes smoldered.

"You can like it or not," I rushed on. "I'm talking to a murderer and a forger. To hell with your six dollars a day! What have you done with the woman?"

And still he only tapped his palm with the knife, a long and very thin weapon tapering to a needle point. His calmness exasperated me unreasonably.

"Are you a better man than I am?" he put, narrowing his eyes. "Your talk is so; is your arm so? Could you knock me down now, do you think? No, I have a differen test." His gaze roved to the knife, thence to the wall behind him. "Only the low-bred resort to their fists, Malin. Dexterity—that's it, eh? Very good! Dexterity let it be! Can you throw a knife, I wonder? Every expert seaman knows the handling of a knife." With the stub of a pencil he approached

the wall, measured it deliberately, and with extraordinary care from either end of the room, at length described on the plaster a small circle. This he scanned for a moment, then stood off and handed me the knife.

"Mister Malin, you have some nasty things to say. If you're the better man, I'll not stop your saying them. Yonder is the target. To the hilt, or it's no fit shot, and a poor drive for a strong man. I'm fair to every man, but there's law and limit. Beat me, and the woman's yours."

CHAPTER VIII.

I GRIPPED the knife for pure light-heartedness, surveyed the rude circle on the wall, loosed a quick look at Hogarth, and found no reason for the docile expression in his face, nor yet for his offer of immunity. It was not like him, and still—had not much the same thing happened on the day I had signed with him? I clenched the poniard. If I were the better man—I laughed suddenly, for this was a game to my liking and ability. But I was unconvinced.

"You grant me the woman if I win the stroke? You'll release her? Swear!" I required, thoughtless of the picture of Hogarth's word linked with honor.

"Aye," he said, and swore. "You may have her, dead or alive, as you will."

This roused no suspicions, and meant nothing more to me than I had asked. I therefore stood for the throw, and, as I did so, it seemed that the thin wall swayed ever so little before my sight and that the plaster gave forth a heavy and repeated crackle as if a body flung against it. I lowered my arm and strode forward to investigate the cause, when Hogarth shoved me back and motioned me to fire ahead.

"The wind straining at the beams—hurry!" he ordered. "Do you fear the bet?"

"Fear the devil!" I hurled, and backed to where I had been. With eyes and hand I took methodical aim and let fly. The knife circled twice through the air, met the plaster with a sharp hiss, and bedded deep, so that only the black hilt protruded. I saw the success of the throw, almost a perfect bull's-eye. I faced Hogarth with something akin to a swagger, and found him pale, with eyes riveted on the wall. But his mouth was drawn into a smile for all his eyes' unwillingness, and he grinned back.

"The shrewdest blow that ever went from mortal hand, Mister Malin. God, look at the thing sticking there! Full to the hilt—and you're the better man. These hands couldn't have done that." The last sentence struck me oddly, so like another speech of his was it. I crossed to the wall and laid hold of the knife. It came forth with a single wrench and lay in my hand.

"A cruel weapon," I grunted, scanning it; "the longest blade, the thinnest point—" I could go no further, or, rather, I found my mind springing away from the crudely erected concealment to grapple with a terrorizing thought. How it came to me I cannot explain; that it came with a rush that fairly staggered me suffices. I let go my breath in a cry of madness and fixed my gaze on Hogarth.

"Have I—is she there? You wolf, have you played

dirt with me?" At the same instant we started for the padlocked door. I was by him while he fumbled with the lock.

"You guess well," he mumbled as he worked over it. "It's the woman you want. I've had no throw, but it's no account. You win—and so do I. All I care for is done. Aye, Malin, the job's done. Six dollars a day it is, and cheap—dirt cheap! Stand aside!" The lock was sprung, and he tore it off. "In with you! Call out what you see—and—be sure the job's not half done."

I scrambled through the opening. Inside, I came erect and slowly adjusted my sight to the semidarkness. The room was dismantled and littered with carpentry effects—jury stays and shrouds and what not. But all this was by the way. Lashed on a huge chest, with her head and shoulders pinioned to a scantling of the wall, was the woman, Loraine, ghastly white and staring. All her face was set in untold agony—all but her mouth that held a gag of rope. Gasping out senseless gibberish, I rushed upon her and did a dozen childish inanities, prying at the brutal rope, groping for her pulse, shouting out to her, attempting to shake her into sensibility. She changed neither color nor expression, and I chatteringly told myself that she was dead, killed by the knife which I had flung, killed by the very person who had vowed to seal her from harm.

I came to swift and awful silence, faced by a terrible truth. Loraine, who had prayed me, a stranger, for help; who had placed her overbalancing fears and hopes in my hands and reposed the future in my keeping; who had lain in my arms with the perfume of her presence restoring something of the manhood that I had of late forsworn—Loraine had been murdered and by unsuspecting hands. In that awful silence I stood, and the waves of frigid despair followed the waves of scalding passion over and through my body and mind. I was alone with a rising madness; and then, out of that awful silence, drove a wonderfully exhilarating sight. From the tendency to becoming a maniac it thrust me back into the zone of rationality. On the edge of total blackness I paused, and the voice of reason spoke and cleared the deeps. The thing that I observed was but a pin hole in the plaster, an inch from the woman's head and to the left. The stronger light of the cabin behind it made it radiate dully; but I saw it, and it was the most joyous sight that ever my eyes rested on. In a trice I recognized it for the opening made by the dagger. The blow had been an inch to the side; the murder had been averted by the chances which favored the error. Loraine was safe; had only fainted from the horrible exposure of ears and nerves. I thudded to my knees. I was so filled with intense happiness that I reacted to a childhood's habit of prayer. I thanked aloud the God who watched over destiny. I called upon Him to hear that I would defend this woman with every effort of my body and mind and until death released me. And as fate would have it, my prayer was broken into by a singular sound that brought me up off my knees and turned my heart to metal. It was the voice of Hogarth—*laughing*.

One moment the knife was on the floor, where I had dropped it; the next it was in my closed hand, and

I was bursting through the low opening. I saw the greater light, and in the midst of it Hogarth, with his lips still parted in a waiting grin. Then the grin fell away. He had seen my face and the knife gripped in my hand. He crouched low, and neither advanced nor retreated. Only intense surprise welled up in his eyes, and back of the surprise were kindled live coals in the blackness.

"Hogarth! Hogarth—you devil! You damned hound!" I rasped bitterly. All the rioting lights of anger blotting out caution and reason, I sprang, and the face of him blurred into cloud and fog, in which I locked myself, and fought as I had never fought before—aye, and never will fight more. Ah, the memory of it sickens me as I lie now and wait, wait for that terror of eternity! I had been made to do what the stomach of this animal held him from doing, and only a tremendously thankful mistake had restrained me from murder. The woman bound there, hearing all, knowing when—God of Mercy, would she ever forgive me? Would she ever comprehend the truth of it? Would she look once more into my eyes and smile and trust me? All this I prayed for in that first second of launching against the object of devouring revenge; for I loved her; I knew it now. She had won every nobler impulse of my being, and I would prove it with the last strength that lay within me.

Hogarth's gorilla arms were about me. The knife dropped to the floor, nor had I intended using it. I would kill him with my naked hands as he deserved, or I would die as Giferth Barthold had done, with that unbreakable, mocking grip at my throat denying breath, denying a last frenzied plea to my Creator. But I was girded by the strength of the mad. The power of curdled fury was mine. I wrenched; I tore at him; I was bereft of cunning, only to be endowed with unnatural energy. He was the better man as muscle goes, but in that moment I knew myself his temporary equal.

And he fought. With the strength of the despicable serpent he fought, and, fighting, laughed. He called on me to save my skin and cool my head. I heard him, and consigned him to everlasting damnation. He was a snake in cunning and command, but I—I was a tiger.

Back and forth we threshed from wall to wall, from pitching table to swaying bunk and back again. From my grip he strove loose, ripping clean off his shoulders the coat that I clutched. We closed the second time, he picking his hold, I blind to everything but the slaving torment that scourged me on. He had me. Those were his terrible hands that clamped my neck. I roared out my rage, and twisted my neck until the bones cracked, but the hands came away. Instantly they were elsewhere, everywhere, high, low, incredibly swift and vulturous. In my blindness I saw them hunting, eluding, plying where the defense was thinnest. And yet I saw them not at all. My own hands worked without plan, with only purpose. My mind worked dully and goaded me with the picture of a woman's blighted face.

Time swept by. It was measured in the pulse beats of too heavily striving blood; it was measured in the coming and going of heated breath; it was measured

in the sloughing grind of strained heels. And ever I counted it second by second, until the last beat should blot out sense and feeling. Then my hands plied no farther. The cords of his sweating neck swelled beneath my fingers. His throat, with its discordant music of dry whistling, compressed, to billow forth, to sink in hollows, there to remain. If I could lock my thumbs where they were; if I could stand the inhuman pain of his hand on my chin, lifting it, bending it till death seemed a cheap price to pay for a moment of respite—a surcease from a drenching misery; if body and soul might still cleave together while I counted! A better man—a better man! I prayed for strength to kill. With the drum of unconsciousness beginning to beat in my ears, I prayed, and my prayer was heard.

His knees gave way. We were down. His breath was sucked in to a sound as of the surf over coarse sand. So near the bunk we were that I narrowly missed breaking my temples against the wood. His hands relaxed in the fall, and I could have cried my exultation, for my own gave no whit. But my triumph was short-lived and foolhardy. To my ears my clearing mind brought the sound of rough hands moving over the floor—moving slowly, slowly; and for what? Need I guess? Could I doubt? Those hands were Jeval Hogarth's hands, and they groped stealthily for the means of furtive murder; they sought the knife I had let fall. A moment more, and the sound ceased. I gasped with intolerable dread. I could not release my hold; I must not. Something rattled, and, likewise, was still. An age drifted by, with that uncanny throat that I clutched still stiff and holding its own. The end came with a violent convulsion. I felt a startling pain in my side. I was conscious that he had found the knife and had struck. A nausea settled over me, and, turning to weakness, defied my pressing thumbs; I was losing all strength. The next stab might be my heart. In this exigency my fingers tore loose of their lawful prize and fell in scant time upon his stretched arm. The knife was lifted; I caught it, swung to ward it off, and down it leaped with all my weight behind it, fairly to his own ribs. I rolled away.

The blood was spurting from his open shirt, and very quickly dyed his chest. His right hand still gripped the handle of the knife; the rest of it was buried in his flesh. His eyes were upon me, baffled eyes that were yet grim. His teeth were set in pain, but fell apart almost at once. I got up, reeling, and clung to the edge of the bunk. I was fascinated by what I had done.

"Hogarth! Hogarth!" I cried out. "You're done for! I've killed you!"

His lips were black, but not so black as Barthold's lips had been. They worked in a sad effort for breath. There was breath aplenty for him now, but he was past using it. He was staring at me, a great astonishment in his eyes.

"Better—man," those dark lips mumbled; "better—man—that's right. Damn you! Did it!" His right hand came away from his body; with it came the knife. The blood sped out afresh. He was well-nigh gone, but the dare-devil in him would live out his last, clinging second. He half raised himself and

tried to laugh. I think he even tried to speak. Then like a lump of clay that he was, he thudded back, and only the grin remained.

I had forgotten the woman. Insane for revenge, the subject of my wild act had been momentarily erased from my thought. Now that the act was accomplished, she flashed back into my consciousness with increased vividness. To the carpenter's room I rushed, dizzy and addle-headed as I was, and brought her forth, past the lifeless form of her evil genii to the healing freshness of the night breeze.

On deck, I encountered no one. The helmsman was at his post, and the lookout showed a motionless back. Alone with this woman who had been spared to me as by the will of a God I had for years forgotten, I worked to bring her back to realization of her surroundings, to the knowledge of security and peace. When at length she opened her eyes with a fluttering sigh, I told her, told her all that had occurred; told her the worst and the best. And because I couldn't stop there, because there was a thankfulness and a humbleness in my heart that demanded expression, I told her more. I told her that my hands would never cease to shield her and protect the peace that they had been allowed to offer her; that later, when certain things had resolved into less vivid memory, I would—I *must* say more.

Then in the blackness of the night we sailed briskly and with new hopes on the *Wings o' Morning*.

There lies the thing as it was done. One soul forgave me; one heart that knew no guilt looked out of two golden eyes and called it right. But that soul and that heart are not sufficient to purge the stain, and the world must judge with her. I have spoken the truth and spared nothing. May that truth spare me in the great accounting, which is near!

THE END.



AFTER

By Charles Kipro

I HAVE been singing in a desert,
Yet the sky was wide around me;
Blind, I was, unto the sun
Yet her golden tresses bound me.

I have been singing of life's madness
Like a child who feebly chatters,
Voicing all the spirit's sadness
As though that even matters.

While I sang each doleful dirge
On my rusty lyre's strings,
I forgot the maddening urge
That lifts one up and sings.

There upon the mighty desert
I had faltered in my flight,
I who wandered on my journey
Through darkness and through light.

CORPSE IS TIED IN RIVER.

Unusually uncanny suicide or a most peculiar murder is believed to be behind the death of an unidentified man whose body was found recently bound with rope and moored to the shore of the Delaware at the foot of Perdicaris Avenue, near the suspension bridge over the overflow of Sanhican Creek.

The gruesome find was made by "Kid" Henry, boxer, and David Russell and George Blase, both of 159 Pennington Avenue, Trenton, N. J.

The arms of the corpse were tied with a piece of rope, and another rope one hundred and fifty feet long was tied to the waist, the shore end being fastened to a tree.

Henry and his two companions were walking along the banks of the river when they saw the rope. They began to haul it in and were horrified to see a human body tied on the end of it. Henry immediately notified Sergeant Hebner at police headquarters, who sent the police ambulance, Reserve Officer McDonald, and Chauffeur Briest and Patrolman Fay to the scene.

The dead man was clad in workman's clothing. He was about fifty years old and had not been in the water more than one day. There was nothing in the pockets or on the body to make identification possible. There were no marks of violence to be found.

It may be that the man tied himself up and jumped into the river, after fastening the end of the line to the tree to insure the recovery of his body.



HE COULDN'T BANISH THE GHASTLY SIGHT.

H. B. Kelly, former secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, now a Y. M. C. A. secretary in northern Italy, tells of seeing a wounded soldier who could not banish from his mind the sight of a dying German woman soldier who was bayoneted to death as she was strapped to a machine gun.

"I had a strange experience while helping unload some of the wounded American soldiers," Kelly writes to his wife. "One of them, badly hurt, was unable to get out of his mind one incident of the hand-to-hand fight in which he was engaged. Charging a machine-gun nest, he ran his bayonet through a soldier. As the latter dropped to the ground the helmet fell off and the American realized he had killed a woman who was chained to a machine gun.

"The soldier raved continually about the incident while delirious. He said he never could forget the sight of the woman's long yellow hair, which fell about her shoulders as she dropped to the ground. We have read of the hellish practice of chaining women to guns, but now I know it was true."



HAT BLOWS OFF AND ON AGAIN.

While John Hoey was passing the Durkee department store in Bucksville, Pa., on his way to the post office, the wind lifted his hat from his head and carried it high into the air. Hoey ran after it, hoping to recover it when it landed. Strange to relate, but vouched for by several witnesses, his headpiece came down and landed right side up on his head, after Hoey had run a distance of several rods.



MAGIC in MANHATTAN

By Robert W. Sneddon

OH, come in! Come in!" I cried out impatiently. Some one shuffled his feet, coughed, and then pushed open the door. I turned in my chair and scowled at the intruder. A long, lanky body, clad in a shoddy suit which had at some remote period dangled outside a secondhand clothes store and was now held together by pins, was topped by a pale face. The tip of the long nose twitched nervously. The eyes were large and brown, and for a moment I could have sworn that a dog's soul, loving and appealing, looked out of them, but I dismissed the fancy. His shoes were a mere lattice work of leather through which peeped red socks.

"If it is books," I said sharply, stifling my better feelings, "I don't want 'em. As you see, I have all I want. If it is anything else, there's the door."

The face of the unknown crinkled in a whimsical smile, and again I was reminded of a dog, and hesitated.

"No, sir. It is not books," he said plaintively.

"Then what is it? I'm busy."

"It is dogs. Well, not dogs exactly. Some dog, to be precise," he answered, bringing into view a small box of inlaid wood about three inches square.

"Some dog? Here! You seem tired. Sit down. Now what is it, but don't be long."

He laid his shabby hat on the floor and sat down.

"When I said some dog," he began, "no doubt I surprised you."

"By the bye," I interrupted, "Harvard or Yale?"

"Harvard," he replied dully, "but we won't discuss that, if you don't mind. This little box holds the result of eight years' study and research. Began when I first went into rooms. You know what that means. You get in, turn on the light, and there you are with your books, the loneliest creature on earth. Don't make friends easily, but I can get next to a child or a dog in five minutes. I wanted a dog, but you know what cruelty it is to leave the poor thing all day. Believe me, a dog gets the blues just like any of us. Ever leave your dog for a day? When you come back it falls all over you for joy. Yes, it's fine to have a dog, but it's no fun for the dog. Well, mine was the scientific side. I never did much good at it. My brain was always buzzing with other problems. My best friend was a Hindu who knew more than his

professors. Once in fun I told him of an idea of mine —"

He looked at me appealingly.

"Go on. I can spare you a few minutes."

"Maybe crazy—my idea; but I thought of a dog that could accommodate itself to all places and circumstances. If I were out the dog would be latent, and on my return all I had to do was to will he should be there. Sounds rubbish, I dare say."

He seemed so anxious to please that I hadn't the heart to tell him to clear out, and I nodded wisely.

"Also," he continued with a faint smile, "there's times when you may want a big dog or a little. If you're going by train how convenient if your boarhound could turn into a toy dog."

Time after time we tried experiments. No, not vivisection. I like dogs too much for that, but psychic suggestion. I know dogs. I lived five years with them constantly till I could read every thought that passed through their brains, and they have brains. We got pretty deep in occult learning, my friend and me. And we hit it, sir, we hit it at last. We found out how to change the outer envelope of a living substance and leave the soul—we'll call it the soul—unchanged. We came on it suddenly, and before we realized it the secret was ours. My friend died shortly afterward, and just before he died he confided to me that in all probability his next incarnation would be in the form of a dog. Now the dog which I have here was evolved at the moment of his death, and though I haven't been able to trace any connection between Ram Nughar —"

"Ah, that was his name?" I murmured.

"Yes, and of the dog. I have a strong conviction that they are connected in some way."

"Hum! Very, very interesting," I commented, rubbing my ankles together to assure myself that I was in room 2005 of the Flatiron Building and not in bed. "Only I see no dog."

"Pardon me. He is in this box," he said, kneeling on the floor and laying the small box carefully on it. "You have no objection to an oracular demonstration?"

"None. Provided there is no smoke or smell."

He took no notice, but opened the box.

"Please look into the box. Good! You see something in it. And it reminds you of what?"

I rather resented this cross-examination, but after all—

"Looks like a piece of dried leather."

"Good! Now watch. Oh, by the bye, what sort of a dog are you partial to?"

"I rather fancy bulldogs," I answered after some cogitation.

There was a period of strained silence, during which the stranger gazed fixedly at the box, placed his hands in certain positions, and finally said in a loud voice—No, I won't relate what he did say, because I promised never to reveal it, and in spite of what happened eventually I am a man of my word. To my horrified

astonishment, I fancied I heard the faint tinkle of a bell, and a large bulldog appeared from nowhere, standing on the floor at once licking its master's hand affectionately.

I started back in my chair.

"Have no fear. He's absolutely harmless. Aren't you, Ram?"

The mention of his name seemed to affect the dog, and he careered wildly about the room, finally bringing up against my legs. I leaned down and stroked him, and he wagged his tail.

"He is all there," I murmured feebly.

The stranger let a comprehensive smile, somewhat wistful and sad, creep over his face.

"All there but the bark."

"Not dumb, surely?" I queried.

"Yes, at will. Bark, Ram!"

Ram gave vent to a succession of barks and growls.

"That will do," I said hastily. "There are other people in the building."

"I trust that my demonstration is satisfactory."

"Oh, quite, quite," I hastened to assure him.

"Of course," he said with an eager look in his eyes, "you might prefer a Great Dane or a St. Bernard."

"Too big," I said shortly. "I could never think of keeping a dog like that in town."

"Ah, I think you fail to see my point. You can have any size of dog you like. Come here, Ram."

"Down!" commanded his master, gazing at him fixedly. He performed the same tricks as before over his body, ending by repeating—the words.

Simultaneously the bulldog vanished and a huge Dane came into view so suddenly that the stranger was propelled upon his back. I could have sworn I heard a bell ring at my ear, but as coming from a great distance. It was queer, but the stranger said nothing, and I thought I must have imagined it.

"Quiet, Ram!" he ordered, picking himself up.

The dog stood like a statue.

"You see, the beauty of it is this: At the word of command you can control him so effectually that he would stand for a year. You could go away to the North Pole and come back to find him in the same position."

"But—but——" I stammered. "Does he never eat?"

"Never! Why should he. He is merely a product of your own will invested with a body. Now, sir, to come to the point, I haven't had a square meal for days, and I want to sell Ram to you."

"Why to me? Eh, why to me, man?"

"Because you are the only person who hasn't turned me away as a charlatan, as a crazy liar, and——"

His voice faltered. I may have wiped away a tear myself. Who knows? I am only a humble writer.

"And the price?" I asked.

"Twenty plunks—dollars, I mean."

"Twenty," I echoed, and looked at the dog. Why not? I had always wanted a dog. My wife adored them. I mechanically felt in my pocket for my bill case.

"Good! You buy, then. Wait a bit, though; I'd better teach you how to change him."

"Surely."

"You must swear never to divulge the secret to

any one. It is attended with considerable risk. Those who are concerned have means and ways of finding out, and I'm taking a big chance myself."

"Trust me," I assured him. "You needn't worry about me."

I more than regret I cannot set down what ensued. I almost repented of my bargain, but finally, after several attempts, my efforts in producing and transforming Ram were successful. I handed over the bill, shook my instructor by the hand, and led him to the door.

"Oh, I forgot!" he said softly as he went out. "Be sure you don't transform him more than three times a day."

"Why, what would happen——" I started.

But he was gone. I put the box in my pocket and set out home. I would not have felt so happy had I known to what a medley of fantastic happenings I had pledged myself.

It never occurred to me till I was closing the door of my dwelling that my wife might not regard our new pet in quite the same light as I did. I am the last person in the world to practice duplicity, but as I stood there on the rug I realized with a sense of discomfort that I could not divulge anything about the Arabian afternoon's entertainment in which I had taken part. Trusting as she is, she would never believe me. I hated to do it, but it was plain I had to make up some story about it, and I needed time for that.

I hung up my coat on the rack, and, with a stealthy glance around, started to tiptoe to my library door. Then the overcoat perversely flung itself off the hook and flopped to the floor. My worst anticipations were realized. My wife's head appeared through the curtains at the parlor door.

"Oh, is that you, dear? I thought you might be sleeping, and so——" I mumbled.

"But, dear, you know I never sleep in the afternoon," she exclaimed in evident surprise.

"Well, it's hardly afternoon now," I said, making a swift step to the rack and lifting up my coat. As I did so, I contrived to cover up the box.

Two facts just passed the winning post in my brain circus then. One was that I had forgotten to ask the name and address of the stranger, and I wished I had never set eyes upon him, and second that I was a singularly unskillful liar.

"Oh, Mary," I said as calmly and convincingly as I could, "I have a little job for you—to fix the tag on this coat."

"Surely. I'll do it now. Bring it in."

I wasn't prepared for this.

"Oh, to-morrow will do—to-morrow. No hurry. Or I have to do some writing later on—so you can do it then."

For a moment my fate hung in the balance, and then Mary drew in her head and I dashed into the library. Where to hide the confounded thing? Where? I felt like a thief. No reason for it. The box was mine by right of purchase. Though there was a suspicion of magic attached to it—well, the magic was no more than the workings of some new law in nature. I have no doubt the inventor of that

mysterious instrument of torture, the piano player, handled his creation with the same secrecy as I did my box. At last in desperation I hid it in the waste-paper basket. No one would touch that till morning.

I went through to the parlor extremely cheerful. I even whistled. What I whistled has no bearing on the story. It was probably one of my bathroom improvisations.

We sat down to dinner, and everything passed off safely till the coffee, which came in with a bomb.

"Oh, dear me!" said my wife. "Such an amusing little booklet came to-day. Toothby's dentifrice. Just the cutest thing. I meant to keep it for you. I wonder where I laid it. Why, I believe I must have put it in your waste-paper basket. I'll run and get it. You will laugh. I know I did. There was such a dear little boy——"

Cold beads of perspiration stood out on my forehead in the approved novelistic fashion. A plague on all novelists! Why do they invent such things?

"Oh, Toothby's——" I faltered, and then plunged. "I got one at the office. Very amusing. Very."

Mary looked her disappointment.

"And I was going to keep it for you. You can always make a verse out of anything like that for one of the weeklies or an editorial or something. The last page was awfully good."

"It was," I said, gulping down my coffee and rising hastily. "The people who write those things are extremely—er—intelligent, but the expenditure of hot air is hardly commensurate with the degree of elevation of the masses thereby. Further than that, I can say no more, and now I must get to work."

"Pertinax," said my wife anxiously, "you must have caught cold to-day. Your voice sounds so—so hoarse."

"Tut-tut! Nothing wrong with me."

"You're not going to write any jokes to-night, I hope, dear. The last time you were quite depressed the next day, you remember."

"Not to-night. Something more serious," I replied reassuringly.

It was. I was possessed by a demon of curiosity. I retired to the library, closed the door, and, drawing the box from among the torn paper, gazed at it. I had a foolish fear that something might go wrong. I might even be so perturbed as to conjure up a tiger or an elephant, both unpleasant house pets. Still, I was prepared for anything. That is the advantage of the literary life. I listened. All was still next door, and I went through my formula tremulously. I was delighted to see Ram appear, and the affectionate creature manifested his joy by burbling through his flattened nose and beating his tail on my legs.

"Good dog. Good old fellow," I murmured to him. He stared up into my face with intelligent eyes, speaking eyes I might almost say. The more I looked at him the more I fancied him. "Unique," I repeated to myself again. No worry, no care. The only fly in the ointment was that I had to keep him hid. I would be unable to flaunt him in the face of Tilby, who boasts of the ownership of a bad-tempered terrier, descended from the dog kings of Erin.

Ram was sitting quietly by, so, drawing over a pad, I began to jot down an idea that had come to me.

All at once I became conscious that something was wrong. Ram! Where in Heaven's name was the dog? The door was shut. Had he dissolved into his native air? The box? It was empty. I groveled on my knees, I peered under the couch, the table, the chairs. Not a trace of him. My twenty dollars had vanished, and my anticipation of occult delvings blasted. Suddenly I thought to myself, what if he has gone next door? But how? Anyway, I got up and pushed open the door of the parlor cautiously. At once a lumbering creature bounded up from the floor by my wife's side and gamboled about me in effusive welcome.

"Why, Pert," cried my wife, "he seems to know you?"

"Know me, my dear. Where did he come from?"

"I don't know. He must have crept in and hid himself. He was so friendly when I looked up and saw him that I let him stay. So this is why you looked so guilty to-night."

"Guilty?" I ejaculated feebly.

"I knew there was something wrong. You couldn't have given me a lovelier birthday present, dearest."

"Glad you like him. He's an—ah—exceptionally well-trained dog."

"I'm sure he must be hungry, poor fellow."

I may have been mistaken, but there seemed to be a gleam of anticipation in Ram's eyes.

"Oh, I'll see to that."

"Do let me feed him, Pert. We have some lovely bones."

"Mary," I said severely, "this is a valuable dog which I intend to look after very closely. I shall diet it myself."

"Very well, dear, but I hate to see any animal go hungry."

"No feeding at odd times or he'll get disagreeable and die of an enlarged liver. Now I must finish my work. Come along, Ram!"

Ram followed me unwillingly.

"Now, sir," I said, once more behind the library door. "No more fool tricks. I don't like 'em. See!"

Ram's attitude became positively propitiatory, and he lay down and beamed up into my face. I was puzzled what to do with him. Leave him as he was, or put him back in the box. If I did that there would be questions in the morning. Finally I recollected his seller's advice, and, pointing to a corner, I said sharply: "Over there, old boy. Now, quiet, Ram!"

The effect of these words was marvelous. His limbs grew rigid, and, but for a gentle snore, he might have been a stuffed dog. The sight was uncanny, and I hastened to put out the light and join my wife.

As I was undressing, Mary said in a pleased tone: "What a protection against burglars he'll be, won't he?"

"Quite so," I answered, rather taken aback.

I hadn't thought of that. All night long I dreamed of Ram chasing me through space, and for some inexplicable reason he wore a turban and two pairs of embroidered slippers.

What a day!

First our Irish maid got me out of bed at seven. I heard her screaming in the library.

"Oh, sor! Oh, sor, tis pl'ased I am to see you," she announced to me as I rushed in.

"Thank you, Moira," I assured her. "It is pleasant to find such appreciation between capital and labor. And what might the cause of all this shindy be?"

"Such a fright. 'Tis the rare start I had with this big, ugly, stuffed dog, an' the face av him glowering at me."

"Stuffed dog," I murmured, putting on my glasses. "Stuffed dog. Where?" And then I remembered.

"Ram, come on, old fellow, wake up!" I called.

Ram silently shook himself, wagged his tail, and barked.

"There, Moira," I said triumphantly, "there is your stuffed dog."

"Gorra, an' me goin' to be dustin' av him. Could yez belave it?"

"Moira," I reproved her, "there is no need for me to engage in a discussion with you on the possibilities of belief. The truth in hand is worth—er—two in the corner."

Ram banged his tail on the carpet, and, sitting up on his hind legs, nonchalantly leaned his back against a chair.

"Did ye iver? The cliverness of him!" cried Moira in open-mouthed admiration.

I could have sworn, had I been in the habit of doing so, that Ram, in unmistakable human fashion, closed one eye and winked.

"What is it?" asked Mary, coming in.

"Mary," I sighed, "nothing wrong. Moira had some absurd idea that the dog was stuffed."

"Silly girl! How could she imagine such a thing?"

"You must remember that the Celtic blood which courses through Moira's veins is conducive to the seeing of visions."

"She must be reading silly books in the kitchen at night," remarked my wife thoughtfully. "I must give her something good to read. Have you an odd copy of your last book, dear?"

"Heaven forbid you should do that!" I exclaimed in alarm. "She may have a bad opinion of me already. She might want me to read her cookery book in return."

"Oh, all right; I'll get her a book to-day. Will you be home for lunch?"

"No, not to-day."

"Don't forget Professor Veda is dining with us to-night."

"So he is, old pest. I'll be home earlier then. Come on, Ram."

Ram cast a longing glance at the radiator and shivered, but followed me out obediently. At the corner, I had a foolish fancy, and before I could control it I had metamorphosed Ram into a mastiff, a great sleek animal with points—I mean good points, not angularities. He was sedate, though big as a young calf. I strode along, secretly enjoying the sensation I was making, and I had just stopped to buy a paper when a heavy hand fell upon my shoulder.

I knew that hand at once as Tilby's. It is so characteristic of the man, whose proudest boast is that he is all there. All there, of course he is, though he could give half of himself away and still be a decent-sized man. Fat, red-faced, and hearty, the type of

man who wears low-necked vests and no overcoat in the depth of winter, who flings open your windows and turns off your steam heat with commiserating regard for your weakness.

"Ha, ha, Pertinax, so we are discovered, my boy."

"Well," I snapped out, "let me hide behind you. It's my only chance of not being seen."

"So ho! We are merry to-day. Sorry to see you still bundled up in your blanket. And we have a dog, and a fine doggie at that," he bellowed, gazing at the mastiff with a butcherous look.

"I don't know so much about the We," I replied, "but if your inference is that I have a dog, then you are tolerably correct."

"It is a dog!"

"Certainly. What did you think it was—a corkscrew with whiskers?"

"You funny fellows get to work too early in the morning," he boomed. "I meant it is—big, enormous."

"Of course he is. I have no sympathy with people who trail about overgrown mice."

"Hum! Maybe, but give me my old Jerry."

"Curb your jealousy, Tilby," I cried as I left him. "The dog is one of the best, if not *the* best."

"Must have cost you a bit?" he said thoughtfully.

"What do you think?" I retorted, and hurried on.

I was just going into the office when I felt I could dispense with Ram's company. He must be made to vanish. He did so, though with a bored and worried air. And then I recollected that the box was at home and that for all I knew I might have sent the unhappy dog to wander at large in the spirit world forever. But the deed was beyond recall.

I went home early, and the first news Mary had to give me was that Mrs. Tilby had just called.

I had a premonition of trouble. I was right.

"Mrs. Tilby," Mary continued, "said her husband had told her at lunch that he had seen you with a dog, and it wasn't a bulldog. Now what was it? Oh, I know—a mastiff. She got quite angry with me when I told her about Ram. She was so positive about the size. Tilby said it was as large as a pony. And I argued and argued with her, but it wasn't any use. You don't think Mr. Tilby was—was—"

"Mary, your delicacy is admirable. No, I don't think Tilby had been drinking, but he can't help exaggerating. If he loses five cents, he proclaims from the housetops that he has been set upon and robbed of a hundred-dollar bill. A good, kind fellow, but unreliable, very unreliable."

"I can't understand it, but anyway where is Ram?"

At that moment I seemed to soar up to the ceiling, thud against it, and drop into my chair again.

"He must be in the library, surely," I faltered.

"I thought I heard him bark about half an hour after you went out in the morning, but I haven't seen him."

"I'll go and see."

My first action on entering the library was to look into the box. I sighed with relief. The piece of leather was there, and in a trice I had Ram back in the flesh. He seemed very much annoyed when he shot into view, and I had to do some coaxing before he resumed his former complacency. I resolved to be more careful in future.

"He's here all right, Mary," I called out.

"Oh, I'm so glad! Now, dear, do get dressed for dinner."

"Need I?"

"Of course. You must remember he's a professor."

I might have disputed the point, but it was easier to obey, so I retired to the bedroom.

I had just finished when the bell rang, and I heard Veda snorting out in the hall.

"Ah, Foglestone, there you are! Cold weather."

I'm not sure that I like Foglestone. He's so obvious.

"So, professor," I said as we sat down to dinner, "what is this you have been doing?"

The man blushed like a schoolgirl—that is, of twenty years ago.

"Why, why?" he stammered. "However did you hear of it?"

"Ah," I said, "walls have bricks. Remember that and you will realize how useless it is to live in glass houses."

"Ha, ha! Very good," he chirped. "I'm sure Mrs. Foglestone told you. Ah, gossip how many sins are committed in your name! You can't conceal anything from a woman. But the engagement is not announced yet, though, of course——" He stopped with a smirk.

"Great Scott, man!" I cried in horror. "You don't say you're engaged to Madame Taridalina."

"What!" he exclaimed, gazing at me blankly. "There's some mistake. I thought you had heard I was going to marry Mary Ruth St. John, but it seems you haven't heard, so that is still my secret, eh?" he concluded, beaming upon us.

"But!" gasped my wife.

"Professor," I interrupted, with a warning glance at her, "whenever you choose to tell us of your engagement it is safe with me. However, what about this Taridalina? How did you come to be mixed up in the business?"

"Well, you see, Foglestone, I am corresponding secretary for the Alaska Society of Psychical Research. I have traveled in India, and I am supposed to have some acquaintance with the occult."

"Humm! Humm!" I buzzed in my confusion. The professor had touched on a delicate subject.

"Dear me," said Mary, looking about her with an annoyed expression, "I thought it was too early for flies."

The professor drew his napkin over his last drop of soup.

"Yes, the occult has always been with me. I was nourished in an atmosphere of spirits."

Mary bit hastily on a stalk of celery, and I adjusted my tie.

"Childhood found me hobnobbing with table rappers and thought readers," the professor continued obliviously. "My book gives a complete exposé of the methods of the Jim-Jams."

"And so naturally you butted into this Taridalina game. Do tell us something about it?"

"Oh, very simple. We met in a little room of lead. The door was locked. There was Hypatia, Tittlemouse of the Morning Moon, and some others, and, of course, Madame Taridalina in a chair. Hypatia and

Tittlemouse put a hand each on one of her hands and a foot on her feet. I stood at her back. We had hardly arranged ourselves when madame rapped on the table. 'T'ree raps for yes. Are zere ze fools here?' she whispered. At once came two raps. As there was no third rap, I rapped on the floor with my heel, and the others seemed terribly annoyed at something. I never could make out why, but they were very angry."

"Of course they would be," said Mary.

"Ah," replied the professor rather huffily, "woman's intuition is finer than ours. Anyway, we proceeded to levitation. Old Hypatia was bending over the table when suddenly it rose up and hit him on the nose. I crept under the table to see that there was no fake. There was. They had forgotten me."

"Impossible!" said my wife earnestly.

He stopped and looked at her solemnly.

"I swear they had. I stole out again behind madame. All at once Tittlemouse gave a yell. 'Somebody touched my ear.' And madame gave a louder yell as I caught hold of her toe which she had stuck into Tittlemouse's ear. You'll hardly believe me, but that woman had slipped her foot out of her shoe, deceiving the man who had his foot on it, slung her foot, her right one, over her shoulder, her left shoulder, and the rest was easy. And that broke up the meeting. Fraud, fraud. Not that I deny the existence——"

"Quite so, old man, but your chicken's getting cold. By the bye, what about India? See anything strange there?"

"I once saw a Hindu wearing a tall hat on his turban," Mary remarked absently.

"Yes, yes, that was extraordinary, but probably not what your husband meant, Mrs. Foglestone. Now let me see. Why, to be sure. In Poona. A fellow I met there dragged me out to some disreputable place in the bazaar. Usual tom-tom business, and then the show started. Chief faker was a slim native, and his first trick was to fling an egg into the air, where it hung——"

"Like this," I said foolishly, taking an apple and feigning to throw it above my head. Unfortunately the wretched thing escaped from my hand. Mary and the professor ducked their heads, and I jerked my hands forward to catch it. To my horror the apple stayed up, swaying in a ridiculous fashion between the ceiling and the table.

"Heavens, Foglestone," gasped the professor, "how do you do it? I know it's a trick. I've often wondered how that Hindu worked it."

I reached up and drew down the apple.

"Lady and gentlemen," I answered quickly, "that is how it is done. If I was to tell you, you could do better'n me, therefore, thanking you one and all. Tell your friends, and the exit is on the right. Go on with your story, Veda, and perhaps later I'll give the show away."

The professor rambled on.

"And do you really think there is something in it?" asked my wife.

"Oh, yes, but that something is trickery. The Hindu loves trickery. It is, as I might say, the curry of his existence."

I thought furiously of a retort, some snippet of

Shaw-Foglestone, but none came, and I smoked in silence. My wife puffed a cigarette. The professor nibbled a mild cigar in his spasmodic silences.

"There was one curious episode. An absurd person, Sam or Ram, came to me with a foolish trick—something to do with a dog. Ah, what was that?"

There was a sharp bark from next door.

"Our dog," explained my wife. "How curious he should bark when you said—dog."

"Pshaw! Mere coincidence," I said, staring dreamily at the wall. To my horror—no, to my foolish amazement rather—a spot of something dark appeared on the wall paper near the ceiling. The spot slowly bulged out, and in the bulge appeared the head of Ram, his lips set in a grim grin. He licked his chops slowly. I was so intent on this phenomenon that I missed what Veda was saying, yet it did not seem to disturb me. The head of this astounding dog was followed by the rest of his body till he stood right out from the wall. It looked as if there was a wire through him from head to tail or that he stood on an invisible shelf. Slowly, as if he were being lowered from the ceiling, he descended. It was a perfect example of levitation, but without the stage accessories, the waving of hands.

"Come, Pertinax," my wife said reprovingly. "You are in one of your daydreams."

"My conclusion is that all Hindus are rascals," repeated Veda smugly.

"But what about the dog?" I asked, coming to my senses.

"Ah, the dog! Well, let's make a bargain. Tell me how you kept that apple in the air and I'll tell you about the dog."

"Oh, that's simple, Veda. You take a long horsehair. Soak it well in glue and point both ends. When the glue hardens it makes the hair rigid. One end you stick in the ceiling, the other you split. Then when you fling up the apple you must be careful to throw it in such a way that the hair will transfix it. Of course when the apple is firmly on the split ends get moist, curl up like hooks and hold it in position. It really is the simplest trick in the world."

My explanation was received in silence.

"Well?" I asked anxiously.

"Very wonderful, Foglestone; very!" the professor breathed, gazing at the ceiling. "And the horsehair?"

"Oh, on the floor probably. Now what about the Hindu?"

"Well, the fellow had a box——"

"What—too?" I ejaculated. "Good heavens!"

"No—no, only one. He was just going to open it when I cut him short. I told him I was tired to death of Hindu swindles——"

"I beg your pardon," I asked anxiously, "but are you feeling quite well? You seem to be moving about in your chair somewhat uneasily."

"Not at all, Foglestone," he said rapidly. "Never felt better in my life."

"Get a cushion, Mary."

"Don't—don't—mind me," he begged.

I gaped at him. His face was flushed and he was wiggling in his seat.

"I'm sure you're in a draft," said Mary solicitously. "Are your ankles cold?"

The professor's face grew redder, and he attempted to rise from the table. As he half rose to his feet some unseen force caused him to sit back heavily in his seat with a loud "Ugh!"

"What is it?" Mary implored. "Do tell us. You are among friends."

I stared at Veda in perplexity. Ram? Was he there or not? I dare not look.

"Ow!" gasped the professor with a pained expression. "Ow! What have you under this confounded table of yours, Foglestone? It seems to me as if some brute of a cat or a dog was digging its claws and teeth," he yelled, "teeth into my—pardon me, Mrs. Foglestone—calves."

My wife bent and looked under the table.

"There is nothing there," she said, mystified.

"But there is. Ow! Ow! Gracious! Foglestone, don't sit there doing nothing."

"My wife says there is nothing there. I believe her implicitly," I answered blandly.

Mary smiled gratefully at me.

"It can't be Ram," she suggested.

"Ram!" yelled the professor. "The Hindu!"

"Ram is our dog," I remarked. "I hope you cast no aspersion on his gentle character."

"Character be damned!" the professor cried, rising and trying to get a purchase on the table.

"Stop!" I demanded with dignity. "You have said enough. I ask an apology for your language, secondly for your behavior, and thirdly for your imputation as to as good a dog as ever walked."

"I do, Foglestone; I do. But in Heaven's name——"

He was tugging himself away from something. I caught his arm and pulled. There was a tearing sound, his coat gave way, and he fell into my arms. Pushing me aside, he bounded out of the door, seized his overcoat, and just as I reached him, holding the coat tails which I had picked off the floor, he opened the door, glared at me speechlessly, and was gone. As I closed the door I have an idea I heard him fall down the steps.

Mary came out of the library.

"Where is the dog?" she asked sharply.

I had a sudden mental picture.

"Have you looked under the sofa?" I inquired.

We both ran into the library. Sure enough Ram was tucked up, sound asleep. He opened his eyes and grunted affectionately. Just in time I spied a button beside him. It was the same make as the one still remaining on the coat tails I still carried.

"I wonder what on earth was wrong with the old duck," I mused.

"Oh, bother him!" said Mary crossly. "He's crazy."

I said no more.

Next morning I was taking a stroll with Ram when, to my dismay, I saw Professor Veda approaching me. I am no coward, but I seek the violet paths of non-resistance, and, seeing a door on my right hand, I pushed in, dragging Ram with me. I was just in time to see the professor walk past, counting loudly to himself. I realized he was keeping himself awake after a séance of some sort.

"Why, Pert, old man, come on over here," bellowed a great voice.

I leaped into the air.

"My word, Tilby, what a start you gave me!" I ejaculated.

"Have a drink, Foglestone."

Looking about me, I was pained to find I was in a saloon.

"How are you, Tilby?" I inquired, recovering my composure. Really it was annoying to run into him. And in a saloon! And so early in the forenoon!

"Great, my boy, great! George, set up another one." I sighed.

"Have a cigar?" I said, drawing out my case.

To my surprise, there was none there.

"Have one of mine. I get 'em from a customer. Market gardener. Says there's nothing like 'em imported from Havana."

"I can well believe that," I said sadly. I knew them of old.

"Say, Foglestone, surely you don't mean to say you don't like 'em," he protested.

"My dear Tilby, when a cigar is strong it's like the truth. It prevails, but—thanks all the same."

"Oh, all right. But, thunder—a new dog! My Lord!"

"You like him, eh?"

"Um! What about the mastiff?" he continued without mercy.

"Tilby," I commenced, "you surely must have heard of the Dog Exchange?"

He repeated the last words in a dazed fashion.

"Yes, the Dog Exchange," I continued firmly.

"Surely you, of all persons, a dog expert, a close student of canine psychology——"

Tilby blushed.

"Aw, come off it, old man!" he said noisily.

"Well, anyway, it is an institution run by a dear old lady with kind heart and a silver-white hair—I mean a kind heart—oh, you know what I mean!—which takes care of dogs temporarily sick. When you put your dog in you go to the exchange department with your ticket——"

"You get a ticket, eh?"

"Surely. A ticket—please give bearer a terrier, or whatever species you fancy, in exchange for Fido, number so and so. You pick out your dog. And so your family is consoled till your own dog is better, see; and then you exchange again."

"Fine idea. But you had a mastiff last time."

"The supply of bulldogs had run out," I assured him solemnly.

He gazed at me in prolonged silence; then he smacked me painfully on the knee.

"I say," he trumpeted, "I've got it! I never saw a bulldog like that. You're going to show that dog at the dog show. Opens Wednesday. I know the secretary; personal friend. So drink up, and we'll go see him right away."

Before I could register a protest I was swept out in the swirl of Tilby's personality, and we were dashing madly up the street. I was dragged into an elevator, into an office, and I heard myself being introduced to Mr. Pinkleton, secretary of the Kennel Club, as Pert Foglestone the funny writer.

Mr. Pinkleton laughed uneasily, and said: "Pleased—ah—to meet youah!"

From the tone of his voice I knew he had never

heard of me. He probably would have been less cordial had he done so.

"Now, Pinkleton," said Tilby, "you know a good dog. Look this one over."

Pinkleton coughed.

"Ah—um—very fine. Want to show him? Certainly has points."

"I told you, Foglestone. I knew there was some class to him."

"Some class!" Pinkleton murmured. "Why, of course. Bulldogs—open—forty-five pounds and over. Certainly there is a class for him."

Tilby gazed at him open-mouthed, for the first time in his life stricken dumb.

"Your name and address, Mr. Foglestone," Pinkleton demanded.

"Pertinax Foglestone, 45 New Grub Street."

"And the dog's name?"

"Ram—er—same address."

Pinkleton sat up, disapproval written all over his pink face.

"But surely, my dear Mr. Foglestone—you don't call a bulldog—Ram. Most unheard of. Why not Brooklyn Billy or Newport Beauty. Surely not Ram?"

"Ram," I said firmly, "because——"

"He butts in," guffawed Tilby.

Pinkleton sighed and wrote down the name.

"Oh, by the bye, his pedigree."

"Out of Hindu by Mystic," I said shortly, taking the first thing that came to my mind.

Pinkleton dried the ink, shook my hand, and we came out.

I said good-bye to Tilby and walked on. And then a devilish whim overtook me. Why not enter another dog? Why not? Before I could restrain myself I was back in Pinkleton's office.

"Oh, Mr. Pinkleton," I said breathlessly, "I want to enter another dog."

"Really—you have two? What sort of dog?"

I hesitated.

"What classes have you?" I asked finally.

"Mr. Foglestone," said Pinkleton severely, "let me give you a catalogue. If you have anything out of the ordinary we can no doubt accommodate it."

"Ah—well—as a matter of fact," I murmured, looking over the list, "it is—ah—a Great Dane."

"Male or female—solid or brindle?"

"Male—solid——"

"Name?"

"Ram." It was the only name I could think of.

Pinkleton laid down his pen, stared at me, then took it up and carefully inscribed the name without a word.

"Good-bye, and good luck," he said after a pause.

"Thank you," I answered meekly.

"By the bye," asked my wife when I got home an hour late for lunch, "where have you been?"

"Mary," I said impressively, "Honi-y-soit. I have had a busy morning. I met Tilby."

"Ah!" was all her comment, but it was as comprehensive as the "Encyclopedia Britannica."

I escaped from the house the morning of the dog show, but only at the expense of the truth, and here I may set down one profound reflection. You cannot twist the tail of the truth without getting a good bite

from the other end. I pleaded an all-day business engagement and fled. Why on earth didn't I tell Mary? I don't know. I was doing nothing wrong in showing Ram. Improving the breed and all that sort of thing.

I passed into the show without comment. A hard-faced gentleman in a blue jersey welcomed me in the gallery.

"Name?" he shot at me.

"Pertinax Foglestone."

I could see that the name made a profound impression. I almost felt impressed myself.

"Aw right; chain him up here," he said grudgingly.

I chained Ram in his compartment, and wandered downstairs. What a bunch of dogs—large and small, male and female! Human, gay dogs in riding breeches and ladies in sporting tweeds. A medley of yelping, whining, barking, a babble of talk and laughter. A pungent smell of sawdust and dog soap.

Pinkleton, in an astounding suit of checks, darted past me.

"Hulloa, Poglestick," he said brightly. "Splendid weather."

"Good morning, Twinkletoes," I retorted courteously.

Poglestick, indeed!

The judging began. An old lady with a pleasant face took her place in the ring, accompanied by a stout man in horsy clothes chewing a cigar butt. The dogs were led in. There was lifting up of heads, examining of ears, mouth, back, tail, and a general poking in the ribs by the judges. A little whispering, and then presentation of the coveted blue and red ribbons. Suddenly "bulldogs" was put up on the board and I scurried off.

I had just released Ram when I met the persistent stranger.

"Fine dog," he said breezily.

"You are right," I assented, and took a good look at him. His round red face emerged from a very tight collar, and he wore a suit of distinctive checks. I would have set him down as an actor had he not worn a heavy black mustache and a couple of real diamond rings.

"Don't want to sell?" he continued, walking by my side.

"No."

"All right. See you later," he said good-humoredly, as he left me.

I felt flustered as I led Ram into the ring. There was an approving murmur. We owners solemnly pranced round with our dogs. My heart leaped as the lady pointed to Ram and I led him onto the platform. I heard a murmur of—low, thickset—well-sprung ribs—flat skull—under jaw long, broad, well turned up, rose-colored—ears high on skull—good color—weight forty-six pounds.

"That will do," said the stout man. "Take him over there."

I led Ram down, and turned to watch the other entries. All at once I was startled by a gradually increasing chorus of, "Oh, the dear! Isn't he clever?" I looked down at Ram. He was sitting upright on his hind legs, leaning against a post, his forepaws folded across his broad chest in human fashion, one

eye half closed. I felt a cold perspiration trickle down my spine. What next? My heavens, what next? Luckily the judge saved the situation. He thrust something into my hand. The blue ribbon.

"Told you so," said a voice in my ear. "Intelligent ain't the word for that animal."

It was the stranger who walked back with me to the gallery.

"Now that dog might be a trick dog," he continued.

"He might. There's no saying," I answered cautiously.

"Never saw his equal. Sitting up like a human being. There's a future for that dog."

"I wouldn't part with him," I assured him; "not for—for——"

"Five hundred dollars, eh?"

Ram gave a growl.

"Five thousand," I concluded softly.

The stranger coughed, then caught my arm excitedly. "Look at that!"

I felt the blood rush to my head. Incredible as it may seem, there was the dog holding the ribbon against his breast with one paw and smiling as near as a dog can smile.

"I've seen dogs in my day, but this——" and he mopped his brow.

"Pooh!" I said airily, recovering my composure. "He can do everything but talk, and now you must excuse me."

"All right; I have something to propose to you when you have time," and he moved away.

I looked about to see that I was alone, and led Ram into a corner. He shivered as if he knew what was coming. I murmured my spell, and I was horrified to see him change so slowly that for a moment he was half bulldog and half Great Dane. At last there stood a magnificent dog, and as I turned to go down with him I recoiled. The stranger stood by with bulging eyes. His lips moved nervously and he was waving his hands in the air. I put my finger on my lips and passed him.

It was the same over again. Ram lifted the blue ribbon, and with beating heart I led him up to the gallery again. As I reached the head of the stairs the attendant rushed to meet me.

"Hi, mister, somebody's pinched your dog!"

"Why—I have him right here!" I exclaimed.

"The bull, mister. This'll cost me my job."

A policeman moved over.

"Anything wrong?" he asked.

"Gent's dog pinched; that's what it is," said the attendant savagely. "Some guy sneaked in when my back was turned."

The policeman drew out a large notebook. I was in a hole and I knew it. The fact that the stranger had appeared on the scene and was regarding me with an enigmatic smile did not add to my comfort.

"You don't blame me," the attendant said piteously.

A sob rose in my throat. Perhaps he had a family.

"No, no, my good fellow," I said, pressing his hand.

"No! It's no fault of yours. The dog's gone, but you're not to blame. Leave me alone for a little, all of you, and let me think it out."

The attendant sniffed and moved away. The policeman stared at me suspiciously.

"When you want me let me know. It's my opinion there's something wrong here," he said righteously, and tramped away.

"Go on, my friend," said the stranger lightly. "Treat me as a confidant and let me see some more hanky-panky."

I blinked at him forlornly. I saw that I was in his power.

"Oh, it's all right," he whispered. "Close as death. Go ahead. Say your—hey, presto, though how you work it beats me."

"Not a word, then," I breathed finally, and, concentrating my attention, turned Ram back into his bulldog form.

The attendant sauntered back then. His mouth gaped.

"My Gawd!" he gasped. "Here's your blamed dog, but where's the other one?"

I looked at him blankly. "What other one?"

The attendant clutched at the empty air for support. He thrust his face forward to the stranger's appealingly.

"What other one?" echoed the stranger composedly.

The attendant shrank away. "Here, here—what—what?"

"A little optical illusion," my new friend said suavely, pressing some money into the attendant's hand and winking at me. "Have you never heard of the wonderful and astounding Hindu illusionist and wonder worker—er—Prince Chota Lal, to be seen next week at the Broadway Vaudeville Palace? Look in one night and ask for Mr. Albert Evans. There will be a seat for you and your lady."

The attendant shoved the bill into his pocket.

"All right, if it's only a bit of conjurin', but you sure gave me a turn. Now I've gotta look after my business. Thanky!"

Mr. Evans and I looked at each other in silence, as if measuring up our respective will power.

"Mr. Foglestone," he said at last, "you heard what I said. I mean every word of it. Five hundred a week, the best billing in town, costumes and setting provided for the trick. I don't ask you how it's done, but it's the swellest illusion I've ever seen. We'll stand 'em up next week. Now, how about it?"

I endeavored to speak, but his compelling eye held me dumb. I thought hard. I needed the money. Lord! What writer doesn't?

"Just put your name here," he said, handing me a paper and a fountain pen.

I signed my name with a sigh.

"Rehearse Monday morning. Just change the dog in sight of the audience. That's all I ask, and we'll pad out the act. All right. See you Monday morning sure?"

"Sure!" I said dolefully, shaking hands with him.

"Why, Pert!"

I jumped. It was Mary!

I gasped out a jumble of explanation, shoved the blue ribbons into her hand, and they saved the situation. They won my pardon. Luckily she did not ask how I came to have two.

"Who was your friend?" she asked curiously.

"Oh, a chance acquaintance," I mumbled, and dragged her past the attendant, who was about to speak.

"You do make the queerest friends," she said, linking her arm in mine, and we passed safely out of the show.

My only consolation was that Tilby did not come.

I repented my agreement every second the next four days.

I could not walk a yard but a flaring sheet would greet my eyes on bill stations, house walls, store windows, and garbage cans proclaiming the appearance of Chota Lal, Prince of Hindu Illusionists and Master of the Marvels of the East. I shuddered as I regarded the swarthy Hindu staring out of them. Mr. Evans was sparing no expense.

Even Mary noticed the confounded things.

"What a horrible, evil face!" she commented as we strolled along Broadway.

"Ah—oh, the Hindu! Probably came from Brooklyn. You never know."

"Marvels of the East. That should interest you."

"Why in the name of goodness, Mary?" I asked nervously. "Why should it?"

"I found a little book behind the bookcase yesterday—must have slipped down—'Magic of the East'—"

"Oh, that! An article—reference, you know—"

"I wonder if we couldn't go one night——" she suggested.

"Mary," I said sternly, "I am surprised at you. You pain me. A knock-about show. I think we might have some afternoon tea—eh—what do you say?" And I dragged her into a tea room. It is the only method of diverting a woman on the trail of a mystery.

Sunday passed away. I came near to doing the same myself. If ever there was contempt in manifest form it showed in Ram's face. In addition he chewed the covers off "Magic of the East."

When I got to the Vaudeville Palace with Ram on Monday morning, it was only after prolonged search that the stage manager could be found and I was allowed on the stage.

"Now, Mister Chota," he said, "Mister Evans is gonna rehearse your act. He's gonna give you a swell set, and you're gonna dress in number one. Is the dog in the act?"

"The dog is the act," I assured him feebly.

"Dog act! Say, you've got your nerve. But the boss has the say here. Got your props wid ye?"

"My props—er—what are props?"

He glared at me.

"Say! Oh, what's the use? Boxes, basket. What do ye work wid?"

"Oh, I haven't any baggage. No."

"All right. You know best." And he left me in charge of a stage hand, who led me to the dressing room. It took me quite a while to get into the costume I found there. Ram sniffed at the garments and let out a long, bloodcurdling howl, and I had a weird fancy that I heard a soft whisper of "Remember," but there was not a soul in the room.

I walked out onto the stage and felt my hand shaken.

"How do, prince?" said Mr. Evans breezily. "And

the pup? Costume's great, and when we make you up your own mother would never know you."

"Thank Heaven for that!" I said fervently.

"What d'ye think of the billing?"

I knew what was expected.

"Great! Immense!"

Mr. Evans slapped me on the back.

"Thatta boy! Thought you'd be pleased. Now what do you think of that for a set?"

I gazed around. The stage was set with an Indian temple, a solid, massive structure with heavy pillars, leading down from which was a flight of steps, flanked by braziers burning blue flame. At the back a river scene with rippling moonlight. The rest of the stage was masked in with jungle and trees.

"Swell, ain't it?" purred Mr. Evans proudly. "Picked it up from an opera show that went to pieces. I've got two tom-tom men and some creepy music. We're fairly going to make 'em sit up. Now, Bill, make them tigers roar!"

I shrank back as a horrid roaring made the scenery vibrate.

"Couple o' men blowing down lamp chimneys," Evans commented calmly. "Where's them tom-toms?"

Two men dressed as Hindus advanced slowly out of the temple beating tom-toms, circled the stage, and squatted down.

"Now, you come on through the temple door. Say you don't want to bring the dog on. Can't you hocus-pocus him out of the air like?"

"I'll try," I said, resigned to my fate.

"That's the stuff. I guess you hypnotize the folks. However, that's your biz. Now get off. All right. Tom-toms! Oh—Toots! Give us the overture. Tom-toms, wait the cue. Now, professor! Now, tom-toms—slower—round again—three bars— Now, prince!"

"Half a second," I called, and, casting a despairing glance at Ram, I made him vanish. As I did so a tall Hindu grazed my shoulder. I turned and looked at him. His face was ablaze with rage.

"I beg your pardon," I faltered.

"Come on, prince, what's keeping you?" bellowed Evans.

Another super, I thought, and walked on.

"Play that last bar again. That's your cue, prince. Now some arm waving. Give 'em the real stuff!"

I clenched my teeth. After all, it was a joke, and I salaamed and bowed and what not for a bit.

"That's the idear! Now down stage to me. Keep it up, tom-toms! Now stop! Stand there. Now! Say, where's the poodle."

"In the box——"

"Holy—oh, all right. Hi, there, a spot light on this here box. Now, Toots, creepy—curdle, their blood. Now, prince, when I ring the chimes here—temple bells, you know—let her go. Mutter a bit—bow— Say, them lamps flare when you bow. Remember that, Joe. Flare 'em when the prince bows. Now, ready all! Chimes—ting-tong——"

There was a discordant clash of bells. Mr. Evans jumped.

"Say—who the blazes is monkeying with them chimes?"

Nobody answered. I mumbled my spell softly and Ram shot full into view in the spotlight.

"Gee! What d'ye know about that?" said the stage manager hoarsely.

Mr. Evans slapped him on the back.

"Wait a bit, George, we ain't through."

"How's that?" I asked anxiously.

"Spel-endid—my boy."

"Oh, by the bye, Mr. Evans, where does the other Hindu come on?" I asked.

"There ain't no other."

"Why, there was one, outside, at the temple entrance, when I came on."

Mr. Evans emitted a volley of oaths.

"By thunder, spying the act, is he? Hunt him out, boys. Scatter and get him."

But the Hindu was not to be found.

"Well, he can't do us no harm," said Evans, recovering his cheerfulness. "Now, what next, prince?"

I thought hard. Suppose I——

"Stand on your head, Ram! Now revolve."

Ram spun round on his nose, his tail erect.

"My Lord," Mr. Evans chuckled. "We'll pack 'em in. Tell Brink no free list. Mr. F., I can promise you five weeks here, the circuit and return."

"Thank you," I said meekly.

"Try his other end," suggested George suddenly.

"Spin on your tail, Ram!" I commanded.

And there was witnessed the extraordinary spectacle of a full-grown bulldog spinning like fury on the point of his rigid tail.

"Stop him! He'll set the blamed place afire!" cried Mr. Evans at last. And indeed the wood of the stage was smoking.

I stopped him, and Ram stood erect on his tail. I was full of confidence now that I could make him perform any improbable trick I wanted.

"Right! Bring him down. Makes me feel queer to see the hound up there. Now, you're on at nine-fifteen. Be here round eight o'clock. And keep cool, and say, keep clear of them Hindus."

As I was undressing, the door opened and George poked his head in.

"Say, prince, how d'ye work it?"

I smiled bitterly and shook my head.

"Some guys is too wise to live," he said, and slammed the door.

Luckily Mary was out and had left word I was to join her at Tilby's for dinner. I put that out of my mind, and spent the most unhappy afternoon of my life in fearful anticipation. About six I stole out and ate miserably by myself and smoked till it was time to go to the theater.

To my surprise, George was excessively amiable.

"Say, prince, what d'ye think?" he greeted me with. "Box office says thirty of them spook bugs—occult society—is coming to-night. Evans mailed 'em tickets, and, by Jings, they're all coming. You'll have to be pretty wise to put it over that bunch," added George with a malevolent grin as he turned away.

I sat in my dressing room, shaking all over, when Evans bustled in with a man.

"Mr. Perook—Chota Lal! This is the gent. Give him a good make-up—not too dark. How d'ye feel, prince?"

"Rotten!" I answered sadly.

Evans dashed out, and came back with a champagne bottle and a tumbler.

"Here's how! Swallow that! That's better, eh?"

"Ye-yes——" I answered with chattering teeth. "Yes. I wonder if I might have a drop more."

"Sure! Now you're as brave as a lion. Biggest house we've had this year. Now get busy, Perook!"

The man dashed at me, smeared my face, lined my eyes and lips, drew a wig over my hair, stuck a turban on it, and when I hung the glass chains of rubies round my neck I looked into the mirror. I was safe from recognition. Evans hauled me on the stage. The hands were building up the scene. In front of the drop some one was singing.

"Those lights blue-green. Say, put a bunch light in the corner. Try that ripple. Lower on that short, boy. Now is them heavy iron braces behind the pillars? Right! Tom-toms there! Now clear stage. Quick!"

The orchestra commenced the overture, and the drop rose. I could hear a ripple of admiration run over the house, and the set got a good hand. Evans motioned. The tigers roared, the two tom-tom men stepped through the temple door, did their march round, and squatted down stage.

"Now," whispered Evans quietly, "take your time. Feel 'em out, and do your very best, old man."

I stepped out on the temple steps and did my salaaming. The audience was very still. Some unknown power seemed to be guiding me, and I had no fear. Coming down stage, I laid the box on the floor cloth. The spot light sprang to it. I waved my arms, muttered my spell imperiously, and Ram appeared as the chimes sounded at the back. There was a moment of intense silence, followed by a buzz, then frantic applause. I raised my hands over my head as if invoking aid, then I held up my right hand for silence. It fell on the house instantly.

Slowly I circled my palms over Ram and murmured.

"Rise in the air, Ram, and pass round my head."

Ram rose into the air, as if standing on something, and made a circle round my head. Then I gasped as he floated out over the orchestra, high in the air, described a curve, and returned to me. I could hear him panting and grinding his teeth, and I shrank back as he descended to the stage.

Some one said, "It's a trick," and there was a riot as he was ejected. I spun Ram on his head and tail, and the house grew more and more excited. I had only one more trick to do—to change Ram into a larger dog. It was then that I felt my first symptoms of fear. I felt my will power weaken, but I knew I had to go through with it, and I went up stage and leaned against a temple pillar. There seemed to be a jangle of bells, and I felt a wave of cold air strike my face. Summoning all my strength, I stretched out my hands, fixed my mind on the image of a mastiff, and pronounced the fatal words.

As I did so, a voice said distinctly: "Fool, the third time!" I was conscious of a tall Hindu towering over me, gazing into my eyes with fierce enmity. There was a loud crash, a discordant peal of bells, and everything seemed to fade from me. I was falling dizzily—dizzily——

When I came to I was in the dressing room. Evans

was standing by me, waving a towel. My forehead was ringing wet with ice water.

"Well, boy," he cried eagerly as I focused my eyes on his red, perturbed face, "you certainly gave us a fright."

I groaned dismally.

"It was that damned Hindu," I explained feebly.

"What Hindu?"

"There was a Hindu did something to me," I insisted.

"Nonsense, my boy, there was no Hindu there. I saw you fall flat, and I rung down."

But I knew I had not been mistaken. I had tampered with something that there was no use explaining. What a fool I had been! The door of the unseen had been mine to open, and I had thrown away my chance. Search revealed no trace of Ram or the mysterious box. They who must not be disobeyed had seen to that, and I had made my last incursion into the occult.



Marsa

By Carl Buxton

YOU came to me laden with gifts, my sweet . . .

The giving was good, so clean a thing
That even I found virgin songs to sing
That were not echoes of some dead defeat.

Few loves there are that find us armed to meet
The wasted spirit's roused desiring;

Vain, vain were all the gifts that you might bring
Save love with her own hands performed the feat.

Ah! lay your cool white fingers at my face

That I might touch the love that stirs me so,
Hand in hand then let us fly through space,

Look back on earth where people come and go,
Remembering that we come of that same race
Yet have created worlds they cannot know.



Out of Our Hands' Reach

By Roy le Moyne

AGE gives us back the unseen things of night,
The grey, discarded litter of our days;

And dead loves buried in the hidden ways
Rise up to mock us robed in deathless white.
Blind eyes see through the darkness into light

While all the things youth's hungry heart obeys
Become like some immortal poet's lays . . .
Out of our hands' reach, yet within the sight.

To-day a child runs to its father's knee,

A lover goes unto his love's embrace,
A vessel surges through the restless sea,

A hare flees trembling in a hunting chase . . .
Then like a flash comes down the enemy

Who steals the dreams that light each living face.

When Brasset Forgot

By
Harcourt Farmer

I.

I HAD always regarded Brasset as a curious kind of human duck, a strange mixture of somnolence and brain, but it wasn't until his death that I really believed him a trifle mad. The newspapers at the time chronicled the passing of Professor Henry Layterman Brasset, with the usual accompanying stuff from their "morgues," and ample tribute was paid to his splendid research work in the Congo. He was tireless and energetic and original. He labored in many fields. In fact, to this man the world owes the famous Brasset rubber compound for tires, a preparation that has saved the United States government thousands of dollars in equipment maintenance. And when he died there was much sincere sorrow in the scientific world.

The medical certificate stated that death was "from natural causes," the press agreed with the doctors, the public believed what they were told, and so the world knew nothing to the contrary. But there were two men who were in a position to prove at the time that the professor's death was distinctly unnatural; one was Taylor, who will be remembered as the brilliant editor of *The Meteor*—the other is myself.

For ten years a strict silence has been kept by us about the truth of the Brasset tragedy; but I think, and Taylor thinks with me, that the time has come to present the facts. It may possibly do some ethical good, and now that Brasset has become almost a myth no harm can result from lifting the curtain.

I am writing of events that took place in the fall of 1906. We had been dining together—Brasset and Taylor and I—and I was in particularly fine fettle, owing to the unexpected acceptance of a set of articles I had ground out on India. In addition, Taylor had commissioned me—I was the gayest of free lances in those days—to write up some special matter on rubber, which commodity was then all the rage. Hence this dinner with Brasset. During the dessert the talk ranged over a dozen varied topics, and later on I recalled the circumstances which led to becoming acquainted with the professor.



I first met Brasset at Nice, when he was on the eve of being swindled in a particularly complete style by the fascinating Nelly Forsyth, and I had the satisfaction of spoiling little Nelly's pretty game once and for all. Brasset seemed profoundly grateful about this, though it wasn't really much to bother over, and thereafter we were good friends. Nelly, by the way—but that's another tale.

The next time I ran across the academic chappie was in London, at the Albert Hall, where I was covering the annual meeting of the Royal Geographical Society. This was some three years after the Nice episode—the professor was wont to say, in his dry way, after the Nice un-Nice episode—and I must confess I had partially forgotten all about Nelly. But the thin, metallic tones snapping from the platform brought back a good deal.

His address was quite the most interesting event in a most uninteresting program, and he told his audience—which was composed of six parts professor and two parts nondescript and the press—a few things concerning rubber, its preparations, its values, its uses, where it comes from, and what is done with it, and talked so learnedly that we all felt quite expert on the subject as a consequence.

"You are the gentleman I met at Nice?" he said, when I went up to him at the conclusion of the meeting. "Under—well, rather distressing circumstances. Am I right?" I told him he was, and congratulated him on his excellent memory.

Well, on this particular night, when we were at dinner at the Savoy, over our cigars, Professor Brasset suddenly switched the current of conversation from Lloyd George to spiders, and on this peculiar topic he waxed discursive. He said he had been devoted to spiders all his life. "They give me more delight than perhaps you imagine." We stared. He rambled out about African spiders and English domestic spiders and spiders from the Andalusian fastnesses; he told us about spiders that feed on small sparrows and spiders that will eat man's flesh, if they can get it.

"I have seen spiders," he said, "that would—but possibly you gentlemen would be sufficiently interested in our subject matter to see some rather curious specimens."

"I should," Taylor replied, and when I nodded confirmation the professor capped it by rising and leading the way to the street, where a taxi transferred us, in fairly adequate style, to the Brasset flat.

Brasset was accounted eccentric because he had an aversion to entertaining. To my knowledge, he rarely invited a man to his apartments, though he was generally eager to dine a chap at the club or accept the hospitality of others. He lived with a manservant, and as he laboriously opened the door he explained with much prolixity that the man was away for two weeks. "No wife, by my own choice, and no man, by his," he chuckled.

We soon made ourselves at home. He had some drinkable whisky and some ripping cigars, and we talked and smoked and drank for a couple of hours, and while Taylor and Brasset argued some dull point about another professor's book, I found myself wondering why Brasset had made the concrete rule of not inviting people to see him, except on state occasions. The explanation turned up a few minutes later.

"Would you care to see my spiders now?" the professor inquired politely, and, without waiting for a reply, led us to a door of a room at the other end of the apartment.

The door was painted a dull brown, almost a russet brown, and nailed along the bottom of the door were some thick, even pieces of felt. In addition to a Yale lock, it was fastened with two strong padlocks, caught between staples. While the old fellow was bending over his series of "locks, bolts, and bars" I glanced at Taylor, and he at me, quizzically.

Soon the padlocks were off, and then Brasset turned the key in the main lock, and as he did so he called out something in an unknown tongue. I think it was Arabic, but that's only a weird guess on my part. Anyway, it was as though the sound of his voice had unlocked something in the room, concurrently with the unlocking of the door by his key, for no sooner had he shouted than we heard a sudden and strange noise inside.

I can best describe that noise by saying that it seemed like the tapping on the floor of a thousand dead men's finger tips. I had never heard anything quite like it. Said Brasset:

"I must warn you both that on no account must you speak while in the room. If you do, I cannot be held responsible. So long as you are quiet all will be well. Come!"

He pushed open the door and entered, and we after him; then he closed the door carefully and quickly behind us. The primary and dominant impression was that we had, by some quixotic mishap, strayed into an undertaker's embalming room after a big railroad accident. I felt disgustingly sick. The stench was awful. But in a few seconds the pause fell away from me. Taylor, who was never what you would call robust, seemed inclined to faint, for he turned deathly pale, but with an effort pulled himself together, too. Brasset alone was unmoved. Freely, with the unautomatic certainty of a man who feels wholly familiar with his surroundings, he moved into the room, saying something in his gun-metal tones, and the clattering, rasping, patting noise increased

We stood rocklike, while Brasset went right across the room, still keeping up his weird chant, his hands outstretched toward some object. What it was we could not see, for the room was dark.

Suddenly he stopped. Shrill and sharp the chant pierced the air, and a funny feeling began to tingle in my hands. I don't know if it was fear; I don't know whether Taylor was feeling the same, but I do know that we kept a rigid silence, remembering Brasset's injunction.

The silly song rose into a minor strain, we heard Brasset clap his hands together very softly, and then a light blazed. I say "blazed" because it seemed like a blast of yellow flame in that warm black room. In reality it was an electric bulb, shrouded carefully with dull, brownish paper. So the room appeared as obscure as the professor's native melody. But what light there was was amply sufficient.

Brasset knelt on the floor, singing his damned Arabic or whatever it was, and on his hands, his knees, his shoulders, all over the floor, on the walls, on the ceiling, in thick nests, in ones and twos and clusters and dozens, were *spiders*.

No normal man objects to seeing a spider once in a while under ordinary conditions, or even a couple of them; but I have to confess that the sight of a university professor in a dress suit, who had come straight from a respectable dinner at the Savoy, almost smothered by countless spiders, sickened me.

The things padded about the floor, ran up and down Brasset's legs, pulled their way through his hair, walked across his face, hid in his beard, sat on his nose, crawled in and out of his ears, and generally nested on him. The creatures who could not get near him he picked up by the handful, while they appeared to register content, as the saying goes. It may have been genuine affection on their part and genuine regard on Brasset's part. God preserve *me* from such affection!

The chant went on unremittingly, and then Brasset rose, shaking himself free from his ugly pets, and held out something indistinct in his right hand. We looked closely, and saw that it was a little dead mouse. Taylor's breath came and went in quivering gasps, which he tried to stifle.

The professor rapped out a long and twisted phrase in the jargon which the spiders seemed to understand, and they ran up his body in masses and along the outstretched arm, toward the mouse. I tried to count

them, but my brain refused to work; at the lowest computation there must have been a thousand spiders on the man. And there were others in the room.

They reached the mouse. Brasset's hand was hidden behind a palpitating, seething cloud of dark bodies and countless legs; one or two bright red legs here and there; two or three of the spiders uttered faint sighs, and we heard the mouse eaten.

That was the last straw for Taylor, for he turned abruptly and said in very healthy and unmistakable English: "Good God! Let's get out of this!" and stumbled to the door.

Instantly there was a silence, and you could literally feel it. The spiders suspended their meal and appeared to listen. Brasset jerked, under his breath, "Quick!" and we both made for the door. Brasset followed us. He shut and locked the door, and from within we could hear them at the door, for all the world like thousands of clay pellets being thrown at the brown panels. They were trying to get through.

"It is unsafe to speak in there," said Brasset as we walked to the living room for a stiff drink. "They become exceedingly fierce if you say anything to them, unless one uses the particular dialect I employ."

"Which is——" I questioned.

But Brasset was lost in thought.

II.

A FEW weeks later I wanted to ask the professor about a point in rubber, and one morning I rang the bell at his apartment. I rang it six times as a matter of fact without response. There was no sign of either professor or valet.

I telephoned Taylor at the paper, and told him he had better meet me at Brasset's flat. While I was waiting I hunted up the janitor of the building, but he proved as stupid as the race of men foreordained to be janitors, and all he had to say was that the valet—only he termed it valett—had not returned, and he knew nothing of the professor.

Taylor came presently, and, after talking over the situation, we decided to risk interference and get into the apartment. We allayed the janitor with a durable piece of fiction, to the effect that we wanted to see the place with a view to renting it, and a tip evoked a duplicate key. We succeeded in ridding ourselves of him for the time being, and entered. Perhaps it was ominous, but we both turned instinctively toward the room with the dull-brown door.

I called "Brasset!" and as the noise of my shout died away we heard the familiar clattering, padding sound from inside. "Brasset!" There was no response. "Brasset!"

"He's in there," I said to Taylor, and cursed myself for saying it, for something told me I wasn't far wrong. Taylor nodded.

"Burst the door in," he said.

I thought to show how absurd his remark was by pointing at the padlocks, when I realized the padlocks were off. I tried the handle of the door. The door was unlocked!

After that it was just a matter of simple discovery. The professor's body lay on the floor, and the yellow light, which had evidently been on for some days,

showed the state of things in their hideous completeness.

What had once been flesh was now a chaos of spiders. The clothes hung in patches and threads about the bones, and only a minute piece of skin remained. Along the floor, toward us, the intruders, sidled hundreds of spiders, some fat and bloated, some thin, but all bent on the one objective.

We banged the door to and went out into the sunshine.



MILADY'S WILL

A Satire

By James Waldo Fawcett

EVERY one admired Milady's hands. They were wondrously fascinating, long, and slender and white, rose-tipped, so perfectly modeled.

Milady's lover grew tired at last and departed in search of new adventure. Milady mourned his loss a thousand days, hoping always that he would return.

He did not forget Milady. Quite the contrary. Wherever he went he told of her beauty. "Such hands she has!" he would rapturously exclaim. "Such beautiful hands!" And then he would describe their fine qualities in detail.

After many days it happened that one of those to whom Milady's lover spoke returned to the city where Milady lived, and on an appropriate occasion presented himself before her.

"You are thrice welcome," she said in greeting. "You can give me some word of my run-away lover, of his health and state of happiness."

"Gladly," the friend replied. "I saw him only a fortnight ago. He is not changed greatly. He speaks of you often. Indeed, madame, he said to me that he could never forget you, that your hands——"

"Yes?" said Milady.

"Defy description, are beyond all human praise!" the friend concluded.

After some years Milady died. At the end she said to her surgeon, "Doctor, when life has passed out of my poor body you must open and read this letter that I now give you. You must obey the instructions you will find therein. Should you comply, one of my servants will pay you a hundred thousand francs. Should you fail, you may follow me to the grave within the week."

When Milady was dead, the surgeon opened her letter and read it, and smiled grimly. "It is a hideous thing to require, but I must obey. A hundred thousand francs is a very great sum of money. I shall need such a sum for several matters."

For several hours he worked over Milady's pale body.

A few days later her faithless lover received a package by messenger. A card attached read: "I can never forget."

He opened the package quickly.

And his friends found him later screaming hysterically.

Every one admired Milady's hands.

From Over the Border

By
Grege
La Spina



HELP! Help!"

Roused suddenly from a sound sleep, Mr. Benham sat up in bed, half awake, awaiting with tense nerves that repetition of the cry which would prove it a reality, not an intensely vivid dream voice.

Ah, there it was again! An unutterable awe thrilled him, so terrible was the note of horror and agony in the voice.

"Help! Ah-h-h—God!" Jerked out in a kind of smothered gasp, the words died away, leaving an indescribably dreadful silence that was heavy with intangible premonitions of evil.

Broad awake by this time, the startled old bachelor sprang out of bed, flooded the room with light, and reached for his dressing gown. In a moment he had slipped it on and thrust his feet into a pair of slippers.

Unless he was vastly mistaken, that agonized midnight cry for assistance came from the apartment of the Orville Rodmans, across the corridor from his rooms. And it was borne in upon him that it was Mrs. Rodman's voice he had heard, for although he was not personally acquainted with the lady he had often heard her voice, which was an exceptionally sweet and well-modulated one.

Thirty seconds could not have elapsed before he was knocking at the door of the Rodmans' apartment, his heart almost stopping under the weight of the ominous silence that reigned. He had almost persuaded himself that she had called out in the throes of a nightmare, when he heard a suffocated moan that fell weak and stifled upon his straining ears. *What was happening behind those closed doors?*

His alarm and apprehension grew until he could bear the suspense no longer; from loud raps he began to pound with bare fists upon the door. Then he grasped the knob, twisting and pulling at it as he strove to open the door, which appeared to be securely locked. No response came from within; that ghastly silence still bore down upon him, heavy with midnight terror. He was on the point of seeking other help when something happened.

The key grated in the lock—the door swung open slowly, as if under the impetus of a gust of icy air that swept out upon him with almost physical force

and tangibility, pushing him to one side as though he had been a featherweight. As it enveloped him with its frosty chill, he found himself shivering with what was more than physical cold; he experienced for a moment the uncanny sensation as of a malevolent presence that laughed at him evilly as he shrank before its unseen power. Terrible as was his momentary sensation, the stress of emotion in that cry he had heard a few seconds previous drew him across the threshold.

He touched the switch, which he knew was located beside the door in a position analogous to the switch in his own apartment, flooding the room and the adjoining corridor with a blaze of light. An icy chill, entirely out of place on such a mild autumn night, lingered in the still midnight air. Benham looked up and down the corridor; there was no one in sight, and as no one had passed him he entered the room, confident of meeting one of the Rodmans or their maid, for one of the three must have opened the door to him. To his bewilderment, the room was entirely empty. Upon the strangeness of this he did not ponder much at the moment, although he was to remember it afterward; the cry he had heard was sufficient warranty for him to make all possible haste.

The door of the bedroom, which adjoined the room he had entered, was closed. The kindly intruder hesitated but a moment, tapped lightly, then entered, touching the electric switch as he crossed the threshold. For a moment he was completely staggered; he had expected to meet some one in this room, but there appeared to be no one in the apartment. To be sure, there were signs of recent, very recent, occupancy, the trailing silk and filmy laces of a delicate negligee half covered a chaise longue, and upon the chiffonier Benham's quick scrutiny observed a discarded collar and tie, presumably removed by young Rodman, whose other garments were neatly disposed on a chair beside a great wardrobe opposite the door Benham had just entered. The bachelor could have sworn there was no human being in the room, and against this he had to put the reality of the agonized cries he had heard in Clara Rodman's peculiarly sweet, penetrating tones.

He looked about, stupefied, to see nothing but the dresser, a chiffonier, tables, chairs, the wardrobe. Positively there was something uncanny about it. As he advanced into the middle of the room the great mirror in the wardrobe reflected his disheveled figure from head to foot; he could not help seeing it, although he did not want to look at it. To observe one's self advancing to meet one at midnight just after receiving a severe shock to one's nerves is a far from reassuring sight, he discovered. But he felt his eyes drawn toward the mirror with a magnetic attraction that he afterward realized was strangely uncanny.

And then—unexpectedly—from within the depths of the glass started up a figure! Mr. Benham felt cold perspiration starting out over his entire body at the shock of it. The face that regarded him was a man's face with deep-set eyes, holding such a smile of triumphant malice that the bachelor gave audible expression to his own astonishment with a loud

"Ugh!" as he whirled on his heel to encounter the individual who was glaring over his shoulder.

He turned. And then he stood rooted to the spot, his mouth wide open, his eyes staring. *He was alone in the room, as before!* No one stood behind him or to either side of him. He sprang to the door, but there was no one in the next room. Then he realized that the mirror was not in a position to reflect any one who stood in the doorway. He turned again to the glass to meet only his own astounded, mystified, and apprehensive eyes.

It was too much for Mr. Benham. He started for the door, and would have left the uncanny mystery to solve itself, had not a muffled, smothered sound as of faint, futile struggling near at hand met his ear. Once more he looked about him, drawing a deep breath to steady his jumping nerves. The mirror reflected his figure innocently enough. He looked at it as if daring it to play him another such scurvy trick, when the truth penetrated his mind in a blinding flash of intuition. Horror grasped at him with numbing hands as he rushed to the rescue.

The wardrobe was a fraud; the mirror was the front panel of a handsome but treacherous folding bed—and the bed was closed—and within it—— His thoughts failed to operate further. He began to pull and tug with frantic haste at the terrible piece of furniture, his momentary uncanny, weird impression thrust to one side by his realization of the terrible truth and the necessity to keep a clear head. The bed had been firmly closed. As he pulled he was rewarded by another faint sound that told him life yet lingered in one or both of the victims of the treacherous mechanism.

At last he had it open; with a creaking reluctance, as of some horrid monster unwillingly disgorging its prey, it had come slowly down to the floor. The covers and the mattress had sunk to the head of the bed when it rose, almost completely cutting off the air from the unfortunate sleepers. Whether or not Benham was in time to resuscitate them he dared not think, but he did not venture to leave them, knowing that every moment was precious. He drew the bedding anxiously from the huddled bodies lying so inert and motionless, and placed an eager ear at the breast of Clara Rodman and then at her husband's. The woman's heart fluttered faintly, but Benham's soul was sick at the confirmation of his misgivings with respect to young Rodman; the poor young fellow was beyond mortal assistance.

Memories of a treatise on artificial breathing came dimly to the rescuer's mind as he applied himself actively to restoring the beautiful young woman who lay there so pale and lovely in her intimate disarray, and his exertions were amply rewarded by a sigh which breathed from her parted lips with weak plaintiveness; he redoubled his efforts. Presently the long, curving lashes lifted languidly and her great dark eyes looked into Benham's at first without recognition. As consciousness returned, a burning blush spread over her face at the realization that it was a man, and a strange man at that, who was bending solicitously over her.

With a sudden access of nervous strength, she drew

the disturbed coverings about her, the while her melancholy gaze questioned Benham's with a dread beyond description.

"Who are you?" she murmured weakly. "What are you doing here? What has happened?"

"I'm Jasper Benham, your neighbor. I heard your call for help; found you shut up in this folding bed. Don't look!" he cried out with futile warning as she stirred, pricked by sudden misgivings, to look for her husband.

She disregarded his command. Weakly she turned, to see the lifeless form of her husband. Her eyes wild with desperate fear, she reached out, caught that limp arm, pulled at it anxiously.

"Orville! Orville! Speak to me! Speak to your Clara! Oh, he does not reply; he is deaf to *my* voice! God have pity! Then he is dead!"

She fell back in merciful unconsciousness.

Benham picked up her slender body and carried it to the chaise longue, throwing the negligee over it; he dared not leave her in that treacherous bed while he went to rouse the maid, who, he now recalled, slept in the servants' quarters. He phoned the house superintendent, informed him of the tragedy, and was finally able to leave the apartment, leaving the young widow in the capable hands of her devoted maid.

He returned to his own rooms, but found it impossible to go to bed. Every time he looked at his eminently well-behaved bedstead it was to imagine it rearing up in the night, tossing him out upon the floor, and trampling him as a trained elephant crushes a condemned criminal. The impression was so strong that he got out his pipe and determined to make himself comfortable in a morris chair for the rest of the night.

His thoughts reverted persistently to a particular incident of the night's tragic experience that, the more he pondered it, the more inexplicable it became. This was the fact of the locked door that had been opened to him so mysteriously. Benham could have sworn that the door was locked when he tried the handle. That he had heard the sound of the key in the lock before the door opened, he now recollected with perfect distinctness. It followed logically that some one had unlocked and opened the door to him, as his own hands were not on the knob at the time.

He began to reflect the smallest incident, striving to overlook nothing, as even the smallest thing might serve to throw some light on what now appeared to be inexplicable. There had been no one but himself in the corridor, either before or after the opening of the door. He had glanced around the room as soon as he had crossed the threshold, pushing the door back against the wall instinctively as he observed no one in the room ahead of him. There was no possible chance that the owner of the hands which had unlocked the door could have slipped past him and into the corridor; nor could this person have had time to conceal himself in the Rodman apartment in the interim between the opening of the door and Benham's abrupt entrance.

Benham hated to draw the only inference possible under the circumstances, but could not avoid doing

so; either the door had not been locked—and he would have staked anything that it must have opened before his blows and shakings had it not been locked—or the person who unlocked it was invisible to the human eye. This conclusion arrived at, the old bachelor sat up straight in his chair, drew a long breath, and unconsciously threw a searching look over his shoulder as though to satisfy himself that he was quite alone; it was not a pleasant thought to entertain—the thought that the invisible might have accompanied him back to his own apartment! The paradoxical side of his action did not strike Benham at the moment.

There were other phenomena to be considered that bore upon his conclusions, also strongly in favor of the supernatural. He remembered that upon the door's opening he had felt the chill breath of a deadly cold wind that had pushed upon him with almost tangible force. That there had been no good reason for a draft Benham was positive; he knew that the windows in the room he had entered were closed, and the bedroom door had been closed until his hand opened it, so that the wide-open windows there could not have been the originating cause of the current of air which had been so strong that it had affected him powerfully at the time.

Benham was not overimaginative, nor was he superstitious. He would much have preferred to have reasoned out the entire occurrence, uncanny as it now began to appear, on strictly material grounds. But this satisfaction was denied him; by no possible twisting of the facts could he account for the unlocking and opening of the door. And then— He laid down his pipe, for a sudden tremor shook him uncontrollably; he had remembered yet another thing which in the moment's excitement he had thrust to one side mentally. *Who and what was the man he had seen in the mirror looking over his shoulder with such malevolent triumph?*

Arrived at this point, Benham could not have slept a wink for the remainder of the night had he been offered a million dollars for a short nap. *Who was that man?* He could not deny having seen the reflection, and where there is a reflection there must be a solid body to cast it. Had there, then, been a man in the Rodman apartment, an evilly disposed stranger? The expression of that face distorted with malevolence—horrors! The mere recollection of it was disturbing. Yet had there been a man behind him, a man so close as to have appeared actually looking over his shoulder, how was it that when Benham turned briskly on his heel there was nobody behind him? No human being could have left the room without making a sound or being seen as he fled in that instant of time between Benham's discovery of the reflection and his almost instantaneous glance behind him. Could it have been his own imagination? He denied this to himself, much as he disliked to give credence to what he had always looked upon as superstition and overcredulity.

Dawn found Benham still puffing at his pipe, still pondering the strange and uncanny occurrences of the night, no nearer to a solution than when he had begun to puzzle over them. With morning arrived the coroner, who, when he learned from Mrs. Rod-

man of the bachelor's share in her rescue, dropped in at Benham's apartment to hear his recital. He listened to the details abstractedly until Benham diffidently mentioned the strange event of the door that had apparently been unlocked and opened to him without human intervention.

"That's odd, the door opening that way," observed he, his forehead wrinkling. "Are you sure no one passed you into the hall? Are you positive the door was locked? Did you look behind it?"

Benham went over his calculations of the previous night, this time orally.

"The Rodman apartment is on the fifth floor," the coroner mused. "The fire escape does not give on any room that could have been reached in that brief moment by any human being. Moreover, every window was securely fastened on the inside, except those of the bedroom, which open on a deep, wide shaft. No human agency could have opened that door," he summed up reluctantly. "And as Mrs. Rodman also confirms your insistence about the door's having been locked—" He shrugged his shoulders helplessly.

"I wonder if her first husband could have had anything to do with the tragedy," he suddenly remarked, after a moment's silent thought. "William Tolliver was mighty shrewd when alive, I've heard. Looks to me as though he'd lost nothing of his smartness by dying! I don't know yet just what he may have had to do in this case, but I have a strong intuition that he's mixed up in it somehow."

"I didn't know that Mrs. Rodman had had a previous marital experience," ejaculated Benham.

"Tolliver divorced her for running off with young Rodman."

Benham's interest increased. He urged the coroner to share with him whatever knowledge he might have of Clara Rodman's life, in the hope that it might throw some light on the occurrences of the past night. Agreeable to this request, the old bachelor was soon in possession of the following facts:

At seventeen her dying father urged upon her what appeared to him a most advantageous marriage with Tolliver, who loved her madly. His life seemed bound up in her. He spent his spare moments constructing the most charming bits of furniture for her and surrounded her with comforts, even luxuries, such as she had never known before. But one day, while she complacently accepted the passionate adoration of her elderly husband, appeared Orville Rodman—rich, young, romantic, handsome, aristocratic—all, in a word, that the elderly husband was not.

Clara was flattered, then fluttered, by Rodman's attentions. And one day Tolliver, who had grown keenly suspicious, interrupted an interview that set his head whirling and almost stopped the beating of his heart. He left the room without a single word, a single glance backward that would have shown the rash young people what his sentiments might be. Clara was terrified, knowing her husband to be a man of fierce, implacable nature; she yielded at once to pleadings which up to this time she had resisted, and fled with Rodman.

Tolliver discovered them after several months, and offered to divorce his erring wife upon one condition; she and young Rodman must swear on the Bible to

accept and use the wedding gift he would make them. It was assuredly a strange and unheard-of proposition.

Clara, womanlike, was anxious to regain, as far as possible, the social position she had recklessly risked; in order, then, to be free to marry the man for whom she had thrown all aside, she urged upon Rodman to accept the proposition. He yielded; they took the oath, and Tolliver kept his promise. In due course of time Clara was freed.

Rodman married her at once; to do him justice, it had not been other than a serious matter with him from the beginning. He took her abroad for a couple of years. Upon their return to the apartment he had leased, they found a letter awaiting them at Rodman's solicitor's—the fatal folding bed, made by the hands of the injured husband, was at their disposal, subject to the terms of their oath. Imagine the subtle irony of the gift! The young man declared, oath or no oath, he would have none of it. The pair came perilously near their first disagreement, for Clara persisted—in spite of her shrinking—in sticking conscientiously to the agreement; something of her former husband's powerfully passionate nature seemed to influence her in holding to her decision. Tears on her part, a shrug of the shoulders from Rodman, and the unwelcome gift was installed in their chamber.

"What a gift was that! What must have been the reflections of the pair who had gained their happiness over the broken heart and the violated hearthstone of another human being, as they shared that strange gift—thinking, as they surely could not resist, of the donor of the gift. William Tolliver must have been amply revenged upon the despoiler of his home and happiness night after night. The two young people became more and more reserved with each other as the days and nights, equally wretched, passed. Orville began haunting his clubs again, returning at night as though drawn by a subtly powerful magnet to toss and reflect, to grind his teeth, to toss again. Clara grew melancholy, and her maid often found her dissolved in tears and told about it in the servants' quarters.

"After the inquest there will be more to discuss," the coroner hinted darkly. He was quite right; the inquest brought out the final act of the tragedy and painted, strangely enough, to the interposition of Tolliver, who had been dead several days before young Rodman's death.

The maid testified that Mrs. Rodman had received a letter which the girl had not scrupled to read when she had discovered it in her mistress' bureau drawer. It was from William Tolliver, and was in a lofty but terrible strain. It warned her to prepare her soul for sudden death; it bade her tell her husband that he had but a short time left to enjoy that which he had deliberately stolen from another man; it told her to watch for the announcement of his death, as it would be an omen to her that her own would follow shortly.

Within a week a newspaper announced the ex-husband's tragic death at his own hands.

The maid declared that after the receipt of this news the pair acted like people from whose shoulders a great weight had been lifted. They toasted each other at dinner, laughing. She heard them discussing

the discarding of the dead man's unwelcome gift. Orville then asked his wife if she did not consider herself absolved of her promise, now that "he" was dead. She replied that she feared him more dead than alive. Then she had burst out sobbing, crying: "Orville, Orville, swear that you do not regret your love for me! Tell me that it has compensated for everything!"

Mr. Rodman, said the girl, had soothed his wife with caresses. It was nearly eleven that night before she—the maid—had been dismissed, and she slept soundly until wakened by Mr. Benham after the tragedy.

It was impossible to question Mrs. Rodman; the unhappy young widow was in such a hysterical condition that her personal physician refused point-blank to answer for the consequences if she were questioned by the coroner at that time.

Benham discussed the subject thoughtfully with the coroner that afternoon in his own apartment. The man declared that in his opinion all the suspicion pointed at the first husband, although of course the verdict must be "Death by accident."

"I wonder if we cannot take a look at that bed?" inquired the bachelor musingly. "Mrs. Rodman is in a private hospital, and the maid is in charge of the apartment. I have a theory that I'd like to subject to proof."

The two men acted on Benham's proposition, and ten minutes later had entered the dread chamber of the tragedy, shutting out the maid with her curious eyes. Benham felt strangely averse to any more witnesses than were strictly necessary. Together he and the coroner went over the bed inch by inch, letting it down cautiously. It was a curious and beautiful piece of work, ingeniously conceived, and handsomely executed. It appeared, when closed, to be a wardrobe, in the door of which was set a large full-length mirror. Perhaps it was, as a whole, a bit too heavy for a lady's boudoir, and to Benham—after the horrible accident—there seemed something almost sinister in the thing.

He exchanged a mutually distrustful look with the coroner, and the two men pulled the bedding aside, exposing the springs, as with a single impulse. The hinges on which the bed turned were concealed in cunningly contrived metal boxes; Benham discovered that there were two at the foot of the bed from which ran long rods that connected with those at the top.

"What on earth are these for?" he said aloud. "The hinges of the bed must be at the top, where it folds up. I believe there is something diabolical about this bed!" He called to the maid for a hammer. Then he beat and battered at the round, well-oiled mechanisms until the head of the boxes screwed off, disclosing springs—some kind of clockwork arrangement inside.

Suddenly he began to see light. He backed off as though his hands had inadvertently come in contact with something horrible. He looked at the coroner, who stared back in dawning comprehension of something unutterably unbelievable. Mutually impelled by the same thought, they destroyed the mechanism and replaced the metal cap, laid the bedding in place, and pushed the terrible instrument of a dead man's vengeance up into place again.

And then the bachelor gave a sharp exclamation: "Come here! Stand where I am standing," he directed.

The coroner took his place before the mirror, started back with an echo of Benham's cry. At the angle from which he looked, with the light striking the mirror from the side, he saw the distinct life-sized features of a man peering at him from over his shoulder. Intuitively, although he had never seen a likeness of him, he knew that it was the face of William Tolliver, who, with compressed lips, looked at him malevolently from deep-set eyes under shaggy eyebrows, from out the depths of the mirror.

How it had been accomplished, by what trick of the glazier's art or the artisan's skill, the thing had been done; staring with implacable hate from the mirror was the face of the man who had been so deeply wronged, the man who had so horribly revenged himself. No wonder the bed remained always with the mirror concealed! No wonder that the Rodmans nightly tossed and muttered, turning almost with loathing from arms that had formerly been so eager to embrace! No wonder they had discharged one girl who had put the bed down in spite of prohibitive orders, in the mistaken attempt to improve the appearance of the room!

The dead man had avenged himself horribly; he had kept his memory fresh before the miserable pair day and night in the very privacy of their nuptial chamber, with a refinement of torture that only a bitter and passionate nature could have devised. To this day Benham cannot decide whether or not the angry spirit of the wronged and embittered husband had not gone that night to gloat over the doom of those whom he had warned, with sarcastic prophecy, of their near-impending death? Had it been he who, unseen, had left the scene of his final triumph so hastily, leaving open to Benham as he went the door of that desolated home? The bachelor shudders at his own uncertainty.

But he was not surprised at hearing that Mrs. Rodman had entered a nursing sisterhood, which she had endowed with the vast properties left her by her husband's death.

ROMANCE

By Roy Le Moyne

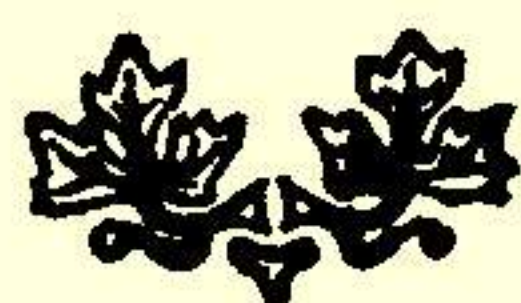
I passed the house
And stopped, thrilled at this sign:

TRA SMANS EN RANC

Words that might have been inscribed by some dead
hand

On a crumbling ruin of ancient France.
How terrible it was to learn that the words only
spelt

"Tradesmans Entrance,"
With some of the letters missing.



Army Courts-Martial

Representative Royal C. Johnson, of South Dakota, made a speech in Congress recently in which he cited the following examples of sentences that court-martials have given. Representative Johnson left his family and seat in Congress to enlist as a private when the United States entered the war. He fought through the battle of the Argonne, where he was severely wounded. These cases were quoted by him as examples of the severity with which the courts-martial law was enforced in the American Army.

"Charge: Disobeyed order to go to isolation hospital and order to stand at attention. Sentence: Twenty-five years.

"Charge: Disobeyed order to drill. Sentence: Forty years; reduced to dishonorable discharge and forfeiture of pay.

"Charge: Absent without leave four days, broke out of confinement. Sentence: Life imprisonment.

"Charge: Disobeyed order to report for setting-up exercises. Sentence: Ten years.

"Charge: Did not remain at barracks as ordered. Sentence: Fifteen years.

"Charge: Willfully disobeyed orders to go to work. Sentence: Forfeiture of all pay and ten years in prison.

"Charge: Willfully disobeyed order to resume his work as janitor at the office of quartermaster general. Sentence: Twenty years imprisonment; forfeiture of all pay.

"Charge: Desertion, one day's absence. Sentence: Fifteen years.

"Charge: Disobedience of orders. Sentence: Ten years' confinement and forfeiture of pay.

"Charge: Disobedience of orders, involving two other charges of disobedience and threats to strike with an ax. Sentence: Two years confinement and forfeiture of pay.

"Charge: Sleeping at post. Sentence: Ten years' confinement; forfeiture of pay.

"Charge: Sleeping at post. Sentence: Six months' confinement; forfeiture of pay.

"Charge: Sleeping at post. Sentence: Two years' confinement; forfeiture of pay. Mitigated on review to six months.

"Charge: Sleeping at post. Sentence: Forfeiture of pay; ten years' confinement.

"Charge: Sleeping on post. Sentence: Forfeiture of one-half pay; six months' confinement.

"Charge: Sleeping on post. Sentence: Ten years' confinement; forfeiture of pay.

"Charge: Recruit willfully refused to serve in the army or to wear the uniform. Sentence: Forfeiture of pay; thirty-five years' confinement.

"Charge: Refusal to wear uniform. Sentence: Forfeiture of pay; three years' confinement. On review sentence suspended and soldier restored to duty.

This list represents about two-thirds of the cases cited by Mr. Johnson.



The Rim of the World

By
Duffield
Osborne

I HAVE often felt that I would give a year of my life for an hour's talk with some friend that is dead and gone. I would talk about the things that troubled me at the moment, and he would probably smile, uninterested, but kindly indulgent. Somehow, I think if I could talk with one or two of the men I have known it might be different; for I would talk with *them* of the past and of things they know better than I.

"What good is there of my filling you fellows up with all that stuff? You are rational and civilized, and I am—well, I am a humble parasite of science. Now if you but had in your club my late very good friend, Don Herrera Eusebio Vaquez, with the same dinner within him and the liquor and the smoke—dreams! Ah, but you could have many tonguesful for the asking!"

It was Carson's guest who spoke; a short, broadly built man; plump, you might say, with a round, boyish face and brown beard and hair; Troilo Watson Bierck. I had met him half a dozen times, and the most definite impression I ever got was that if we slept under the same blanket half a hundred years I would never know him the least bit better than I did now, which was not at all. I never even succeeded in placing his nationality, except to surmise it was at least as composite as his name. He spoke nearly all the languages I had ever heard and a few others, but I judged he spoke none of them like a native; certainly not his English or his French or his German. He had been in about every part of the world where nobody else had been, gone through no end of hardships and hair-breadth escapes, and lived God knows how many years; yet his complexion was like a boy's of twenty, and he did not look as if there was a muscle in his body.

Bierck's eyes were his sole distinguished feature, and that because they seemed to have a curious faculty of changing their size and shape and color and pretty

much everything that goes to make eyes recognizable. Sometimes they loomed big and round and vacant and dark-blue. Then they were little and black and beady and vicious, and, again, full of dreams, and brown and soft as sealskin fur.

He was, as he put it, a collecting naturalist; beasts, living or dead, insects, fishes, minerals, plants—anything any man or body of men wanted and could pay for; and he knew, I verily believe, pretty much all that a man ought to know—perhaps more.

The four of us had dined together at Carson's club—Carson, Bierck, Leaven, and myself—and Carson had put Bierck up for two weeks and got him a room there. His eyes, while he had been speaking, were in their dreamy phase, and his words had been prompted by a question of Carson's which I had not caught. At the reply, however, I was all attention.

"Show us the beast, anyhow," said Carson. "Incidentally, you promised to tell me about it when you had time, but, of course, the time clause lets you out. Is it upstairs in your room?"

Bierck smoked silently for a minute.

"Yes, it's up there," he said. "I'll get it, and don't you fellows steal my drink while I am away." His humor, at least, was purely Teutonic.

"What is it, Carson?" I asked when Bierck had gone out.

"Oh, nothing much," he said. "Just a big moth. But there's a story about it that I've never been able to make him tell. He has definite ideas of what he wants to do and what he doesn't, and he seldom changes his mind. Nobody else ever can."

"How do you know there's a story, then?" queried Leaven.

Leaven should have been a lawyer instead of a doctor of medicine; but, before Carson could answer, Bierck was coming toward us with a little flat box in his hand. He laid it on the table gingerly; an ordinary butterfly box, about six by four, with a glass top and bottom hermetically sealed.

"You see him," he said, and he resumed his chair, puffing at his cigar to retain its dying light.

Our heads were together over the box and its contents; a large moth of so dark a brown above as to seem black but for the really black shadings at the ends of the wings. Beneath, they were lighter, a smoky tint that gave them a curious transparent quality, but in appearance only. As a matter of fact they were less so than those of most moths, for when one held the box up to the lamp, bottom toward you, they seemed no darker for the blackish color above; only smoky, with vague shadows like floating clouds.

"It is very rare," said Bierck, taking his cigar from his mouth. "You see it has not the two dull yellow marks of the Ashtoreth, and it is several shades darker. I have had many Ashtoreths—that is, many when you consider; but of this only one."

"I suppose it's worth a lot of money," said Carson.

"It is worth to a man what he will give," replied Bierck. "That is the only measure of things that are unique; but it is not for sale. I am myself interested."

"How?" I asked innocently. I have a sort of impression that if I had said "Why?" Bierck would have shut up tight. Possibly the vagueness of the interrogation kept it from frightening him off. He looked at me, with his eyes in their beady, vicious phase, for a full minute, chewing his cigar. Then he said:

"You see, it was the Don Herrera of whom I spoke that gave it me. He had said that he would die within the year and would want it no more. Three months was the end of him."

"Phthisis?" asked Leaven, in his professional tone.

"No," said Bierck, and went on: "He got the moth in southeastern Colombia, and it was not easy to get; perhaps a little dangerous. Few white men go to that country, and fewer return. It is wild. I cannot well describe it except to say high mountains where you freeze, broad plains where you bake, forests where they breed strange fevers that kill in an hour, and many rivers that look innocent but are not so. The natives? They are Indians of the pure blood; quiet and hospitable enough if you do not offend; very dangerous if you do; and sometimes you may not know what the offense is till you feel the prick of the little poisoned arrow and never feel anything again. Then your head hangs on a tent pole for many years, perhaps centuries, carefully cured and shrunken in some way I know not, and it is dry and hard, and your face is of a deep, rich mahogany color."

"Don Herrera, you see, was a curious man in his mind; not scientific, but inquiring; and these Indians, they are very superstitious and filled with strange imaginations. They are most independent and have ever had their own kings, and when a king dies they place him in the royal sarcophagus of some porous stone that makes it truly a sarcophagus, for it eats the flesh in a year, so that the tomb is always empty when the next king dies."

"It is a deep, low grove with a small gray stream running through it where the sarcophagus stands, and it was only in that grove that Don Herrera ever saw this moth. The Indians told him that the night after a king's body was laid in the sarcophagus a moth

like this one appeared, and that night after night it hovered over the queer-cut face on the lid until the stone had devoured the body. Then it was seen no more except on the anniversaries of his death, and one like to it when the next king died."

"Naturally they did not wish the moth to be disturbed, but Don Herrera was a man, as I have said, of a curious mind. The king, Ohiano Juato, had been dead six months when he got there, and he watched many nights this moth hovering about the queer-cut face. Then, after three months more, knowing it would soon be gone, for he had some Indian blood in his own veins and believed many strange things, he caught it and went away very quick."

"I met him at the theater in Havana about two years later, and saw him much for several weeks. So he gave me the moth in its box, as you see, saying he was near to die."

Bierck stopped speaking and smoked meditatively, while we sat quiet. I think we all realized there was something more to hear and feared to break the thread if we tried to draw it. At last his eyes grew brown and dreamy, and he began again:

"You understand that my friend was part of the Indian blood. When he gave me the moth he told me what I have given you, and a little more. He said that his servant, who was a half-breed of Panama, had always prepared his room for sleep, closing the windows and lighting the lamp a few minutes before the hour of retiring, that the mosquitoes should not be drawn in too plenty. The box with the moth hung on the wall like a small picture, but on one night when Don Herrera came to go to bed he found this man, his servant, sitting upon the tiled floor before it, and Don Herrera looked, too, and the box was empty and the moth gone."

"At first it was his thought that the fellow had stolen it, though the glass was as ever well sealed; but when he found the man dazed, much frightened and unable to tell a good story, he knew it was not so, for the half-breeds of Panama are very excellent liars when there is need. Then he did not know what to think, so he went to bed, and when he arose the next morning the box hung on the wall with the moth safely fastened in it, which seemed most unexplainable, for both Don Herrera and his servant were very sure of what they had seen."

"Of course my friend's most curious mind thought much about this thing, and it occurred to him, for some reason, that he should count the days. The night when the moth had vanished was one year to the day from the night after the king's death."

"I think it was foolish of Don Herrera to speak much of this to his man, but he did so, and for several weeks the half-breed grew restless more and more, and at last he ran away. Don Herrera told me that he had heard of him afterward, that he was dead."

"It was the Don's drop of Indian blood, perhaps, that made him think of all these things, and it was his curiosity that made him resolve to sit up, with the moth case before him, during the night that came one year later. I do not know quite what he expected or why; and he, too, was very vague when he came to this part of his story. Only I know he sat and watched the empty box for much of the night and

that the moth was there again at sunrise. So he gave me the box with the moth in it, as you see, saying that he would die, which he so did."

"Odd!" ejaculated Carson.

Leaven spoke professionally: "Yes, it looks like a pretty well-defined case of auto suggestion. Such things are not at all uncommon among the dark races. I take it both Señor Vaquez and his servant knew the details of the Indian superstition and that they had incurred some penalty."

"I do not so understand," said Bierck. "I could get nothing definite from Don Herrera more than I have told you, and I cannot think that even his curiosity would have led him to face death for it knowingly."

"What do you call it then?" asked Leaven.

Bierck shrugged his shoulders.

"I call it nothing, only I know enough to know that I know very little."

"How long ago was all this?" I put in.

"About six years; a little more."

"And you have never felt inclined to sit up with your moth on the anniversary?"

"No, I have never felt so curious as that."

Then we were all silent for a while and smoked. At last Carson spoke.

"Do you know this mysterious date of King What's-his-name's exit?" he asked lightly.

"Surely," replied Bierck. "Ohiano Juato died just eight years ago lacking one day."

"Then the spooky occasion is actually to-morrow night?"

Bierck nodded.

"Good!" cried Carson. "I say we all sit up with your moth and put one more superstition to sleep."

Leaven smiled.

"Doesn't it seem a rather foolish performance for grown white men?" he suggested.

"Not at all," persisted Carson, "unless we're fellows of the know-it-all type. I've always yearned to find a *real* haunted house, and this strikes me as pretty close to it."

I looked at Bierck.

"Well?" I said.

He spoke slowly, with his eyes fixed on his shoe tips. "You are very welcome to the loan of the moth."

Leaven watched him quizzically.

"But you'd rather not lend your presence as well?" he queried.

"Why, you see," said Bierck, "I have an engagement to-morrow—one that takes me from town. I shall not return till the day following, but I repeat you are welcome to the moth—if you wish him."

"Very good," said Carson. "I'd like to have you with us, for hanged if I don't think you're superstitious about it yourself, and when a man feels that way not even the oaths of sane friends will knock it out of him."

"I am very sorry that it is impossible," said Bierck. Then he paused and seemed to hesitate. I watched what I took to be a struggle between influences that stirred him to keep silent or to say more, but silence won out. "You are welcome to the loan of the moth," he repeated.

"Much obliged," said Carson. "Am I to sit up

with the thing alone, then?" He looked at Leaven and me, and Leaven answered in a rather indulgent tone:

"I suppose we might make a night of it with you, if you'll stock up with enough stuff and cigars to make it worth while. A cold bite wouldn't go bad, either, say along midnight."

I am telling this story as straight as I can, and perhaps I ought to say that if Leaven had not happened to include me in his acceptance—well, I don't know just what position I might have taken. I've never held myself to be a superstitious man, but somehow Bierck always affected me strongly. I did not like or trust him especially, but I had a sneaking moral certainty that, were we thrown together much, he would have dominated me in a way that was not agreeable to think of. Possibly, if I'd been left quite to myself, I, too, might have found "an engagement," but the feeling was not strong enough to assert itself against even a tentatively assumed arrangement.

Therefore the matter settled itself in its own way, which is a rather comforting thing to reflect on, and we three dined together at the club on the next evening—dined very well, and then adjourned to Carson's apartment, with the glass case wrapped in cotton batting in his big overcoat pocket. Later it was comfortably propped up on a little table easel with a lamp behind it, and a most pleasing array of bottles and stamped boxes round about. If further comfort were needed, we could hear Carson's man at work in the pantry. He made excellent mayonnaise, did Carson's man, and weirdly sedative rabbits, wherefore we had no misgivings as to the material side of the night.

As for the immaterial, our attitudes seemed less at one. You can't always judge from a man's action at such a time just what he really feels, especially a man of the Middle East, where the habit sets against shows of emotion and where, we often speak flip-pantly about the things that hit us hardest. Therefore I don't know for sure, but, as far as appearances went, Carson took the affair as a big joke on its face with any sort of fool possibility underneath, while Leaven sat and laughed, the acme of cynical indulgence.

My own feeling I can state more definitely, and I am frank to say that it was uncomfortable. I think that, temperamentally, perhaps, I was less superstitious than Carson and more so than Leaven, but apart from any belief or anticipation, I was conscious of what some people call "nerves" and others a premonition, and which, whatever you choose to call it, goes pretty far toward destroying all real enjoyment of the things of life.

So, as we sat, smoking, sipping, and talking, now in a desultory way and again of more serious topics as they came to the surface, the hours drifted along. The supper came and was most satisfactory.

We had agreed to watch the moth closely as it drew near to midnight. This was at Carson's insistence. I agreed indifferently, wishing only to humor him and see the thing through according to his mood, and Leaven, as usual, laughing; but midnight came and we watched and nothing happened—absolutely nothing.

The minutes lengthened into tens and twenties, and

Leaven laughed more. Carson, on the other hand, grew irritable. I think he vaguely suspected that both of us thought he'd made a fool of himself, but I, at least, did not. I was conscious of no especial feeling except that I was sleepy and of a growing hope that I could go home pretty soon without breaking my agreement or offending Carson. At last Leaven cut the knot.

"How much longer do you want us to stay, old man?" he asked.

"Not any longer than you want to," snapped Carson. "I suppose you've both eaten and drunk and smoked all you can pleasantly."

I wheeled about, following Carson's finger to the box propped up on the easel before the lamp. It was empty.

Leaven picked it up and examined it on all sides. Hermetically sealed as ever, it surely was, but the moth that we had all been watching time and again through the evening was as surely gone.

I confess suspicion was my first impulse.

"But I *saw* it go just this moment," said Carson in an awed whisper. "I saw it myself. An instant it was there; the next, it wasn't; and I have had my eyes on it all the time."

"Curious, very curious," murmured Leaven, "and Colombia is west of New York. Midnight there is a little later."

For an hour, perhaps, the talk drifted vaguely, suddenly cut loose as it was from all moorings of preconceived fact. There seemed to be little that either Leaven or Carson had to say outside the line of occasional ejaculation; while I, after one or two mild essays at tentative doubt, subsided under the weight of sheer unreceptivity. Then the silences grew longer and the smoke more dense.

"Well, are we going to sit up all night," said Carson peevishly, "or is the experiment ended?"

I suppose I looked surprised, and I know I felt even more so when Leaven replied:

"I've seen enough. Let's home and to bed. Somehow I can't seem to think straight for ten consecutive seconds."

"But the experiment is not finished," I protested. "The thing is supposed to be back in its box in the morning, when it gets tired of flitting around the King Ohiano's sarcophagus."

I have never been quite able to explain the condition of dull indifference into which both Leaven and Carson had lapsed—especially Leaven. Perhaps it was only the combined result of considerable food and drink, too much tobacco and too little sleep.

"Oh, we can look at it again to-morrow," said Carson.

"Lock it up somewhere," supplemented Leaven with a yawn.

"Look here," said I; "you fellows may have lost interest, though I can't for the life of me see why you should at this stage of the game. I haven't seen as much as you have and I'm naturally disposed to keep on looking for some rational explanation. May I take this empty case home and see the thing out?"

"Certainly," assented Carson indifferently.

"Good idea," said Leaven. "I'm too far gone, somehow, to trust my sense any more, but"—and he braced determinedly for a moment—"I'm perfectly sure of what we've seen, whatever the explanation may be."

Well, to make a long matter short, I wrapped the box in its cotton batting again, with a last look to make sure it was still empty, slipped it in my pocket and went home. Then I examined it again very carefully with a glass, and then—my first idea had been to sit and watch it till daybreak, but somehow a settled disinclination to do this grew in me; a sort of physical reaction, I suspect—I put the box under my pillow and went to bed.

It was half after eight when I awoke, which I considered spoke well for my nerves. The light was streaming into my bedroom, and I felt instinctively under my pillow and drew forth the box undisturbed through the night.

What I expected to see counts for little, even supposing I had any definite expectations. What I did see was the moth fixed securely in its place, as when Bierck had given it into our hands. This much I know—that I was not surprised. I would have been surprised at nothing. My state of mind was much like that of a traveler in some unvisited region, whose experiences there had brought him to view as a part of the world where all the natural laws that govern things elsewhere were in abeyance. Therefore I dressed calmly and went to the club for breakfast with my fellow explorers.

"You have the moth, I suppose," said Leaven, and I took the box from my pocket and gave it to Carson. It was all as if I had borrowed the latest novel and returned it—or, possibly, that might have occasioned even more emotion.

We ate, and said little or nothing, partly, I suppose, because no one had a very clear idea of just what he wanted to say, and partly—but what's the use of theorizing?

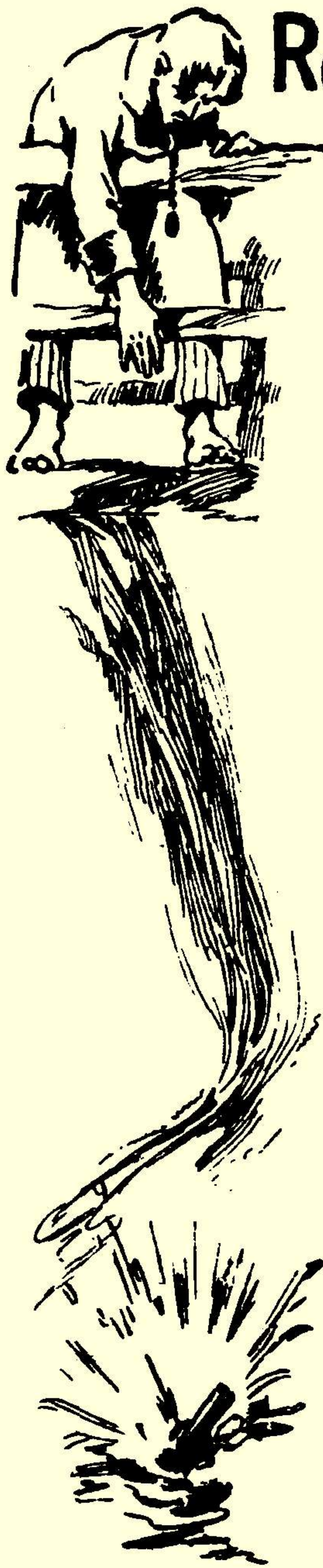
Just as we were finishing, Bierck came in, and I wondered vaguely where "out of town" he had been and how he had got back so early. He seemed nervous—almost agitated. I had never suspected him of nerves before. There was only one part of our experiment that apparently interested him, and that was who of us had actually *seen* the moth disappear or reappear. The rest he took calmly for granted; and, when we told the story of the night, he looked at Carson and Leaven in a way I did not understand—almost angrily, I thought, and said little, but spoke irritably as with the irritation of a man embarrassed by the consciousness of some folly. He left us in a few minutes quite abruptly.

Carson and Leaven are both dead, Carson of typhoid fever five months after, and Leaven of blood poisoning from an autopsy within the year—both natural deaths enough in all conscience; but now I think you can understand why I would give a year of my life to talk with one of them for five minutes.

As for Bierck, he was a remarkable man, but somehow I hope we will never be in the same hemisphere together and that I shall never hear of him again, which is more or less absurd.

Alpheus Bings--Thrill Hound

By
Ronald Oliphant



III The Purple Fear Ray

THERE was joy in the heart of young Alpheus Bings,
As he sat in his bedroom and looked at some things
He had purchased that day. He was glad beyond measure
At the thought of acquiring such wonderful treasure.
One purchase, especially, pleased him immensely.
"By George! Those are beauties!" he murmured intensely.

It had been a hard day for the pen-pushing wight,
So he turned in uncommonly early that night.
Slumber-filled shadows about him crept
And wrought their magic. The Thrill Hound slept.

A shriek—a most horrible, blood-curdling yell
Into the midst of the night hush fell,
A woman's voice crying, "Take it away!
It's killing me! Stop it—that purple ray!"

Alpheus Bings was awake in a second,
Here, perchance, was a thrill upon which he'd not reckoned.
A swirling of bedclothes, a patter of feet,
And Alpheus Bings ambled out to the street.
A crowd had collected—agape, with its tongues out,
To see why the lady was yelling her lungs out.
She seemed an innocuous little old maid,
Half frantic with terror and sorely afraid.
So Alpheus, taking her hand, gently pressed
Her fingers and asked: "Prithee, why so distressed?"
No answer forthcoming, he followed her gaze
And then held his hand to his head in amaze.

In his many adventures, the Thrill Hound had seen
All sorts of odd rays—purple, violet, green,
Besides spirit auras and astral vibrations
And suchlike occultified manifestations.
But never—no, never—of all the things listed,
Had anything jolted his nerve-ends as this did.
For, sparkling and crackling its way through the gloom,
The weird purple ray came *direct from his room!*

He thought for a minute, then gulped with delight.
He'd struck a solution; it surely was right.
He rushed to his bedroom and there, straightaway,
He seized upon something he'd purchased that day.

Adown the back stair and across lots he hied
To a bridge o'er a river that flowed deep and wide.
He stood at the center, then quickly attached
A piece of lead pipe to the thing he had snatched
From the drawer in his bureau, to make sure it sank,
Then he sighed: "What a hit they'd have made at the bank!
It's beastly hard luck that the blamed purple ray
Should scare the poor woman and cut up that way!"

Deeply, sepulchrally, Alpheus groaned
As the vividest socks that he ever had owned
Went down with a splashing, regurgitant quiver
Forever to rest in the depths of the river.

Soldiers and Sailors Personal Relief Section

Conducted by a former officer of
the Adjutant General's department,
U.S. Army.

IF there is anything typical, purely so, of the American soldier, it is unselfishness. One's heart grows suddenly hot to think about it, and one remembers all the splendid things the boys do every day as a matter of course, without hope of reward, without thought of self.

A certain private by the name of Treptov was killed at the crossing of the Ourcq, and on his mutilated body they found a notebook. In it was written:

America shall win the war:
Therefore I will work,
I will save,
I will sacrifice,
I will endure,
I will fight cheerfully and do my utmost as
if the whole struggle depended on me alone.

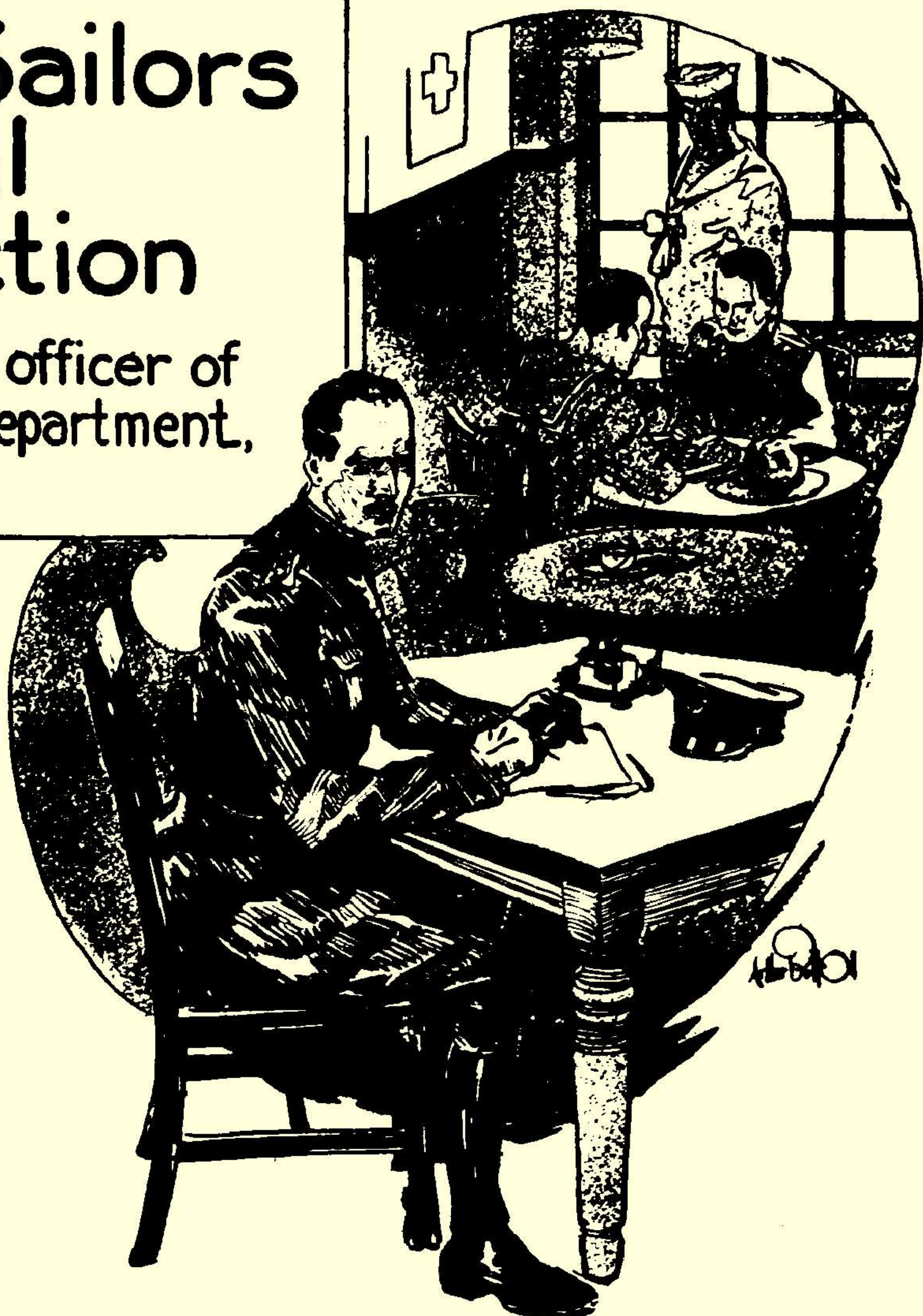
Treptov called this "my pledge."

Think of this, you folks at home. Let it sink to the bottom of your hearts, because if such lofty thoughts are in the hearts of the private soldier, how glorious does our great struggle seem! To you, oh, grumbling citizen, this should be an eternal thought—this beautiful ideal expressed in the pitiful notebook of one lad who thought enough of his home land to give his all. The mind is lifted to heights unknown when it comes across such splendid heroism.

To the man in the army, service is the watchword. Service is only another saying for unselfishness. To give, give, give—that is the ideal of the game, and remember always that it is a game that requires all one can give and more, too.

When you see the wounded men crowded on the trains it comes over you with a rush how much service these boys have given to us and the life ahead would seem a pretty bleak affair without an ideal of this kind.

I recall in this connection the second Liberty Loan Campaign conducted at a certain post where I was stationed. There were approximately three thousand men stationed there, and they raised one hundred and fifty-six thousand dollars! A number of boys pledged their entire pay for ten months in advance! Think of it for a moment.



I heard one of them say: "Well, we are here to give—why not give it all?"

Then, too, do you recall that stirring message which the A. E. F. sent to America during the Fourth Liberty Loan Campaign? If you don't, let me put it down here so that the poor fame of these pages will help to perpetuate the glorious example of the boys "over there." Here it is:

If the folks back home fall short on the billions you need, Mr. President, call on us for the balance. We like our pay—but if we have to, we can go without it. Yours for victory,
A. E. F.

The attitude of the common soldier is something so unutterably fine that it will take a greater pen than mine to put it down upon paper so that all who read can understand. With all the realization of being called sentimental I am willing to state unequivocally that our boys are, without doubt, the most unselfish lot of men who ever went forth upon a crusade. It is not their country that has been ravaged or closely endangered, but France and England, yet they proved to be excellent soldiers, as the victories of Bois de Belleau and St. Mihiel have proven. They fought for other peoples' rights, and their task was one that called

forth the utmost atom of manhood which they possessed.

Nothing before or since has equaled that historic entry into Paris in July, 1917. The whole civilized world waited breathlessly to see what that slender column of men would develop into during the oncoming months. The Germans scorned them, disbelieved in them, but inside of fourteen months we had nearly two million across the water and had organized that amazing shipment of men each month which held us breathless.

Why was all this possible?

It rested upon the unselfishness of the men who engaged in the work. From the lowest to the highest it was the same. Each individual had his task, and he performed it without regard to his own feelings, his desires, or the stress of the moment.

A job had to be done, and it is done. That is all there is to it. Excuses are not in order. The complaining fellow finds himself most miserably alone, and he soon learns to bend to the work like a man. He gains a vision of his duty, and like Private Treptov he fights and works as though the whole struggle depended upon him alone!

How much sweeter and cleaner would our home lives be if we were to live like these boys do! I often wonder how the cranky person feels when he reads of men like Private Treptov. It must be quite an eye opener. Surely there is no one on earth who could read of this lad's pledge and still remain the same. There is no shell so hard but what it would be opened by an example so stirring.

A wounded sergeant of the Marines said recently: "Every man who was with the Marines in that fighting over in France and who came out alive is a better man than he was before he went in. He has a broader, finer way of looking at life. He sees the world through new eyes. He may have been wounded and cut up and gassed and have suffered physically more than I care to think about, but he is a better man for all that. He has learned to think of others more than of himself. He has risen above most petty things. He has seen the suffering of a nation, and he has done his part as best he could to right a great wrong, and so he is better in every way, better for himself, better for his people, and better for the world at large."

Again, O ye people back home, think of this idealism from a sergeant who was wounded in battle and who may never recover! It should come home to you like a streak of fire across a dark sky—thus it is and it means a new country here after the war. These men are learning the hard lesson in a hard school. What they learn is going to stick. It is no superficial matter, but we tell you it is a case of "brass tacks and plenty of 'em."

The cause of the war was selfishness—the solution and victory lie in unselfishness. The President has put it correctly many times. His great idealism and lack of thought for selfish ends has made the war a tremendous crusade for the helpless little nations, for the right of the individual and against the greed of a despotic nation. He has set the standard and the world is living up to it. The last soldier in the army learns it—it is the omnipresent idea everywhere.

Men might write books by the ton, preach sermons by the thousand, scribble inspiring poems, draw dra-

matic pictures, compose splendid music—do all these things for a hundred years for one purpose and still not do one-hundredth part of the work done in a few months by those boys at the front.

A common cause—a common enemy—these are parts of the explanation, but there is no explaining the business. It just is, that's all. It is the proof of the pudding. We are awakening at last to the fact that the American dream of ability is a reality.

We have not failed.

That is the point.

Let us not forget, however, that our success depended heavily upon the individual's sacrifice. In him there was the hope of peace, and to him was given the task of sacrificing his all to see that peace was gained speedily and effectively. THE EDITOR.

Questions and Answers.

B. L. O.—Question: I am twenty-nine years of age. How much should I pay for five thousand dollars War Risk Insurance?

Answer: \$3.45.

R. T.—Question: How is the Government going to discharge disabled soldiers, and what are the conditions under which this may be carried out?

Answer: The following circular letter sent by the Surgeon-General to all army surgeons in hospitals outlines the present Government policy:

"It is the policy of the War Department to retain so far as practicable, under military control, for the purpose of medical and surgical treatment, (a) officers and soldiers suffering from acute diseases or acute exacerbations of chronic diseases or unhealed lesions; (b) officers and soldiers suffering from communicable diseases, or who are 'carriers,' whose discharge would be a danger to the civil community; (c) officers and soldiers suffering from disabilities incurred in the line of duty which are correctable within their terms of service or enlistment; (d) officers and soldiers suffering from chronic or permanent disabilities incurred in the line of duty, which are susceptible for improvements by measures for mental or physical reconstruction designed to fit them for return to their homes for the resumption of their former vocations, or with their consent for the industrial opportunities or the training courses provided by the Federal Board for Vocational Education.

TO RESTORE HEALTH.

"In the accomplishment of this policy it is the intention to restore officers and soldiers who are held in service as provided above to health and function as fully as possible, considering the nature of their disabilities, the limitations of the military service and the other provisions which the Government has made for the care of the permanently disabled.

"The National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers provides retreats for former soldiers who have served in time of war and are unable to maintain themselves. The Bureau of War Risk Insurance provides compensation and medical and hospital treatment for disabilities incurred in the line of duty. The Federal Board for Vocational Education provides courses in vocational training and maintenance during the same for soldiers disabled in the line of duty."

"Around the World"

McGintis Nearly Spoils Ball of the Peg-leg Club.

Churley McGintis, an old salt who made a whaler on the South Sea his home back in the eighties, almost broke up the annual ball of the "Peg-leg Club," in Galveston, Texas. But for the presence and participation of Churley the dance would have been devoid of anything out of the ordinary other than the squeaking of cork limbs and the thud of the pegs when bending in rhythm to the tantalizing strains of the jazz. But Churley was there. More than that, he insisted on dancing with his peg leg, and his peg was a stump of the type used by sailors.

The Peg-leg Club is composed strictly of members who have been so unfortunate as to lose a leg or an arm or both, and fortunate enough to have that member, or those members, replaced by wooden or artificial ones. The total membership of the club is 137, of which forty-seven are women. One hundred persons were present at the dance. Attending and participating in it was George Boolin, who has two cork legs and two cork arms. Miss Martha Heling, with a cork leg and two mechanical arms, was also present. The music for the occasion was furnished by the orchestra of the club, composed of five pieces, three violins and two guitars.

Well, the ball opened with a grand march, and by the time that was over most of the hinges in the wooden limbs were thoroughly oiled and working. The real dancing had just got under way when who should ask for admittance but Churley McGintis. Churley scorns cork legs and hustles nimbly about on the old-time peg which he made from a hard wood that grew on a small island in the South Sea.

Churley was welcomed. He immediately "spiked his top piece," warmed his hands, said "hello" to all the crowd, tossed a dollar to the orchestra, and then secured a partner for the next dance.

The number was a one-step, and Churley was stepping lively enough at first. Pretty soon some member of the club kicked into his stump. This happened more than once. Then the leather cap came off the end of Churley's stump leg, and the spikes in the end of it began to scrape the wax off the floor. In fact, he was cutting the wax like an ice saw, but he was not bothered in the least, for it was the annual occasion to forget deformities and wooden limbs and be merry.

About this time the orchestra struck up the liveliest part of the music. Churley forgot that he was using a peg leg. As he gave his graceful partner a whirl he brought the stump down emphatically. It stuck to the floor. Churley realized something was wrong. He gave the wooden member a twist in efforts to pull it from the floor, but it was no use. That stump stuck as firmly as if it was grown there. The dancers piled into and onto Churley as he clung madly to his partner and struggled to free himself from the floor.

Other dancers grabbed at each other, and more than one mechanical arm and wooden leg was disjoined from swaying bodies in the mêlée.

Finally the leather strap about Churley's knee gave way. The stump was left growing in the floor while a struggling, straining, maddening mass of humanity and mechanical limbs piled up about it. Hooks on the end of artificial arms slit lingerie waists and twisted mechanical knees protruded through skirts and trouser legs. The moaning of hinges and stifled cries of ladies filled the room. Finally things grew quiet. Churley dragged himself to a bench along the side of the wall. The lady members of the club wanted to throw him out. But better counsel prevailed. He was a member of the club, and the accident was unavoidable.

Three of the men wrenched Churley's peg leg from the floor and pitched it to him. He silently buckled it on and then rose. With a look of disdain he surveyed the crowd. He declared he would never attend another dance, and the ladies swore by their hands and feet that they would never dance another step with Churley. They demanded that he sever his connections with the organization, but he will not be compelled to do so.

After things were straightened out and Churley had gone the dance was continued. The members of the Peg-leg Club did not find their way home until early in the morning.

Aerial Cowboys.

The air-plane scout will replace the picturesque cowboy on the ranches of the West within a few years if inquiries received at the Glenn Martin air-plane plant in Cleveland, Ohio, are any indication. Ranch owners plan to use the machines to trace lost cattle and sheep, scores of letters received at the plant indicate.

Dies After Taking Patient to Hospital.

After he had taken a patient to the hospital and seen that every arrangement for his welfare had been made, Doctor William C. Griggs, a prominent West Philadelphia physician, fell dead from heart disease in the Misericordia Hospital.

Doctor Griggs, who lived at 558 North Fifty-eighth Street, was born in Portsmouth, England, fifty-two years ago, and came to this country when seventeen years old. He was graduated in medicine at the College of the City of New York in 1890.

Immediately after his graduation he was sent to Bahma, Burmah, by the Baptist church, to found a hospital and school. He stayed there fourteen years, and during that period made three trips to this country to study and to provide new appliances to keep both school and hospital modern in every way. In 1904 he returned finally and established a practice in West Philadelphia.

Famous Equestrian Clown Risks Life for a Laugh.

Edwin Hanneford is a clown. But, unlike Marceline, Toto, Bluch, and the other famous clowns who have tried to make New Yorkers laugh, Mr. Hanneford is many other things. He is not only an acrobat, a comedian, a magician, and a dancer—to mention just a few of his accomplishments—but he is one of the greatest horsemen in the world. In fact, he was without a peer as a straight rider while he was still in his teens. And to-day, at twenty-seven, he is the highest paid equestrian artist—to employ the language of the tanbark—in the business.

In the performances in which he appears in his whirlwind act with his sister and brothers, with his mother as ringmaster, he is known as "Poodles." For every clown has a nickname, and besides "Mr. Edwin Hanneford" is much too dignified for a chap whose business it is to make people laugh.

Like most equestrian artists—they are the most exclusive of circus folk, and rarely marry out of their own caste—Poodles comes from a family famous on both sides for many generations in the annals of the English circus world. His skill he attributes to the unique training of his father—himself the fourth of the name of Hanneford to star as an equestrian. In training his children for the profession he taught them just one thing—to fall off the horse. Once they mastered that feat, they picked up the rest from imitation and an inherited instinct for the work.

"Month after month I was ordered to fall off my pony," declares Hanneford. "At first I was a mass of bruises, although I never had the slightest fear. In fact, when I could barely crawl they used to look for me in the stables among the horses' hoofs when I disappeared for a few minutes. I always loved horses, and little by little I got the hang of falling and rolling out of the way of the hoofs of the galloping pony. After that my father used to blindfold me and make me fall that way so that I would rely on horseman's instinct rather than on my sight for escaping danger. I got so tired of tumbling off that I used to rack my brains to invent new falls, and I finally thought up the stunt of walking off the horse, a stunt which I still use."

This trick never fails of a laugh. It has baffled hundreds of riders by the apparent ease with which young Hanneford does it. But no one has been able to imitate it. One minute he is tearing around the ring at breakneck pace, clinging to the horse's neck and apparently in imminent danger of breaking his own. The next he rises gracefully on the still-speeding horse, extends one foot in mid-air and steps as nonchalantly to the ground as any top-hatted gallant leaving his limousine.

"He would risk his neck any time for a laugh," declares his mother regretfully. For the only nervous person in the ring is Mrs. Hanneford, who declares that no matter how long she lives she will never get used to the venturesome ways of her children. "He's always thinking up some new stunt in the middle of the act, and calling on his sister Lizzie to do it with him, and away they go before I can stop them, she standing on his shoulders or he playing leapfrog over her on the horse's back. One is just as bad as the other," she laments.

Hanneford is a Yorkshire man. He is a slender, quiet youth, outside of the circus, dressed in clothes of an irreproachable English cut. There is nothing about him to suggest either the horseman or the clown. And yet, since he made his professional debut, twenty-two years ago, at the age of five, riding around the ring on a tiny pony beside his father, he has not missed a season in the ring. Of his initiation into the ring he says:

"I shall never forget one day when the whole company of riders, about thirty altogether, was gathered in the ring at practice hour.

"My father brought me in and put me on the horse, and everybody laughed. I saw red for a minute, and I turned to him and said: 'Father, are they laughing at me?' He tried to comfort me, and said: 'Go ahead, son. Just show them what you can do.' I knew they were making fun of me, and I started the old horse up with a kick, determined to make them laugh out of the other side of their mouths. I wasn't five at the time, but I had spent all of my life around the ring watching the older people perform, and I knew every one of their tricks. Well, that day I did better than I knew how. I rode forward and backward. I turned somersaults and flip flops; in fact, I did all the stunts of that circus.

"And when I had finished I stood up backward on the big horse, which was still galloping round and round the ring, and I made a very low bow to my audience—with my thumb at my nose! They had all been holding their breath a minute before, fairly stunned that such a tiny roly-poly body could do what I was doing. They didn't know the black rage that was in my heart. But when they saw that gesture a roar of laughter went up that I can hear now. I was soundly spanked for my disrespect, but it was worth it."

Returns Home After Twenty-seven Years.

After an absence of twenty-seven years, during which his brothers believed he had died and were just about to start proceedings in the courts to have him declared legally dead, Jeremiah Sullivan has returned to the Oak Grove section of Malden and will share in an estate of ten thousand dollars left by his father.

Sullivan was identified by many Malden people, including Patrolman Charles T. Costello, a playmate when they were boys. Sullivan left Malden when he was twenty.

Crew Blames Skipper for Two Deaths.

"Hell Fire" Adolph Pedersen, skipper of the American brigantine *Puako*, was locked up in the Tombs recently on charges by the nine members of the crew. His two sons, A. E. and L. R. Pedersen, who served as mates on the brigantine, were also held. The crew were lodged in the Ludlow Street jail as material witnesses.

The *Puako* sailed from San Francisco with a cargo of lumber April 19, 1918, bound for Cape Town, South Africa. The crew declared that the deckload of lumber was piled fifteen feet above the rail and that when the voyage ended, August 27th, two of the crew were missing. Their shipmates allege they jumped overboard and were drowned because of the brutality of the officers.

Pedersen and his sons, the sailors said, had a favorite trick of ordering one man to go aft. They would then jump on him, handcuff and belabor him with knotted towels and a club. The men were forced to obey orders at the point of an automatic pistol. The American consul at Cape Town took the testimony of the crew and ordered them to return to New York for trial. The eleven men reached New York on the transport cruiser *Rochester*, which brought over three hundred and fifty troops, and were arrested by the marine division of the police department by order of Assistant United States District Attorney Ben Mathews.

United States Commissioner Hitchcock, before whom the skipper, his sons, and crew were brought, fixed bail for Captain Pedersen at twenty-five thousand dollars, to answer the charge of violating the seaman's act by administering corporeal punishment. The sons were similarly charged and held in five thousand dollars each. In default of bail the three went to the Tombs.

Judge Hand, in the United States district court, ordered the nine members of the crew to Ludlow Street jail for the night when he learned they could not supply bail of one thousand dollars each.

The men who are said to have jumped overboard to escape persecution were John Henry Stewart, the cook, and Seaman Axtel Hansen. The charge of murder that the crew prefers against the skipper is based on their allegation that, after Hansen jumped overboard, he repented, and, seizing a line that was trailing over the stern, begged to be taken back aboard. The crew declare that the captain refused to permit him to be taken back.

Captain Pedersen stated that the men became mutinous soon after leaving port, and were difficult to control. He declared that when a man fell overboard the crew refused to lower and man a boat to pick him up.

The long trip of over four months was made by way of Cape Horn. On the arrival at Cape Town, the crew lodged their complaint with the American consul, with the result that captain, mates, and crew were sent to Brest and put aboard the *Rochester*.

Learn to Speak with New Tongue.

Private Horace B. van Everan, of A Company, 101st Engineers, winner of a French Cross of War, is learning to talk with a new tongue. A piece of his tongue was shot away while in action.

He was throwing a pontoon across a stream near the Chemin-des-Dames in the big drive when a shell struck that killed three of his party, wounding several, including himself. A piece of shrapnel passed through his cheek, tearing into his tongue, while other pieces struck in other parts of his body.

A French surgeon pieced the tongue together so skillfully that he was given a decoration in recognition of his feat.

After the tongue healed Van Everan found he could not control it like the other one, and had a terrific struggle with his enunciation. He is now able to make himself understood clearly and improves steadily.

Van Everan is recuperating in Base Hospital No. 10, at Parker Hill, Boston.

Ex-Army Captain now Humble "Gob."

From the silver bars of an army captain to the red stripe of a third-class fireman! Sounds strange, doesn't it? Nevertheless, Stanley Satterwhite, of Company 668, 8th Regiment, strolled about Camp Farragut, gravely returning the respectful salutes rendered him by passing sailors. To-day he is wearing a gob's uniform and is carrying out orders of a navy company commander.

Captain Satterwhite—or, Fireman Satterwhite, as he should now be called—has just completed a four-year enlistment in the regular army. He enlisted in the regulars, United States infantry, on May 16, 1914, at his home town, Louisville, Ky., going in as a private.

Satterwhite was not a "leatherneck" long, being soon raised to a corporalship. A little later he was made a sergeant, and two months after Uncle Sam's entry into the World War he was given a commission as second lieutenant. He was raised to a first lieutenant January 15, 1918, and was given the rank of captain August 23, 1918.

The former captain has seen service in the Hawaiian Islands, having been in command of an army post near Honolulu for about a year. He has also served on the Mexican border, having commanded a company of infantry there from August 29th until the date of his release, December 17, 1918, when he was honorably discharged from the army.

Asked his reasons for choosing a billet as a common sailor in preference to a "gold-braid" job in the army, Fireman Satterwhite stated that it had always been one of his ambitions to sail the ocean on a United States dreadnaught. Prior to his signing up with the army he had attempted to join the navy, but was rejected on physical grounds.

"It had been my intention to reenlist in the army upon the completion of my first enlistment there," he continued, "but at about the time I received my discharge I read a statement by Secretary of the Navy Daniels calling attention to the navy's need for men. My old desire to wear the uniform of blue came over me, and I made up my mind to sign up in the navy. I picked the fireman branch because I wanted to be in with real fighting men, and also because I believe I can advance myself rapidly in that part of the service."

The tall Kentuckian is not at all disconcerted by the prospects of experiencing the rigors of life as a sailor. He is quite ready to swab decks, serve on mess, do messenger duty, heave coal, and shovel snow.

While in the army, Satterwhite won a sharpshooter medal for excellent marksmanship, and this, together with the fact that he was a railroad fireman at one time in his varied career, points him out as a valuable man for Uncle Sam's navy.

U. S. Discharge Medal.

The "honorable discharge" emblem to be issued by the war department to soldiers leaving the army will be a bronze lapel button somewhat similar to that of the G. A. R.

A design has been selected from fifteen models submitted by American artists and sculptors, it is announced.

Spirit Saved Dead Girl.

Some twenty years ago a group of fraternity men met at an "old grads" reunion in an Eastern college. They gathered in a very familiar old room that evening, and one of their number was moved to tell the following story:

"You fellows know, of course," he said, "that I married soon after leaving college. Ours was a love match, if ever there was one.

"We were happy for years. And then my wife died. My prayers and the skill of the doctors I brought to her availed nothing.

"Through the funeral I sat as completely detached as if I, too, were dead. I endured the rest of the day in a sort of stupor.

"When I retired and fell into an uneasy sleep my wife came back to me. The sound of her voice awoke me—and then she was gone. I slept again, and again she called.

"Come to me! Come to me. I am dying!" she cried.

"You are dead, my dearest," I heard myself saying.

"No, no!" she pleaded. "Come to me!"

"So vivid was the impression that I had actually heard my dead wife's voice that I arose and dressed. I got my physician out of bed, and together we went to the cemetery and opened the grave.

"My wife's body had not been embalmed. Now a faint flush had come into her cheeks. Her flesh was warming. The next day she was in our home. She is living to-day, a healthy, normal woman."

Spooks Testify.

The spirits invaded Judge Frank R. Graham's courtroom in New York one day recently in the trial of Mrs. Martha Wurtz, 923 Hudson Avenue, who was arrested by Policewomen Agnes Walsh and Theresa Johnson on a charge of telling fortunes. Mrs. Wurtz's defense was that she is an ordained spiritualist. To prove this Attorney Benjamin Burr placed on the stand Mrs. Janette Erion, president of the Erion Aid and Benevolent Society.

Seated in the witness chair, Mrs. Erion, at the direction of Judge Graham, proceeded to hold a session with the spirits. As Mrs. Erion began about one hundred and fifty women spiritualists in the courtroom joined in the demonstration.

Mrs. Erion closed her eyes, and, arising, said:

"Let everybody stand."

Spiritualists and spectators obeyed. Mrs. Erion then said a prayer.

"Close the doors," commanded Mrs. Erion.

The bailiffs complied.

"Put your heels together."

Hundreds of heels clicked.

"Take your hands out of your muffs."

"Take off your gloves."

"Loosen your wraps and place your hands on your hips."

The commands were complied with promptly while Judge Graham looked on.

Just as Mrs. Erion concluded her orders, Assistant City Prosecutor A. Ayres started to enter the judge's chambers.

"I see the city prosecutor is leaving the room," she

said. "He is a person of such magnetic influence that he could be of much assistance if he would remain."

When some one in the back of the courtroom laughed, Mrs. Erion said sharply:

"There must be no laughing."

As the laughing subsided, Mrs. Erion said:

"Cast all material thoughts from your minds."

Then Mrs. Erion, with hands clasped, faced Judge Graham and said:

"Judge Graham, I see above your head a beautiful wreath in which there are five white roses. Those roses typify five spirits which are attendant in your everyday life. They are the spirits of five persons who have meant much to you and who have gone into the larger life."

Pausing for an instant, Mrs. Erion continued:

"And, Judge Graham, there is something in what I now see. I see a little old white-haired man and a sweet little old woman with a black bonnet, standing near you. You know who they are, judge; I do not.

"And, judge," said the witness, "there is a yellow flower in the wreath that I see above your head. That means that some person in your family is ill."

After Mrs. Erion had concluded, Judge Graham thanked her for the demonstration, then said that in his opinion Mrs. Wurtz was guilty of fortune telling and that he would impose a fine of one hundred dollars.

Flying Fire Box Strikes Woman.

Mrs. Agnes Maloney, twenty-seven years old, of No. 12 West Eighty-eighth Street, New York, is reported to be dying as the result of a fractured skull, suffered when she was struck in the head by a fire box, which was ripped from an electric-light pole when an automobile crashed into it at Eighty-eighth Street and Amsterdam Avenue.

August Flack, sixty-nine years old, who was run down by the machine, is also in the hospital in a less serious condition, although he suffered a fractured rib and contusions of the head. Reginald van Reusall, a schoolboy, sixteen years old, was cut by flying glass, but refused medical aid and went home.

John Durkin, driver of the automobile, was locked up on charge of felonious assault and reckless driving.

Five Dead in Lynching Riot.

Five persons were killed, more than twenty were known to be injured, and several probably were fatally hurt when a mob numbering several thousand stormed the city jail at Winston-Salem, N. C.; in an attempt to lynch a negro prisoner accused of attacking Mrs. J. E. Childress and shooting her husband and Sheriff Flynt.

Among the injured are two members of the reserve militia, called out when the trouble started.

The mob, which formed in the afternoon, succeeded in seriously wounding the negro. A white prisoner named Tragg was hit by a stray bullet.

The police succeeded in driving the crowd away, but by nightfall the mob gathered again. When the fire department turned the hose on the crowd more shots were fired.

How About It?

Are you "registering" the idea of THE THRILL BOOK? Are you beginning to see how big our idea was when we started the magazine? If you have been a regular reader you couldn't help but see how we have been steadily climbing with each issue into a secure place on our readers' library tables. It has not been the mere result of a happy idea, but rather the fact that it was *the ideal*! To conceive a thing and to do it are entirely distinct and separate matters, as we all know to our own sorrow. We confess that although we knew THE THRILL BOOK was needed, we had no idea that it was *an absolute necessity*! We had heard people say that it was difficult to find the kind of story in current magazines that really held one's interest. It was one of the causes that led us to establish this magazine. We knew that eighty per cent of the tales that appear are tiresome and hardly worth reading. We realized that the same percentage of readers were demanding that this condition of affairs change. What literally swept us off our feet was the whole-hearted reception accorded us from the very start when we announced that *at last* a periodical was coming forth with the practical theory that the good story did exist and only needed discovery and publication. The trouble was that previously fiction had fallen into a rut. It moved in well-oiled grooves. It was often finely done. It possessed plots of no mean texture, *but it lacked in vitality*. The spinal column of American fiction was beginning to suffer from a peculiar disease that might be termed "laziness." The poor patient could hardly hold his head up. Stories started well, ended poorly, failing utterly to hold our interest. What was the reason? Many things contributed to this state of affairs, the most important being the *set condition of mind* of those who conducted the ordinary, humdrum carrier of fiction. They imagined, foolishly, that the American reader was humdrum also. It is almost unbelievable that such an opinion could exist. Naturally it ended in a static muddle—a kind of stagnant pool.

The American loves "pep." He eats it up. He likes to see and meet people with energy and imagination. That is one of the reasons why we succeeded so well "over there" in the Great War. It has contributed largely to the astounding place which the United States now occupies as a leader of the world's thought. In the same way the American likes to read stories with ideas and real punch. The harder you hit the better he feels. THE THRILL BOOK stands for just such an ideal. We are proud to admit that we are an American institution already. Just as Edgar Allan Poe showed sleepy old Europe that a real short story could be written, so are we going to prove that a magazine publishing vital, original fiction can prosper. We have found to our satisfaction that it can do so as easily as rolling off a log just as long as we continue our policy of giving the reader what he wants. Look over the issues that have appeared and buy each new one as it comes out, and we are sure you will agree with us that at last you can find square-rigged, red-blood, honestly absorbing stories of a kind that have been jettisoned by the other magazines.

THE EDITOR.
