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TOP-NOTCH

TWICE-A-MONTH MAGAZINE

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By BERTRAM LEBHAR

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Also in the next TOP-NOTCH, the best airship story to date,
"On the Wings of Chance," by John Milton Edwards.

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Talks With Top-Notch Readers

By BURT L. STANDISH

KEEPING UP THE PACE



It was not my intention to talk with you much in this number about TOP-NOTCH and its stories, but the receipt this morning of a letter from a man in Pittsburgh has changed my plan. It is at once the shortest and one of the most significant letters I have ever received. The writer, who signs himself C. A. Beeston, says:

You set yourself a stiff pace, and you are holding it. May you continue to do so, but, as the Scotchman says, I hae me doots.

There is one thing never asked of us, and yet that most of us indulge in, even if it generally comes out wrong, and that is the gentle weakness of making prophecies.

Whatever comes up—war, weather, elections, automobile engine valves, any old thing—it's all the same to us. We spring out, like Jack from his box, with our prophecy.

We have hard work resisting the delightful temptation to show that when it comes to judgment and foresight we are the whole touring car with an extra pair of tires on the roof.



SOMETIMES current events take such a turn that, with all our confidence, we don't venture a prediction one way or the other. Nevertheless we can't squelch our genius for reading the future. So we shake our heads wisely and announce that we have our doubts. That's pretty safe. It belongs to the heads-I-win-tales-you-lose class of prophecy. Whichever way the weather comes—rain or shine—you can say you had your doubts about it coming any other way.

But our friend in Pittsburgh, I am quite sure, is not of the hedging order, judging from his use of the old Scotch phrase. He doubts that we shall be able to keep TOP-NOTCH up to the standard it has set for itself.

This we take as a high compliment, and I haven't any idea that he meant it otherwise. An important consideration is that—here we fall into the prophecy pit—his doubt may be dispelled; for TOP-NOTCH, bigger than ever

with this issue, is going to be not only as good as, but better than ever.

It is going to keep up the pace.

Pretty hard to do that in any field of endeavor. Every one knows it. All of us think it is specially difficult in our own particular activity; so I find myself thinking that keeping up such a pace as TOP-NOTCH has hit is not half so easy as rolling off a log.

But that doesn't matter. We are all going to pitch in, and we'll get away with it. Prophecy again, you see. Oh, we can't help it!

In this issue of TOP-NOTCH there are thirty-two pages of stories more than ever before, and future issues will be of the same size. I will resist the temptation to declare that this magazine will continue to be not only bigger in bulk, but bigger in entertaining power; bigger in the range of its stories. Better than such a declaration is just to go ahead and make it so, letting you for yourself see its steady forward march.



A LOT of letters speak well of the departments, "Mechanics for TOP-NOTCH Readers" and "In Your Own Shop." We are glad to say that these features have proved to be popular with you. In only one of the letters has there appeared a request that we print an article on any particular subject. This letter comes from Edward J. Bullock, East Division Street, Syracuse, New York. He says, in part:

About two months ago you published an article on "How to Build a Canoe." Now that was some article. What I want is "How to Build an Ice Boat." Some people say it is very simple. It undoubtedly is if you know how.

Will you please find out *how* and publish it in one of the future magazines? It will not only be a favor to me, but to a large number of young men who are waiting for the same thing, but don't like to ask for it. I thank you in advance.

We are glad to receive requests of this sort, and, if it be possible, we shall try to respond with the desired article. In the case

of the ice boat, that was done in the issue of January 1st.



DISCUSSION is continued by some of TOP-NOTCH's honorary editors on the subject of the serial novel. I think it a good thing for us to get together on this as well as any topic whose discussion may result in making the magazine more entertaining.

That's what you, as readers, are after; that's what the publishers and the editors are striving for. Let editors and honorary editors pull together.

Mr. E. L. Kemp, of Brandon, Vermont, replies to Mr. Parke M. Lawrence, of Conneautville, Pennsylvania, whose letter appeared in our December mid-month issue. Mr. Lawrence, who was against serials, said that between installments the reader is likely to forget, to lose the run of the story. Mr. Kemp says:

I feel sorry for Mr. Lawrence if his memory won't serve him for fifteen days on a stretch. It must need cultivating. My own memory is not of the best, but I can remember what I read fifteen days ago. I have no trouble keeping the run of the serials in TOP-NOTCH.

Now, with the serials cut out, I feel quite sure that the magazine would lose most of its charm to seven-tenths of its readers. And it certainly will for me if it is enlarged to the extent that the price will have to be raised also. And also the way you run the serials (three issues to a story) makes it just right to suit me. I wish to say that I partly agree with Raymond A. Stevens, of Amsterdam, New York, as to the way to read the serials—that is, save the numbers of the magazine and read the whole serial at one time. I don't do that way, but I read the other stories before I start a new serial, so that, after I have read it, the next issue is nearly due. I have been an ardent admirer of TOP-NOTCH since its birth.

The above letter was written on November 22, 1911. Mr. Kemp knows by this time that with the enlargement of TOP-NOTCH has come no enlargement of its price. There never was any intention on the part of the publishers to raise the price—to take it out of the class where it stands alone: the only ten-cent magazine published twice a month.

From Newport, Rhode Island, comes this shriek against serials:

MR. BURT L. STANDISH.

DEAR SIR: We are sending you this letter to tell you that in this city of Newport, Rhode Island, we are not in favor of serials. We know at least seven Newport young men who have stopped reading your splendid magazine, and two more are on the verge of

quitting it, because of serials. It is the best clean magazine in the good old U. S. A., only for the serials. Please stop them.

Yours truly,

PETER BRADY.
JOHN GREER.



IT strikes me that the subjoined letter has the right ring. The writer says that he likes both serials and complete stories, and demands both.

TOP-NOTCH is printed for many, many thousands of readers, one should bear in mind; and you know how tastes vary.

But an excellent way—and this correspondent seems to have it—is to take your copy of the magazine every time it comes to hand, and get out of it all the entertainment it offers, whether that be in the form of serials or complete tales.

List to a man who knows his TOP-NOTCH and how to enjoy it:

MR. BURT L. STANDISH.

DEAR SIR: This talk about the serial story has grasped me to the point where I must bellow forth my say as loud as possible.

A magazine can't exist without the serial, yet be popular.

I find out by reading as many stories that I can lay hands on that some subjects can't be treated right in a serial and demand a short story, while other subjects, just vice versa, needing detail which a short or complete story in one issue can't and never will bring out. And as we like both these kinds of subjects we will have to take complete and serial stories.

In conclusion I wish you all a pleasant time in reading the stories of this issue, and I wish to subscribe myself a lover of both serial and complete stories and a demander of both.

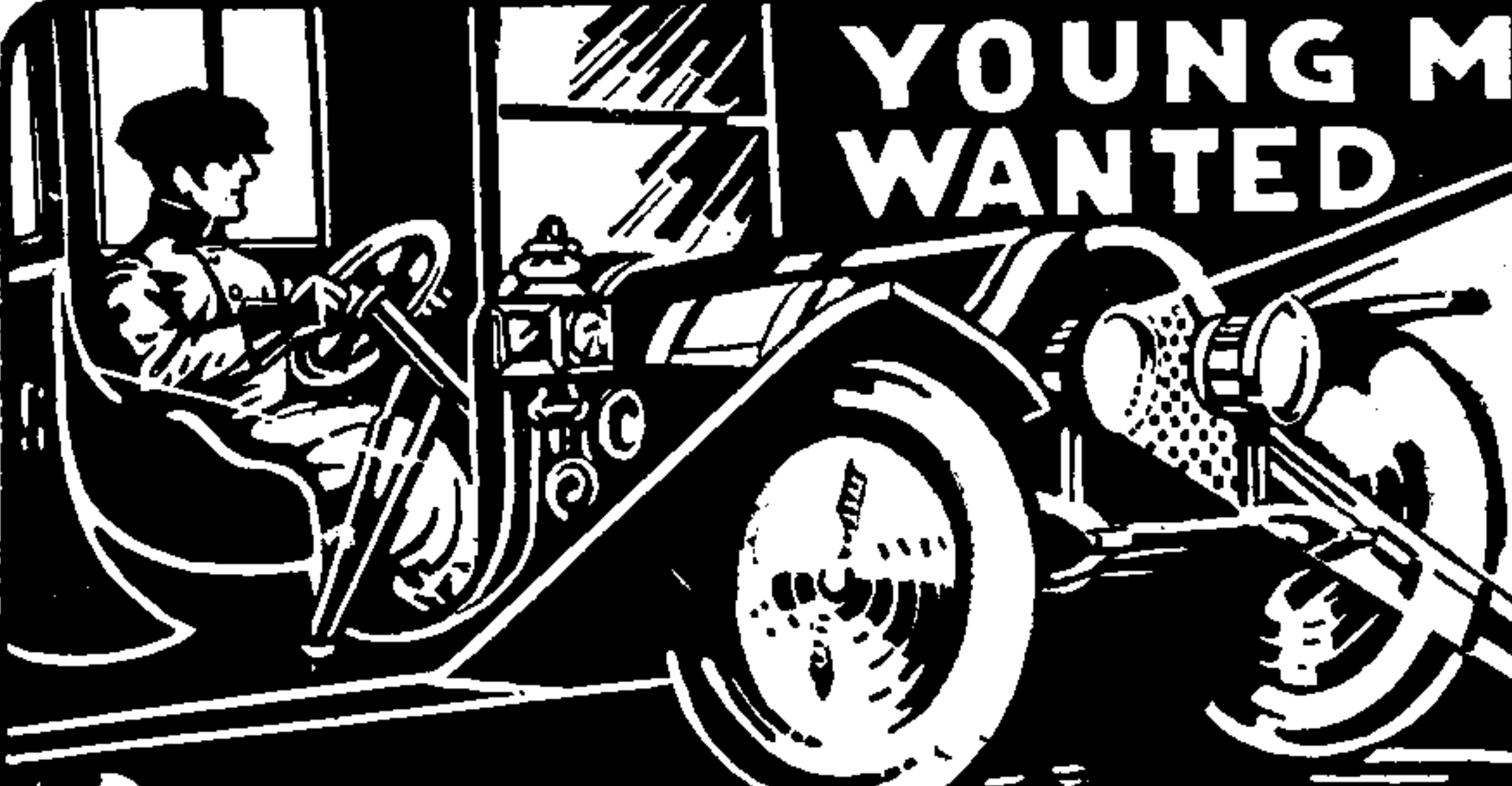
NATH. SCHNEIDER.

751 East 150th Street, Bronx, New York.



THE new serial novel for our next issue is one of adventures that have a lot to do with chaps who go up to the air in ships. It is called "On the Wings of Chance," and the author is John Milton Edwards, new to TOP-NOTCH readers, except for a stirring railroad story of his that appeared in the January 1st number—"Wild Dynamite."

This airship tale is a good one, and I speak of it specially because not a great many good airship tales have been written. We had been looking for a story of the kind for some time, without any great success; but when Mr. Edwards turned in this one we knew it was the goods. I await with much interest your opinion.



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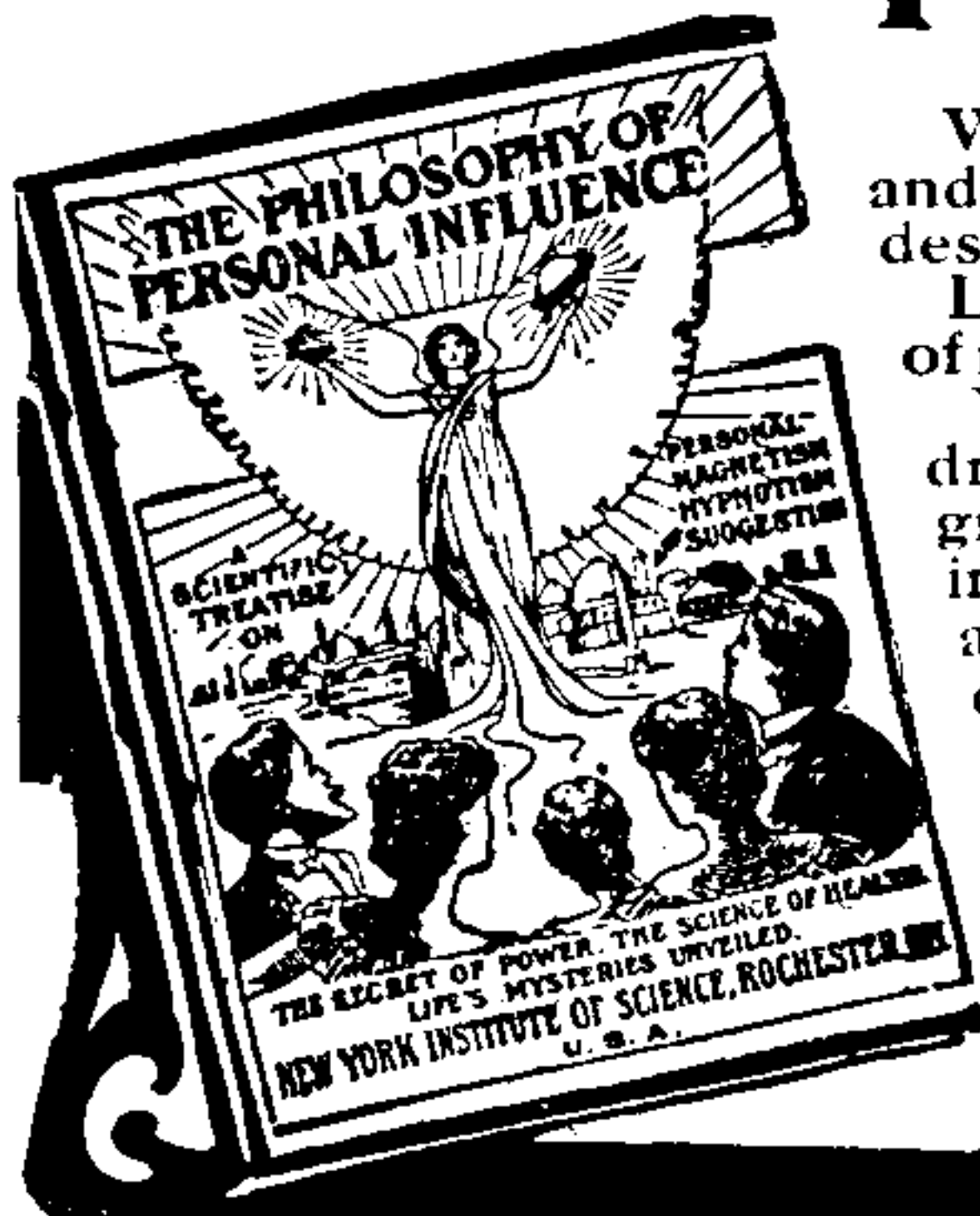
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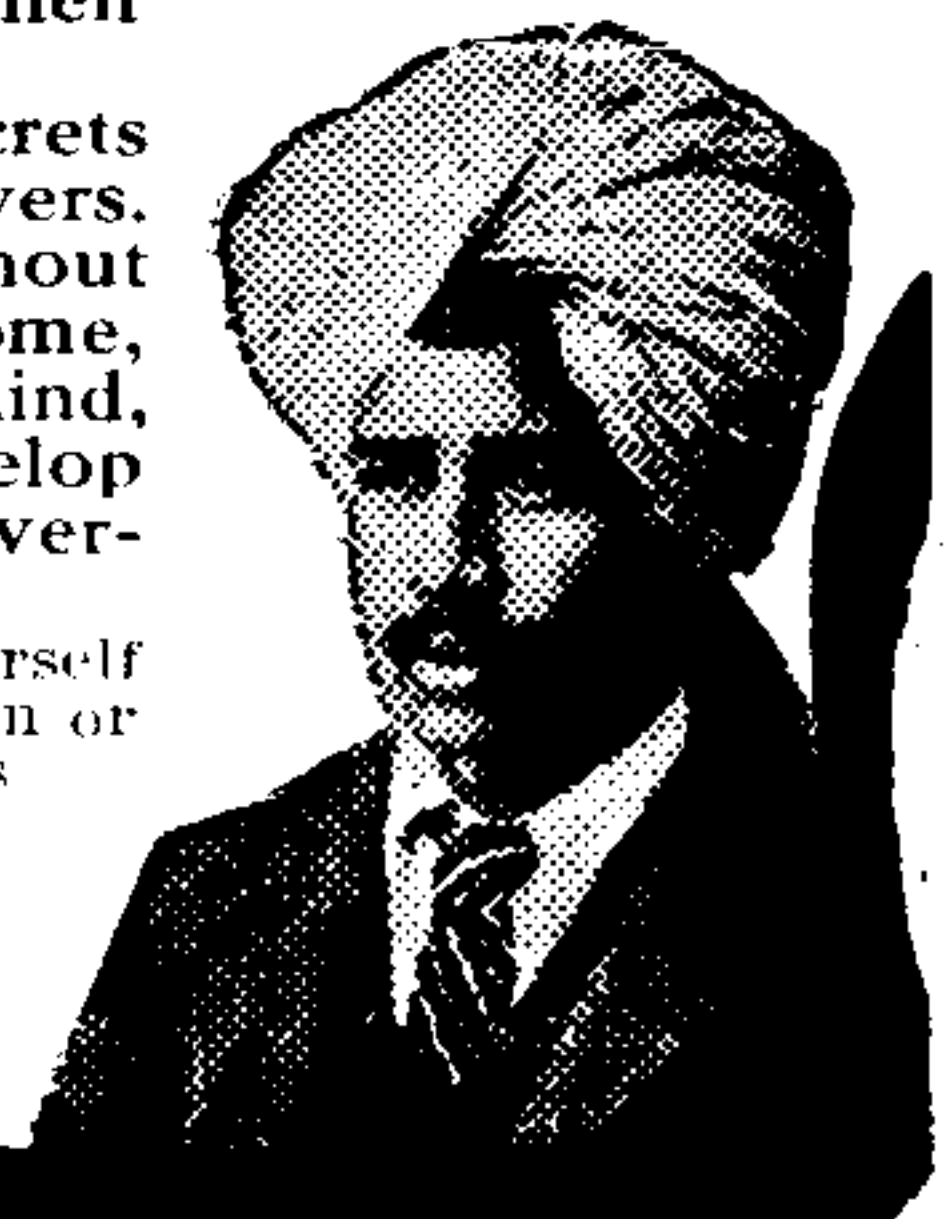
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TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE

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FEBRUARY 1, 1912

No. 3

Stirring · Tale · of · the · Moving · Picture · Art ·



His Canned Drama Debut

By
Ralph Boston

(A COMPLETE NOVEL)

CHAPTER I.

EAGER FOR THE FRAY.

WAYNE LELAND, better known to his comrades of Double B Ranch as "Reckless" Leland, spent a part of his first day in New York at Bronx Park viewing the wonders of the world-famous zoölogical gardens.

Having feasted his eyes on lions, tigers, elephants, gorillas, and the various other wild beasts in captivity until his inordinate appetite for such marvels of nature was satisfied, he left the park and tried to find his way back to the subway station, with the intention of returning to his hotel in West Forty-second Street.

Hitting the wrong trail, he wandered far into the wilds of Westchester Coun-

ty. Suddenly, upon gaining the brow of a wooded hill, he came upon a thrilling scene.

There stood a girl tied to a stake. Her big brown eyes were opened wide with fear and horror. Her face was deathly white. Her tiny hands were clasped despairingly. At her feet crackled a bonfire. Around her danced a horde of savage Indians, hideous in their war paint, splitting the air with fiendish, blood-curdling yells as they whirled around their helpless victim.

Wayne's lower jaw dropped, and his heart almost stopped beating. Don't think for a minute, though, that his emotion was due to the fact that he took what he saw for the real thing. Even though he was from a ranch and this was his first visit to New York, the Westerner had eyes and ears, and, there-

fore, did not fail to note the whirring moving-picture camera that was stationed a short distance to the right of the despairing woman.

And, although he had never seen such an apparatus before, he did not jump to the conclusion that it was a gatling gun or a sewing machine, or a musical instrument. According to the average Easterner's conception of a cowboy, that is what he ought to have done; but even though he hailed from the very wildest and wooliest section of the wild and woolly West, Wayne had intelligence, and was in the habit of reading the newspapers and magazines when he could get hold of them. He took in the situation at a single glance, and realized that he was for the first time in his life witnessing a motion picture in the process of making.

Why, then, did his lower jaw drop and his heart nearly stop beating at what he saw? It was because he recognized the face of the girl tied to the stake—recognized her as a young woman whom he knew well and was head over heels in love with—although he had never before seen her.

That is to say, he had never before seen her in the flesh. But he had seen her a hundred times in a hundred different rôles, and each time and each rôle had made him more and more her slave.

Cowboys, like every one else, have their weaknesses. With some it is liquor, with others it is cards, with others still it is gun play, and, again, it is all three. But Reckless Leland's ruling passion was moving pictures.

When the photo play first appeared in the West he became a devotee of canned drama. Pretty soon he had the habit so bad that he would ride a hundred miles to see a new set of films. He became a moving-picture "fan" of the most rabid variety.

At first he had loved the pictures for themselves alone, irrespective of what they were or who posed for them. But it was not long before he began to take particular notice of a little, dark-eyed, slender girl who appeared in many different scenes, and eventually his inter-

est in canned drama and canned comedy revolved around her.

Sometimes she would appear before his eager, admiring eyes as a sheriff's daughter, attired in simple garb, riding like the wind across the prairie to save her dear father from the bold, bad bandits who were about to take the life's blood of that brave but helpless official.

Sometimes he would see her dressed in silks and satins, a grand society lady sitting in a magnificently furnished drawing-room and spurning the love of the rich old banker who was trying to win her from the poor but honest young mechanic to whom she was secretly betrothed.

Betimes she was the daughter of a Kentucky moonshiner and desperately in love with the fearless young revenue officer who had sworn to find the illicit still and capture the desperate band who were cheating Uncle Sam; and yet again Wayne had beheld her in a suit of oilskins, the devoted wife of a deep-sea fisherman, going out into the surf to climb aboard the lifeboat which was starting out to rescue dear hubby from a watery grave.

But whatever the rôle she played, and whatever the garb she wore, those big dark eyes of hers never changed, and always had the same effect upon Reckless Leland, thrilling him through and through, causing him to feel an insane desire to rush up to the screen and try to encircle that unsubstantial, slender figure in his strong arms.

And that was the girl now tied to a stake in the wilds of the Bronx, surrounded by yelling redskins—the central figure of the moving spectacle which was being made into a moving picture.

No wonder that Wayne's emotion got the best of him as he gazed upon the girl of his dreams who had thus unexpectedly come into reality. For a few minutes he stood there staring at her like a man in a trance, wondering how on earth he was going to break down the barriers of formality and get acquainted with her, now that he had found her.

And then suddenly an inspiration came to him. He had once read a fool story about a cowboy in New York who had gone to a theater and become so excited at what he witnessed on the stage that he had leaped across the footlights to rescue the heroine from the clutches of the cruel villain.

He had read many other stories, too, in which cow-punchers figured as the most unsophisticated and simple-minded of men.

"Accordin' to the popular idea, here," said Reckless to himself, "we ain't supposed to have any sense, so I reckon I'll live up to our reputation. I ought to be able to get away with it."

With a yell which would have been regarded as a very ordinary performance at Red B Ranch, but which was unlike anything which had ever been heard before in the region of the Bronx, he dashed over the long grass toward that animated group.

"Hey! Get out of the way, there!" shouted the man at the moving-picture camera; but Reckless pretended not to hear. He hurled himself into the midst of the astonished redskins with a violence which sent three of them sprawling on their backs and caused the rest of the horde to flee in panic.

"Don't be afraid, miss," he said, addressing the lady tied to the stake. "I won't let 'em hurt you. Tryin' to burn you alive, was they? I'll show 'em."

He trampled out the bonfire at the girl's feet, and, then taking out a big clasp knife, started to sever her bonds.

But at this point the man at the moving-picture camera and several other men in cowboy garb who had been concealed behind a clump of bushes, came up and surrounded him angrily.

"What are you doing, you blithering idiot!" growled one. "Don't you see that we're only taking pictures?"

"Pictures!" exclaimed Reckless, with well-feigned astonishment. "Waal, I'll be derved! I thought——"

"To blazes with what you thought!" snarled the camera man, shaking his fist in Reckless' face. "I yelled to you not to butt in. Why in thunder didn't you listen? It took us an hour to re-

hearse that scene before we got it the way we wanted it, and your infernal interference has spoiled it all."

"And you stepped on my pet corn, you big boob," groaned the chief of the redskins, limping painfully to and fro.

"I'm sorry," said Reckless meekly. "You see, I'm a stranger in these parts, and I didn't know what the game was."

His apology was addressed to the girl, who smiled upon him kindly.

"And you mean to say that you thought I was really in danger?" she said. "And you started out single-handed to fight all these fierce Indians in order to rescue me? Why, I think that was awfully brave of you." She gave him an admiring glance.

Reckless blushed. His ruse had been a complete success in that it had given him what he wanted—a speaking acquaintance with the girl of his dreams; but he didn't quite like the idea of being a fake hero. It made him feel sort of mean to get that admiring glance, realizing that he was not entitled to it.

"Waal, you see, miss," he began stammeringly, "I——"

"You're from the West, aren't you?" she interrupted him, a flattering interest in her tone. "No need to ask, though; I can tell from your accent. My folks are all——"

"Say, Miss Holcomb," broke in a short, thickset man in a red sweater impatiently, "excuse me for cuttin' you short, but the sun'll be goin' down in a little while, and we've got to hustle. You can tell this gentleman your family history after we get through."

He motioned imperiously to Reckless. "Step back, please, and give us a chance to do our work. Now, then, you Indians, take your places again, just as you were before this—this gentleman butted in." He glared witheringly at Reckless, who was meekly stepping back out of range of the camera.

"Everybody ready?" shouted the man in the red sweater. "Miss Holcomb, please chase that smile from your face, and look scared and despairing. No lady that was bein' roasted alive by Indians would look as if she enjoyed it, you know. That's better. Try to hold

that expression throughout the pose. Now, Indians, start your dancing. Hey! you fat Indian on the left, you're out of step, and spoilin' the whole effect. If you can't do better than that we can't use you. That's much better. Keep that up everybody! It's very good indeed. Don't forget to yell, Indians, as soon as I give the signal."

He turned toward the camera man, who had gone back to his apparatus. "Hey, Bill!" he shouted, "I guess this is as good as we're goin' to get it. When I raise my right hand grind her out."

Reckless, watching the queer scene from a distance, wondered what "grind her out" meant. He soon discovered that it was the technical term for taking a moving picture; for as soon as the man in the red sweater raised his right hand the man at the camera began to turn the crank of his instrument.

The redskins began to yell fiendishly, and kept up their dancing. The girl at the stake wrung her hands despairingly, and maintained the terrified expression which had won the approbation of the man in the red sweater.

Suddenly the latter put his two hands to his mouth and yelled to a group of men in wild-West attire, who, mounted on horses, were stationed several hundred yards away. "Now, then, you cowboys, we're ready for you! Come on all of you!"

The "cowboys" urged on their steeds, and, uttering wild yells and waving their arms frantically, came dashing into the picture.

"Gee!" said Reckless Leland to himself, with a contemptuous smile. "What a punk outfit! There ain't one of them fellers that can ride worth a hang." And it was this discovery which gave him his big idea.

CHAPTER II.

RECKLESS LEARNS A LOT.

IT was not until he got back to his hotel in West Forty-second Street that the big idea came to Reckless Leland.

He had not had a chance to continue his conversation with the moving-pic-

ture girl; for, after the posing was over, she had climbed into a big automobile, together with the rest of the troupe, and had gone off without a single glance in his direction.

It was patent to the disappointed young man that she had forgotten all about his existence. But she wasn't going to be allowed to continue to forget it, if he could help it, Reckless told himself, as he sat in the hotel lobby, twirling his mustache thoughtfully.

Take note of that mustache. It is destined to figure importantly in this story. All that shall be said about it now, however, is that it was dark and luxuriant, and contributed not a little to its owner's good looks. Reckless was proud of it, and he had cause to be; for it really was a creditable mustache.

He sat now, as has been said, stroking this decorative growth pensively as he reclined in a big armchair in the lobby of the hotel, wondering how on earth he was going to get better acquainted with the moving-picture girl during his few weeks' stay in New York.

And then suddenly an inspiration came to him. The solution of his problem was as simple as A, B, C. All he had to do was to join the outfit to which she belonged. As a fellow member of the company, he would have plenty of opportunities to cultivate the acquaintance of Miss Holcomb. Perhaps, even, he would have opportunities to take her in his arms—business opportunities, of course.

He had observed, with a jealous eye, that in every moving picture she appeared in it was some fellow's happy lot to hug her and press kisses upon her pretty mouth. Sometimes it was the sheriff who did the hugging, sometimes the honest young mechanic, sometimes the deep-sea fisherman; but whoever it was, she was always hugged by somebody in each picture.

"Why shouldn't I be that somebody, sometimes?" Reckless asked himself, thrilling at the thought. "I'd give a whole year's pay for one chance like that. And even if I ain't lucky enough to get picked for the huggin' scenes," he mused, "I'll at least have a chance to be

near her and to talk to her. Yes, I reckon it would be a mighty good idea to sign up with that outfit."

He did not proceed to carry out his plan that night, because he figured that the moving-picture people could not be found after dark; but the next morning he got in a subway express train and journeyed out to the Bronx, with the intention of making the man in the red sweater—who seemed to be the boss—an offer of his services.

Without much difficulty he found the place that had been the scene of the Indian outrage the previous day. He knew that he had found the exact spot, because the remains of the bonfire with which they were going to roast their captive alive was still there. But there was no sign now of the moving-picture troupe. Reckless' eager gaze swept every inch of the "prairie" for them in vain.

Much disappointed, he walked back to the roadway and approached a man who sat in the door of a shack smoking a corncob pipe.

"Seen anythin' of the movin'-pictur outfit that was playin' here yesterday, stranger?" he inquired.

"Not this morning," replied the man. "They ain't showed up yet, and the chances are they won't be here all day: They only come out here a couple of times a week—when they're doin' wild-West stuff."

"And where are they now?" demanded Reckless eagerly.

The man shrugged his shoulders. "That's more than I can tell you, my friend. They go all over. It's a business that keeps 'em on the jump all the time. But if you've got business with the company, why don't you go to the main office in New York?"

"What's the name of the company, and whar do they keep, stranger?" inquired Reckless.

His informant told him that the official name of the concern was the Pendexter Moving Picture Company, and that its headquarters were in East Fiftieth Street.

Reckless hurried back to the subway, and, three-quarters of an hour later, was

standing in the outer office of the Pendexter Moving Picture Company, explaining his business to a friendly disposed clerk.

"I don't think they'll take you on," the latter told him. "We've got all the talent we can use, and a big waiting list besides. Everybody seems to be trying to get into the moving-picture game nowadays. But you can wait and see Mr. Eddy, if you want to."

Mr. Eddy proved to be a keen-eyed, sharp-featured man, who looked Reckless over from head to foot when the latter informed him that he had come to "sign up with the outfit."

"What experience have you had, young man? Ever done moving-picture work?"

"No, sir; but I can ride a heap better than——"

"Been on the stage?"

"No, sir, I haven't; but, as I was sayin', I can ride all around any of them imitation cow-punchers of your'n I saw at work yesterday. When it comes to handlin' a cayuse, there ain't a man in the whole Double B outfit that can beat me—and I reckon that's equivalent to sayin' that I'm the best in the world."

Having delivered himself of this modest speech, Reckless Leland looked at the moving-picture man confidently.

"When shall I start to work, boss?" he inquired.

Mr. Eddy shrugged his shoulders. "If riding is your only accomplishment, my friend, I'm afraid we can't use you. You see, in this business we want actors, not roughriders. If you haven't had any theatrical experience, we couldn't think of taking you on."

Reckless looked astonished.

"Actors!" he exclaimed. "What's the use of an actor in a wild-West scene if he can't ride a horse? Why, that punk outfit of your'n I saw up in the Bronx yesterday was enough to make even a tenderfoot laugh. The way they jogged along on——"

"Ever see any of our wild-West pictures on the screen?" broke in Mr. Eddy, with a smile.

"Yes, sir; but all the pictures I've seen had real cowboys in 'em," said

Reckless. "Any one could tell the difference by the way they rode. And that's why I——"

"They were all posed for by that same 'punk outfit' you saw at work yesterday," the moving-picture man broke in, with a laugh. "You see, Mr. Leland, in this game there are lots of tricks. A man doesn't have to be a roughrider in order to be able to ride fast in a moving picture. The speed effect is obtained by cutting out sections of the film after the picture has been taken."

"Cutting out sections of the film?" repeated Reckless blankly.

"Exactly. You see, the speed depends upon how many picture units there are in a single motion." Mr. Eddy took from his desk a long strip of film containing several hundred little square pictures, one under the other.

"Now, here's a film of a fat man running," he went on. "Being fat, he moved very slowly, of course, and it took several hundred different picture units to register his movements. If this film were run through the moving-picture machine just as it is, our fat man would be shown on the screen making very slow progress. But by cutting out a unit here and there in the film we hurry him along, and the finished result has the effect of making him run at breakneck speed when the picture is exhibited."

He smiled at his visitor's astonishment. "And that is why we can use actors instead of genuine cow-punchers in our wild-West scenes," he said. "Our horsemen can move as leisurely as they please when they're posing, but they cover the ground just as fast as you could, Mr. Leland, when they're flashed on the screen."

Reckless gulped down his disappointment. Then a happy thought came to him. "Waal, talkin' about tricks, boss," he said, "how about trick ridin'? I reckon you ought to be able to use me there. I can do more stunts on the back of a cayuse than a tenderfoot can do standin' on the ground. I can handle a lariat some, too. There ain't a man at Red B as can beat me at doin'

things with a rope. Reckon you can't produce *them* effects by cuttin' out sections of the film?" He looked at the moving-picture man confidently.

Mr. Eddy smiled again. "Ever happen to see that bucking-broncho picture of ours, Mr. Leland?" he inquired quietly. "In the scene I refer to a cowboy is tossed twenty feet up in the air, turns a double somersault, and lands on the broncho's back in a sitting position."

Reckless chuckled. "Yes, sir, I remember that picter? I saw it just before I started East. Say, that feller sure is some rider. I take off my hat to him. Where did you get him?"

"He's a comedy actor by the name of Kelly," replied Mr. Eddy, with a laugh. "Never been on a ranch in his life, and don't know much about riding. The way we got that effect was by another simple trick. First we posed Kelly on the broncho, and stopped the camera just as he was thrown. Then we took another picture of him hanging up in the air from the end of a thin wire. He did those back flips while dangling from the wire, and then we lowered him to the back of the broncho. Afterward the wire was painted out of the negative, and when the finished product was flashed on the screen it looked realistic enough to fool even such an expert as yourself."

"And as for lariat throwing," he went on, "we've turned out some corking good pictures on that subject. You may be an expert with the rope, Mr. Leland, but even you couldn't do some of the stunts which our fake cowboys pull off. You see, it's impossible for them to miss, no matter how difficult the throw. We simply shut off the camera after they've hurled the lariat, and before the picture is started again we place the noose around the object they're aiming at. When the film is shown on the screen the motion is continuous, and it looks as if the cowboy had made a successful throw."

Reckless looked dejected. "Then, I reckon you couldn't use me nohow?"

"No, I'm afraid not. I'll take your name and address, but I can't give you

any hope. Wild-West pictures are getting to be awful chestnuts, anyway. They went fine at first, but the market has been flooded with them, and the public is about sick of them. They still go well over in Europe, but American audiences want something new; so we're seriously thinking of cutting down our cowboy and Indian output."

Reckless left the manager's office in a disconsolate frame of mind. His big idea had failed, after all; and he had imagined that the moving-picture concern would jump at his offer to join the outfit.

As he was going out, he encountered Miss Holcomb, who was just coming in. The moving-picture girl recognized him immediately, and gave him a pleasant nod. He was about to speak to her, but, somehow, although he was considered at Double B a pretty fluent talker, he now found himself strangely at a loss for words. And before he could find his tongue she had passed through a doorway marked "No Admittance," and his opportunity was gone.

As the door swung closed behind her, Reckless recovered his presence of mind.

"Wriggling rattlesnakes!" he muttered, with self-contempt, "what an all-fired fool I am. I might have asked her to finish what she started to tell me yesterday about her folks out West. That would have been a good way to make conversation."

Thinking it might not be too late, even then, to avail himself of this inspiration, he strode toward the door marked "No Admittance," and pushed it open.

He found himself in a long passageway off which several rooms opened. There was no sign of the girl. Evidently she had entered one of the rooms. Reckless was staring at a half dozen closed doors, wondering which one she had gone through, when a small boy came along the passageway.

"Hey! What do you want?" he asked. "No strangers can come in here. It's against the rules. Didn't you see that sign?"

"I was lookin' for a lady that just

came in here," said Reckless. "Her name is Miss Holcomb. Would you mind tellin' her, son, that I'd like to speak with her a few minutes?"

The boy looked him over critically. "Guess you're stuck on her, ain't you?"

"It ain't a bad guess, young feller," admitted Reckless.

"Fell in love with her from seein' her in the picters, and come to ask her to marry you, eh?" said the youngster, with a knowing grin.

"Son, you're a wonder!" said Reckless admiringly. "How do you do it?"

"Gee! It's dead easy. I can spot you movin'-picture Johnnies every time. Guess you don't know how many ginks comes here every day to try to marry Miss Ruby Holcomb."

"You don't say!" exclaimed Reckless despondently.

"Sure. You didn't suppose you was the only one, did yer? Why, there's a hundred times as many movin'-picture Johnnies as there is stage-door Johnnies. Guys all over the world fall in love with Ruby from seein' her on the screens, and travel to New York to ask her to marry 'em. Them that can't come, write. You ought to see the pile of letters she gets every day from love-sick gooks that wants to get hitched up with her. Some of them's bully good offers, too, believe me! The other day she got one from a millionaire out in Minnesota. He wrote her that he'd settle two million dollars on her on the day she became his bride. Them's his own words."

"And what did she say?" asked Reckless anxiously.

"She turned him down," replied the precocious youngster. "He mentioned in his letter that he had a wooden leg and a glass eye. She said she might have stood for the wooden leg, but the bum lamp was a little too much."

Reckless heaved a sigh of relief.

"Both my eyes are my own," he said. "Ask her if she'll let me say a few words to her, son?"

The boy shook his head.

"Nothin' doin'. Miss Holcomb's very busy just now; besides, she's given or-

ders that she ain't to be bothered by any more guys with the marriage bug."

CHAPTER III.

IN TROUBLE.

FINDING that the office boy was not to be persuaded, even though he offered him a ten-dollar bill for the privilege of a few minutes' talk with the moving-picture girl, Leland walked out of the office of the Pendexter Moving Picture Company and took up a position on the sidewalk near the entrance to the building.

Dogged persistence being one of his traits, he had made up his mind to wait there until Miss Holcomb came out, even if his vigil had to be maintained all day.

Unfortunately, however, he was ignorant that there were two entrances to the building—the one at which he was steadfastly watching, and a rear door which the employees of the company frequently used.

Thus it happened that the moving-picture girl made her exit without his seeing her; which sad fact he did not discover until after dark, when a night watchman informed him that the last of the Pendexter people had long since left the building.

Reckless was considerably discouraged. He had stood watching that doorway for eight hours, and not a morsel of food had passed his lips in that time; for he had not ventured to leave his post even to satisfy the cravings of his stomach.

That his long wait and equally long fast should have been unrewarded by even a glimpse of the girl, made him feel that he wasn't receiving a square deal from fate.

But after he had dropped into a restaurant and put away a good dinner he looked at things differently.

"After all," said he to himself, "there's lots of other days beside this un. I'll try it again to-morrow, and keep right on tryin' until I get what I want. Mebbe she'll be up in the Bronx again, to-morrow morning, posin' for

some more wild-West pictures. I might take a run up there and see."

In the meantime, as it was impossible to pursue his quest of the moving-picture girl, that night, not having any inkling of her home address, Leland gratefully accepted the offer of an affable stranger who had generously undertaken to show him "the sights of the town."

This stranger, whose acquaintance Reckless made while at dinner in the restaurant, was a well-dressed, clean-shaven man of middle age who was suffering from an unfortunate malady of the hands which prevented him from keeping them out of other people's pockets.

He did not mention this weakness of his to Reckless, however, and the latter found him a very agreeable companion until, after they had visited a score of interesting places which, from the stranger's viewpoint, represented the best that was to be seen in New York after dark, they entered a café on West Twenty-ninth Street and seated themselves at a little round table.

It was here that his companion's malady first made itself apparent to the cowboy. Two men, acquaintances of the affable stranger, were introduced by the latter to Reckless and invited to sit at the little round table.

Reckless ordered beverages, and when he had paid for them and restored his roll to his trousers pocket he became dimly conscious of the fact that there was a hand in that pocket which did not belong to him.

He made a quick move to grab the hand, but before he could reach it, it had disappeared. He felt for his roll; and, to his great relief, found it was still there; so he said nothing.

The affable stranger who was piloting him around sat beside him, the other two men sat opposite; it seemed, therefore, that the intrusive hand could have belonged only to the former.

Reckless gazed at the man's face long and searchingly. Not a trace of discomfiture or guiltiness could he detect there. His glance traveled to the countenances of the other two; they were chatting

and drinking with an unconcern which disarmed suspicion.

"Perhaps, after all, I may have been mistaken," Reckless told himself; nevertheless, he took the precaution of secretly shifting his roll to another pocket.

A few minutes later he again became aware of a hand stealthily entering the pocket in which his bank roll had previously reposed. Quick as a flash his own big hand shot beneath the table and grabbed a wrist.

"Caught you this time, bud," he said quietly, turning, with a grin, to the affable stranger. "From the clumsiness of your work, I judge that you must be considerable of an amachoor."

He laughed as his prisoner, without uttering a word, struggled vainly to wrench his wrist from that viselike grip.

But the next moment the laugh froze on his lips. One of the two men sitting opposite leaned over the table and said very quietly:

"Let go of him, friend, and don't make a sound. I've got you covered under the table."

Something pressing against his abdomen convinced Reckless that this was no idle boast.

Obedying that command, his right hand relinquished its hold on his prisoner's wrist; but simultaneously his left hand, moving with remarkable swiftness, went to his hip pocket, and his own revolver flashed into view.

It was a foolhardy act. Nine men out of ten would not have attempted to draw, realizing that the other fellow already had the drop on them. Even to make a move toward one's hip pocket under such circumstances is generally equivalent to committing suicide.

But Reckless Leland was a creature of impulse, and it was by taking several such fool chances as this that he had earned his nickname. Applying logic to a consideration of some of the mad things he had done in the past, he ought to have been dead several times over. His comrades of the Double B outfit marveled at the extraordinary luck which had saved him in each instance.

That luck seemed to be with him now;

for as his revolver flashed into view above the table there came a click from the other revolver *under* the table.

That click saved Reckless' life. It meant that his opponent's revolver had in some way missed fire. Before the fellow could pull the trigger again, Leland's weapon barked, and the man opposite fell sprawling across the table.

It all happened so quickly and so quietly that the attention of the people at the other tables—there were a score of men and a half dozen women in the place—was not attracted until the shot from the revolver rang out.

Then there was great confusion. Men shouted; women screamed; tables and chairs and potted palms were overturned; and, as nearly always happens in such cases, all the lights in the place were suddenly extinguished by some panic-stricken employee whose first thought was to rush to the wall switch and plunge the scene in darkness.

Then came the police and a crowd from outside who had been attracted by the sound of the shot and the cries from within.

The lights were turned on again, and the man whom Reckless had shot was discovered lying across the little round table, unconscious, but still breathing.

His two friends had vanished; so likewise had Reckless Leland. They had taken advantage of the temporary darkness to make a hasty retreat to the street.

If this thing had happened in his own country, Reckless would have waited calmly for the arrival of the sheriff, confident that no harm could come to him for what he had done, inasmuch as he had acted in self-defense.

But he didn't know how such matters were adjusted in New York. He had an idea that from an Eastern viewpoint his act would be regarded as murder, notwithstanding the extenuating circumstances. He was a stranger in the city, and he figured that that might count against him; for there is something about New York which gives a stranger the impression that it is hostile to him.

Therefore, he had decided that it would be a good thing to get away

while he had the chance; and as soon as the lights went out in the café, he thrust his revolver into his pocket, and, moving swiftly toward the door, made his way to the street unnoticed.

"Too bad I had to shoot that crook," he said to himself, as he swung into Broadway and hurried toward his hotel; "but he'd have dropped me sure if I hadn't. Wonder if I killed him. If so, I guess I'd better pack my kit and get back West before they get on my track. Reckon I'd better do that, anyway. Even if he ain't dead, New York ain't no place for me just now."

He felt in his pocket for his money, and discovered that it was still there. He drew a deep breath of relief at that pleasing discovery. It had suddenly occurred to him that perhaps the affable stranger had taken advantage of the excitement following the shooting and abstracted his roll. It would have been decidedly awkward to find himself penniless, just then—sans the price of a railroad ticket back to Double B Ranch.

"Thank goodness, I've still got it!" he said to himself. "I'll take the first train out."

But when he reached his hotel, the clerk handed him a special-delivery letter.

"It came this afternoon, Mr. Leland," he said, "and as you weren't in, I signed for it."

"Thanks, partner," said Reckless, and he tore open the envelope eagerly, for it bore the imprint of the Pendexter Moving Picture Company.

This is what he read:

MR. WAYNE LELAND, Hotel Worthing.

DEAR SIR: Please call and see me tomorrow morning regarding a position. I have changed my mind since our conversation this morning and think we can use you.

Yours truly,

GEORGE P. EDDY, Manager.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LURE OF A JOB.

RECKLESS decided, at first, to ignore that letter. Discretion told him that in view of what had happened at the café, it would be useless to keep that appointment with Mr. Eddy. A

moving-picture job in New York was out of the question now. It would be dangerous to delay his departure for the West.

But he thought of the moving-picture girl and the opportunity to cultivate her acquaintance which this letter held out to him; and he threw discretion to the winds.

Early the next morning he started out to visit the offices of the Pendexter Company, and on his way there he bought a morning paper, being eager to ascertain whether the man he had shot was still alive and whether the identity of the latter's assailant was known or suspected.

He was relieved to read that his victim was at the hospital and not yet dead, although the surgeons did not hold out much hope of his pulling through.

He was still more relieved to learn that the police had not yet succeeded in finding out who had done the shooting. Regarding this, the newspaper said:

Testimony of eyewitnesses as to the appearance of the man who fired the shot is hopelessly conflicting. Some say that he was a short, stockily built man of middle age, others are equally positive that he was a tall, slim young man; while still others have given the police such various and contradictory descriptions of him that the authorities are without a clew as to the identity of the assailant. In the excitement and commotion following the tragedy he easily made his escape, and it is feared that he will never be found.

"I hope this paper is right," said Reckless to himself. "Guess I'm tolerably safe, even if I do stay in New York. I'd give myself up in a minute if I thought they'd give me a square deal; but from what I've seen of this town I reckon there's no chance of that; so I'm goin' to think it over a whole lot before I decide to 'fess up.'"

Half an hour later he was in the private office of Mr. Eddy, manager of the Pendexter Moving Picture Company, listening in astonishment to that gentleman's offer of five dollars per day to pose for wild-West scenes.

"But I thought you told me yesterday that wild-West stuff was played out, and that you was goin' to chuck it?" said Reckless.

The manager smiled. "Circumstances alter cases, Mr. Leland. Shortly after your visit yesterday the directors of this company held a meeting and decided to go in big for the European trade. As I believe I mentioned, cowboys and Indians, while somewhat passé in the home market, are still all the rage on the other side of the ocean; so instead of cutting down, we are going to increase our output of such scenes."

"I see," said Reckless; "but you said, too, yesterday, that you didn't need genuine cow-punchers for such work—that it didn't cut no ice how fast a fellow could ride or how spry he might be with a rope."

Mr. Eddy smiled again. "Well, of course, we haven't got any particular objection to expert horsemen, even though we can increase the speed of ordinary ones by cutting out sections of the films. Under the conditions which existed at the time of our interview yesterday morning, we preferred men with theatrical experience to those with experience on a ranch—performers who could pose as cowboys or redskins to-day and waiters in a swell restaurant or sailors in a submarine boat to-morrow. But, now that we have decided to go in strong for wild-West stuff, I guess we shall have enough work to maintain a special company for that branch of our business; and your ability to do stunts with a horse ought to come in useful. But the main reason I sent for you, Mr. Leland, is—because somebody has spoken up for you."

"Spoken up for me?"

"Yes. Miss Ruby Holcomb, our leading lady, came to me yesterday and asked me to give you a job. Inasmuch as we were increasing our wild-West work, I was glad to oblige her."

Reckless fell back in his chair in astonishment. If the manager had told him that the Queen of Holland had spoken in his favor, he couldn't have been more amazed. It seemed incredible that the moving-picture girl could have done this for him; and yet he couldn't see what object Mr. Eddy could have in lying to him. It really must be the truth.

A grin of delight creased his weather-beaten face. "So *she* spoke for me," he chuckled. "Waal, boss, if that's the case, I reckon I'll take the job. When do I start work?"

"You can report to-morrow morning. We've got a big Western scene on then, and will probably need you. You understand, of course, that we're only taking you on as an extra, at first. We'll pay you five dollars per day for each day we employ you; but I can't guarantee you full time. How often we'll use you will depend entirely upon the quality of your work. If you make good, you'll get plenty to do."

"I'm going to make good, all right," declared Reckless confidently.

"I hope so." The manager wrote a couple of lines on a card, which he handed to the Westerner. "You know where our grounds are up in the Bronx? Well, you can report direct up there to-morrow morning, instead of coming here first. Ask for Mr. Bates. He's in charge of our outdoor work."

"The chap in the red sweater?"

"That's the man. Hand him this card, and he'll put you right to work, if there's any chance at all to use you in that scene."

As Reckless stepped out of the manager's room and was walking through the main office toward the elevator he encountered Miss Holcomb.

"Good morning," said the girl, giving him a cordial smile. "Did you get work?"

"Yes'm; thanks to you," replied Reckless, strangely ill at ease. "It was very kind of you to——"

"Oh, don't mention it. I inquired of one of the clerks what you were doing here yesterday, and he told me that you had come to look for a job; so I put in a good word for you. I owed you a good turn, you know, for rescuing me from those savage Indians." She laughed merrily; and you may be sure her laughter thrilled Reckless.

"And are you goin' to be in that scene up in the Bronx to-morrow, miss?" he asked eagerly.

"I should say I am! It's called 'The Boss of the Ranch,' you know, and I'm

to be the boss. My husband, who owned the ranch, is dead, and, instead of selling out, I'm running the place myself. My cowboys are all in love with me, and——"

"Wriggling rattlesnakes! Perhaps there'll be a chance to hug her," said Reckless joyously, to himself.

"I beg your pardon; did you speak?" she inquired.

"No, ma'am; at least, I was just thinking out loud. I didn't mean to interrupt. Please go ahead."

"It's going to be one of the most thrilling spectacles we've ever turned out. I'm stolen by Indians and tied to the back of a horse. My brave cowboys give chase. I guess you'll be one of the cowboys, and you'll have another chance to rescue me; only this time you won't be butting in and spoiling the film."

Once more she laughed merrily, and again Reckless was thrilled through and through. "I wish it was to-morrow already," he said impatiently, as she hurried toward the door marked "No Admittance."

When he reached the street a newsboy passed him yelling: "Wuxtry! Wuxtry! All about the café murder! Wuxtry! Wuxtry!"

Reckless bought a paper—the first of the "evening" editions, which are on sale before noon—and read these startling headlines:

POLICE ON TRAIL OF CAFÉ ASSASSIN

VICTIM OF SHOOTING AFFRAY DIES IN HOSPITAL WITHOUT REGAIN- ING CONSCIOUSNESS

Police Now Have Full Description of Man Who Fired the Fatal Shot—Dragnet Out for Him—Arrest Expected Soon, Central Office Says

Astonished and greatly perturbed, Reckless read every word of the column of smaller type that followed these headlines.

He learned therefrom that the unfortunate man whom he had been com-

pelled to shoot in self-defense had passed away in the hospital at seven o'clock that morning. Regarding himself, the paper said:

Although at first it seemed impossible to obtain a comprehensive description of the man who did the shooting on account of the conflicting testimony of the many excited eyewitnesses, the police have now succeeded in getting a very definite idea of what the fellow looked like.

According to James O'Neill, a waiter employed in the café in which the shooting took place, the assassin was a good-looking young man, about twenty-eight years old, broad-shouldered, six feet tall, and powerfully built.

He had blue eyes, long dark hair, a heavy dark mustache, spoke with a drawl, and had every appearance of being a Westerner. Several other persons, the most level-headed of those who witnessed the tragedy, corroborate this description, and the police feel sure that it is correct.

"And, barrin' what it says about me bein' good-lookin', I guess they've got me down pretty pat," said Reckless to himself uneasily. "I hope they're just as right in telling how the thing happened."

But in this respect the testimony of these witnesses was not at all in accord with the facts. To his horror and indignation, Reckless read on:

The authorities have been unable to learn as yet what the quarrel was about; but all the eyewitnesses agree that the assassin's act was cold-blooded, deliberate, and quite unjustifiable.

He had little or no provocation, apparently, for shooting down his victim, for the latter was unarmed, and the men were drinking and conversing amicably together right up to the moment of the tragedy. Their voices were not even raised when the fatal shot rang out, and the shooting came so suddenly and unexpectedly that it was several minutes before the eyewitnesses could believe that a murder had actually been committed.

"Now, what do you think about that?" growled Reckless. "Little or no provocation for shootin' down my victim! Of all the lies I've ever heard or read, that's about the limit. And they say that the feller was unarmed. As though I'd have shot him if he had been. That's New York for you! That's the kind of a square deal a feller can look for in this part of the country. Twenty people must have seen the gun in

that feller's hand, and seen that I had to drop him or be dropped myself, and not one of 'em comes forward to tell the truth. This here town makes me weary. Give me the good old West every time."

It is only just to the witnesses of the tragedy to state that all of them who had been questioned by the police believed that they were telling the truth in characterizing Reckless Leland's act as unprovoked and unjustified.

None of them had seen the weapon which the crook had held pressed against the Westerner's side under the table. None of them had heard a word of the talk that preceded the shooting or knew of the attempt that had been made to rob Reckless.

When Leland fired, his victim's weapon had fallen to the floor, and when the police had picked it up afterward they had concluded that it was the weapon of the assassin: for it happened that there were a couple of exploded shells in it. Consequently everybody supposed that the Westerner had been the aggressor, and that he had cold-bloodedly shot down an unarmed man.

Not realizing how this misunderstanding had arisen, Reckless was of opinion that the situation had been wilfully misrepresented to his disadvantage, and he congratulated himself that he had not gone straight to the authorities and given himself up, as he would not have hesitated to do out West.

"Reckon I'm mighty lucky that I'm still free," he muttered; "and, inasmuch as I've got the price of a ticket back home, I guess I'm goin' to stay free.

"Police hot on my trail, eh!" he went on, with a scornful glance at the newspaper headline. "Waal, I reckon they'll have to jump some in order to get me. It's me for the Double B, first train out. Reckon the boys'll be some surprised to see me back so soon."

He was proceeding toward the railway station with the intention of departing from New York without even stopping long enough to go back to his hotel to pack his kit, when, happening to pass a moving-picture show, there suddenly flashed upon his mental vision

a pair of laughing black eyes and a dazzling display of pearly teeth.

There were several lithographed posters outside the show. One of them bore the legend: "New To-day! Great Western Drama, The Cowboy's Sweetheart." Beneath it was a highly colored picture of a wild Westerner clasping in his arms a slim, girlish figure.

It was by no means a flattering likeness of Ruby Holcomb; but it was near enough to the original for Reckless to be able to recognize it; and he paused irresolutely.

"And to-morrow mornin', up in the Bronx, she's goin' to be 'the boss of the ranch,' he muttered. All her cowboys are in love with her—and I'm to be one of 'em. Me give up a chance like that! Wriggling rattlesnakes! Not much!"

He changed his mind about going to the railway station. Instead, he entered a barber shop.

"Shave or haircut, sir?" inquired the barber, as he deposited his burly form in a chair.

"Both," replied Reckless. "Crop the hair close to my head and take off this mustache—every bit of it."

CHAPTER V.

A TRIFLING DRAWBACK.

WHEN the barber had finished with him Reckless Leland gazed at himself in a mirror, and chuckled.

"Even the boys at Double B wouldn't know me now," he said to himself; "so I reckon there won't be no danger of any of those galoots who saw the shoot-in' bein' able to recognize me. It'll be perfectly safe to stay in New York—until my hair grows."

So he went back to his hotel and turned in early, partly because he didn't consider it safe to venture abroad that night, notwithstanding his disguise, and partly because he wanted to have a good sleep so as to be in proper shape for the important work of the morrow.

He was up in the Bronx the next morning two hours before the moving-picture troupe arrived. When Miss Holcomb stepped onto the long stretch of pasture which was the nearest ap-

proach to a prairie to be found in Westchester County, she stared, without recognition, at the close-cropped, smooth-shaven young man who came hurrying toward her with an eager greeting.

"I beg your pardon," she said coldly, "I think you must be making a mistake. I am quite sure that I haven't the pleasure of your acquaintance."

The man who was with her—he of the red sweater—laughed and said something under his breath about "another moving-picture Johnny."

Reckless Leland's face flushed crimson. For the moment he had forgotten his changed appearance, and took the girl's attitude for a deliberate snub. Then, recovering himself, he turned to the man in the red sweater and handed him the card which Mr. Eddy had given to him.

"Reckon your name's Bates, ain't it? I was told to give this to you. I'm the latest addition to this outfit."

At the sound of his voice, the girl started.

"Why, of course, I know you," she exclaimed, turning apologetically to Reckless. "How stupid of me not to recognize you. And yet, my mistake isn't surprising, considering the change you've made in yourself since yesterday. What on earth caused you to take off your mustache?"

"I—I found it got in the way when I drank soup," stammered Reckless.

The man in the red sweater studied the card which Leland had handed him, then looked the new recruit over critically.

"All right. I guess I can use you. You can ride a horse, of course?"

"Tolerably well," replied the cowboy, with a grin.

"Then you can come in this first picture. It's a roughriding scene. Go on over to the stables and ask Mike to let you have a horse and a cowboy outfit."

He pointed, as he spoke, to a big barnlike structure on the outskirts of the prairie, and Reckless hastened toward it. He found a dozen men there in the act of donning wild-West garb and a dozen more making up as Indians; for

the barn served as a dressing room as well as a stable.

When they had learned that he was a new addition to the company, the others welcomed him cordially, and Mike, who had charge of the stables and supplies, fitted him with a costume and a mount which, although not to be compared with Reckless Leland's own "Black Boy," at Double B Ranch, was a tolerably good specimen of horseflesh.

Fifteen minutes later, the cowboy band came galloping across the long grass, yelling lustily and waving their sombreros.

They lined up before Miss Holcomb and Bates, and the latter inspected each one carefully, and nodded.

"All right," he said. "Guess we're ready to start on scene one." He consulted a typewritten sheet of paper. "Miss Holcomb, you go over there and stand on that hill, yonder. Be sure to keep your profile turned toward the camera. Wave your handkerchief, and smile as the boys come on. The scene is cowboys returning from the round-up, the woman boss welcoming them back. Get the idea? Now, you fellows, beat it over there to that corner of the field, and when I raise my right hand you all come racing toward Miss Holcomb. Be sure to keep all in a bunch; but make it look as if each is trying to get ahead of the rest so as to be the first to reach the woman boss. Look at each other and scowl fiercely as you ride, so as to convey the idea that you're all terrible jealous of each other. You're all supposed to be desperately in love with the ranchman's pretty widow, you know. Does everybody get the picture?"

They all nodded, to show that they understood what was required of them, and the cowboy band pranced off to a distant corner of the field out of range of the camera, while Miss Holcomb, who was attired in a natty Western riding costume, went to take her position on the knoll, and from that eminence smiled and waved her handkerchief for ten minutes before she managed to do it well enough to suit the critical eye of Mr. Bates.

When that gentleman, who was a

genius at posing, was satisfied with her efforts, he raised his right hand as a signal for the cowboys to advance, and they came bounding across the field in close formation, doing their best to carry out the instructions which the man in the red sweater had given them.

"Rotten!" the latter exclaimed, regarding them with a disapproving scowl. "You fellows haven't got the spirit of the thing at all. I told you particularly to scowl at each other as you rode toward the lady boss of the ranch. You don't give the effect of jealousy at all. You're the punkest lot of scowlers I ever saw. Try it again."

They galloped back to their corner, and once more came dashing toward the hillock on which Miss Holcomb stood, this time taking care to contort their faces into savage scowls.

Still the man in the red sweater was not satisfied.

"It won't do," he growled. "There's only one of you that has the right idea. The rest are rotten! You don't show nearly enough jealousy. Try swearing at each other as you ride—that may help give you the right expression. Be careful what you say, though. Don't make the cusses too strong. Lots of deaf and dumb people go to moving-picture shows, and they can read your lips. Use language that's forceful but not indecent."

They tried it over again, and this time they managed to satisfy Bates with their scowls; but he took them to task because they were so busy scowling that they neglected to look once toward the ranchman's widow on the hillock.

"Intersperse your scowls with affectionate glances at the lady boss—the woman you're all in love with," he said. "Most of you failed to do that. Take off your hats and wave them at Miss Holcomb. Remember she's welcoming you back from the round-up, and you're all supposed to be tickled to death to see her. Scowl and smile—scowl and smile. Get the idea?"

They tried it over and over again before they met with the approval of the man in the red sweater. In fact, it was not until they had been rehearsing this

one scene for three solid hours that Bates considered the result good enough for "grinding."

Reckless marveled at the man's patience and his fussiness. It had never entered the Westerner's mind when he visited moving-picture shows that so much painstaking effort was required to produce the apparently spontaneous motions which were flashed upon the screen. He had never dreamed that the pictures had to be rehearsed as much as this, and that so much importance was attached to apparently trifling details.

Once, for instance, when everything seemed perfect, and Bates was just about to order the man to "begin to grind," he suddenly changed his mind, and turned instead to the "ranchman's widow," on the hillock.

"Miss Holcomb," he shouted, "I've got a new idea. Try waving your hat in the air instead of your handkerchief. I think that'll give a better effect."

And, to Leland's great astonishment and indignation, after the girl had waved her sombrero until her slender arm must have ached—for even this trifling change had to be painstakingly rehearsed—the critic in the red sweater suddenly changed his mind again.

"Never mind the hat, Miss Holcomb!" he shouted. "Guess we'll stick to the handkerchief, after all. I think I like it better."

At length Mr. Bates was satisfied that the picture could not be improved upon. He yelled to the camera man to "grind her"; the latter began to turn the handle of his wonderful apparatus, and the home-coming of the cowboys was recorded on several hundred feet of film.

After the picture was finished, Mr. Bates came over to Reckless, just as the latter was dismounting.

"This is your first experience at moving pictures, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir."

"How do you like it?"

"Fine," replied the Westerner enthusiastically, looking at Miss Holcomb out of a corner of his eye.

"Well, you certainly made good," declared the "stage manager" approvingly. "You got the spirit of the scene bet-

ter than any of the others. What theatrical experience have you had?"

"None at all," answered the cowboy.

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Bates, in unfeigned astonishment. "You don't mean to tell me that you're an amateur! Why, the way you looked at Miss Holcomb as you came galloping toward her was great. It was exactly the expression I wanted. All those other fellows are professionals; but they didn't manage to look nearly as much in love with the ranchman's widow as you did."

"Waal, when it comes to such actin' as *that*," drawled Reckless, with another glance toward Miss Holcomb, who stood a few feet away, "I reckon I'm a natural born actor."

"You certainly are," assented the man in the red sweater, not perceiving any special significance in this remark. "I don't like to handle amateurs, as a general rule. You're the first one I've ever taken on that was any good. But I like your work, and I guess I'll be able to use you a whole lot."

"Thanks," said Reckless joyously.

"There's one thing, however, that I'll have to ask of you," Mr. Bates went on.

"What's that?"

"If you want to appear permanently in our wild-West scenes you'll have to let your hair grow long.

"And you'd better grow a mustache, too," he added, looking at Reckless critically. "I've got too many smooth-shaven cowboys."

CHAPTER VI.

WITHOUT REHEARSAL.

RECKLESS LELAND was considerably perturbed regarding the trifling drawback to his personal appearance which Mr. Bates had pointed out. It seemed to him that if his continuance with the moving-picture outfit depended upon his letting his hair grow long and wearing a hirsute adornment on his upper lip, he would be compelled to give up his new career.

He appreciated the peril which such a change in his present appearance would mean. Not only would there be danger of somebody on the street iden-

tifying him as the man who had fired the fatal shot in the café; but, also, the moving-picture scenes for which he posed would be a constant menace to him.

For these pictures, of course, would be exhibited on the screens of several hundred moving-picture theaters in New York every week, and the chances were that somebody who had been present in the café when he had fired that shot would drop into one of these places, recognize the tall, long-haired cowboy with the mustache, in the picture, as the assassin, and put the police on his track.

Clean-shaven and close-cropped as he was at present, Reckless didn't think that there was much danger of his being recognized either in person or in the pictures; but he regarded his undoing as inevitable, if he complied with the wishes of the fastidious Mr. Bates.

"Oh, well," said Reckless to himself, "maybe he won't press the matter. Reckon it's only a whim of his, and he may forget to mention it again. If so, I sure shan't remind him."

Reckless acquitted himself so well at rehearsal next morning that he again came in for some warm praise from Mr. Bates, who assured him that he was a natural born actor, and predicted a great future for him in moving pictures.

And, to the Westerner's great relief, Bates made no further reference, that day, to the shortness of his hair or his lack of a mustache.

The pictures for which Reckless posed that morning were a continuation of the story of the previous day. The lady boss of the ranch was proposed to by each of her adoring cowboys in turn, and gently but firmly informed each one that there was no hope for him.

As Miss Holcomb, of course, was the lady boss of the ranch, it was small wonder that Reckless was able to go through this scene with an intensity which made his performance stand out as a work of art, even though his fellow cowboys were all professional actors.

There was only one other "cowboy"

who managed to put into this scene anything like the same amount of fervor as the Westerner. This was a little Mexican named Lopez, who used to do a "comedy bullfight act" in vaudeville before he joined the moving-picture company.

Lopez, in proposing to the pretty "widow," managed to display as much ardor as did Reckless, and his gestures of despair when he was turned down were so eloquent that he, too, was warmly complimented by the man in the red sweater.

It was not his theatrical experience which enabled Lopez to do so well in this picture. His success was due to the fact that in this particular scene he wasn't merely *acting*. For Reckless Leland was not the only member of that moving-picture company who was head over heels in love with its leading lady.

The Westerner did not realize then, however, that he had a rival in love in the little Mexican. It was not until later that day that he discovered that such was the case.

After luncheon the cowboys laid off while the Indians came into the picture. This was the big scene of the photo play. The redskins were to attack the ranch while the cow-punchers were absent, seize the pretty widow, tie her to the back of a pony, and bear her a captive to their camp.

Reckless, taking care to keep out of range of the camera, stood beside his mount watching the rehearsal of this thrilling spectacle. With a broad grin on his face, he saw the Indians come creeping stealthily across the prairie, watched them seize the terrified widow, and tie her to the pony's back.

And then, just as they were about to lead their captive away—to be rescued in the next scene, of course, by the faithful-unto-death cowboys, something happened which was not on the program—something which caused the smile to disappear from Leland's face and an exclamation of alarm to escape from his lips.

Scared by the shrill screech of a locomotive whistle from a railroad track near by, the pony suddenly wrenched its

head free from the Indian who was holding it, and darted off, panic-stricken, across the "prairie," with Ruby Holcomb lying across its back, bound and helpless.

In an instant every one of those make-believe cowboys was in the saddle and dashing off in pursuit of the panic-stricken beast; needless to say, Reckless Leland was among them.

Mr. Bates, Bill, the camera man, and the redskins—none of these having horses and, therefore, being unable to join in the chase—stood waving their arms frantically and yelling encouragement to the riders.

"They'll never get her," groaned Bates, perceiving how the distance was widening between the runaway and the pursuing band. "That pony is the best horse we've got. None of those others can touch him for speed, even when he's in his normal senses, and now, in his panic, he's twice as fast as ordinary."

"And he's heading straight for that high stone fence," exclaimed the camera man. "Heavens! Miss Holcomb will be dashed to pieces!"

"Those fellows can't possibly overtake him," repeated Bates despairingly. "See how they're all falling behind already! Oh, how I wish they were real cowboys instead of mere actors."

"Two of them seem to be doing pretty well," said one of the redskins, shading his eyes with his hand. "Look at that big fellow and the little man beside him. They're 'way ahead of the others. By Jiminy! *those* two certainly can ride some."

Bates nodded. "Yes, that's Leland, our new man, and the little Mexican, Lopez. If Miss Holcomb is saved it'll be one of those two who'll do it. The rest of that bunch don't know beans about riding. But even Leland and Lopez are too far behind. Look! The pony is almost at the fence now, and it hasn't changed its course. The fool beast is too blind with fear to realize its own danger. It's all over with that poor little girl. Too bad! She was the best leading lady we've ever had, and——"

"They're right at the fence now," groaned the camera man, shuddering,

and closing his eyes. "That means the finish, of course. At the speed that beast's going it can't——"

"Great Cæsar's ghost!" broke in Bates joyously. "He's cleared it! What a jump! Did you see that, Bill? That pony went over the fence as easily as if it hadn't been there. Miss Holcomb's escaped that danger, at least."

The screech of a locomotive whistle came to their ears. The camera man looked fearfully at Bates. "Yes, she's escaped *that* danger; but the railroad tracks lie a couple of hundred yards beyond that wall; and there seems to be a train coming. If that pony doesn't change its course, Miss Holcomb might as well have been dashed against the fence."

Leland and the little Mexican, riding like the wind, and leaving the rest of the pursuing band far behind, reached the high stone fence together. Before he had gone on the vaudeville stage, Lopez had worked on a ranch and, like, Leland, he knew how to get the utmost speed out of a mount. But when he arrived at the high wall over which the pony with the helpless girl tied to its back had disappeared, the Mexican's nerve failed him. To attempt that jump seemed madness. He gazed at the obstacle with blinking eyes, and instinctively reined in his mount so sharply that the beast rose on its haunches.

And as he halted there, eager, but afraid, Reckless Leland passed him by, and, leaping the fence, continued the chase alone.

The runaway pony was less than three feet from the railroad tracks when Reckless drew alongside, and brought the frightened beast to a stop just as a fast freight went rattling past.

Miss Holcomb had fainted, but she opened her eyes as her rescuer began untying the rope which bound her to the pony's back; and, to Leland's great surprise and admiration, when he had released her she jumped to the ground with a brave laugh.

"That was a close call," she said. "When I saw that train coming I thought I was done for. You've saved my life, Mr. Leland. Let's go back,

now, and continue the rehearsal. It's a good thing we weren't grinding when this silly pony ran away; otherwise we'd have spoiled a film."

"Spoiled a film!" gasped Reckless. "Wriggling rattlesnakes! you sure have got grit, little girl! I never before met a woman with such pluck."

The girl laughed again. "Do you think so? I'm afraid I'm not very brave—or I shouldn't have fainted. I ought to be used to such accidents by this time. We go through so many of them, you know, in the moving-picture business. I was almost drowned a couple of weeks ago, when we were making a picture on the Hudson River. I jumped overboard—tied to a rope—and the rope broke, and I went down twice before Mr. Bates jumped in and grabbed me. And the other day I was overcome by sulphur fumes. We were doing a fire picture in a little cottage in Yonkers, which we filled with pots of sulphur, to make thick clouds of smoke, you know, and when I rushed in to rescue my stage baby I was really overpowered, and they had to get a doctor to bring me to. Oh, yes, I've had so many thrilling experiences since I went into moving pictures that I oughtn't to be scared at anything any more."

When they returned to the "prairie," they were received with cheers. Mr. Bates, Bill, the camera man, the redskins, and the cowboys gathered around Reckless, and wrung his hand.

But there was one man who did not take part in this tribute to the rescuer. Lopez, the little Mexican, stood some distance away, scowling at the Westerner. And, encountering the look of hatred in his rival's eyes, Reckless realized that he was not the only man in that outfit who was in love with the leading lady.

CHAPTER VII.

A GREAT TEMPTATION.

THE next three weeks were very pleasant ones for Reckless Leland. Everything seemed to be coming his way.

In the first place, he continued to do so well at his new job that Mr. Bates assured him that it would not be long before he was out of the "chorus" class, and able to play individual rôles. In fact, the latter was so pleased with his work he predicted that Reckless would one day rise to the eminence of a moving-picture star.

The Westerner was filled with delight at this prospect; not that a canned-drama career appealed to him particularly for itself alone, but because he saw in such promotion a chance to "play opposite" to the leading lady.

The man who enjoyed this great privilege at the present time was a good-looking chap named Morton Mallory, who had stepped from a forty-dollar-a-week job with a theatrical road show into a seventy-dollar position as leading man with the Pendexter Moving Picture Company.

Mallory greatly appreciated the difference in salary, for there was a wife and several little Mallorys to feed; but he didn't seem to realize the other, and—in Reckless Leland's opinion—far more important advantages that went with the new job. Every day he would hold Miss Ruby Holcomb in his arms, in front of the moving-picture camera, sometimes maintaining that enviable position for a solid hour before the fastidious Mr. Bates considered the scene artistic enough to grind.

Sometimes the moving-picture girl would throw her slender arms around his neck; sometimes she would pillow her pretty head upon his shoulder; in one or two particularly affectionate scenes she kissed him—doing it over and over again, until the gentleman in the red sweater deemed the osculatory effort good enough to be made into film.

And all these things Mr. Morton Malcolm took quite as a matter of course—or, rather, as a mere matter of business. It was quite evident that he was not at all thrilled by such proximity with the pretty leading lady. In fact, he had once or twice been heard to complain at the length of the rehearsals, and to express himself as being exceedingly bored. While Reckless Leland, watch-

ing these poses with envious eyes, felt that he would have given his right hand for one such chance.

Thus far the rôles which the Westerner had filled had been sadly barren of such opportunities. In one or two scenes he had enjoyed the privilege of holding the leading lady's hand for a brief moment; but even such slight bliss as this came seldom. Most of the time he merely did chorus work—riding with the other cow-punchers to the rescue of the girl who had been kidnaped by Indians, or acting as one of the lynching party about to string up the hero, whose life was saved by the heroine just in the nick of time.

And, of course, when the heroine dashed up to the rescue on a foam-flecked steed, she didn't kiss the lynchers—she always threw her arms around the neck of the condemned man. And even when she was rescued from the redskins by the intrepid cowboys, she didn't express her gratitude by hugging them all. She invariably fell fainting into the arms of the hero, and let it go at that.

And that was why Reckless Leland was so much pleased by Mr. Bates' assurance that it would not be long before he would graduate from this group work to more important rôles. He yearned for that day to arrive.

But in the meantime, although he wasn't given any chance to make love to the leading lady in front of the moving-picture camera, Reckless was swiftly winning his way into Miss Holcomb's good graces—in real life.

Since the day that he had saved her life, the moving-picture girl's attitude toward him had been frankly cordial, and they had become quite chummy. She had even invited him to call on her at her apartment on a Sunday afternoon, which invitation, needless to say, Reckless Leland had eagerly accepted; and he had made the acquaintance of her mother and sisters, and quaffed tea brewed by Ruby Holcomb's own hand.

Thus everything was going very nicely with the Westerner, and he would have been very happy—if it hadn't been for a realization of the fact that he was

a fugitive from justice. That realization was never long from his mind; it kept him continuously uneasy. It wasn't that his conscience troubled him; the knowledge that he had been forced to fire that shot to prevent himself from being killed saved him from seizures of remorse.

Nor was it the fear of being discovered which kept him uneasy. It was because, possessing an open, straightforward nature, it went very much against his grain to have to skulk and dodge the vengeance of the law. So obnoxious was this rôle of fugitive that several times he was on the point of giving himself up to the police; but each time he recalled that unfair account of the tragedy which he had read in the newspaper, and he told himself that there was no chance of his getting a square deal if he took this step. So he decided to remain in obscurity.

So far as his being discovered was concerned, he had very little fear of that. As the days went by he felt more and more safe. He passed policemen on the street, and although every member of the force had been furnished with a description of the fugitive, they stared at him without a sign of recognition.

They had been instructed to watch out for a man with long hair and a heavy mustache, and therefore it did not occur to them to suspect this clean-shaven, close-cropped young man of being the fellow they wanted.

Even the persons present in the café that night wouldn't have recognized him if they had seen him; for the lack of a mustache and long hair makes a great difference in a man's appearance; and Reckless took the precaution to shave his upper lip every morning, and keep the hair upon his head very short.

Mr. Bates, since that single occasion when he had imparted to Reckless his prejudice against close-cropped, clean-shaven cowboys, had not again referred to the subject. Like most geniuses, that gentleman was erratic. Things that he considered of all importance one day he forgot all about the next. His objection to Reckless' scarcity of hair had been merely a passing whim.

But one day the matter of hair and mustache came up again in a manner which sorely tried Reckless Leland's soul. Morton Mallory, the leading man, was laid up with a bad attack of grippe, and sent word to Mr. Bates that he couldn't come to work. Bates was greatly annoyed at this message. He was about to start work on a brand-new play that day, and there were reasons why the film had to be rushed through without delay.

"I'll have to get somebody else to play his part," he growled to Miss Holcomb. "It's too bad, because this is to be one of the biggest things we've ever put over, and I haven't got anybody who measures up to the leading male part nearly as well as Mallory."

His gaze swept the group of actors who played secondary rôles. "No, none of those fellows'll do. They haven't got the presence for this particular part. Mallory was just the man for it. I suppose I'll have to telephone one of the agencies to send out a new leading man—and I hate to book with strangers, especially in a big production like this."

"Why not try one of the chorus?" suggested Miss Holcomb, glancing toward the group of cowboys and Indians who stood some distance off.

"No, I'm afraid they wouldn't do. Some of them look more like the part; but I need a good actor, and none of those fellows are clever enough."

"How about Mr. Leland?" said Miss Holcomb quickly. "You've always said that he's got talent, and is too good for the chorus. Why not give him a chance to show what he can do?"

"Humph!" muttered Bates, staring hard at the Westerner. "Leland certainly *looks* the part. He's big and strapping. As far as appearances go, he's almost a better man than Mallory for this rôle. But I'm afraid he hasn't had enough experience, and——"

"Try him," broke in the leading lady eagerly. "From what I've seen of his work I feel sure that he'd be able to pull through. He may need a lot of rehearsing, but he'll be able to manage it all right."

Bates glanced again at the Westerner's burly figure. "By George, Miss Holcomb, I think I'll follow your suggestion. That fellow certainly does *look* the goods."

He walked through the long grass to where Reckless stood. "Leland, I'm going to give you the chance of your lifetime to-day. Mallory is sick, and I've decided to try you in his place in this new play we're putting on. Do you think you could do it? There's a big love scene, and——"

"Try me," exclaimed Reckless eagerly, without waiting to hear any more. "Say, boss, out at Double B Ranch I've got a hoss named Black Boy, which no amount of money could buy from me; but if I don't make good in this part I'll make you a present of that hoss, and pay his freight to the East in the bargain."

Mr. Bates smiled at his enthusiasm. "All right; I'll accept that offer. But I hope the horse stays at Double B, Leland." He took some sheets of type-writing from his pocket. "I'll read you the scenario of the play, and you'll understand what's required of you. It's called 'The Horse Thief,' and——"

He broke off suddenly, and glanced at the Westerner's face. "Oh, by the way, you'll have to wear a wig and mustache. The part calls for a chap with long dark hair, and a heavy growth on his upper lip. That smooth face and close-cropped hair of yours won't do at all."

"Long hair and a mustache!" gasped Reckless, turning pale. "I'm afraid I couldn't wear *them*, boss. I——"

"You must," interrupted Bates, regarding him with astonishment. "They're part of the plot. The story hinges on them, as you'll see when I've read you the scenario. Surely it can't make any difference to you what——"

"I couldn't do it, boss," declared Reckless, shaking his head emphatically. "I've got a certain prejudice against hair, which ain't to be put aside even for a chance like this."

Bates frowned. "This is the most absurd thing I've ever heard, Leland. What can be your objection? Are you

joking with me? If so, cut out the comedy, my friend, because I haven't any time for kidding."

But Reckless shook his head again. It was quite apparent from the expression of misery on his face that he was very much in earnest. He realized that even though the long hair was only a wig, and the mustache a false one, he would look in these things almost exactly as he had appeared that night in the café when he had fired that fatal shot.

And brief as would be the time in which he would have to wear them, it would be long enough, in all probability, to lead to his detection, for the films for which he posed would be exhibited at several hundred moving-picture theaters throughout the city, and the chances were that somebody would recognize him on the screen as the man who had done the shooting.

"Come," cried Bates impatiently, and with an angry frown. "I'm not going to waste any time arguing with you. If you don't want the part, I'll find somebody else. It's doubtful whether you'd have made good, anyway. I wouldn't have thought of even trying you if Miss Holcomb hadn't suggested it."

A look of mingled astonishment and joy came to the Westerner's face. "*She* suggested it?" he exclaimed, and glanced over to where the moving-picture girl stood.

She was too far away to hear their conversation; but she was looking toward them, evidently wondering what all the argument was about; and as Reckless gazed over in her direction their eyes met.

"*She'll* be in the picture, of course?" he said hoarsely, turning to Bates.

"Of course she will. Miss Holcomb's to be the sweetheart of the horse thief. That's the part I was going to try you in; but——"

"Go on, boss."

"The sheriff and his posse have tracked the horse thief to his sweetheart's cabin, and while he's inside, holding her in his arms, they——"

"All right, Mr. Bates," cried Leland. "I'll take that part—no matter what

happens afterward. Where'll I get that wig and mustache?"

CHAPTER VIII.

A STAR ROLE.

THE first part of "The Horse Thief" was done up at the Bronx prairie; but the cabin scene, being an interior, was made in the moving picture company's indoor studio at the main offices.

After they had got through posing in the open air, which took one whole day and half of another, Reckless Leland, Miss Holcomb, and those of the actors who were to appear in the cabin scene jumped into an automobile, and, accompanied by Mr. Bates, proceeded to the studio.

While the car was speeding through the city, the Westerner took the precaution of removing the wig and false mustache with which Mike, the property man, had supplied him, for he did not care to run the additional risk of being recognized en route by some vigilant policeman.

This was the first time Reckless had ever posed for an indoor picture, or had ever been inside the studio in which such scenes are made. He was astonished at what he saw there, and half blinded by the glaring green lights always used for interior work.

All kinds of scenery was to be found stacked up in this room; but instead of being in more or less natural colors, as is the scenery of the ordinary stage, it was all in black and white. A corps of stage carpenters were busily hammering together a structure of canvas at one end of the room, and Reckless saw at a glance that this was the "cabin" in which the horse thief was to visit his sweetheart while the sheriff and his posse were waiting outside to hang him.

"All ready, now, Mr. Bates," said the boss of the carpenters, hammering a last nail into place as they approached.

Bates inspected the interior of the cabin with a critical eye.

"Pretty good effect," he commented, "but we need some more pictures on the walls. Tack up a few lithographs—the kind of stuff a rough Western girl

would use to decorate her den; and that ceiling looks too new. This isn't the living room of a New York apartment; it's the tumble-down shack of a poor Western family. Smear up the ceiling, and knock some holes in the plaster. Smash out a couple of panes of glass in that window, too, and nail rough boards across. And take out that table. Who ever heard of mahogany furniture in a log cabin? Bring in that plain pine table over there, instead. That'll serve much better."

These changes having been made, the moving-picture camera was adjusted, and the strong green lights were focused on Reckless and Miss Holcomb, who took their places inside the shack.

In the greenish glare of the lights, Miss Holcomb's complexion looked ghastly; but that didn't lessen the joy of Reckless Leland when she flew into his arms, and rested her head on his broad shoulder.

He forgot, then, that he was posing before a camera; forgot that he was in a fake cabin made of canvas; forgot that the girl in his arms was only playing a part—that this was nothing more than her daily work, and that while she snuggled against his shoulder she was taking care to keep her face turned toward the photographer's lens, and wondering anxiously whether the love light in her eyes would show properly on the film.

Reckless forgot all these things, and forgot, too, that he was wearing a wig and a false mustache which might prove extremely disastrous for him. He was living that scene, not acting it, and he put his big arms around the girl's slender form and hugged her so tightly that he nearly squeezed the breath out of her.

"Very good!" cried Mr. Bates approvingly. "Very good, indeed! You've got it almost good enough to grind, right now. But a little more fervor, Mr. Leland. A little more fervor. Remember, you're supposed to be desperately in love with the girl. Try to show it on your face."

A little more fervor! Ye gods and little fishes! If he didn't show he loved her on his face right then, thought

Reckless, he must be suffering from facial paralysis.

"Take your head from his shoulder, Miss Holcomb, and try looking up into his face instead," suggested Bates. "Give him the goo-goo eyes. You know how I mean."

Reckless gazed into those big brown eyes which the girl obediently focused upon his, and he trembled with joy at the love he saw in their depths.

"Fine!" cried Mr. Bates, with great enthusiasm. "Perfectly splendid. Mallory couldn't have done it any better. Hold that expression, Mr. Leland. I won't keep you waiting long. We're going to grind it out right now."

He turned to the camera man. "Let her go, Bill. We couldn't get it any better than that if we rehearsed 'em for a hundred years."

And as the camera began to whir, recording this love scene on several hundred feet of film, Reckless, holding the girl in his arms, and gazing into her upturned face, continued to maintain the expression which had wrung such warm praise from the artistic soul of Mr. Bates.

Suddenly the camera stopped, and Reckless became conscious of a jarring voice, which said: "That's all, thank you, Mr. Leland. The picture's finished—and I'm willing to bet right now that it'll be a beaut."

The jarring voice was that of Mr. Bates, and it announced the end of those few minutes of bliss.

"That's all, Mr. Leland," said Miss Holcomb, in a most matter-of-fact tone. "Don't you hear that the grinding is done? No need to hold me any longer." And she slipped out of his arms, and stepped out of the canvas walls of the shanty, and, walking over to a mirror, calmly began to arrange her much-disordered hair.

For a few seconds Leland still stood there, as though dazed, his complexion a ghastly green from the strong spotlights, although there was plenty of red blood in his face at that particular moment.

Then he came slowly out of the cabin, chuckling to himself. "And to think,"

he muttered, "that I get paid five dollars for doing that!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE PENALTY.

MORTON MALLORY'S attack of grippe didn't prove as serious as he had feared. He came back to work in a couple of days, and Reckless returned to his job in the "chorus," and had no more opportunities—for some days, at least—to act love scenes with Miss Holcomb.

He had done so well in "The Horse Thief," however, that Mr. Bates had promised to promote him as soon as there was a vacancy in the ranks of the actors who played more important parts. Therefore the Westerner was not without hope.

And, in the meantime, outside of the world of make-believe, he was continuing to make great headway in his wooing of the moving-picture girl. He hadn't yet got to the point of being able to muster up the courage to repeat in real life that blissful scene which he and she had enacted under the glaring green lights of the studio, and he hadn't been able to inspire that expression on her face which had been there when he had held her in his arms, and she had looked up into his eyes, before the whirling camera; but he and she had become the best of friends, and he was a frequent caller, now, at the pretty little apartment uptown. There Miss Holcomb served him tea out of the daintiest of china cups, or fed him wonderful concoctions which she made in a chafing dish.

And during working hours, up at the Bronx prairie, her manner toward him was so cordial, and she bestowed upon him so many smiles, that the rest of the company soon began to take notice, and to exchange significant grins—all except the little Mexican, Lopez, whose face grew longer each day, and whose scowl grew darker every time he looked at Reckless Leland.

One evening, about three weeks after the making of "The Horse Thief" picture, Miss Holcomb and her twelve-

year-old sister, Marjorie, were walking through West Fourteenth Street, when they passed a moving-picture theater outside which were several highly colored lithographs announcing the good things to be seen inside for a dime. One of the posters bore this legend:

PENDEXTER COMPANY'S LATEST AND BEST

"THE HORSE THIEF"

Stirring Western Drama of Love and Heroism. Full of Action and Pathos. Don't Fail to See This Film. You Can't Afford to Miss It.

"Let's go in," said Miss Holcomb to her sister. "I haven't seen myself on a screen for months; besides, there's one picture they're showing here I'm particularly interested in."

They entered the darkened auditorium and sat watching other films, and listening to illustrated songs for an hour, before the title plate of "The Horse Thief" was flashed on the screen.

Miss Holcomb viewed these pictures—the productions of rival film concerns—with a hypercritical eye, and frequently made whispered comments to her sister as to the defects she found in the posing; for the canned-drama artiste has the same weakness as the actress of the ordinary stages—she cannot refrain from "knocking" the work of a rival performer, when she sits "in front."

But when, at length, "The Horse Thief" was put on, the Pendexter Company's leading lady ceased to whisper, and sat watching the progress of the film with great interest.

She was not so absorbed in the picture play, however, that she failed to notice the remarks of two men who occupied seats directly in front of her and her sister.

These men—not suspecting the identity of the girl who sat behind them—did not trouble to lower their voices when they commented to each other on the appearance of the horse thief's devoted sweetheart.

"Ain't she a peach, Bill?" said one ad-

miringly. "Would you leave your happy home for her?"

"In a minute," answered Bill promptly. "Say, I'd give a whole lot to know the original of that picture, Pete. I've a good mind to go around to the office of the company that made that film, and try to get acquainted."

Little Marjorie Holcomb giggled, and nudged her big sister in the ribs. "Did you hear that, sis? There's a chance for you!"

Miss Holcomb smiled. "Hush! Don't let them hear you, or they'll look around," she whispered.

A few seconds later one of the men said something that caused both girls to lean forward in their seats eagerly, and the amused smile vanished from the elder girl's face.

"Say, Bill!" said Pete, pointing toward the screen. "Who's that fellow with the long hair and mustache, in the picture? His face looks familiar to me."

"And to me, too," replied Bill. "I seem to know him, and yet I can't exactly place him. I guess we must have seen him in other pictures, and that's why his face is familiar."

But Pete shook his head. "No, I'm pretty sure that I've seen him somewhere in real life. I wouldn't swear to it, but I've got an idea that I've met him. Now, where was it?"

Suddenly as the "horse thief" on the screen came into the foreground of the picture and stood, life size, facing the audience, the man addressed as Bill emitted an excited exclamation: "Pete, you're right. I've got him placed now. That night in the café when the murder was committed. That's where we saw him."

"Sure!" exclaimed the other, equally excited. "That's the fellow that did the shooting. I'm willing to swear to it."

They arose and left the theater hurriedly, not waiting to see the finish of the picture.

Little Marjorie Holcomb nudged her sister. "Did you hear what they said about Mr. Leland, sis? Can it be possible that——"

"Hush!" whispered the elder girl, her

face very pale. "Yes, I heard what they said; but of course it isn't true. People are always recognizing the characters in moving pictures as persons they think they know. I've had lots of letters from men and women who are quite sure that I'm their long-lost daughter or sister. Those men have made a ridiculous mistake. Come on, Marjorie, let's go home."

"Will you say anything to Mr. Leland about what we've heard, sis?" inquired the little girl, as they left the theater.

"Oh, no; of course not," replied Miss Holcomb. "It's too ridiculous to repeat. Besides, it might hurt his feelings."

Nevertheless, when she saw Reckless, the following morning, at the Bronx prairie, she did mention the matter to him.

"I heard a funny thing last night, Mr. Leland," she said, with a nervous laugh. "I dropped into a moving-picture show with my little sister, and they were showing 'The Horse Thief.' There were a couple of men in front of us, and when you came onto the screen they thought they recognized you. They spoke about a murder in a café, and they said you were the man who did the shooting. Isn't that a good joke?"

She was watching his face intently as she spoke, and she saw how he changed color.

"It's all up with me now," said Reckless to himself. "Of course, those fellows have gone to the police with their information by this time, and I'll be nabbed for sure—probably before another hour has passed. I knew trouble would come of my wearing that mustache and wig. I had my fun, and now I reckon I've got to pay the penalty."

Suddenly it occurred to him that there was still time to save himself. He was free as yet, and there was no reason why he shouldn't remain free—if he acted quickly.

He had enough money in his pocket to pay his fare out West. If he left at once he could be on the train and speeding toward Double B Ranch before the police realized that he had made his escape. And even if they got on his track,

and followed him out there—well, the boys at the ranch wouldn't give him up without a struggle.

"Of course, I know there's no truth in what those men said," exclaimed Miss Holcomb, breaking in upon his meditations. She tried to speak confidently, but in spite of herself there was a tremor in her voice. "I simply mentioned it to you, Mr. Leland, because it struck me as being such a—a good joke."

"It's the funniest thing I've ever heard," responded Reckless, with a harsh laugh. Then he held out his hand to her. "Well, good-by, Miss Holcomb. I've got to attend to a little personal matter out of town, so I reckon I can't stay to-day to take part in——"

He was interrupted by Mr. Bates, who came up to them with a scowl upon his face and a telegram in his hand.

"Good morning, Mr. Leland. Here's another big chance for you. I've just heard from Mallory that he's got another attack of the grippe, and can't get up here to-day. Confound that fellow, he's always getting sick! So I'm thinking of putting you in his place."

"Sorry," began Reckless, "but I can't possibly——"

"You did that love business with Miss Holcomb in 'The Horse Thief' so well," Bates went on, unheeding the interruption, "that I think you're just the man for the star rôle in the new play we're starting to-day. There's a big love scene in it, and——"

"Can't possibly do it, boss," broke in Reckless Leland hoarsely. "I've got to leave——"

He stopped short, and looked at Miss Holcomb, a great yearning in his gaze. Oh, for the joy of holding her once more in his arms—to have her face raised toward his! Life and liberty suddenly seemed to him inconsequential matters compared to such happiness.

And, after all, he told himself weakly, there was a chance that those fellows hadn't gone to the police with their information. It was possible that they had changed their minds, and decided that they were mistaken in their identification.

Or, even if they had not changed their

minds, there was a chance that they had not gone to the police as yet. Maybe they had put it off until to-day, in which case it would be safe for him to delay his flight until he had availed himself of this tempting opportunity which Bates held out to him.

Leland looked at the girl he loved again, and proved himself deserving of the nickname which his comrades at Double B had bestowed upon him.

"All right," he said to Bates. "I had an important engagement, which called for my leaving town right away, but I reckon it'll have to keep until after we've done this film."

CHAPTER X.

A STIRRING SCENE.

THIS play," said Mr. Bates, referring to his typewritten scenario, "is called 'The Quarrel.' It's all in the open air, so we can make it out here. There's a shooting in the first picture. The girl quarrels with her lover, and in her temper pulls a gun, and fires three shots at him. They all miss, and—well, I'll tell you the rest afterward; that's enough to go on with. Miss Holcomb and Leland get ready for the first scene."

Within fifteen minutes, Reckless and the leading lady were ready to begin the rehearsal. The girl had come to the grounds dressed for the part, and Leland had gone to the dressing room and hastily donned the Western costume which the part called for.

"Go and take your places near that big tree," Mr. Bates instructed them. "Miss Holcomb, where's your gun? Haven't got one, eh? Well, one of you fellows hand her yours."

Every member of the chorus, all of them dressed as cowboys ready to come into the scene later on, reached for his six-shooter, loaded with blanks, which went with the costume. But the little Mexican, Lopez, was the first to draw his weapon from his belt.

The Mexican's face was very pale, and there was a queer glint in his eyes as, with a graceful bow, he handed the revolver to Miss Holcomb. But nobody noticed these symptoms, and the

girl thanked him with a smile as she took the weapon.

"Now," said Bates, glancing at the typewritten sheets in his hand, "you walk toward each other as the picture opens, and embrace each other with much fervor. Don't forget to put ginger into it; you're a pair of lovers, you know, and mighty glad to see each other."

"Suddenly a letter falls from your pocket, Leland. Miss Holcomb, as she lies in your arms, spies it, breaks away from you, and picks it up. It's in a woman's handwriting. You snatch it out of her hand before she can read it. Your face shows that you are very much flustered. Don't forget that—very much flustered."

"Miss Holcomb demands to know what's in the letter. You refuse to tell her. She becomes angry. You plead with her. She won't listen. She walks away from you. You call after her, and step toward her, your arms outstretched. She whips a revolver from her dress, and shoots at you three times. She misses. You shake your head sadly, and walk slowly away out of the picture. The girl, penitent, covers her face with her hands, and bursts into tears; but you don't look behind you, and she's too proud to call you back. That's the end of scene one. Let's get to it."

Eagerly Leland stepped forward to enact the first part of this scene. Miss Holcomb flew into his arms, and he held her tight. And in that embrace he forgot the peril which menaced him, and wished that that pose could last forever.

"Say something to her," yelled Mr. Bates. "Speak to her as you hold her in your arms, Leland. You're not supposed to be deaf and dumb, you know. Lovers generally talk when they meet. Keep on hugging, but say something, too."

"I love you," said Reckless, with a tenseness which would have done credit to the greatest of matinée idols. "I love you, little girl. I may never see you again after to-day, but I've got to tell you that before I go."

"Great stuff!" exclaimed Mr. Bates enthusiastically. "Those words don't

exactly belong in the play, for you're not supposed to be going anywhere, you know—but they'll *look* just right in the film. The facial expression is splendid. Now pass on to the letter incident."

Reckless obediently dropped an envelope from his pocket to the grass, and the girl picked it up, and they went through a quarrel scene with a realism which won the hearty approval of Mr. Bates.

"Fine!" the latter exclaimed. "You're both doing so well that we'll need very little rehearsing. Now for the shooting scene. Understand, Miss Holcomb, you retreat from him slowly, and, turning, fire three shots at him as he comes after you. Don't forget that you're beside yourself with rage. Make your face show it. Leland, stretch out your arms pleadingly as you step toward her."

Miss Holcomb, giving Reckless a look of withering scorn, walked off several yards away from him. Even though her back was now turned toward the camera, she made it evident by her carriage that she was exceedingly angry.

Reckless, calling after her, and stretching out his arms entreatingly, advanced toward her. At his call she turned, and, facing the camera, a wonderfully well-simulated expression of fury on her countenance, whipped out her revolver and fired at him—once, twice, three times.

And at the third shot Reckless spun around and sank to the ground.

"Hey! Not that!" cried Bates. "What are you doing, Leland? That isn't in the play. You don't get shot, you idiot! She misses you every time."

But Miss Holcomb ran toward Reckless with a frenzied cry, and, kneeling beside him, pillowed his head in her arms. "I've killed him! I've killed him!" she moaned, and added, somewhat inconsistently: "Oh, get a doctor, somebody. Please hurry!"

Bates, realizing that this was genuine tragedy, knelt beside the stricken man, and put his ear to his chest. Then he turned to the group of horrified actors who had gathered around. "He isn't dead," he said. "I don't know how

badly he's hurt, but he still lives. Yes; hurry up and telephone for a doctor, some of you. Don't stand there, gaping like a lot of idiots."

Suddenly spying the little Mexican, Lopez, hanging back on the outskirts of the throng, Bates addressed him sharply: "You handed her that gun. How do you explain that it contained bullets instead of blanks?"

"I—I don't know," stammered the Mexican, his face livid. "They—they must have got in there by accident."

Reckless, opening his eyes in a few minutes, was surprised to find Miss Holcomb bending over him, her face close to his. As he looked up into her eyes he saw in them an expression which made him think that he was still posing in a love scene for the camera.

Just at that moment, two men, thick-set, short-necked, and square of jaw, came across the grass, and pushed their way through the group of cowboys.

"Excuse us for buttin' in on this picture, boss," said one, addressing Mr. Bates, "but I guess you've got a man here by the name of Leland—and, if so, we want him for homicide."

As he spoke he pulled back his coat, and displayed a badge fastened to his suspender—the badge of a central office detective.

CHAPTER XI.

GOOD NEWS.

HEARING these words, the little Mexican, Lopez, was very sorry that he had handed that gun to Miss Holcomb. He had put the bullets in the gun because, crazed by the Westerner's growing favor with the leading lady, he had made up his mind to find a chance to kill Reckless Leland some time during that day's posing.

His first intention had been to do the shooting himself, but when he had heard Mr. Bates select Leland for the leading rôle, and had learned that the scenario required the heroine to shoot at the hero, it had occurred to his ingenious mind that to hand the weapon to Miss Holcomb, and have her bring

about the demise of his rival, would be a great improvement upon his original crude plan.

But now that he learned that Leland was a fugitive from justice, and that these officers had come to put him behind bars, and perhaps start him on his way to the electric chair, he realized that he had acted too hastily. What is the use of going to the trouble of shooting a rival in love when the law is ready to get rid of him for you?

Therefore, Mr. Lopez was greatly relieved when Reckless staggered to his feet, thus showing that he was not mortally wounded. The bullet, which had entered his breast, near the left shoulder, had lodged in a cushion of muscle, and although the force of the shot had been sufficient to knock him out momentarily, his injury was not severe.

"I'm the man you want," he said to the detectives. "I reckon it was those fellows who saw me on the screen at the moving-picture show last night who tipped you off where to find me, eh?"

One of the officers nodded. "Yes, that's how we got wise to you. We went to the main office of the Pendexter Company this morning, identified you from the film, and was told that we'd find you out here."

"And a big fool you were not to give yourself up right at the start, Leland," said the other officer, "instead of giving us all this trouble."

"But, of course," said Miss Holcomb to the detectives, "those men are mistaken. Mr. Leland isn't a murderer. I'm quite sure of that." She turned anxiously to Reckless. "It is a mistake, isn't it? You didn't shoot that man in the café. It was some one that resembled you, wasn't it?"

The Westerner shook his head gloomily. "No, those fellows were quite right. It was me that did the shooting. But I want you to believe that it wasn't murder—at least, not as we understand the term out West. I had to kill that fellow in self-defense. He had the drop on me, and there was only a part of a second to make up my mind. I decided that I'd rather shoot than be shot—so I fired first."

"No," corrected one of the detectives, "you're slightly wrong there, Leland. It was that crook who fired *first*, but his gun hung fire—and before he could pull the trigger again you dropped him."

Reckless, scarcely believing that he could have heard aright, stared at the man in astonishment. "Yes, that's true," he said, "but, wriggling rattlesnakes! how in blazes do *you* know it?"

The detective chuckled. "A little bird told us—or, rather, two little birds. There were two chaps in the café that night who sat at the next table to yours and saw the whole thing. They dropped into headquarters yesterday morning, and told us just how it happened."

"But why didn't they speak up before yesterday?" demanded Reckless.

"They were afraid to. You see, they are both married men, and afraid of their wives—you know that kind—and they hadn't ought to have been in that café that night. They had told their better halves that they was at a Y. M. C. A. meeting, or something of that sort, and they were afraid to come forward with what they knew for fear of getting into trouble at home. But their conscience had been troubling them, and yesterday they decided to come out with the truth, regardless of the consequences. We're convinced that they're telling the truth, too; for the gun we found under the table, and which we supposed at first was yours, has since been identified as having belonged to the man who was killed."

Miss Holcomb heaved a sigh of relief. "In that case, then, why are you arresting him for murder?" she asked.

"Not murder, miss—merely homicide," corrected the detective. "That's nothing but a technical charge. You see, even though he shot in self-defense, the fact remains that he took a human life, so we have to place him under arrest."

"But there won't be nothin' to it," he added reassuringly. "When he tells his story in court, and it's corroborated by these new witnesses, he's sure to be exonerated."

"Oh, I'm glad to hear that," said the

moving-picture girl, extending her hand to Reckless Leland.

And, seeing the expression that was on their faces, as they stood gazing into

each other's eyes, Mr. Bates, in a fit of absent-mindedness, shouted: "Hold that pose! It doesn't need any rehearsing. It's good enough to grind."

Learning to Talk at Twenty-Five

A MAN learning to talk at the age of twenty-five years, at the same time that his infant daughter was trying to form syllables and words, seems a paradox. But such was the experience of Harry J. Scott, of Goshen, Orange County, New York. Moreover, it took him five years to learn.

Scott was a clerk in a Goshen grocery. About six years ago he was a member of the Cataract Engine Company, of the Goshen Fire Department. The company had bought some new apparatus and was testing it in the village street, when something broke and a piece of iron struck Scott on the head with such force that it depressed a section of his skull, and the piece of bone pressed on the brain. Scott was unconscious for days.

Doctor Frederick Seward, Doctor Dennis, and Doctor Condit, who attended him, agreed there was but one chance in a thousand for the man to recover. The piece of bone was removed, and then fitted into place again. The lacerated brain cells were treated antiseptically, and results awaited.

At the end of two weeks consciousness gradually returned. Food was given by artificial means for a time, then little by little strength seemed to return, and he could swallow normally.

But though consciousness had returned, the power of speech had not. The man could not utter a syllable. At intervals he would seem to try to speak. The doctors could find no organic impediment to speech. After a few months, following some premonitory symptoms, the man's lips moved in sound. It was not a syllable or a word, but it was a sound. He was encouraged to repeat the effort, and one day he formed a syllable or two. In turn more syllables, and in time, by dint of much patience and encouragement and effort, one-syllable words were spoken.

The doctors decided the injury had affected one side of the section of the brain controlling the organs of speech. They say that it is known to the medical fraternity that in such a case the remaining side in time will take over little by little the functions or a share of the functions belonging to the other side. Hence the man's gradual recovery of the power of speech.

By the time he was able to form polysyllable words and short sentences, his daughter Ruth, who was born shortly after the accident to her father, began to learn to talk. It was strange to hear the grown man, with other faculties intact, even to the extent of being able to read papers and books intelligently and write normally, lisping words and phrases the same as the child. The two were inseparable, and learned to talk together. Progress was more rapid with the child than the father.

After a couple of years, Scott was able to resume his work as a clerk in the grocery. His speaking vocabulary was limited, but as he waited on customers and used the words he had learned, it increased. Fluency and ease of speaking came slowly.

There was a halting hesitation about every utterance. It was as if the man were trying to recall a forgotten something, to grasp a lost faculty. Patience and practice, however, made for constant though slow improvement, and gradually fluency and ease began to come.

Through the remaining months and years down to the present, it has continued, but only recently has Mr. Scott's power of speech become normal. To-day he talks as easily and fluently as he ever did, and no one who does not know him would ever suspect his strange experience. The little daughter that learned to talk with her father is now a bright-eyed schoolgirl.

three months. Said that was every cent he'd allow me. If I spent it in one month I'd starve for the next two."

"Maybe you'd work," Cole suggested.

Maddern lifted his eyes. "That's his game. Do you know he even gave me the address of a friend of his out in San Pedro. Said the chap would give me a position on the new breakwater. Think of me holding down a real job."

"I'd advise you to keep the address," the detective said. "You'll have to eat in California, and luck plays us some odd pranks."

"Thanks," returned Maddern dryly. "Let's talk of something pleasant. Where are you bound?"

"I don't know." Cole gazed reflectively from the window.

"You mean you won't tell?"

"I mean I don't know. It all depends."

Maddern fixed his eyes on the tablecloth a moment, then said: "I get you, Cole! You're dogging some one on this train."

"I won't deny it."

"Then it's not me."

The detective shook his head.

"But the governor sent you, didn't he?"

"Yes. The firm of Maddern & Miles is rather interested in a certain bill clerk of theirs who dropped out of sight six months ago, with some money belonging to them."

"Oh, I understand!"

"Glad you do."

"He's on the train, and you'll nab him when he leaves. Is that the program?"

"Patience," was all that Cole replied.

CHAPTER II.

DIFFERENCE OF OPINION.

JUSTIN MADDERN, son of John Maddern, head of the banking firm of Maddern & Miles, of Denver, had been shipped to California by his father. Three years at an Eastern college had drained the senior's patience and worried his pocketbook.

"Get out!" the elder Maddern had exploded, when Justin bluntly admitted

being in several scrapes, and also in debt. "Get out to California. I'm disgusted! Get out there among strangers, and maybe you'll get a little sense knocked into your head. I'll start you with a thousand dollars, and it'll have to last you for three months." He said some other things, which you heard Justin tell the detective.

So the young man departed, bag and baggage. At the station he met the girl, and played an important rôle in the little scene enacted there—a case of mis-checked baggage. After that they were friends. Many continuous hours alone, on the observation platform, are conducive to "development," as Cole had expressed it.

After the chat at the table the two left the car, and walked back to the rear buffet and parlor coach. Here Cole excused himself, and stepped into the buffet for a cigar. Justin continued on to find Neva curled up in a big chair, engrossed in a magazine.

"Can't I bring you something to eat?" he asked, sitting beside her.

"Thank you, but I had the porter get me some tea and toast. It was plenty. I'm not the least hungry. I'm—nervous! I'm not used to traveling, and the thought of seeing my brother in a few hours takes away my appetite!"

"Going to live in Arizona?" Justin asked.

"I—I guess so. You see, there's only my brother and myself, and we're more like pals than anything else. We've been that way ever since we were left orphans." Her eyes lighted up at the mention of her brother. "Oh, Dick is a wonderful chap. I'm wild with fear that some girl will come along and marry him!"

Justin laughed with her. "Jove, but a man's lucky to have a sister like you," he observed, in a low voice.

"Dick's working on a ranch. Likes it, too. He was always fond of the outdoors and horses. I'm glad he got out of the city."

They went out on the open platform, sank back in chairs, and for a moment gazed upon the vast expanse of sky and desert.

"To-morrow night I'll be traveling alone," he said presently. "I'll miss you a lot."

"You've been considerate to me," she returned. "I appreciate it."

"May I write you?" he asked; "or would your brother object?"

"He wouldn't object—if he knew you."

Justin fumbled for a card and pencil. He wrote her name—Miss Neva Douglass. "And the address?"

"Circle City, Arizona," she told him. "In care of Richard Douglass."

He dropped the card into his coat pocket. "When do we arrive there?"

"In about three hours, I think."

"Your brother will be at the station to meet you, I suppose?"

"Of course. Or he might show up at some town before that. I wired him this morning."

At eleven o'clock, when most of the passengers had left the parlor end of the car for their berths, Justin suggested lemonade, and went to the buffet to get it. While the porter was mixing it, Cole sidled in, and touched Justin's shoulder.

"When does your friend leave us?" he asked.

"You mean Miss Douglass? Oh, it depends upon the time the train gets into——"

Justin cut his remark short. A sudden, gripping suspicion entered his mind.

"Depends upon the time the train gets where?" Cole asked again.

Justin closed his fingers. "Great Scott!" he muttered.

"No such town as that," came from the detective.

"Cole!" Justin began. "The man you are after is named Douglass!"

"Yes, Richard Douglass."

"When did he take the money from the firm?"

"Last Christmas."

"And the amount?"

"Nine hundred exactly."

"They *know* he took it?"

"Almost certain!"

Justin set his lips in a straight, hard line. "Pretty mean trick, Cole," he

said evenly. "You're following the sister—letting her lead you to the brother."

Cole's shoulders went up. "Since you've guessed it, yes. My profession has its unpleasant duties; but a thief's a thief, and the law must——"

"Hang the law!" Justin burst out. "What's the use of digging into the past? You merely *think* that man took the money, and you are going to ruin his whole life because of that belief. What's nine hundred dollars to my father? Nine hundred dollars against a man's name and a sister's heart! This Douglass has been living a clean life—why won't you let him continue?"

"Sorry I can't accommodate you, Maddern," Cole observed quietly. "But your father's orders were——"

"Yes, I suppose dad is worried about the money. He always did do that. He'd spend a hundred to get fifty back! But just forget what he said, and listen to reason. This girl's a brick, and she's wrapped up in her brother. I'm sure she doesn't know about this affair he's charged with. If she did, it would kill her, that's all. Hang it all, man, haven't you any heart?"

"Hearts are not trumps in my business," the detective responded. "Now, look here," he said seriously. "When that money was missed from Douglass' department, he quietly dropped from view. We couldn't get the least trace of him. Isn't that pretty strong evidence? Finally I got wind of a sister—that girl you've been sitting out on the platform with—so I kept a watch on her. I knew she was in touch with him. When she left town the other day I was positive she would meet him. So I tagged along. Possibly she doesn't know the truth—and I do feel sorry for her; but you can't mix sentiment with law. When she greets her brother, I'll be right on the job with a warrant."

"Well, at least you don't know where she's to get off this train," snapped Justin, "and I'll take pains to see that you don't learn."

"Really?" The detective shook his head in a pitying manner. "I'm afraid you're about five minutes too late. I

lifted a card from your pocket—you had her name and address on it. Oh, I wouldn't flare up. Your lemonade is waiting."

CHAPTER III.

NOT SCHEDULED.

WITH a pounding heart, Justin took the two glasses the porter held out, and made his way very carefully back to the rear platform; still, he spilled some of the lemonade. His mind was working in a strange manner. The last five minutes' conversation with Cole had brought a sudden realization home to him. How peculiarly the once-forgotten affair had returned! How was it to work out? For the first and only time in his life Justin felt burdened with a vital responsibility.

As he stepped out of the rear door and called to the girl, the lights went out like a snuffed candle. A sickening rush of air tore at his lungs. In the inky darkness the hooded roof sank down; he pitched forward, blindly holding to the two glasses, and realizing, foolishly, that he was spilling the contents.

Steel shrieked on steel; the splintering of wood crashed to his ears; he shouted, but was unable to hear his own voice. He felt, in that flash of time, without in the least losing consciousness, as if a mighty whirlwind had picked him up, twisted him about, top-fashion, and finally hurled him brutally to the ground.

A vague, measureless interval followed. He found himself doubled up, not uncomfortably, under the hood of the observation car. Cautiously he tested each muscle, prodded himself expectantly. Nothing appeared to be wrong.

"Great guns!" he murmured reverently. "A smash-up, and I'm as fit as a fiddle! What do you know about that for luck?"

Then he remembered, and his heart skipped a beat or two. Where was Neva? She had been at least within five feet of him the moment the lights went out. With a groan, he groped about in the limited space. Twisted

steel, bits of jagged wood, rods, glass, and parts of chairs—everything, it seemed, sprang up under his touch except what he dreaded to feel. The girl was not there. Either she had been thrown away from the wreck, or——

He shuddered, wiped at his moist forehead, and found a match. This he struck, shielding it with a palm. Then he peered fearfully about. Nothing other than what his fingers had disclosed met his gaze.

The match went out, burning down to his fingers. He lay for a long time, gazing straight into the gloom that enveloped him. At times he heard the distant murmur of voices, the chopping of what might have been axes; once he heard an explosion that jarred the ground. The timbers creaked and settled about him. In the silence that followed he lifted his voice and called. He received no answer.

A tiny point of light first aroused his curiosity. As it grew larger he sat erect, rubbing at his eyes. When understanding finally regained its sway, he was conscious of a peculiar tremor passing up and down his spine; his body suddenly became moist, his pulses fairly jumped into a race.

With a quick intake of breath, he gripped at the nearest steel rod, and pulled at it. It yielded not the slightest part of an inch. Then he gained his knees, and with both hands worked at the tangled wreckage that held him trapped.

He cried aloud, desperately, as the light became brighter. It flared so high now that his surroundings were bathed in a dull, reddish, pulsating glow. Occasionally a heated wave fanned his wet face like the breath from some infuriated animal.

The wreckage was burning!

A puff of smoke, biting like acid to his eyes and lungs alike, served as a spur. He attacked the immovable timbers with a fury little short of madness. His fingers became bleeding stumps—yet somehow, such was his fear, he felt no pain from them. The sweat poured into his eyes. The smoke increased. His trap was becoming unbearable.

He sank wearily exhausted against the side. This, then, was the end. The fire was gaining, inch by inch. Soon, very soon, it would reach his body.

Staring death in the face, Justin's mind went back to what had passed only a short time ago. The situation gripped his brain, sweeping, for the moment, all before it.

Subconsciously he fumbled, and found his cardcase. With a stub of a pencil, and by the aid of the glowing flames, he hurriedly wrote across the back, signing his own name. After a second's indecision he took out his cigar case, slipped the card into it, and then, with all his remaining strength, he hurled it through a small opening in the roof above his head. He saw it disappear.

The smoke thickened like a pall. He coughed. Then he lifted his voice for the last time. His reason left him like the breaking of a string.

CHAPTER IV.

PROFESSIONAL HONOR.

HE drifted back to the world again with the cold night air on his face, and the white stars twinkling high above him. For the moment he could not recollect what had happened; then, with half a frown and an impatient move of his arms, he remembered.

As Justin sat erect, feeling stiff, but otherwise unhurt, he saw the line of wreckage below him, some of it still smoldering. Toward the east the sky was reddening. Dim forms moved back and forth. To the left he saw the glimmer of sickly yellow lights and the outlines of buildings—a station building, a water tank, and the tall, lifted arm of a semaphore. It pounded to his wandering brain that this was a tiny station in the heart of the desert, and that the wreck had taken place just outside the yard limits.

Justin got up and lurched along the embankment. The yellow light beckoned. At the door of a low shed he paused and looked in. It had been hurriedly fitted up as a hospital. Several

women, passengers, evidently, flitted back and forth among the makeshifts of beds. A few lanterns offered the only light. As he swayed there, almost drunkenly—for his brain was still dazed, and his limbs weak—some one called his name, and he turned to look into the eager face of Neva Douglass.

"Oh, Mr. Maddern," she cried. "You—and unhurt?"

He wagged his head slowly. "Not the least hurt! Just a trifle dizzy, that's all."

He clung to her arm, conscious and happy for the slender support she made. "I never expected to see you—here," he said again.

"I was flung clear of the car, and landed in the soft sand. I didn't even lose my senses. I've been helping the others who were not so fortunate."

"Brave girl," Justin said, and pressed her arm.

"There's a friend of yours—on the end cot," she went on. "He's been asking about you—over and over."

The detective, Cole! Justin had forgotten him until this moment.

"Badly hurt?" he asked thickly.

"Not seriously—but his legs are bruised. The doctor has just left him."

Justin swallowed hard. Cole injured. Could it possibly mean that the detective was unable to follow——

"I'll go to him," he said.

In the faint light of the lantern, he sank down beside the last cot. The girl tiptoed away in answer to a cry. Cole, opening his eyes, uttered a sharp exclamation:

"Hello, Maddern! Get out of that hell, did you? Hurt?"

"Not at all."

"Good! I wasn't so lucky. Got my legs bunged up some. Doctor said I'd have to stay in bed for a month. Can you beat that?"

"I'm sorry," Justin replied. But his heart beat just a trifle faster.

"Well, it can't be helped," Cole went on, as if resigned. "Might have been worse. I got bunged up—but I got Douglass!"

Justin jerked himself erect so violently as to jar the cot. He stared dully

upon the sufferer for a moment before his lips could frame the two words:

"Got him?"

"Yes; and in a funny way. Part of that buffet car fell across my legs. There I lay like a trussed chicken, watching the fire creep toward me. I was about to give up when a big chap came along, sang out cheerfully, and chopped me free with an ax. When he was lifting me out I happened to get a good look at his face, and under the smut and grease and dirt I saw—Richard Douglass! Guess we both got wise to each other at the same time. He sort of trembled. I said: 'Hello, Douglass! Just been looking for you. Coming back without any fuss?' And he answered: 'Yes, I'll come with you; only let me work here until daylight; there's so much to do. There are dozens under these cars yet. Just let me work until daylight, won't you?'"

"So I let him work!" Cole resumed, after a pause. "What else could I do—after the chap begging me with tears in his eyes? He's to come here at dawn and surrender."

"And his sister?" Justin asked. "Does she know?"

"Hardly think so. They've been working side by side for hours, I guess. Douglass has brought in at least a dozen men since I've been here. He's been a fiend for work! And the girl—well, I'm not much on sentiment, and I always scoff at it, but, jingo! she's got the softest hands and the most healing touch Heaven ever gave to woman!"

"And—and you're going to arrest Douglass—when he comes here?" Maddern exclaimed hoarsely.

Cole nodded. "At dawn!"

"He'll never come," Justin asserted.

"He gave me his word—and I took it," the detective said quietly.

Justin sank back against the wall, but continued to stare straight into the detective's white face. "A man pulls you from certain death—and instead of thanking him you arrest him! I've been rotten in my time—but——"

"It's the profession, Maddern," Cole interrupted. "Don't forget that!"

CHAPTER V.

A PRISONER TAKEN.

THE dawn broke as swiftly as a stage sunrise. The flat, arid floor of the desert melted into pink and gold, and the skies trembled with their multifarious colors.

"I told you he wouldn't come," Justin said, after the long interval of silence. "Any man would be a fool deliberately to surrender—give up his liberty—especially when he knows you can't get him again."

Cole only looked out of the low door and said: "He's coming now."

The man came in; he seemed fairly to fill the doorway and the very room. He was wide-shouldered, bronzed by the desert sun, coatless and hatless. He stood for the moment gazing back toward the wreck, now plainly visible in the dawn; his big hands clenched themselves. He turned and saw the detective.

"I'm here, Cole!" His voice was calm and even. "I said sunrise, didn't I? I'm a minute or two late. There was so much to do—out there."

The detective struggled erect in his cot, and Austin slipped a pillow behind him. "Douglass, shake hands with Mr. Maddern."

Justin gripped the man's hand. "I'm happy to meet you, Mr. Douglass!"

Douglass allowed his eyes to rest upon the other's face for the moment. "I recollect chopping you out of that observation end," he said. "Pretty narrow for you it was, too."

Something choked in Justin's throat. He tried to speak, but before his lips could form the right words, Cole interrupted:

"I guess there are plenty of us who owe our lives to you, Douglass!" The detective bit his lip, then resumed, his voice once more under control: "I guess there's no use discussing a painful subject any longer. We three at least know the exact situation. Last Christmas a package of currency amounting to nine hundred dollars was missed from your department, Douglass. Evidently you were aware of it before the

others, because you suddenly dropped from sight."

Douglass bowed his head. "I've been cowardly. I couldn't help myself. I didn't steal the money, but I knew all the evidence would be against me, and—and I did so want my freedom. So I came here."

"John Maddern put the case into my hands. We located your sister. When she left Denver I followed, confident she was to meet you."

Justin broke into a cry. "Wait—Cole," he stammered. "I want—to say—that——"

"When I've finished you can talk," Cole interrupted. "Meanwhile, it becomes my painful duty to get these bracelets on the guilty man!"

Cole reached for his coat at the head of the cot, and brought out a pair of handcuffs. Douglass paled, but he extended his hands, that the detective might easily adjust the steel loops. Justin in turn started forward. His hands, too, were outstretched, as if to plead for the other.

Cole, with a deft move, reached out, and snapped the handcuffs about the nearest wrists—*those of Justin Maddern!*

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE CIGAR CASE.

HALF an hour later, when Cole and Justin were alone together, Douglass having left for the ranch with his sister, Maddern turned to the detective.

"When did you first suspect me?" he asked.

"I had my suspicions all along. But I wasn't positive until I found that confession of yours in the cigar case. Douglass picked it up and handed it to me, thinking I had dropped it."

Justin stared across the hot desert. The emergency train had arrived an hour ago, and they were carrying the injured into the special cars. His handcuffs had been removed.

"I've learned a wonderful lesson to-night," he said, after a while. "I think I've been tried by fire—and come out a man. That day I took the package of notes I was desperate—needed the cash to square some pressing debts. I knew my father wouldn't give it to me. I had no idea of any one being accused of the theft—although I might have known had I not been such a fool! And then to-night, when I saw those flames eating toward me, and realized that if I were to die and Douglass still be accused——" He broke off, with a sob.

"I think it best that your father learn nothing of this—he might not understand—the way I do," Cole said quietly. "I shall merely say that Douglass returned the money, and——"

Justin looked into the detective's face. The understanding dawned clear, and he smiled.

"I think it would be the best way," he answered. He slipped a hand to his inner pocket and drew out an envelope. From it he passed over to Cole nine one-hundred-dollar bills. But one bill remained of the sum his father had given him.

"Sometimes," Cole said, smiling, "sometimes my profession isn't so bad; still, it isn't a game of hearts." He hesitated a moment before resuming. "I—I suppose you'll be returning with me—back to Denver?"

Maddern shook his head. "My ticket is still good—and it reads through to San Pedro. And I still have that card the governor gave me. I think I'm going to have a jolly time working on that new breakwater."

Latest Convenience

AGENT: "This is the motor car you want. You never have to crawl under it to put it right."

Customer: "You don't?"

Agent: "No; if the slightest thing gets wrong with the mechanism the car instantly turns upside down."

For the



Tiger's Eye

By Michael White



(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

CHAPTER I.

A RECKLESS INVESTMENT.



A TIGER-SKIN rug at ten dollars and ten cents would seem to be a bargain. Then, again, it might prove a complete waste of currency. It all depends whether you want a tiger-skin rug, also on the condition of the article. This particular rug had been offered at a customhouse sale, and knocked down with peculiar swiftness to Mr. Schussler for the sum of ten dollars and ten cents.

Mr. Schussler, whose fur store in the middle of a block on a cross-town street you may have noticed, had gone to the sale intending to purchase fox skins. But either he couldn't get his bids in at the right moment, or he hesitated at an advance. Many more important opportunities than fox skins have been missed in the same way. But Schussler did not see it exactly in that light. He thought there was favoritism on the rostrum, and openly said as much. Mr. Auctioneer firmly refuted any such pact, advised Mr. Schussler to speak up louder, and promised him ample redress for a purely imaginary grievance.

He delivered it presently when he offered the tiger-skin rug at ten dollars.

In a spirit of nettled irony Schussler bid ten cents advance. The auctioneer's pencil fell with a smart rap on his book, as he remarked that the tiger-skin rug had passed to the ownership of Mr. Schussler.

"I hope," said Mr. Auctioneer, smiling pleasantly, "that the gentleman is now satisfied there is no favoritism here. I accepted his bid right away."

For a moment Schussler looked nonplused, while one or two of his acquaintances in the fur trade chuckled.

"Well, you got the tiger rug all right," said a little man, who had been a spirited and successful bidder for the fox skins. "Nobody wanted to raise your ten cents on that tiger rug. If you was sleeping, Schussler, I guess Mr. Auctioneer was awake. What you going to do mit that old tiger rug? I think you better cut it up for a winter overcoat. Make a new style for the attomobile."

Schussler had already perceived his error, and, pulling himself together, refused to admit either lack of judgment in his purchase, or that he had not a definite purpose when the ten-cent bid slipped rashly out of his mouth.

Still, when he came to examine the rug, he found little joy in his acquisition. It proved to be rusty in shade,

worn in patches, and looked as if it had been kicked around the appraiser's store for months, possibly years.

He certainly did not want the rug, and could not foresee what he was going to do with it, unless it might be used for repairing other tiger rugs. But that kind of work came in seldom, and meanwhile he was out ten dollars and ten cents, plus twenty-five cents expressage.

And that was not all. There was Mrs. Schussler. Mrs. Schussler was both his domestic and business partner—a capable woman, who took charge of the shop in his absence. She had approved the prospective purchase of the fox skins, but to bring home an old tiger-skin rug was another matter, for which he might anticipate more or less severe criticism.

He felt it would be difficult to explain just how he came by the thing, and for the life of him couldn't find a purpose for it which would satisfy Mrs. Schussler's probable questions. At least, not until he was riding uptown in a street car, and his eye chanced to fall on a lion in mortal combat with a python, mounted above the door of a fashionable fur store. Quite a satisfied smile overspread his face, which some people would call a beam of inspiration. What his idea was, he hastened to put before Mrs. Schussler the moment he crossed the threshold of his fur shop.

"Well, we don't get the fox skins," he began. "They was all moth-eaten and no good. But I bought a tiger rug—very cheap—for ten dollars and ten cents."

Mrs. Schussler looked up sharply from marking some dyed rabbit-skin muffs at prices suitable to near-mink.

"A tiger rug!" she exclaimed. "What you want to go and buy a tiger rug for? Why——"

Schussler interposed with an apologetic cough and gesture:

"Just wait, while I tell you why I bought the tiger rug—at only ten dollars and ten cents—which was a wonderful bargain for a tiger rug. At the sale I was talking with Mr. Blumenburg, of The International Fur Company. Every

year he go to London and Paris two or three times to buy furs. That fellow, Blumenburg, thinks nothing of writing a check for a hundred thousand dollars."

"Yes, but what has that got to do with your buying the tiger rug?" Mrs. Schussler questioned to the point.

"We come to it this way." Schussler invented as plausible a story as possible as he went on: "Blumenburg said to me: 'Schussler, you have a nice location and a good trade, but how long you going to keep that old show bear above your shop front? By Jiminy! pretty soon that old show bear shake loose, and if he fall down and hit a policeman, then you get into trouble. You surely do need a new show bear, Schussler.' And it seem to me he was right."

"Well!" ejaculated Mrs. Schussler.

"Well, don't you see we take the old show bear down and fix the tiger skin on his frame. We have then a fine show tiger. As I came up on the car I see now they have a lion fighting with a big snake over a fur store. Everything grow bigger all the time. Used to be a small animal was enough. Pretty soon, I guess, we have show elephants. Now we take a jump from the old bear to a tiger. That is why I buy the tiger-skin rug, and we have a new sign for ten dollars and ten cents."

CHAPTER II.

A POOR MASCOT.

MRS. SCHUSSLER was not entirely convinced, though there appeared to be business logic in her husband's argument. She was a practical woman, but, for all that, she hesitated to part with the old show bear which, for several years, had presided over their destiny, upward from a small beginning.

In a sense she believed it had brought them luck, and was doubtful about the benign influence of a tiger. Still, she was forced to admit the rains of summer and storms of winter had left the show bear presenting a woefully disreputable appearance.

Its ghastly jaws lent to the face a

grotesquely hideous expression, while the torn, rent, and tattered skin disclosed in places the framework beneath. It was clearly long past patching up, and no longer worth the trouble of covering with a mackintosh in wet weather, as had been Mrs. Schussler's concern in times past.

For these reasons she yielded a somewhat reluctant consent, particularly when the tiger-skin rug arrived, to prove in no wise available for indoor ornamental purposes.

On their close expert inspection, however, certain peculiarities were observed.

At one time the skin had undoubtedly been of the first grade; its mounting was of foreign workmanship, and the head retained the animal's original whiskers, which was unusual, owing to the native's desire to possess such objects for charms.

Moreover, when the eyes were cleaned of stains and dust, the crudity of Oriental work was clearly in evidence. No attempt had been made to reproduce with any fidelity the natural eye of the tiger, but, instead, two green, transparent balls had been inserted in the sockets of the skull, giving to the beast's face a peculiarly sinister expression.

"I'll tell you," said Schussler, turning the rug over thoughtfully with his foot, "what we do do when we get the tiger skin on the old bear's frame. We have an electric wire run up into the head, and two lights behind the eyes. Then when he look down at night fierce, I guess he make people stop. How about that, Mrs. Schussler?"

Mrs. Schussler agreed that since the change in their show animal was to be made, it was best to render the tiger as noticeable as possible.

"After a while," added Schussler reflectively, as improvements occurred to him, "we can have one of the tiger's paws on a stuff goat. That will be more in style. But for the present I think the lights in his eyes will make a big effect. Out of the dark he will look as if he is going to jump right down into the street. That should be good advertising, worth many times ten dollars and ten cents."

The process of transferring the tiger skin to the frame of the old show bear proved more arduous than Schussler anticipated, because bears and tigers are built on somewhat different lines, and parts of the bear frame had to be altered to suit the convenience of the tiger.

But fortunately the show bear's pose—on four legs, with head turned observingly streetward—was easier of adaptation than if, to use a heraldic phrase, it had been a savage beast rampant. Thus, when the tiger was complete, with eyes electrically aflame after dark—blazing down in savage green ferocity upon the passing wayfarer—the Schusslers were gratified by general recognition of their labor.

"That fellow, Schussler, is putting on style with his tiger," remarked the picture-frame maker, opposite, to his neighbor, a bird and fancy animal dealer. "Business in the fur trade must be looking up."

"Um!" grunted the fancy animal dealer. "The darned thing is scaring all my goods to death—set the dogs, cats, and monkeys in the window to kicking up a pretty racket. It's the eyes, I guess; that worry them."

Now things go well or bad according to a variety of circumstances, in which such inanimate objects as show bears or tigers can have no influence. But when a very mild winter followed the change from the old show bear to the comparatively new tiger, and consequently the demand for furs fell to a low ebb, Mrs. Schussler's fears began to perceive a connection.

It was almost confirmed when a furious gale taxed insecure props, and, getting a grip on the tiger, twisted it around so that it hung perilously over the street. Schussler called in competent workmen, who firmly secured the tiger with iron rods and clamps, but Mrs. Schussler saw in the incident an unfavorable omen. She imagined the tiger was going to prove a hoodoo, just as she had regarded the old bear as a mascot.

It was rather a case of "I told you so," and Schussler was again inclined to regret that intemperate bid of ten cents advance.

CHAPTER III.

THREE EYES.

TWO men of bronze complexion, who wore their long hair twisted in a knot under the back rim of their hats, dropped in one day to ask if it would be possible to rent the floor above Schussler's shop. The one who acted as spokesman gave his name as Sadath Pestinji, and remarked that the other was his brother. They wished to open an Oriental salesroom on the floor above.

"This-place," said Sadath, running all his words together in a curious, measured way, "this-place-would-suit-our-purpose-very-well. Yas, very-well! We-see-that-it-is-now-to-be-sure - occupied, but-sometimes-a-change-can-become-arranged. Yas, become-arranged."

Schussler replied that he couldn't answer for the present tenant—a photographer—but there would be no harm done by approaching him or the agent on the subject.

The two men thanked Schussler profusely, and went out of the shop in a kind of amble, being unaccustomed to wearing heavy shoes.

For some days they did not reappear, but Schussler heard from the photographer that he had accepted a good offer to vacate the premises. Presently the photographer moved out, and Pestinji & Co. occupied the floor with some cooking pots and a few cheap sticks of furniture.

They gave out that a large consignment of goods was on the way, and drew down the shades to be secure from observation. Apparently they seldom went out, except to purchase provisions, but when they did so, Mrs. Schussler, whose curiosity in the foreign strangers had been roused, noticed that if they chanced to pass the front of the shop, they bowed after their own fashion by raising the finger-tips of both hands to their foreheads. This she took to be an act of courtesy toward herself, and nodded pleasantly in return.

"Mr. Sadath was in, asking about the show tiger," she remarked on one occasion. "He wanted to know where you

got it, and why you fixed it up over the shop front. He didn't seem to understand."

"He didn't!" repeated Schussler. "Well, I don't see why he wants to find out anything about it. I don't care for those fellows' looks, anyway—kind of slippery, snakelike people. They have no goods up there, and I don't understand their business. One thing is pretty certain—they don't intend to buy furs. I guess we have no particular reason for encouraging them to come around."

It may be Pestinji & Co. comprehended Schussler's attitude toward them; in any case neither member of the firm again attempted to cross his threshold. When passing they usually maintained a downcast, thoughtful mien, as if entirely concerned in their own affairs.

Presently the Schusslers lost interest in their movements, and hardly gave them cursory notice. In this way a certain night fell which brought with it surprising developments.

Schussler had closed up at a late hour, and joined Mrs. Schussler in their flat a couple of blocks away for supper. It occurred to him that he had not switched off the lights in the tiger's eyes, or, rather, Mrs. Schussler reminded him of one or two former omissions in that respect.

He was not quite sure, but he thought he might just as well return and make certain, because to keep the lights going all night when business was slack was a useless waste of electricity.

Therefore, telling Mrs. Schussler that he would be back in ten minutes, he picked up his hat and went forth briskly. A short walk brought him in view of the store, and he saw in the comparative darkness of the side street that the tiger's eyes were out. The peculiar glare of those green balls could be seen easily from that distance, therefore he reckoned he must have switched off the current.

And yet, somehow, he didn't recollect having done so. He paused, a trifle uncertain whether to take another look at the store or return to the flat.

A little splutter of blue flame at the base of one of the tiger's paws drew his attention. Possibly something had gone wrong with the insulation; the tiger might be in danger of cremation; so he decided to investigate.

Approaching his shop, he glanced up, to mark a moving object—or what seemed to be such—in the deep shadow between the tiger and the side wall of the building.

Above, one of the windows of Pestinji & Co. was partly raised, and a face could be seen peering out with caution.

An arm reached downward from the window in the act of passing something. A moment later another hand stole around the tiger's head, the fingers working nimbly over its features.

This much Schussler made out in the slanting gleam of a street lamp.

He jumped back into the road, and shouted. The hand was swiftly withdrawn into the shadow behind the tiger, and the window above was closed stealthily.

Schussler shouted again, but, receiving no response, hardly knew what to make of it. Certainly there was something wrong, the first idea in Schussler's mind being an attempt to steal his show tiger. If so, it was an outrage he did not feel like enduring passively.

It was possible to step from the hall window of the second story onto the ledge above Schussler's shop. He had availed himself of that route to adjust the tiger's mackintosh in wet weather, and he took it now with speed, three steps at a bound.

He gained the hall window, threw it open, and climbed on to the sill, reaching down with one leg for the ledge.

Instantly his foot was grasped by two hands, and he was jerked violently outward, his intended destination evidently being a bone-fracturing crash on the pavement beneath.

But in the wrench he had swerved sideways, and, throwing out his arms wildly, managed to grasp the hind quarters of the tiger.

The next moment he found himself jammed in the narrow space between

the tiger and the wall, at death grips with a muscular adversary.

He had cast one arm around the other's neck, and he recognized in the face thus drawn close to his own the maliciously contorted features of Sadath Pestinji.

Meanwhile Sadath had locked his arms around Schussler's chest, and, python-fashion, was endeavoring to squeeze the breath out of him. Also, the window above had again been opened, and an arm came forth, this time making thrusts with a supple blade to reach a vital spot in Schussler, protected somewhat by his antagonist's body.

In his cramped position Schussler could neither twist, turn, nor use his disengaged arm to any advantage. Neither could he shout for assistance, for the coiled arms had so tightened that only a gasp came from his throat, while his ribs seemed to be on the point of cracking.

The curious struggle went on in silence, except for the desperate efforts to gain breath. It seemed likely to end disastrously for Schussler unless moved to decisive action, for Sadath's brother, or partner, was preparing to climb down from the window and use his weapon to a certain stroke.

Schussler realized this, and pulled himself together for a final struggle. He sank down suddenly, and, being much the heavier of the two, managed to carry Sadath with him, twisting him into such a position that he fell underneath.

The securely clamped forepaws of the tiger held firm, and saved both from rolling down into the street. This was Schussler's chance, and he took it. Gaining a purchase with his knee, he sank both hands into Sadath's throat, and heaved with all his might.

The arms around Schussler's body were unwound in an effort to dislodge the throat grip, and Schussler was thereby enabled to put forth shouts of increasing volume for help.

Shortly a group of inquisitive and gesticulating figures collected beneath,

wondering at the fight going on behind the show tiger. A policeman appeared on the scene, and Schussler directed him to a settlement of things by way of the landing window. Thus, when Sadath had been dragged from the ledge, and the blade thruster night-sticked into submission, the policeman looked to Schussler for an explanation.

"They were trying to steal my show tiger," was the irate and panting charge he made. "I guessed as much when my wife told me they wanted to find out where I got it."

The policeman looked a bit puzzled. Stealing a show tiger was a unique offense in his experience. It seemed to need further investigation. That resulted in the discovery that the electric wires for the eye lights had been neatly severed, and that one of the tiger's eyes was missing.

A personal search revealed the tiger's eye in the possession of one of the prisoners. At least, apparently so, until another one was found on the ledge just beneath the tiger's head, where it had evidently fallen in the struggle.

Thus, when the policeman took the prisoners to the station, he carried as exhibits of the crime one rubber glove, a pair of shears, and two tiger's eyes.

CHAPTER IV.

IN LARGE FIGURES.

AT the station Schussler identified his tiger's eye in the one found on the prisoner, by a slight scratch on the surface, which he had carelessly made with a tool when adjusting the head. As to the other eye, he knew nothing, except that it was apparently intended for a substitute.

As the prisoners refused to explain their action, the first proof to bear out this theory was the discovery of a mystical inscription engraved on the reverse surface of the eye, backed by a transparent pigment to give it the appearance of being carved in the center.

Then followed the surprising expert decision that the eye was not of ordinary glass, as the Schusslers and every

one else supposed, but an emerald of great price.

Very quickly Schussler plucked out the tiger's other eye, but that proved an imitation closely resembling the one on the ledge.

Naturally the question followed as to whether both the tiger's eyes had been precious stones, and the prisoners had been successful with one of them in a former attempt? It was never definitely answered.

They would not say anything. Neither threats nor persuasion could extract a word. They refused to defend their action, and were convicted of attempted burglary and assault.

After a term of years in the penitentiary, where they maintained good conduct, they were released, and never heard of again.

Detective Sergeant Hogan, who was assigned to the case, trailed it backward as far as he could. There were merely the customhouse records, in which it was stated that the tiger-skin rug had been seized on a sailor attempting to smuggle, and for all that was now known of the sailor, he might have gone to Davy Jones' locker.

But by referring the matter to Professor Hoffman, the Orientalist, a little light was turned on the mystery. Professor Hoffman deciphered the inscription carved in the stone as the name of an idol of special sanctity, and consequently entitled to a blaze of jewels, in one of the great Hindu temples near Madras.

He gave it as his opinion that the rug had been used as a seat for the idol, that it was stolen by the sailor, and its wake had been subsequently taken up and followed to the United States.

As to its bearing on the fortune of the Schusslers, you have only to step into a first-class jeweler's and ask for an emerald of several carats weight and deep grass-green velvet shade, similar to that of the tiger's eye. If the jeweler has one of that size and quality, his chief trouble will be to fix the price high enough—away beyond diamonds and all other precious stones.

Consequently, when Schussler got a

bid of five thousand dollars, if it momentarily took his breath away, it very quickly made him wary. He smiled and shook his head.

"But I don't come here for a joke," he said. "This stone is the same as Russian sable, and when we bid for Russian sable—well—we talk business."

"But, Mr. Schussler," the merchant jeweler began to protest.

"All right," nodded Schussler indifferently, holding out his hand for the emerald, "I'll take it back."

But the jeweler retained the stone, gazing down into its marvelous depths almost lovingly.

"Well, what price do you set upon it?" he questioned.

Schussler leaned over a polished table in the merchant's office, fixed his eyes penetratingly on the other's face, and said slowly:

"Fifty thousand dollars."

What Schussler keenly noted was that while the jeweler affected astonishment he did not treat the price named with contempt.

There followed much dickering, consultations between the partners of the firm, and several trips back and forth by Schussler. Meanwhile he led Mrs. Schussler to believe that, after all, the stone was not worth much. Finally the

jeweler climbed to an offer of forty thousand dollars.

"And two thousand for Mrs. Schussler," added Schussler. "Just as you have your partners, so there is with me Mrs. Schussler. As it is, Mrs. Schussler says——"

The jeweler interposed, with a gesture, as if he had heard it all before and was weary of further argument. He simply wrote a check for forty-two thousand dollars and handed it over to Schussler.

Thereupon, Schussler went home in a taxi, grinning and waving his hand hilariously from the window to wondering acquaintances. His arrival in such fashion at first alarmed Mrs. Schussler.

"Have you gone crazy with that old tiger's eye?" she questioned.

Schussler did not reply, but, placing an arm around her waist, drew her into the shop. Then he produced the check, holding it before her astounded gaze.

"Look!" he exclaimed. "For ten dollars and ten cents we now get forty-two thousand. That old tiger rug was pretty good business, hey? Well, I think we put your brother in charge of the shop, and make a trip to Paris. Mr. Blumenburg, of the International Fur Company, who scatters money around everywhere—we go with him on the same ship."

When the Men Cats Met

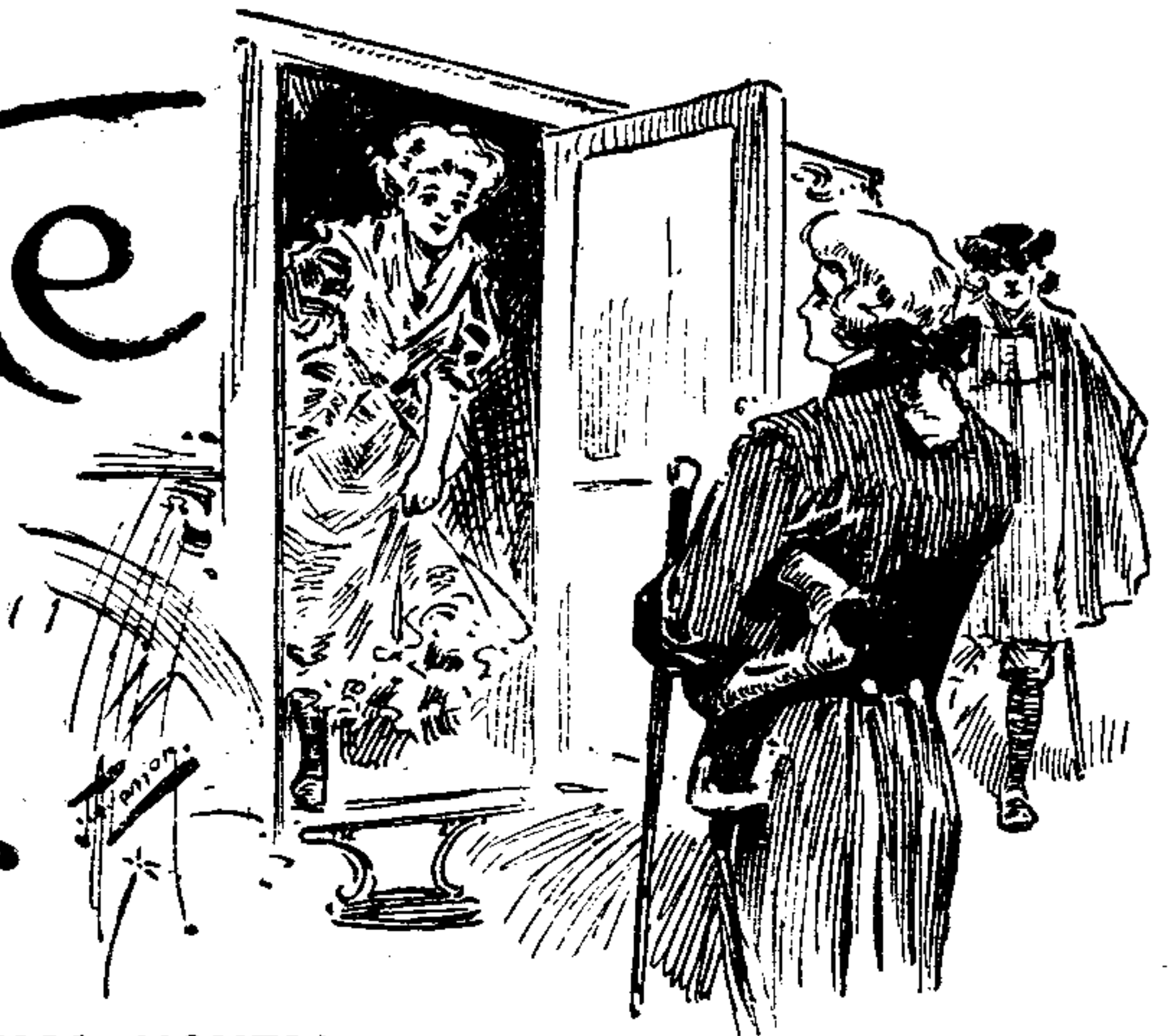
A BUNCH of lawyers were sleeping in a stuffy courtroom in a country town because of the overcrowded condition of the single hotel during a session of court," said a lawyer, "when one of them, a practical joker, possessing a remarkable faculty of imitating a cat, concluded to have fun out of it. After all of them had quieted down to sleep he started a plaintive moan like a cat. Another fellow on the opposite side of the room had a similar faculty of imitation, and was awakened by the noise of the supposed cat, and remarked to his next fellow:

"'Some darned cat got into the room. Just wait. I'll imitate a tabby and we'll catch the Tom.'

So the two began meowing at each other. The first supposed it was a real cat, and the room being extremely dark they kept approaching each other, each with a boot in hand to demolish the supposed cat. They got together finally, and then there was an act not down on the program. Each had aimed his boot well, and when a light was finally struck the two men were mixing it up badly in the center of the room, and it took the rest of the lawyers and the town doctor to get them in presentable shape for court the following day.

Will-o-the- Wisp

By W. Bert Foster



(A SERIAL NOVEL)

THE OPENING CHAPTERS

Condensed for those who have not
read them

Captain Roger Kemp, just returned from England, during the dark days of the Revolution, to seek his share of the estate of his late uncle, Michael Lawe, meets Major John Favor, of the British army, on one of the New Jersey roads on a dark, stormy night. Together they take refuge in the old Lawe mansion itself, and Roger Kemp then learns that Major Favor is also a nephew of Michael Lawe, and is there to claim the entire estate for himself.

They quarrel, and Favor accuses Kemp of being a rebel, and sends to the town for the British dragoons. While quarreling, Favor asks Kemp what possible hope the ragamuffin rebels have, and, as if in answer, a mysterious hand appears from the hangings on a balcony, and traces, in letters of fire upon the wall, the name of George Washington.

The dragoons arrive to seize Kemp, but he fights Major Favor, wounds him, and escapes from the house with the aid of the old servant, Barnaby Lamson. A mysterious light—like a will o' the wisp—guides him across the dangerous swamp, and he is hidden in a barn by the half-witted son of a rebel farmer.

On the following morning he obtains a horse and starts for Newark to join the rebel army, but decides to pay a call at the house of old Squire Perrine, whose daughter Sylvia he more than half suspects of being his mysterious guide across the swamp.

CHAPTER VII.

A MORNING CALL.

THE fog had disappeared, and the falling temperature improved the road, which had been a mire the night before. The ring of the horse's hoofs upon the rapidly freezing ground announced his coming before he entered the gateway of the Perrine estate, and when halfway up the avenue the young man sighted the squire himself on his veranda, peering under his hand to identify the approaching caller.

The sun was just rising, and its level rays interfered with the old gentleman's view; even when Kemp set his horse at a brisk canter, and waved his hand in greeting, it was plain that the squire did not know him.

Not until he drew rein before the steps, and turned squarely to look at his old acquaintance with his customary smile, did Perrine's frosty countenance melt into a cordial expression.

"I declare if it ain't Roger Kemp!" exclaimed the master of the house. "And I thought ye well off in England. Come in! Come in! You're in time for breakfast. Heard the old man was dead, I s'pose, so ye come with the rest of the crows to see if there were any pickings for you on his bones? He, he! You're all sold, I understand. This 'ere English officer, John Favor, is come to

seize the estate by law—if he kin find law enough in this colony to establish his rights. Come in! Come in! Glad to see ye, Roger.”

By this queer mixture of cordiality and depravity old Perrine clearly showed his nature. He was as hospitable as any old country squire, priding himself on keeping open house after the English custom; but his guests usually paid for their entertainment by enduring the unkind chatter of their host.

Kemp, however, long since used to Perrine's carping tongue, only smiled over this welcome, and, leaping off his horse, shook the old man warmly by the hand.

“I have come on a small errand, and am in haste, Mr. Perrine,” he said. “As for breakfast—well, I have already eaten; but I will keep you company at table for old-time's sake. You look hearty, squire.”

“An' so I be,” declared the old man. “Though I'm two year older than was Michael, ye see I outlast him—I outlast him! Come in, come in! I'll send the maid to hurry Sylvia down. You and she were always quarreling, Roger. Had ye been friendlier, like enough old Michael's property would now be yours. He wanted you an' my Sylvia to mate—that bee was ever buzzing in his bonnet.”

“I am afraid, Master Perrine, your little girl would scarcely have agreed to the arrangement,” Kemp said, striding into the house behind his host. “If I remember rightly, the last time I saw Sylvia she boxed my ears, and called me a ‘bumptious calf’—or such like pleasing name. I presume she is quite grown up now?”

“Grown up? Gad, she's a woman, and bosses us all. She's even got her old dad by the nose,” declared Perrine. But that did not so much impress Kemp, for he knew that little Mistress Sylvia had held sway over the household and every soul in it from her cradle.

They entered the long morning room, where a solemn black man stood behind the squire's chair at the head of the table—a servant in rich livery, a powdered wig twice the size of the squire's

own, and with silk stockings and silver-buckled shoes. Although the old gentleman was dressed not only plainly but carelessly himself, his household had little about it that was simple or democratic.

Kemp found no opportunity of stating his particular reason for visiting his old acquaintance, for the squire ran on about this and that, interspersing his invitations to his guest to partake of the viands which the servants brought on, with sharp comments upon persons with whom Kemp had been acquainted before he left the country.

“And I suppose you have come back to join in this play-war that has cursed us for months past—though, in truth, 'tis about over now?” the old gentleman suggested. “Our loyal young men are winning smiles from the women and easy glory in fighting these miserable ruffians who have overturned the peace of the colonies, and who would throw aside their allegiance to his majesty—Heaven preserve him! I understand that my Lord Cornwallis is close on the heels of that scoundrel Washington and his army of malcontents. Do you join him, Roger?”

Thus brought to a plain avowal of his intentions, and knowing the irascibility of the old gentleman, Kemp hesitated. But before Perrine could repeat the query, or be made suspicious by the young man's hesitancy, the door of the room opened, and there swept in a person whose appearance quite precluded the possibility of Kemp's replying to the squire's speech.

In the past Sylvia Perrine had seldom appeared before Kemp except in the guise of a harum-scarum girl, who tore her frocks, played with the boys, and was warranted to prick the bubble of his dignity. She mimicked him, and made him ridiculous, affronting him in innumerable ways, until Kemp declared her to be quite the most objectionable child he knew.

But this dignified—even haughty—young lady took away his breath. She would always be a doll-like creature; but she did not need height to give her dignity of bearing. Kemp was fairly

overwhelmed, and found himself stammering and blushing over the hand she gave him when he rose from the table to greet her.

"Hi, hi!" cackled old Perrine. "I told ye she'd grown out of all remembrance, Roger. Don't look much like the young 'un ye useter see flyin' about here on pony back, eh?"

"Father!" admonished Mistress Sylvia, and it was actually Kemp who showed confusion because of the squire's propensity to recall old times, instead of the girl herself. She welcomed him with a polite aloofness which did not add to Kemp's self-possession.

Nor did his frank amazement and admiration melt her heart. She knew he was comparing her present womanhood with her former self, and that alone was sufficient to afford her a wicked delight in making Roger Kemp as uncomfortable as possible. He could scarce believe that the little hoyden who once caused him such annoyance had bloomed into this exquisite and beautiful creature.

Her blond hair was still riotous, framing her face with a tangle of curls, and the smile which curved her lips now and then bore still some relation to the roguishness of her old expression. Aside from these attractions and her petite figure, there was nothing to remind him of the Sylvia Perrine that was.

He was truly amazed, and could not keep his gaze from her. His admiration heightened the color in her cheek; but her treatment of him was chilling. Kemp could not realize that the proud little lady and the girl whom he had once likened in his mind to an Indian squaw were one and the same. If she had been piqued in the past by his neglect of her, she took ample satisfaction for his crime now.

And she might easily punish him, for Roger Kemp had capitulated instantly. There must be recompense for most things we do, or suffer. If Kemp had ignored Sylvia as a child, she had it in her power to make him suffer for it now; and she proceeded to mete out this punishment lavishly. Her coldness and

brief replies to his most ingenious speeches finally brought the old squire himself to Kemp's rescue.

"Mistress Sylvia is in an icy mood this morning, Roger," he cackled. "Best let her be. Women are kittle-cattle—there's no understanding them. Come, boy! Tell us some'at of yourself. What brought ye home when the country's in such turmoil? Will ye try for military glory, which seems the fashion now?"

"I must admit that some such hope is in my mind. You have my sword, good Master Perrine, and I have come for it."

"Aye, so I have," cried the squire. "According to all I hear, the rebellion is already put down, so ye'll have little use for the weapon if ye do not wear it soon." And he laughed again. "Come, mistress!" to his daughter. "*You* know where this famous sword is kept, I have no doubt?"

For the first time Sylvia showed confusion. Her eyes sought Kemp's face for one little moment; but he was too abashed by now to look directly at her. Nor would he have understood her glance had he observed it. The girl recovered her composure instantly, called the black man from behind the squire's chair, and gave him some instructions in a low voice. Meanwhile the old man continued hammering at the unresponsive Kemp, with the hope of making a spark fly somewhere.

"Whom do ye join, Roger?" he asked. "Among the great friends ye must have made in England did none give ye letters to my Lord Cornwallis? They tell me some of his horse are already in our neighborhood. Yesterday it was the ragamuffin Continentals who marched by, and I had my servants out with arms, guarding the place. To-day I expect the king's troops will pass. One of the boys declare there is a party at Lawe House already. Have ye been there, Roger?"

Kemp admitted that he had spent the previous evening with old Barnaby Lamson, meanwhile watching the girl to see if she would show any consciousness, but her countenance was quite placid.

"Ha!" exclaimed the squire. "And has this Major John Favor arrived?"

"He has."

"Ho, ho!" cried the old man. "Now I see why ye are hurrying away from the neighborhood again. Ye found the British officer a Tartar, I've no doubt."

"We *did* have some little misunderstanding," said Kemp gravely.

The old man's eyes snapped, and he ceased eating to watch his guest intently, while his ruddy face flushed a deeper crimson. "Aye, aye," he cried. "And is *that* the bottom o' this desire of thine for the sword, Master Roger? A quarrel with the doughty major, eh?"

For the first time Kemp saw some little expression of interest come into Sylvia's countenance. She caught her breath suddenly, and flashed a look from her father to the young man. But the latter was so disturbed by the squire's words that he gained no advantage from the girl's new attitude. He felt that he must not leave a false impression as to his future intentions; yet he shrank from coming to an open rupture with the squire.

"I am afraid that Major Favor and I are not good friends," Kemp said slowly. "But I do not intend to seek a quarrel with him."

"Huh? No, no! Ye ever were a mild-mannered young whelp!" snarled the old man. "More milk and water in your veins than good red blood, I warrant ye! And yet you will offer your sword to the king's cause, eh? Luckily, the war is near over, Master Roger."

Kemp's cheek paled, but he knew the squire's tongue of old. He said nothing in reply, and at the moment a maid entered, bearing his long-disused sword and belt, wrapped in a length of homespun linen. She gave the weapon into Mistress Sylvia's hands, and the old man began to cackle and gibe again.

"Ha! wilt thou buckle on the hero's sword in true romantic fashion, eh, Mistress Sylvia? Although he mayhap has come 'too late for the fair,' as the saying is, Roger has a fine figure on which to parade a red coat."

"Be still, father!" the girl exclaimed sharply.

She called the maid back, thrust the sword into her hands again, and pointed haughtily to Kemp across the table. "Give it to the gentleman, Matilda," she commanded.

Kemp's confusion and anger set the squire off into a brutal gale of laughter. He was used to his daughter's usurpation of command, and paid no attention to her attempt to overawe him.

"Haw, haw!" roared he, his mottled cheeks crimsoned and distended, and his wicked eyes twinkling. "What say you to *that*, Sylvia? Roger is as good a tree as another to hang a uniform upon, eh? They say it needs nine tailors to make a man, and I've the idea it takes near as many students to make a soldier. Roger was always a brave man with the books, an', by gad! he *played* at soldiering on training day with the best of them, I'member. What d'ye suppose he would do in a *real* scrimmage, now?"

But Kemp had endured quite enough, and as he rose to receive the sword from the maid, he interrupted the squire's harangue:

"Without intending disrespect to you, Mr. Perrine, who are a much older man than I, I must beg Mistress Sylvia's permission to retire before I suffer further indignity at your hands. Your years protect you, sir!"

"Gad! the bantam crows well. It pleases me to see ye show some spirit, Master Roger. But ye need not take offense at an old fellow who might have been your father, eh?"

"Thank Heaven you were not!" exclaimed the exasperated Kemp, turning from the door quickly. "I shall not come here again to be insulted. Indeed, considering the step I am about to take, I should not be welcomed here again—even to enact the bull's-eye for your shafts of wit, sir. I go to join the American army at Newark!"

"What's that, sir?" cried the squire, stung instantly to vicious rage, lumbering out of his chair and striding after Kemp. "D'ye mean I've harbored a villainous rebel—that you've dared come here under false pretenses?"

"Accuse me of nothing unbecoming a gentleman, Master Perrine!" interrupted

Kemp furiously. "I made no protestations of loyalty to King George or the cause you espouse. I am a man, sir, who will ever choose for himself, and I have decided which side I may take in this controversy, after weighing the claims of both."

"You dare beard me in my own house, sirrah?" gasped the squire. "I'd had my blacks whip ye off the place had I known *this* were your mood. And if I were twenty years younger ye'd not leave this room without measuring that sword ye bear 'gainst mine own!"

"Abel Perrine was once too honorable a gentleman to threaten a guest—and withal one who is withheld from replying," Kemp said savagely.

"Ha! And Abel Perrine had never before a rebel scoundrel to face him down in his own house!" roared the squire, shaking his hairy fist before the young man's face. "Had I known what ye were, I'd sent for some of the king's horse, and delivered ye up to them. I'll have ye know I give no shelter to a traitor to the king!"

Before Kemp could reply, the door was thrown open at his back by the black man who had previously left the room.

"Yo' done got a visitor, Mars' Perrine!" the serving man exclaimed. "Here be Majah John Favah, f'om Lawe House." And sharp upon the heels of the announcement the British officer strode into the room.

CHAPTER VIII.

A HORNET'S NEST.

IN entering thus abruptly the morning room of Perrine House, Major Favor faced the excited squire, and saw, as well, Mistress Sylvia behind him; but he overlooked Roger Kemp, who, upon the opening of the door by the servant, was somewhat behind it.

"I speak with Mr. Abel Perrine, I presume?" the British officer said, scarcely giving the squire a glance, for his glittering eyes had observed the girl instantly, and his gaze became focused upon her.

Sylvia drew back with a little gasp,

and her lovely face grew white and dead, while into her eyes suddenly shot the stony glare of fear.

Her father and Kemp were both too deeply engaged in their observation of Favor to notice her emotion; even when the major swept off his hat and bowed low to her.

"I am indeed fortunate," murmured Major Favor, "to find Mistress Perrine, likewise, so early astir."

Then he looked back at the old man, who, red-faced and gasping like a fish suddenly removed from its element, stared at the major with bulging eyes.

"I am so new a neighbor, sir, that perhaps you do not know my name; but I hope to settle in this pleasant country, and I am glad that a small duty gave me excuse for my early ride to your door."

Then suddenly, although neither of the trio who had occupied the breakfast room previous to his unexpected entrance said a word, he became aware of the presence of another person.

He turned questioningly to look at Kemp. Instantly his own face flamed with color, and his thin lips, wonted to sarcastic expression, wreathed in a smile.

"What, Master Kemp? Is it you again? Then, by Heaven, we are indeed well met!"

Kemp had had these few seconds in which to recover some measure of his composure. Mild as was his usual manner, and naturally patient with the old man who had so insulted him, at the last he had been provoked to an expression of rage which, he knew, ill befitted him. But now, although his passions were at white heat, he gave little outward sign of the turmoil within as he returned Major John Favor's scrutiny with a bold glance.

"Badly met, I should say, major," he replied. "Have you a troop of horse behind you this morning, or are we man to man?"

The British officer's cheek paled with rage, and he strode another step into the room, flinging to the door behind him. "You will find me, sir, quite able to uphold any private quarrel I may have, without assistance."

"But not *here*, sir," said Kemp swiftly, dropping his studied coolness. "Remember that we are in this gentleman's home," with a gesture toward Perrine and the frightened girl at the farther end of the room. "Another time——"

"Another time does not suit *me*, Master Kemp," interrupted Favor. "As for this gentleman, I understood that he was a loyal subject of King George. But when I find *you* here——"

"And you are right!" cried Perrine himself, finding his voice. "A faithful subject I am. This fellow came here under false pretenses; I believed he was loyal. And I was driving him from my house when *you* entered, Major Favor. I know who ye are, sir, and I shall prove my friendliness toward you in future time, I hope; but now I declare that it is my wish and desire to see this young hound apprehended as the traitor he proves to be!"

There was a faint cry from the lower end of the room, but the three men were too excited to notice it, or to look at Sylvia. Perrine had seized Kemp by the sleeve as though he feared he would escape before he could explain his own position to the British officer.

"Were I twenty years younger," vowed the old man, "I'd measure swords with him myself. Here he dares come to me and demand and receive his sword from my hand, letting me believe until it is in his possession that he will offer it to Lord Cornwallis. And then—*then*," pursued Perrine, nearly frothing at the mouth in his rage, "he declares he is on his way to join that despicable Washington and his ruffians at Newark! You have it in your power to stop him, and I say do it! He is a spy and traitor, I have no doubt, and came into this neighborhood for no good purpose, I'll be bound!"

Favor seemed, during this tirade, to measure the situation keenly. He saw what manner of man Perrine was, and knew that, in his rage, the squire would allow the laws of hospitality to be forgotten. He now looked upon Kemp with authority.

"Hand me your sword, sir; you are my prisoner," he said. "I will not dis-

grace you—or our host—by fighting you here; but you must yield——"

"Sir!" exclaimed Kemp—and his eyes flashed and his bosom heaved with the passion it contained—"sir, you have me at some disadvantage; and you would take this foolish old man at his word. But let me tell you that no man shall take this sword from me without first proving himself able! Let us step through yonder window to the lawn and try conclusions, if ye do not care to await a more fitting time. But if ye would take my sword—then fight for it!"

At the ringing challenge, John Favor's sword leaped from its scabbard. That there was truth in Kemp's conclusion spurred his rage the deeper, and, thus roweled, it knew no bounds.

"Ye shall have need to fight, then," he cried. "Guard yourself!"

"Not *here*!" gasped Kemp, struggling with the windings of the linen about his weapon. "Remember Mistress Sylvia!"

"At him, man!" cried the wildly enraged squire to Favor. "Let him not hide behind the skirts of my wench."

The major, after a swift glance around, looked again at Kemp sneeringly. "I see no lady here, Master Kemp. Will you fight me here and now, or shall I run you through, as you deserve?"

Kemp shot a glance to the extremity of the room and saw that, noiselessly and without a word, Sylvia had disappeared. She had removed herself from the scene that there might not be found in her presence an obstruction to this dastardly attack upon him.

That old Abel Perrine should forget what was due his own honor, as well as the safety of his guest, was not surprising; his passion, once aroused, had always been ungovernable. But even in this moment of excitement and actual peril, Kemp was moved by the apparent heartlessness of the girl.

He remembered once finding her years before, on her knees in the barnyard at Lawe House, weeping bitterly over the lamed leg of some mongrel cur which had got under the horses' heels; true, she had flown at him in the guise

of a little fury when she observed him watching her; yet Kemp knew the hoyden had a tender heart in her bosom, because of this incident.

Bitterly he told himself now, that the metamorphosis of the riotous tomboy into a bewitching and lovely woman had not added those tender graces which more than aught else enhance the female character. Her departure from the room at this juncture was little short of cruel.

And it seemed, try as he might, that Favor would disarm him, if nothing worse, before he could wrench his own weapon free of the clinging linen.

He was by far the lighter man, however, and he eluded the major's early thrusts by leaping backward, and from side to side.

Finally, finding that he was not to be given a fair field and equal favor, and believing his antagonist might really disable him, Kemp kicked over a heavy chair, so that it fell directly in Favor's path. The major cursed him, and leaped the barrier.

But now Kemp had freed his sword hilt, and, with one motion, drew the weapon from its scabbard, throwing both scabbard and accouterments behind him.

He deflected the major's thrust with a skill which showed him no novice in the art of sword play, and, instead of following the defensive, he charged upon his enemy before the latter could entirely recover from his leap over the chair.

He bore Favor back and back, until the bulkier man was halted by the wall. The clash of steel brought the servants running to the room, but the old squire, beside himself with excitement and rage, kept them back and out of the way of the duelists. The latter were so desperately intent upon the game that they scarce saw anything but the whites of each other's eyes and the sparks which flew from the blades.

Thrust and parry, undercut, stroke—all the various moves of the game as practiced by the swordsmen of that day, were tried by the antagonists. Favor was a more than ordinarily keen swords-

man, although he knew little but that which was taught in barracks; if Kemp possessed a more scientific knowledge of fencing, his enemy's greater bulk and strength balanced such skill.

Only for a moment did Kemp manage to hold Favor against the wall; then it was the other way—the American was forced back, and back, across the end of the room, eluding the pieces of furniture with consummate skill, but unable to retard the advance of the British officer.

He was being forced toward the long windows opening upon the broad piazza of Perrine House. These windows opened like doors, but through Kemp's keenly awakened memory there flashed the thought that the windows swung inward. Had it been otherwise he might have dashed them open and escaped, for he knew himself to be, under the present conditions, no match for John Favor.

Besides, should the chance open for him to thrust the major through, how could he do it here? He knew he must withhold his hand, for, although old Perrine had forgotten every call of honorable decency, *he* had not! When he had regained his self-control, Abel Perrine would never forgive himself if murder were done in his house. And it was plain that Favor was eager to see a tragic finish to the bout.

Suddenly, however, Kemp felt the chill outer air blowing upon him, and, casting a momentary glance sideways, he saw that a pair of the windows had swung softly open, pushed by some hidden hand without. For a breath he feared the presence of another enemy in his rear; then he saw that neither his antagonist nor the squire seemed to notice the opening of the windows.

Once again they began a circuit of this end of the room. The point of Favor's heavier sword had pricked Kemp's wrist once, and the wound smarted. Perrine had thrown aside several pieces of furniture to give them footroom, and the way being clearer and Favor forcing the fight, Kemp retreated more swiftly than before.

Suddenly, above the clash of the

blades and the screams of the women servants, the young man caught a noise from without. In the distance sounded the rattle of horses' hoofs. Along the road they charged, bearing down upon Perrine House.

Whoever came by that road was no friend of his, Kemp knew. He could not hope for succor; but he dreaded the appearance of the dragoons.

Keenly as he was alive to every move of his antagonist, and unwavering as were his blade and eye, back in his brain was the thought that, whether Favor worsted him or not, in the end he was bound to lose the fight.

He heard the horses flounder through a half-frozen puddle by the gateway.

Kemp was indeed in a hornet's nest! Favor's bloodshot eyes looked murder into his own. Kemp's obstinate defense and skillful handling of his sword had inspired the British officer to ungovernable rage.

Although his enemy's strokes were more desperately delivered, Kemp dared not risk a thrust, for he had no wish himself to kill the man. The whole affair had happened in the heat of momentary passion, and he had no deadly feud with the Englishman.

His desire to escape with his life and liberty, however, was Kemp's principal thought. If he remained, although Favor might not kill him, the coming troop of cavalry would surely make him a prisoner. Some mysterious agency had given him a single chance of escape, and he grasped it.

As they came around a second time to the open windows, he leaped suddenly sideways, threw down a screen to cover his retreat, and plunged out of the window upon the piazza just as the troop of British horse came into view, charging furiously up the drive!

CHAPTER IX.

MID THE CLASH OF ARMS.

LIKE the eager yap, yap of the hounds when the pack sights the fox rose the yell from the charging squad of British horse as Kemp, sword in hand, whirled into view through the

open window. In some way they had learned of the presence, at Perrine House, of the fugitive for whom the countryside had been beaten during the night, and at once concluded that this armed man must be he.

Within the house was a great hulla-balloo at Kemp's unexpected move. The shrieks of the women servants could have been heard a bowshot away; now the angry voices of Favor and Squire Perrine added to the din. They had charged the open window by which the prey had escaped, and, retarded by the screen Kemp had overthrown, and both eager to get through the opening first, the excited men blocked each other's efforts.

This gave the fugitive an instant's respite. After his first glance at the coming dragoons, his eyes sought the unknown friend who had opened the swinging panes; but the piazza was deserted. He was free for the moment; the sweets of liberty would quickly turn to ashes in his mouth, however, did he not find some means of making it secure.

The pursuit he principally feared was that of the horsemen. They could overtake him far quicker than his recent antagonist; and, believing that Major Favor's horse was still held before the main entrance of the great house, Kemp fled toward the rear.

The broad piazza, its roof upheld by fluted wooden pillars, was built on two sides, as well as on the front of the mansion. Before the horsemen could send a single ball in his direction, Kemp was around a corner. Instantly he beheld a horse upon the side driveway, out of sight of the dragoons; it was the one on which he had ridden from Langdon's early that morning.

He was convinced the squire had sent this horse to the stables when he urged its rider to the breakfast table. Who, then, had ordered it saddled again and brought around here at this moment of need?

The horse was in charge of a small black boy—Squire Perrine was one of the several Jersey colonists who owned a number of slaves—and when Kemp

darted into view the boy's expectant face wreathed itself in smiles. He beckoned eagerly as the young man halted in amazement, and instantly Kemp understood that the friend who had opened the window for him had arranged this, as well. He vaulted the piazza railing, and ran to the horse.

"Yo' git erway by de orchard paf, Mars' Roger!" squealed the little darky, whom Kemp now recognized as a one-time personal retainer of the squire's harum-scarum daughter. "Dat British-er's hoss done been took to de stable, an' he's saddle's off by now! Git, Mars' Roger! Git!"

"Your mistress will have you whipped for this, Ginger!" cried Kemp, as he vaulted into the saddle.

"Yah! yah! don' yo' worry 'bout me, sah!" cackled the excited darky. "Off widjer!"

He struck the horse a resounding slap upon its flank, and the beast sprang into a gallop before Kemp was fairly seated.

The escape had evidently been planned before the dragoons came into view; yet Kemp saw that it would be best to follow instructions, trusting himself wholly to the guidance of his unknown friend. It was plain that, although Squire Perrine and his daughter were such rank Tories, there were members of the household who supported the American cause.

His sudden appearance and bounding into the saddle had startled what spirit there might be in the sorry nag with which Hughey Langdon had supplied him, and the beast needed no urging through the rear premises of Perrine House. He saw the stablemen watching from the doorways of the outbuildings, where they had been engaged in the early morning chores; but none strove to thwart his escape.

Kemp slapped the horse again with the flat of his sword and shot into the long orchard lane like a bolt from a crossbow. From the front of the great house rose a confusion of voices; evidently the dragoons had halted to receive instructions from Major Favor. That retarded them but a minute; be-

fore Kemp reached the foot of the lane the British horse appeared on his trail.

Behind them came Favor and the old squire, both shouting lustily to the stablemen to bring up the officer's steed.

Between the pursuing phalanx and the fugitive was the darky, skimming the ground like a winged Mercury. He reached the head of the lane in advance of the troop of horse.

A heavy five-barred gate swung here to shut off the lane, making of it a paddock for the horses or young cattle to run in, and with a flying leap the black boy threw himself against it. It swung creakingly over on its huge wrought-iron hinges and slammed against the latchpost directly in the path of the dragoons.

Their shouts changed instantly to execrations upon the darky who, worming himself between the lower bars of the gate, padded down the lane at top speed, paying but slight attention to all the threats and oaths which followed him.

He had another duty to perform, and Kemp saw what it was, and thanked his unknown benefactor fervently.

The troop of horsemen had come so suddenly upon the closed gate that they were not prepared to jump it, and must either stop for it to be opened, or wheel back for a proper start before surmounting the obstruction. At this lower end of the lane was another gate, and the darky boy intended closing it, likewise.

As Kemp shot through, entering between the rows of apple and peach trees, he saw that this was a much taller gate, and that probably no horse in the pack of his pursuers would be able to leap it. The troop would be retarded at both ends of the lane, and every moment's delay counted in his favor.

He knew the country very well; he had ridden to the squire's hounds and taken part in cross-country rides, in imitation of the old English custom, more than once in the past years. Free of the lane, and with the yells of pursuit growing fainter in his ears, he spurred his steed to greater effort, making for a pass in the hills which would bring

him out upon another highroad, and one which he hoped would be free of the British troops.

The sounds of pursuit finally died away. When he topped a rise in Perrine's great sheep pasture, he looked back and saw the crowd of horsemen at the lower lane gate. One horse seemed to be down, and the troop was still delayed.

He drew in his own mount, knowing that the beast was laboring sorely, and pursued the way more slowly. When the redcoats came in sight again it would be time enough to urge the creature to another heartbreaking effort; a cart horse cannot be expected to do the work of a thoroughbred.

As he jogged on, Kemp's thought fastened upon the query that had been in his mind since the moment he saw the windows at Perrine House swing open, affording him opportunity for escape. This query dealt with the identity of his unknown friend. Who was there about Perrine House who felt interest enough to aid him?

As far as he had seen, the darky boy and the stablemen were all who had to do with his escape; yet there must have been a governing mind—somebody in authority at the head of the plan.

Mistress Sylvia and her father had shown so plainly their unfriendliness that he wondered much how any person under the Perrine roof dared aid him. Who could it have been, and who, in sooth, had guided him across the swamp from Lawe House the night before? These two incidents and the trick of the hand writing in fire, seemed to be all of a piece.

The root of the mystery was with Barnaby Lamson; Kemp felt sure that the old serving man could explain; but it might be many a day before he dared call at Lawe House again. Not only had he lost hope of ever finding the will of Michael Lawe, but Major John Favor was in possession of the property, and would hold it by might, if not by right! The Continental troops were being swept across Jersey before the advancing redcoats, and the volunteers

were mainly dispersed. This part of the country was completely lost to the Americans, and he must ride as far as Newark before overtaking the army.

He rode through the narrow pass in the hills and down to the old road beyond. The day remained overcast and chill, and the sound of his horse's hoofs on the frozen earth and through the ice-crusted puddles might be heard half a mile away. He could be tracked by these sounds, and, remembering a hidden path which led around the town and rejoined the highway beyond it, he forced his mount through the hedge and into the open wood until he came upon this sheep track.

It proved a rough way, and already the horse was badly winded; Kemp saw that it could not keep up for long, even upon smooth ground. If his enemies appeared now he would have to surrender; but he hoped that he had succeeded in throwing the dragoons off his trail. It was now mid-forenoon, and he was still in the vicinity of Morristown. The old horse fairly hobbled, and Kemp felt some compunction in riding it farther.

Suddenly he beheld several men running from the shelter of a clump of saplings some yards in advance. For an instant he feared he had fallen into a trap; then he saw that he was not discovered, and drew up his tired horse. The strangers looked like farmer folk of the vicinity, and they skulked across the path and descended the hill toward the not far distant highway. Kemp leaped from the saddle and pushed through a brush clump afoot to watch them.

They were surely not British men-at-arms, for they wore no uniform. He knew many of the American military companies were not supplied with uniforms; but all were distinguished by some bit of color, or a cockade, in their hats.

"Cowboys, or skimmers, by my soul!" muttered the fugitive.

And whichever guess proved true, he was not anxious to fall into their hands. Although the first named were supposed to be Tories, and the latter claimed affiliation with the Americans, both

preyed upon the weak and helpless of either party in the controversy.

He was on rising ground, and could overlook some considerable territory. Below, between the hill and a broad marsh, was the Newark road. The disreputable-looking fellows had gained shelter in a thicket, and he dared not move his horse while they crouched there, for fear they would see him. The steed stood, with drooping head, its feet planted far apart, and breathing sobbingly, as though completely wind-broken. Kemp dared call no pursuit now, even from men afoot.

The general demeanor of the group below him precluded their being fugitives themselves. The secrecy they displayed in taking their places in the thicket spelled peril to some traveler. Being without weapon save for his sword, he had not the means to assist any weaker party who might be the lurkers' prey; but he held to his own shelter, and watched with breathless interest.

He cast a glance behind, over the path by which he had come, to see that no enemy crept up in his rear. He felt himself in momentary danger—and from more than one direction. Therefore, the sudden sound of rapidly beating hoofs upon the frost-hardened highway excited him immediately. That only one horseman was coming saved him from instant—and perhaps disastrous—flight.

The pounding hoofs were still at some distance. He glanced down into the thicket where the men were lurking, and knew by their eager actions that they meant injury to the approaching horseman. There were five of them, each armed with a long-barreled musket or fowling piece, and they lay in a position to sweep the road with a hail of shot.

From the direction of the sound, and in consideration of the fears Kemp himself had of being overtaken by the enemy, he believed the approaching rider to be a British soldier. These men were likely neighboring farmers, or allies of the patriot army, bent upon harassing the redcoats. Should he, who had so

boldly espoused the American cause that very morning, try to save one of the enemy?

Yet horror filled his soul at thought of the coming rider being shot from ambush; to his mind even the exigencies of warfare could not excuse such a crime. He was tempted to spring from concealment and shriek a warning to the victim.

Yet he knew he could not be heard by the rider, and, by showing himself, would only attract the attention of the armed men. Had he possessed a pistol he would have attempted a rescue, for a ball sent into the middle of the clump of bushes might quickly disperse the guerrillas. Men who would thus lay in ambush for a victim must be cowards at heart, and easily frightened.

He heard the rider coming hotfoot over the frozen road, saw the guerrillas in the thicket prepare their weapons, and knew that he could do nothing to stay their hands—absolutely nothing! Death was hovering over that lonely spot, and thus far Kemp had been a stranger to death. It was as though he were a spectator to a hanging, with the gruesome gibbet before him in readiness for the victim.

There was a flash of color through the wood; the rider passed an opening swiftly, but so far away that Kemp could not tell what manner of man he was or how he was dressed.

Another flash of color appeared nearer the thicket. Then Kemp saw the horse and rider, the former a deep-chested bay, which carried its master nobly. The man leaned well forward in the saddle, urging the horse with whip and spur. Kemp caught a glimpse of a cocked hat and buff-and-blue coat—the uniform of a Continental. The discovery shocked him, for he had believed the endangered rider to be a king's man.

Would the skulkers below in the thicket let him pass? The question was asked in Kemp's mind, and answered in a flash—literally in a flash of gunpowder! The horse and rider reached the thicket; up rose the five guerrillas, and their pieces blazed simultaneously.

None of the bullets hit the fright-

ened horse; but the man flung his hands above his head and rolled from the saddle. The horse spurned him with its heels as he fell, then continued its mad gallop along the road, while the guerrillas burst from the bushes in an ineffectual attempt to catch the frightened beast.

The highway curved here about the foot of the hill, and Kemp, standing horrified above the bloody scene, saw that the riderless horse must finally circle around toward his own position. Run as they might, it would be long ere the murderers could overtake it; but *he* had a chance to head it off.

Risking exposure and the chance that one of the five might still have a load in his gun, Kemp broke cover and dashed down the hillside. He was instantly observed, and a wild shout went up from the cowboys; if he did not reach the roadway in season to capture the horse, his fate would be that of the Continental. This thought spurred him.

Plainly, the fallen soldier was dead, for all five of the guerrillas followed the bay, intent on heading off Kemp, and without halting to rob their first victim. Kemp ran straight down the hill, soon losing sight of the scoundrels, while the hoofstrokes of the bay sounded more faintly in his ears. Then they grew louder; the riderless horse had rounded the turn and was coming down the stretch toward the point at which Kemp hoped to intercept it.

CHAPTER X.

WASHINGTON.

A HORSE will not run as well under an empty saddle as when feeling the weight and guidance of a rider, and the bay's pace began to flag before Kemp sighted it again. But it still came on so rapidly that the yelling cowboys were well distanced, while Kemp himself was not at all sure that he could head the beast off.

He risked his life and limb plunging down the steep descent into the roadway, and when he reached it the bay was not many yards away. His appearance startled the animal, which stopped,

throwing up its head and half wheeling to return by the way it had come.

It was a desperately anxious moment. If the horse escaped him, not only would it fall into the hands of his enemies, but those same enemies would surely overtake him. The fate of the horse's rider would be his own. He had now gone beyond the neighborhood familiar to him, and these five guerrillas were doubtless natives. They could easily run him down unless he caught the horse and got away by its aid.

He sprang forward, knowing that to approach the creature slowly would only give it opportunity to escape. The reason man controls creatures of such greater bulk and strength than himself is because of his ability to think quicker.

But the bay, frightened by the explosion of the guns and the fall of its rider from the saddle, was easily panic-stricken now. Kemp's approach was the signal for it to rear upon its haunches, preparatory to taking the back track. Fortunately for the fugitive, however, at that very moment the guerrillas appeared in sight, and set up a yell of satisfaction, believing that Kemp had lost the horse and that neither man nor brute could escape them.

In a flash the big bay wheeled again, standing almost upright. When its fore hoofs struck the frozen roadway, Kemp gripped the bridle. Snorting and terrified, the bay tried to pull away; but the excited yelping of the pursuers frightened it more than the calm voice of Kemp. The latter ran a soothing hand along the brute's back, secured a grip on the pommel, and before the bay could bolt again, was in the saddle.

The horse was off like a shot. There was no stopping it then, had Kemp so desired, and he was only too glad to distance the scoundrels who had murdered the former rider.

War is an awful thing at best; but this that he had observed in the lonely piece of road was sheer murder. So enraged was he with the bloody cowboys, that, had the saddle holsters contained pistols, he would have tried to turn his mount, spur down upon them before their weapons could be reloaded, and

take summary vengeance for the Continental's death.

There were no weapons in the holsters, however; undoubtedly the soldier had worn his horse pistols in his boots—a trick not at all uncommon at that time. But as Kemp fled on the bay, leaning forward in the saddle and gathering up the reins with caution, his right hand sought the holster on that side, and his fingers clutched a packet pushed well down into the pistol pocket. For the moment he was too closely engaged in gaining control of the frightened horse to go into the matter more deeply; but when the pursuers were distanced and the horse had settled into an easy stride, Kemp drew the packet from the holster.

Before unpinning the bit of cloth about it he was sure that its contents were dispatches. There had been more than robbery in the shooting of the Continental; his capture of the horse was perhaps a lucky stroke. The documents were valuable, for upon the parchment wrapper was written in a bold hand: "These, To His Exc'l'ncy, Gen'l George Washington, by Jn. Cadwallader."

Kemp was not so ignorant of colonial affairs, and of Philadelphia in particular, as not to know who John Cadwallader was. The son of the Philadelphia physician was high in the best social circles of the City of Brotherly Love, and to Kemp had drifted the news that Cadwallader was not only a member of the Committee of Safety, but was a warm friend of this Virginia colonel who had been placed in command of the Continental army. These dispatches, then, must be of moment.

It smote Kemp at once that no better introduction to General Washington was needed than this fortunate incident. If he could carry the papers himself to the headquarters of the American forces, his introduction to the commander in chief would be assured.

He was on an unfamiliar road, but he knew he was going in the right direction. It was not long before he began to pass houses again, for even in those days there were not many untenanted lands in Jersey. He had to ride slower, how-

ever, for, despite the pluck of the big bay, it was plain he had been ridden far by his former master. Kemp had abandoned the wind-broken old plug that Hughey had found for him without much compunction; but this bay was far too fine a creature to ruin needlessly.

Kemp saw people at their windows, or working about the cow yards; these were mostly decrepit men, or women and children. Nobody hailed him, but many gazed after him eagerly as he pressed on his tired horse. It was strange that he met no scouting or foraging parties, for if the British horse was so near Morristown, and to the westward of Newark, the Orange Mountains should have been overrun with these gentry.

So it was that when he did finally sight a group of mounted men by the roadside he greatly feared they were of the enemy, until he saw the cocked hats and buff-and-blue coats. It was an outpost of General Washington's army.

The troop was patrolling the road, guarding that way into Newark from a possible flanking party of the enemy. When Kemp came into view some of them prepared to receive him in anything but a friendly spirit. The fugitive, however, had already made up his mind as to how best to meet such an emergency, and he spurred on his tired horse, waving the packet of papers above his head.

His pantomime was understood. Although nobody in the troop knew him, the dispatches spoke for themselves, and the flagging pace of the big bay told more.

One man instantly dismounted and led his horse out into the open road for the dispatch bearer's use. The others filed across the way to make sure of Kemp's capture, should he not prove all right.

A glance at the directions on the outside of the packet reassured them, however. "That's the fist of the captain of the Silk Stocking Company, to be sure!" declared the sergeant in charge of the squad. "Ye be in haste, sir, and your horse is spent. Take this fresher one."

Kemp was already out of the saddle,

and he ran to the other horse as soon as the packet was returned. "Direct me to headquarters," he begged. "This must reach General Washington's hand immediately."

"Where ye may find his excellency I know not," said the sergeant, "unless it be at Master Hedden's, who is a stanch old Whig as ever was. But ye'll meet those farther on who may direct ye more nearly."

The bay was led to one side; but the man whose steed Kemp had mounted did not instantly let go of that bridle. "Are ye bad wounded?" he asked curiously.

"No—'tis only a scratch," Kemp assured him as he gathered up the reins, displaying his wrist where Major Favor had pinked him.

"Ye've bled like a stuck pig, then," declared the man. "See the tails of your coat, sir!"

Surprised, Kemp turned in the saddle. But the horse under him, feeling him settled in the stirrups, was eager for the road. He sprang forward, jerking away from the restraining hand of the private. At the same moment a shout rose from the group gathering about Kemp's former mount.

"See the blood! The saddle's full of it. Stop that fellow!" roared the sergeant.

But Kemp was already under way, and had his hands full with his new mount. He had obtained a single glance at the saddle he had just vacated, and saw that it was splotched with crimson. Undoubtedly his own garments were daubed with blood, too—the blood of the poor fellow who had been shot out of the bay's saddle!

To punctuate the order of the sergeant, a pistol barked, and Kemp heard the slug sing past his ear. Involuntarily he leaned forward in his saddle, and the steed he had mounted raced away without further urging. It was a reckless act, but blind impulse spurred him to it. To be halted and examined by this squad regarding the death of the unfortunate dispatch bearer was no part of Roger Kemp's plan.

With the dispatches in his possession,

or with proof that he had delivered them as promptly as possible, he was sure of a welcome at the headquarters of General Washington. He determined to go on now, and risk investigation into the matter afterward. To be brought a prisoner into the Continental camp, despoiled of the dispatches which might reach their destination by other hands, was not at all to his taste.

He risked the bullets, and spurred on. Fortunately, the sergeant had selected the best horse in his troop for the service of the dispatch bearer, and that one shot was all that sped after the fleeing man. But some of the troop took up the pursuit, and for half a mile the race was a close one.

The outlying dwellings of Newark were already in sight, and through a break in the wood, across a great pasture, the fugitive saw a brigade of Continentals marching along a parallel road. He knew he should soon be in the midst of the army which had been billeted upon the Newark folk, Whig and Tory alike.

At that day the village was a bustling place of not less than a thousand inhabitants, and, like most other Jersey towns, almost equally divided in sentiment. Neither Whigs nor Tories were passive; when the American troops were in command the patriotically inclined people forced their Tory neighbors to remain very quiet indeed; when the British were near the shoe was on the other foot! Just now, Kemp was sure, had the Whigs come across that company of cowboys who had shot the dispatch bearer, the five of them would have been given short shrift.

He did not desire to fall into the hands of any of the recruits; for with the troop of horse thundering down the road on his trail it would be difficult to urge the truth of his story. Therefore, he was glad when he again saw buff-and-blue uniforms ahead, and pulled up his horse in the face of a file of infantry which, with leveled muskets, were deployed across the highway.

"Dismount, you, sir!" exclaimed the corporal in command. "Give an account of yourself."

"I bear dispatches for General Washington," declared Kemp boldly. "Detain me not, for I am in haste."

"And somebody comes in haste behind ye," remarked the corporal dryly. "Whom have we here? Not redcoats, I'll be bound!"

"No, no!" exclaimed Kemp. "It is true I am being chased by a troop of your own horse; but I could not stop to explain. See! here are my dispatches—from Mr. John Cadwallader to the general himself."

"Wait a bit! wait a bit!" cried the corporal, seizing the bridle of the horse as Kemp would have pushed through. "Unless ye desire the feel of cold steel, hold in your beast. We'll hear what these who come in pursuit have to say. Ha! Some of Wayne's lighthorse, as I live!"

Around a turn in the road came the sergeant and his men, and Kemp despairingly gave up all as lost. "Hold the villain!" yelled the officer, immediately on seeing Kemp and the infantry. "He's likely a spy. Those dispatches are stolen, or my name's Ananias! Hold him!"

The footmen crowded around, and Kemp was like to be seized and dragged from his saddle. He raised his bare sword, tempted to sweep it about him and so clear the path, and the threatening gesture made them stand back; but there were enough muskets pointed at him for their charges to blow his head to bits if he attempted escape.

Naught but the sword in Kemp's hand saved him from being borne at once to the ground. It looked as though he would enter the American camp a prisoner; when these horsemen told their story at headquarters he might have great difficulty in satisfactorily explaining matters.

But fate interfered most unexpectedly, and in Roger Kemp's favor. Before anybody could lay hold upon him, the sound of other horsemen drew near. A cavalcade of rather brilliantly uniformed officers was approaching, and of a sudden both horse and footmen fell back from the dispatch bearer, and every man's hand rose in salute. Kemp was

left alone in the center of the road upon his restive steed.

The cavalcade was evidently in haste; but Kemp barred the way, and perforce the officers must pull up. "Out of the way there, sirrah!" exclaimed one very pompous and red-faced gentleman, who rode in advance of the group. "Who are ye that blocks his excellency's passage?"

Kemp had quickly controlled his horse; but now he did not give way, his glance swiftly overlooking the approaching cavalcade. He had never seen Washington in his life, nor had he happened to come across a picture of the great Virginian; but he picked him out unerringly.

It would have been a dull man indeed who made a mistake in selecting General Washington in almost any gathering. Aristocrat of aristocrats, Washington sat his white charger with an air of command and a reserve of appearance that made other men seem small about him. At first sight his austere face and haughty aspect repulsed the beholder; yet mingled with these was so much courtesy, and his eye held so kindly a glance, that after a moment's hesitation Kemp made bold to urge his horse directly toward the commander in chief.

"Hey, there!" exclaimed the big man, who likewise wore the insignia of a general, reaching forth a hand to seize Kemp's bridle. "Stand, and give an account of yourself!"

"I have dispatches for his excellency," cried Kemp loudly, to make sure that General Washington should hear; "dispatches from Master John Cadwallader."

The horsemen were already riding by, but Kemp's voice had reached the ear of the commander. He glanced once in the young man's direction, but he spoke to the bulky person.

"Bring me the papers, and let the gentleman ride with us, sir!" was Washington's command.

Ignoring the eager sergeant of horse and the anxious corporal and their men, the cavalcade moved on, with Kemp in its midst. The latter had but a moment

to feel relief at escaping a further examination, with the soldiers he had outwitted as witnesses against him

CHAPTER XI.

IN THE NAME OF LIBERTY.

INCIDENT had fallen upon incident so rapidly during the last few hours that Kemp had little time to think of his personal affairs. He rode away in Washington's train, delighted that he had so easily gained the result craved so heartily since his experience at the Langdon farmhouse.

This leader who so inspired the patriots with confidence was really a remarkable man. Kemp had felt it must be so before; now, in this brief event of his first meeting with Washington, he was assured that his judgment had not been at fault. Beaten as he was at White Plains, driven back from the Hudson with the loss of the forts and of a large part of his army, General Washington did not have either the air or look of a defeated commander.

There was sadness in his eyes, and he had a brooding brow; but his depleted ranks and overturned plans—the defection of his generals and the desertion of many of the volunteers—could not quench his sure spirit. Indeed, one looking into the great man's countenance for the first time, as did Kemp, gained an everlasting impression that here was a soul unmoved by disaster.

The cavalcade surrounding the commander galloped over the frozen byways about Newark, for the staff was on a tour of inspection. Driven back from Fort Lee by the triumphant legions of Cornwallis, Washington had hoped to make another stand. But it was not to be. From desertions by the volunteer companies, and the refusal of General Lee to make a junction with his troops, Washington's forces were depleted until scarcely three thousand Continentals were gathered at Newark. They had lain here now since the twenty-second, hoping to be reënforced; but after five days of waiting, the British were reported very near.

The dispatches Kemp had brought

were read by the commander in chief as the party circled the camp. Evidently the information they contained fulfilled the worst forebodings of the chief officers. Kemp heard but little of the discussion carried on by Washington and his advisors, for he rode behind with the aids; but every face was downcast, and they returned to the town at last in a state of settled gloom.

Little attention was paid to Kemp on arriving at the house where the commander was stopping, and he was left to cool his heels in the yard until it became somebody's pleasure to notice him. He was determined to wait for a chance to make himself personally known to his excellency.

The younger officers with whom he had ridden dismounted and went about their various affairs. There was not a soul he knew among them, and they looked upon him askance. A man in citizen's dress, who rode wildly to present dispatches carrying a naked sword in his hand, and without even a hat upon his head, did not commend himself to the members of the staff. Kemp appeared to be neither "flesh, fowl, nor good red herring"!

There were several members of the commander in chief's guard—called later the Life Guard—in the company; Kemp knew them by their distinctive uniform, which was a blue coat with white facings, white waistcoat and breeches, ending in black gaiters, while their cocked hats were adorned with blue-and-white feathers.

Two guarded the door of the general's headquarters with muskets crossed; they carried side arms, as well. The moments slipped by, and nobody spoke to Kemp; but the appearance of the guards did not encourage him to try to force himself into the presence of General Washington.

Even in those comparatively early days of the war, the patriot cause was cursed by the envy and unfaithfulness of certain officers of the army. With many it was a struggle for personal preferment, rather than an ambition for the establishment of the liberty of the colonies. Washington's character was

by no means understood by many of his associates, and history told of few great military leaders whose success had not ended in their becoming dictators. It is natural for one courtier to fear the approach of another near the throne; few of these officers desired to see an unknown like Kemp familiarly approach the commander in chief, who, in their minds, might yet actually occupy the exalted station of *king*.

One there was, however, who finally spoke to Roger Kemp. The latter had seen this gentleman leave the house, and noted that he was treated with marked respect by the subalterns standing about, although he wore only the insignia of captain. And, too, he came to Kemp with something of a cordial manner.

"You are the gentleman who brought the dispatches to his excellency from General Cadwallader?" he inquired, saluting Kemp—a gesture which the latter was quick to acknowledge.

"I brought the dispatches—yes."

"You are in the service?"

"I am not. But I come to offer myself to General Washington as a recruit. I think I can easily assure him of my identity and sincere intentions——"

"You desire to see him, then?" queried the young officer.

"I do, sir. I wish to explain, as well, how I came in possession of the papers which I delivered to him."

"The desire seems to be mutual," said the other dryly. "Follow me, sir. His excellency has asked to speak with you."

The moment was not auspicious for meeting the commander of the army. No leader can be expected to appear at his best when the Fates are arraigned against him. Disaster had followed disaster of late, and the future held nothing bright in store for the distressed leader of the rebel army; yet Washington's countenance was unruffled as Kemp was led into the room where he sat. When the general looked up from the papers before him, in the perusal of which he had been engaged, Kemp saw only the sadness in his eyes. The calm face masked, he was sure, a soul much

wrought by the tempests of opposition which assailed it from every direction.

Here was a man, indeed, who fought not alone the battles of his country, confronting an enemy outnumbering his army in many cases three men to one, but fought the divergent opinions of his brother officers, and suffered from their envy and treachery. For all of these leaders of the revolution were not great and good men, with liberty and the general good of the new confederation at heart; many were rank adventurers, who, like Benedict Arnold, let personal ambition overtop duty and patriotism.

"Your name, sir?" queried Washington, measuring Kemp's slight figure with commending glance.

Even in his disordered dress, and hatless as he was, the young man was one to attract more than a passing glance. He returned one's gaze boldly, yet his eye was mild, and he could not be termed a forward person. Rather was he retiring; his air marked plainly the studious life he had led heretofore.

"Roger Kemp, an it please your excellency," Kemp said, with a bow. "Perhaps my father's name was not unknown to all here"—for the room was filled with a crowd of officers and civilians, who, at his presentation to the commander, turned to gaze upon Kemp as their mood dictated.

"We dwelt much at Philadelphia before I went to England; from where I returned but recently. Master Ephraim Carney, of Philadelphia, can vouch for me. He has some small affairs of mine in his hands. Before going to Oxford, and previous to my father's demise, I was captain of a certain military company at Morristown. I have ridden here, sir, to offer my services to the cause of the United States of America—hoping, sir," with another bow, "to render myself so agreeable to your excellency that I may be found a place under your own eye."

"Well, well!" said Washington, perhaps not unaffected by this speech, for he liked young and enthusiastic men; "of that later. Let us take the matter of the dispatches first. You come from my good friend Cadwallader?"

"I never met him in my life, sir; but I know him by reputation," responded Kemp, smiling. "I knew that reputation so well that, when the papers fell into my hands through the death of their original bearer, I hastened here to deliver them."

He went on to tell his story briefly. His explanation that he was on the way to offer his sword to the commander when he saw the dispatch bearer shot bore some weight. Likewise the fact that he had had a brush with the British horse in the neighborhood of Morristown was noted by the company.

"I feared as much. They are hot after us, gentlemen," declared Washington, rising wearily. "If they do not attack before morning, it will be a blessing. And if they come in force we cannot withstand them."

He turned again to Kemp. "Your request I will weigh later. I know Mr. Carney personally. Meanwhile I give you into the care of Captain Polk." And he bowed to the young officer who had brought Kemp into the room. "I shall not forget your effort to serve the cause, Mr. Kemp. Good day, sir."

It was a short dismissal, but there was something so kindly in the tone and look which accompanied it that Kemp could not take offense. He was glad, too, to go with Polk and obtain rest and food. Before night Captain Polk had found him a military coat, and a hat with a cockade, besides a scabbard and belt for his sword, and a pair of horse pistols. By exchange with the sergeant of horse who had endeavored to make him a prisoner, Kemp obtained again the big bay which had served him so well, and for which no owner could now lay claim, thanks to the cowboys.

He was billeted with Polk and two other young officers, and found them agreeable fellows, although at first inclined to look upon him with some suspicion. When General Washington sent word to him that he was to be attached, for the present, to his own staff as aid, Kemp's messmates began to treat him with marked cordiality. That evening, however, there was little time for them to become acquainted.

Kemp's own report, and information from other sources, assured the commander in chief that the British were endeavoring to cut off his retreat. Fight he could not, for ammunition was low, his troops hungry and ragged, and Cornwallis had more than two men to one of the Americans now left to Washington. Retreat was ordered before daybreak of the twenty-eighth.

As the worn and hopeless troops left the outskirts of Newark on the road to New Brunswick, the music of the British bands could be heard entering the other end of the town.

Kemp had joined the army at a time when the day seemed darkest. To a man of less positive convictions, the condition of the American forces, and the apparently hopeless state of the cause in general, would have utterly routed that desire to join Washington's command which had burned so heartily in Kemp's breast since the night of his reappearance in the neighborhood of Lawe House.

But once having made up his mind that the cause of the rebels was just, and that he desired to be, with his countrymen, liberated from the tyranny of George III. and his ministers, nothing could shake Roger Kemp's resolution.

Bitter and long were the days that followed, and the souls of the men were worn thin. Sickness, hunger, and worst of all, lost hope, were the wolves that tore at their hearts. The rank and file could not be blamed so much for deserting; patriotism thrives illy on empty stomachs. There was little glory in prospect, and had Roger Kemp sought his position for the sake of the pomp and panoply of war, he would have deserted likewise!

But his heart was moved by the faith and trust displayed by most of the men in their chieftain. Whatever may have been the feeling among the officers, the rank and file came nigh to worshipping General George Washington. And mysteriously indeed this same impression of the great man's character stamped itself upon Kemp's soul. He saw now how true that answer in fire had been to Major John Favor's sneering query, the

night they talked together at Lawe House.

Liberty might be a will o' the wisp; the cause of the Americans might be visionary and seemingly impossible of success, but the inspiration of this chieftain had led them thus far, and Kemp felt it would lead them farther.

The bugle music of the flushed and victorious army of the conquering Cornwallis might greet the ears of their rearguard as it left the towns to the occupancy of the enemy—Newark, New Brunswick, Princeton, and Trenton were lost without a blow being struck—yet, withal, Washington's superb courage held the little body of troops together.

Long ere that awful retreat was finished, Kemp had given up his horse to a weaker man, and marched in the ranks himself. It was maddening to be so helpless—to follow on behind the poor fellows and behold, here and there on the frozen ground, the bloodstains from their broken feet.

There could be no enthusiasm under such depressing circumstances. The ranks plodded dully, the file officers swearing and driving the men on like beasts, the torn banners drooping, and the shrill fife like the eerie shriek of a lost soul, rather than a ringing note of encouragement.

Well-disposed folk along the route of march dared only bring the fugitive army succor by stealth; whereas, a few months before the entire Jersey plantations had been aflame with patriotism. Ah, *that* is a flower, Kemp learned, that blooms quickly and fades at the first suspicion of the frost of disaster. The retreating army was obliged to take by force in many cases what had freely been offered them before.

So it happened that the first duty of any importance which fell to Kemp's lot was acting as guide to a foraging party through a section of the country north of Princeton, which he happened to know very well. It was with his aid, too, that several boats were found when it became evident that safety for the American troops lay only upon the farther shore of the Delaware. These

were small matters, yet Kemp hoped for something better when the army should be reorganized.

The broken lines finally escaped across the river, and, having secured all the boats for miles up and down the stream, it was put out of the power of the British to follow until the ice should become thick enough to bear up horses and artillery. Cornwallis had left guards in all the principal towns, and established at Trenton fifteen hundred Hessians—some of the very savages who had bayoneted Colonel Magaw's men at Fort Washington.

With the rolling river between the enemy and the handful of Continentals, Washington stopped, and, with immense optimism, began to reorganize the army. The news from the Champlain country of Arnold's defeat and the loss of the American flotilla, as well as Clinton's successful descent on Newport, darkened the cloud of doubt and uncertainty which hung above the American camp. Congress, believing Philadelphia to be threatened, departed for Baltimore on December twelfth; but it took measures to provide a permanent army, and soon gave his excellency almost absolute power.

Fearing dictatorship as they did, this was a last desperate resort. In the hands of another man the power given the commander in chief might have been misused, and to the final and utter destruction of the cause of liberty. To George Washington, however, it promised at length the ability to make his under generals obey, and to move the enlisted brigades to some purpose.

The arrival of some Pennsylvania recruits, including General Cadwallader's brigade and a part of Lee's division, swelling the army to some seven thousand men, gave heart to the faithful. Even the young officers with whom Roger Kemp associated knew that an important move was at hand. Something must be done to give impetus to the cause—to rivet and clinch the wavering hopes of the colonists—and the entire army was on the *qui vive* as the month of December drew toward its close.

CHAPTER XII.

IN PERIL.

THE American camp was very much alive at this time. The divisions were quartered as far south as Bristol, where General Cadwallader's brigade lay. And it was Kemp's fortune to be offered the command of a company under this eminent friend of Washington. By courtesy he was already addressed as Captain Kemp; but his only commands were foraging parties or small scouting expeditions. In this last work, however, he had been successful, and had received personal commendation from his excellency. Therefore, Kemp hesitated to accept a command that would tie him to a brigade, for the opportunities of a free lance were greater.

General Cadwallader was a very fine gentleman, indeed, and it was something to be marked out by him as a subaltern; Kemp realized the honor, and when he was called before Cadwallader and the commander in chief, he strove to make his position clear. Mr. Cadwallader was rather a tall man, with a long, ruddy, beardless face and a very high forehead. His aquiline nose and prominent chin betrayed both determination and haughtiness, and had it not been for the kind interference of General Washington, Kemp might have found disfavor in the eyes of the commander of the "Silk Stocking Company"—a term of good-natured raillery which had stuck to Cadwallader since the beginning of the war.

"I have offered Master Kemp his choice, general," Washington said, "and, like the rash young man he is, he has chosen the alternative. The honor of being under your command, sir, seems less to him than the chance of having his neck stretched by the Britishers—though God forbid!"

"Ah!" exclaimed Cadwallader; "you have chosen Captain Kemp for *that* duty?"

"He has chosen himself, as I tell you. It laid between him and Polk. I give you Polk, and Captain Kemp crosses the river before daybreak. The matter is arranged."

Kemp's eyes sparkled at these words,

for, although the matter of a secret visit to Trenton had been broached to him, he had not been sure, despite what Washington called his own choice, that he would be allowed to undertake the dangerous mission. The moment was ripe for an attack on the British forces, which were carelessly resting on their arms—strung in a chain of posts across Jersey—while Cornwallis was enjoying the Christmas holidays in New York City.

After General Lee's capture, his division under Sullivan had joined Washington's force, quartered at Newtown, and other troops were numerically increasing the strength of the main army almost daily. Yet Washington would not attempt to strike a decisive blow at the garrison of Trenton without having the reports of its unpreparedness verified.

With several men picked from a corps of scouts who had been under General Putnam's personal command before that officer was sent to take charge at Philadelphia, Kemp left the headquarters on a small branch of the Neshamming River, at nightfall, and rode hard over the bad roads, made worse by the marching and countermarching of troops and the heavy traffic of Colonel Knox's artillery, to McConkey's Ferry, eight miles above Trenton.

A mile from the ferry Kemp exchanged his fagged horse for the bay, which he had sent on in advance. At a friendly farmer's he changed his uniform for the dress of a foppish gentleman of that day, and, with a portmanteau behind him on the saddle, rode down to the log ferryhouse. As previously arranged, although he crossed the ferry with some of his men, he did not speak to them, or they to him. They were dressed like drovers, and their side arms were hidden beneath their rough coats.

The only thing Kemp lacked as he rode into Trenton in the guise of a "macaroni" from one of the Southern colonies was a body servant; but he explained to the host of the inn that his black man had been confiscated by a party of Continentals near Harrisburg

—and his expressions of anger and disgust over the incident left no doubt in mine host's mind as to Kemp's distaste for the Americans.

This "play acting" was not pleasant; but he was in peril, and must use every art possible to evade suspicion. The task of gaining exact information as to the numbers of the Hessian troops and British lighthouse at Trenton and Bordentown, their means of communication, and their preparedness—or lack of it—to meet a quick sortie from across the river, was not unimportant. And if he, an officer of the American army, was captured by the enemy in their midst, and in civilian dress, the shadow of the gallows would certainly fall upon him.

His ability to learn that which Washington and his advisers considered necessary, and to do so without attracting suspicion to himself, was enhanced by the fact that he understood and spoke German. And, with this attribute, and his gentlemanly and cheerful bearing, it was an easy matter for him to become acquainted with the young Hessian officers, as well as those of the lighthouse quartered in the town.

Kemp fell in with a certain Lieutenant Piel and an ensign named Von Drack in the public room of the inn that very day, and was taken by these new friends about the town and to the various quarters of Knyphausen's regiment and Rohl's grenadiers.

Colonel Rohl was in command of the garrison, and he had gained, with the British officers, a hearty contempt for the rebels. The men were allowed to plunder from the peaceful inhabitants of the surrounding country, and the lines were in no state of defense. What else could be expected of mercenaries? It was all a matter of gold to them. Their masters had sold them for thirty-six dollars a head to King George, and their only desire was to get out of the conflict alive and gain such portable possessions as they could gamble away and drink up during the long winter nights. An attack from the beaten Continentals was not dreamed of.

The purchase of the Hessians for the

American campaign was a most atrocious act, condemned in Parliament, and it brought over many right-thinking Englishmen to the American cause. They were merely trained fighting machines, but, it must be admitted, they were as savage as St. Leger's Indians. Altogether, seventeen thousand, five hundred and twenty-six of these hired butchers were bought from the Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel, the Duke of Brunswick, the Prince of Hesse, and the Prince of Waldeck, and in almost every battle in which they had a part there were atrocities committed.

So disliked were these foreign soldiers that the British would not themselves associate with them. The young officers whom Kemp met were delighted that a "white" gentleman should show them any attention, and, therefore, it was the easier for him to gain the information which he sought. He spent half the night with Piel and Von Drack, and in the morning he managed to see one of his "drovers," and sent him back across the river with a written report to General Washington.

This was the day before Christmas, and great preparations were being made for the celebration of the holiday. Kemp himself was invited to a banquet to be given by the junior officers of the Hessian troops on Christmas night. He saw that, unless warned in season, the enemy would fall an easy prey to the American arms, if General Washington's plans were carried out.

But every hour Kemp delayed his departure from Trenton increased the danger of his apprehension; until relieved or instructed to return to the army, he was bound to stick to his post. With this anxiety on his mind, he was expected to be gay and cheerful as the season demanded, and to act a part that was, at the best, quite foreign to his real nature. For Roger Kemp was no fop, and the ribbons and laces, the powder and wig, and the various niceties of his present toilet, were not to his taste.

He nevertheless strutted in the tap-room of the inn, among Tory gentles and officers alike, and was not unpopular with those whose acquaintance he

made. There were few in Trenton at this time who dared flaunt their patriotism, and, although the cause of the colonists looked so desperate, nearly every house in the town displayed signs of cheer on Christmas Eve. The Rutherford and Dickinson mansions were ablaze with light, and there were several private dances as well as two military balls planned for the evening.

Many of the officers under Count Donop, in garrison at Bordentown, were in Trenton to attend these soirées, and Kemp wished that Washington and his board had planned to strike the blow at this time. The disorganization of Colonel Rohl's command seemed complete.

The weather had turned colder, and therein was another worriment for Roger Kemp. Suppose the Delaware should freeze to a thickness which would interfere with the passage of boats, yet too thin to uphold the troops which Washington had determined to throw across the stream? With the possibility of nature's taking up arms against the patriot cause before him, the young man must appear among the acquaintances he had made at the tavern as though he were perfectly light of heart.

A dozen times he went to the door, however, to assure himself of the increasing cold. Wheels creaked in the streets and the ring of horses' hoofs could be heard at a long distance. Mine host of the tavern came out, rubbing his hands delightedly, and pronounced it "ideal Christmas weather"—when Kemp would have given his fortune for a thaw!

"This tempers us all, sir," declared the round and ruddy host, with satisfaction, "to the real holiday spirit. There'll be a good bit of gold in my till before morning. And—ha!—what's this? More guests, 'pon me soul! And never more welcome than now."

He bustled down the stair as a heavy traveling coach, drawn by two big horses, turned into the street with the plain intention of seeking the tavern. Kemp would have turned away idly had his attention not suddenly been attracted to one of the men who sat stiffly upon the coachman's seat, but who, the in-

stant the carriage stopped, climbed actively down.

"Barnaby Lamson—or his wraith!" muttered Kemp, drawing behind a pillar and wrapping his cloak about him, so muffling the lower part of his face. "What—and who—brings him here?"

The tavern keeper bustled forward to open the chariot door before the old serving man from Lawe House could accomplish that duty. It was then Kemp made other discoveries. A single rider rode hard after the chariot, and the instant this man gained the illuminated space before the inn, Kemp recognized him, as well as the other man on the coachman's seat. The horseman was Major John Favor; the driver of the chariot was Granby, the major's man; and it was then easy to see that the vehicle itself was the one which had broken down near Lawe House on the night of his first meeting with Favor.

Favor swung himself out of the saddle and began stamping his benumbed feet upon the ground, slapping his gauntleted hands meanwhile. His resonant voice echoed across the courtyard before the inn, as he addressed Barnaby Lamson: "Open that door, old man! By my life, you and the fat man are as clumsy as though ye had no hands at all. Dost want the lady to freeze? Open it, I say!"

Together Barnaby and the innkeeper finally accomplished the task. The door of the carriage flew back, and at once a silvery little laugh rippled out upon the night air.

"Ah, Major Favor, we have been as warm as a breakfast urn in here, while you have chilled yourself on horseback. Come, father! We have arrived at last."

The speaker leaped out, disdaining the assistance of the hands outstretched to her, and turned to call back into the depths of the carriage. Kemp uttered a smothered exclamation of surprise. It was Mistress Sylvia Perrine, and no other!

Through the busy days which had followed that never-to-be-forgotten morning at Perrine House, when Kemp had defied the lady's father, and the

scene had ended in his chance duel with Favor, the young American had often thought of Sylvia as she had been revealed to his eyes at that time. It was easy enough, in sooth, to conjure a vision of the beautiful girl as she haughtily welcomed him at her father's table. Kemp, in those few moments, had been deeply moved.

His old remembrance of the squire's hoyden daughter was quite blotted out. Now, when he beheld her disembarking from Major Favor's chariot before the Trenton tavern, his heart leaped again. And there stirred in the depths of his being a feeling new to his experience. Jealousy awoke!

Heretofore he had recognized Major John Favor as a rival claimant to the property which Kemp was assured old Michael Lawe intended for *his* benefit. Now Favor appeared in the guise of a rival of another kind. There could be no misunderstanding of the British officer's attitude toward little Mistress Perrine, and the familiarity of his tone and manner spurred Kemp's sudden rage.

"Run in, run in, I pray you, mistress!" urged Favor, as the old squire, with much groaning and no little profanity, climbed out of the deep interior of the carriage. "The air is shrewd, and a hot nog and a warm fireside ye'll find e'en more comfortable than yon carriage."

The main door of the inn had been flung hospitably open by now, and the lights streamed out. Serving men and maids lingered about the entrance curiously to watch the new arrivals, and the hostess came forward with unctuous smile, seeing that there was a lady in the party.

Kemp held his ground, sure that his disguise in the height of dandyism would shield him from recognition by any casual glance.

Mistress Sylvia, with a laugh, mounted lightly up the stair, her ample skirts held up modestly in front to admit of her taking the steps without tripping.

The glare of the light pouring from the house was in her eyes, and she mounted heedlessly. During the mid-

dle of the day the sun's warmth had let the melting ice from a leaking drain drip upon the steps, and these drippings had now frozen. Just before Mistress Sylvia reached the top of the stairs she trod upon a patch of this ice.

Kemp alone saw her sway and drop her skirts, reaching forth both hands quickly to save herself. But she would have fallen—perhaps been sorely injured—had the disguised American officer not sprang to her aid.

One stride, and he was at the head of the stairs and had seized her as she fell backward. The landlady cried out in alarm, and all eyes were turned upon the two figures at the stairhead, outlined clearly in the glare of yellow lamp-light.

"Zounds!" ejaculated the squire, in his high-pitched, angry voice. "Who's that scoundrel? Unhand my daughter, ye villain!"

He charged up the steps, but Favor was before him. Big as he was, the British major was quick of movement. To see Mistress Sylvia in the arms of an unknown man gave him a deeper pang perhaps than it did her father. But he understood the cause of the incident before he reached Kemp and his sweet burden.

Helplessly she had fallen into the circle of Kemp's arm, and he had raised her quickly against his breast, while retaining his own balance by a desperate clutch upon the pillar at his side.

For a long moment he held her so, and he knew that she, breathing quickly, but without uttering a cry of fear, gazed into his face. He dared not think of what she might have discovered there; if she cried his name he was lost—perhaps a dead man! Yet his first feeling was one of delight at holding her, even for that brief time, against his breast.

It was over in a minute, however. Securing his own footing, he placed her gently on the top step, and his arm fell away from her reluctantly.

"Pardon my boldness, mistress, but the occasion seemed to warrant it," he said huskily, bowing over her gloved hand, and so hiding his own face from

the glare of the light as Perrine and the major came up the stair.

"You are pardoned, sir—and I thank you!" she returned, her voice as calm and unshaken as it had been that morning in her father's house.

Had she recognized him? Nothing in her voice or manner betrayed any suspicion of his identity. Could he hope for equal fortune with her father, and with Favor, who were now at hand?

CHAPTER XIII.

A KNOCK AT THE DOOR.

THE girl went quickly into the inn with the wife of the host; she did not look around even to bow to Kemp again. But he had recovered his nerve when Major John Favor reached the spot.

"Gad, sir! I beg to offer my thanks," exclaimed the officer, in his bluff way. "Your quick eye and hand saved the lady from a serious fall." He turned to Perrine as the old gentleman puffed up the stair behind him: "Did you see it, sir? She would have fallen had this gentleman not interfered."

"Oh—aye?" exclaimed the squire, rather grudgingly it seemed, and staring at the muffled Kemp in a suspicious manner. "'Tis lucky, then. I thought that——"

"I am sure Master Perrine wishes to thank you," interrupted Major Favor, with a smile, seeing that his companion was not yet sure whether to accept this explanation of Kemp's familiarity with his daughter or not.

"Of course, of course!" grunted Perrine.

"Let us say no more about it, gentlemen," returned Kemp, bowing gravely. "Your servant, sirs!" and he turned swiftly and went into the taproom, to escape the group of gaping and curious people which had gathered.

But he was not to close the incident so easily. Secretly he smarted because Mistress Sylvia had taken his assistance so much as a matter of course. After that first moment she had not even glanced at him. But when the idea

finally got into Squire Perrine's head that the young stranger had really saved his daughter from injury, he pursued Kemp with attentions.

This was later in the evening, and after the old gentleman had become "thawed out" by sundry potations of the landlord's brewing. Major Favor had gone out into the town to hobnob with the officers of the British horse; therefore Kemp had not *his* keen eye to fear.

"I declare for't, master," said the squire, seeking Kemp out in his quiet corner, and taking a seat without as much as "by your leave." "They tell me I should ask your pardon for my roughness. But, zounds! there's so many cursed gallipots about these days, bold enough to run off with a girl before her father's very eyes, that I did not know but you might be one of 'em!" And the old man cackled, punching a pudgy finger at Kemp's ribs.

"You do not flatter me, sir," Kemp said dryly.

The old gentleman started, and glanced keenly into his face. Evidently Kemp's voice seemed in some degree familiar to him, but the powdered and be-ruffled macaroni with whom he sought to strike up an acquaintance fitted into no very clear remembrance in Squire Perrine's mind.

"Ha! a man must be careful who speaks to his womenfolk these times," growled Perrine. "I tell ye, sir, we Americans are in evil odor enough as it is—and before Major Favor! Gad, sir, the girl is all but promised to his honor."

Kemp's face was a mask which betrayed no emotion. Nevertheless the lips which formed his question moved stiffly, if the old man had but noted them. "Your daughter is betrothed to the officer, sir?"

"If she's not, she will be, by gad!" declared Perrine, smiting his fist upon the table. "These women are kittle-cattle; there's no knowing their minds. They don't know 'em themselves. But she'll come to my way of thinking, now, I tell ye! And Major Favor is a fine man, of great family—he may be *Lord* Favor some day!—and has recently come into broad lands right here in the

colony. 'Twill be a goodly match for both of them. Will you drink with me, sir?"

"You must excuse me to-night," mumbled Kemp, getting up abruptly. "I must leave you."

"And mighty abrupt ye are about it!" ejaculated Perrine, in some heat. "I'm not good enough for your honor, I suppose? I don't sport ribbands and velvet cloak, but I've broad lands of my own," boasted the half-drunken old fellow.

Kemp halted to look down at him in scorn. "Your poverty or riches affect me but little, Master Perrine," he said sharply. "I do not desire, however, to cultivate the acquaintance of a man who sells his daughter for a British title. Good night, sir!"

He was sorry instantly that he had so spoken, for he left an angry and a suspicious man behind him. Kemp was angry with himself, too. His usual caution and self-possession had deserted him for the minute, and for what? Why should he take an interest in the affairs of Mistress Sylvia Perrine? She was nothing to him—could be nothing to him! He knew that very well.

As a child he had disliked and derided her; now, without rhyme or reason, he was jealous of every other man who came near to her. She had shown him plainly that she was not interested in her old friend and playfellow; undoubtedly she, too, was dazzled by Favor, and was only coquetting with the British major, intending to plight her troth with him in the end.

Kemp sought his room, but on retiring found it impossible to sleep for a time. And not alone was the disturbance in other parts of the inn the cause of his wakefulness. He could not get Mistress Sylvia out of his troubled mind, nor could he close his eyes with-

out involuntarily calling before his mental vision a picture of her piquant, yet haughty, face. The uncertainty which had harassed him earlier in the evening, regarding the outcome of Washington's plan for the advance on Trenton, was forgotten in this personal trouble.

And it was really a serious trouble. He could not hide from himself that he had fallen deeply in love with Sylvia Perrine; that the little hoyden he had once scorned had grown to be a woman whose charms he could not resist. That she and her father were bitter opponents of the cause he had espoused made no difference to Kemp; the fact remained that he had acquired an overwhelming desire for one who seemed as far removed from his reach as was ultimate victory from the rebel forces.

And while he tossed in this mesh of despairing thought he was startled by a sudden summons on his chamber door.

Not that it was a commanding knock, but the fact that one should desire to see him at this hour of the night at all startled Kemp into a sudden realization of his danger.

A moment's suspicion might cause his undoing. He was a spy, and the gibbet threatened him.

He lay for several minutes, listening acutely. Then the knock was repeated, and a voice whispered shrilly the name by which he had clothed his identity at the tavern. It was useless to feign sleep, for his caller was evidently a determined soul, and might yet raise half the house in his endeavor to reach him.

Kemp rose quickly, slipped on his nether garments, lighted a candle, and, sword in hand, approached the door.

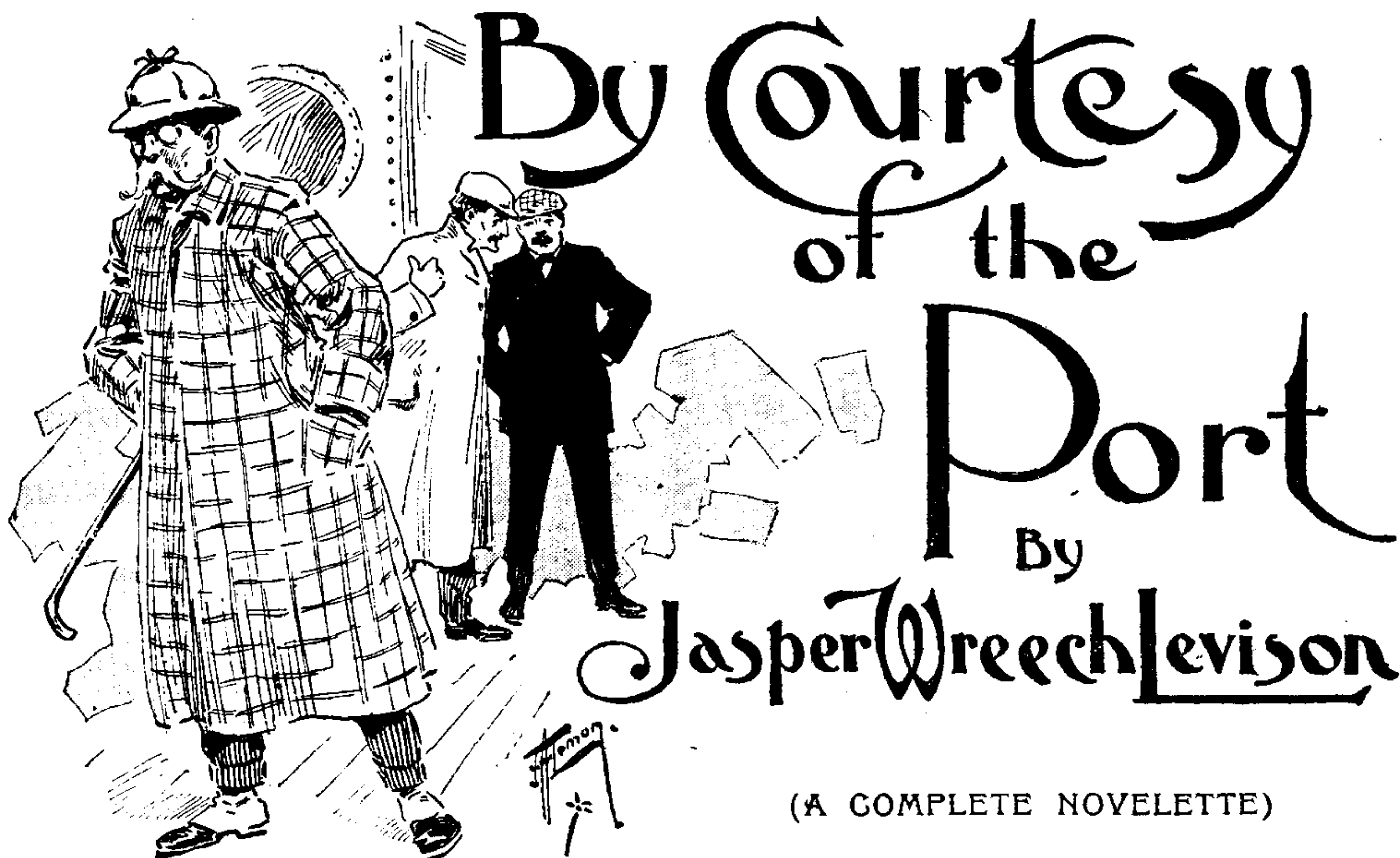
TO BE CONTINUED.

The next section of this serial will appear in the February Mid-month TOP-NOTCH, out January 15th.

Found What He Looked For

SEE here!" exclaimed the stranger, as he stumbled into his twentieth puddle. "I thought you said you knew where all the bad places were on this road?"

"Well," replied the boy who had volunteered to guide him through the darkness, "we're afindin' them, ain't we?"



CHAPTER I.

PROVINCIAL CURIOSITY.

THE tall, gray man of soldierly bearing, with the monocle and the drooping mustache, passed along the deck for the fourth time, in his huge plaid ulster and fore-and-aft cap. "I don't know anything about it," remarked the talkative Yankee tourist in the steamer chair, "but I'll bet you a dollar that's Sir Percy Vandeleur, the new ambassador."

"Why?" queried the man in the next chair, turning a weary eye on the busy-body.

"I've got a hunch, that's all," answered the American. "The papers said that Sir Percy would go to the United States incognito, accompanied only by his valet. He's only just got back from India, you know, and he wants a rest, so the papers said he'd come over alone, and his household and suite would come on another steamer. I chased up the purser this morning and asked him to tell me this man's name. He said the man was down on the list as Captain Torrance, and that's all he'd say, but he had a sly look in his eye, and I wasn't born two years ago, my friend."

"I don't know as I care particularly whether that man is Sir Percy Vandeleur or the Duke of Wellington," returned the other steamer-chair lounge, who had not taken a cheerful or broad view of anything since the ship passed out of sight of Fishguard.

The talkative tourist merely smiled. His nerves and stomach were unaffected by the cradle of the deep, but he had a sort of understanding.

"You'll feel better by to-morrow," he said sympathetically. "If you would eat some dry codfish, or chew some common spruce gum, like I told you, you'd be all right in an hour. Say, I've a great good notion to speak to that graven image when he passes us again; he's getting on my nerves."

"Look, where it comes again!" quoted the bored traveler ironically. "Don't bother on my account, sir. If the man is Sir Percy Vandeleur, I am content that he should remain so, as quietly as he pleases, and *that* could be none too quiet for me."

The tall man was again approaching the pair of observers, and as he drew near their chairs the inquisitive one sat up straight, smiled pleasantly and with assurance, and piped cheerily:

"Good morning, Sir Percy!"

The man in the plaid ulster stopped, as if a shot had halted him.

"My word!" he exclaimed; "really, you have the advantage of me, sir."

"I'm Frank H. Warren, of Taunton, Massachusetts," replied the American eagerly. "I'm pretty well known in that section in the shoe business. Pleased to meet you, Sir Percy. Hope you'll like our country as well as your predecessor."

The tall, soldierly man surprised the indifferent traveler by raising the corners of his mouth in something like a smile.

"You have been misinformed, sir," he said quietly; "I have not even heard that Sir Percy Vandeleur was to sail on this steamer. Ah, by Jove! I dare say I should thank you for the compliment of taking me for Sir Percy. Ha, ha!"

Mr. Warren, of Taunton, cast a furtive and meaning glance at his indifferent neighbor; then he said, somewhat flippantly, to the Englishman:

"Oh, that's all right—er—Captain Torrance. I understand these little diplomatic matters. I reckon it does you credit to want to keep out of the limelight as long as you can. And you can depend on me, captain, to keep mum—I respect a man's notions—have 'em myself. Not another crack will I make about Sir Percy; you're Captain Torrance; that's enough. And I think you can depend on this gentleman, here." And he indicated the man in the next chair with a lateral movement of his thumb.

The indifferent traveler changed his position uncomfortably, and cast a cold glance at the tall man in the ulster.

"If you're anxious about me," he muttered, "why, rest easy! I don't care if I don't talk to a living soul for a month. If the Pope of Rome came up and spoke to me, I wouldn't take the trouble to tell my wife about it. That's the way I feel."

"I assure you, gentlemen," returned the distinguished stranger, "I do not feel the slightest anxiety. As a simple tourist, traveling for pleasure, I surely have nothing to conceal or feel anxious about.

Good morning, gentlemen." And he settled the fore-and-aft more firmly on his head and resumed his measured pacing of the deck.

"What'd I tell you?" chuckled Mr. Warren, when the Englishman had passed out of hearing by little more than an inch. "I nailed him with the goods; that's the way to do it! Now, I'm going to cinch it. His valet is a little, dried-up shrimp of a man. I'm going after *him*. A dollar bill will turn the trick, or I'll go back to Taunton and stay there!"

"You're a wonder!" groaned the other man; and, turning his wan, hopeless face away from the exuberant man from Taunton, he fixed himself a little more uncomfortably in his steamer chair, and gazed dully out over the limitless, heaving brine.

CHAPTER II.

PROOF POSITIVE.

BEFORE the *Laurentic* was more than two days on her way to New York, every soul among the first-cabin passengers had the secret—that the *distingué* Captain Torrance was no other than Sir Percy Vandeleur, the new British ambassador to the United States, traveling mysteriously incognito. And all through the earnest efforts of Mr. Frank H. Warren, in whom a clever press agent was lost to the show business through the allurements of the shoe trade.

Captain Torrance took the inquisitiveness of his fellow travelers with a commendable good grace. The eager overtures of the celebrity-hunting people broke down the chilly reserve which he had maintained at first, and by the third day he was actually joining in the vapid conversation of the smoke room.

He talked more and more freely as time went on, and apparently got so far off his guard as to ask pertinent questions about American life, especially that of the city of Washington.

The Taunton man was not observed to efface himself in these conversations, and he tried slyly, at times, to lead the

Englishman into matters pertaining to the diplomatic service.

"I never had time to dabble in politics," he said, during a general chat among five male passengers, including the Englishman, "but I always thought I'd like to be a diplomat."

"If you'll permit me, I'll venture to say that you are one already, Mr. Warren," remarked the man who had taken so dark a view of life on the first day out, with a wealth of irony. The man had made his first appearance in the smoke room that day, and while still pale and a little cautious as to his movements, he was able to view his surroundings with at least a cynical humor.

"Oh, I mean the real article," continued the Taunton man, unoffended and unabashed. "These diplomats get into the insides of everything, you know. They're the whole thing everywhere. They have the respect of all the big people, and *perquisites*!—more than they know what to do with. Why, they can tote anything they want right into the country free of duty.

"Ain't that so, Captain Torrance?" he added, in a sudden flash, looking at the mysterious Englishman pointedly.

"I dare say it is; I believe I have heard as much," answered the captain dryly, palpably amused.

So it went on. The captain played bridge, promenaded with some of the women, indulged condescendingly in games of shuffleboard, and made himself something of a reputation as a good fellow. But he evaded all the tricks that were planned to force him to an admission, and the passengers got their sole satisfaction in the fact that he never once positively denied that he was Sir Percy Vandeleur.

Warren came upon the indifferent traveler, tramping the deck boldly, on the fourth morning of the voyage.

"Say," he cried, taking the man familiarly by the arm, "I've got 'im at last!"

"Well?" murmured the man, stopping and leaning against the rail as though suddenly tired.

"It's hardly decent of me to tell about it," continued Warren, "but you've been

sort of *in* on the game from the first, and I know you're interested in it."

"Oh, very!" agreed the man, with a look of resignation.

"Well—you mustn't tell of it—but this is how it worked out," began the busybody. "You know me and his knobs have been getting kind of thick for the last day or two? Well, last night, after all you fellers had turned in, I was left all alone with him in the smoke room. We got sort of confidential—both of us—and, while he didn't let on anything about himself, in so many words, he loosened up, and agreed to do me a favor.

"I'd been telling him," he went on enthusiastically, "how business was kind of poor, and I hadn't really ought to have taken a European tour this year. And I told him how I got foolish over in Amsterdam and bought my wife a stunner of a pearl necklace, and I was afraid when I come to pay the customs rake-off on it I wouldn't have more'n enough left to get up to Taunton.

"Well, sir, he came right out like a real sport, and let on that he'd take the necklace right in for me, along with his personal stuff, and wouldn't have to pay a cent on it. That's what I call being a real sport! And, believe *me*! I was game enough to respect his confidence. I didn't so much as let on that he'd given himself away at last. I just said: 'Thank you, Captain Torrance; anything in the city of Taunton that I'm good for is yours, sir;' and we went on talking like we'd known one another for years. I gave him the pearls, too, before I went to bed, and it'll save me enough to pay my taxes."

The recipient of the spirited confession did not manifest an interest entirely commensurate with the expectations of the narrator. He listened in silence, and his habitual skeptical smile gradually broadened into a grin.

"A fine chance for a scandal in diplomatic circles," he remarked at last. "Of course, Mr. Warren, you will not allow your enthusiasm to get the better of you. It seems to me that your friend has placed his reputation in your hands. The secret is safe with me, I assure

you, but I wouldn't trust it to go any further, if I were you."

The dyspeptic—and therefore skeptical—man observed the person from Taunton with idle interest the rest of the day. Several times he smiled broadly as he saw him in furtive conversation with various members of the first-cabin crowd. It was evident that Frank H. Warren did not wish any one to walk in darkness as to the real identity of the mysterious passenger.

CHAPTER III.

GROWING POPULARITY.

ON the fifth day Captain Torrance, strolling alone upon the deck, met a fellow passenger, and paused to talk with him.

"I hope you'll pardon the effrontery, Captain Torrance," ventured the man, one Hiram W. Rider, from Chicago, "but I've sized you up as a man with a heart in the right place. I'm not going to dig into things that are none of my business, rest assured, sir. You may be Captain Torrance, and you may not, but you're a gentleman."

"Thank you, Mr. Rider," said the Englishman simply. "And now, sir, in what way can I be of service to you?"

Mr. Rider flushed and fidgeted. An answer to the direct question seemed to be a hard thing to manage.

"I'll tell you, captain," he said presently. "I'm in the jewelery business, in a small way. I've been looking round the European markets, and I picked up, here and there, a pretty fine lot of unset diamonds. Now, I'd like to get them passed through the customhouse without paying anything, and I reckon, sir, that you're the man that could do it for me. I understand, sir, that you have 'the courtesy of the port.'"

"Mind, I don't want to know especially what goes on that doesn't concern me. I don't care a hang whether you're in disguise, or not. If I can get this put through for me, why, sir, I'll be *made* in business."

As the man talked, the Englishman gazed at him in blank amazement. At

the end of the speech he exploded, but in a characteristically reserved manner.

"*Ext-traordinary!*" he exclaimed. "By Jove! sir, some chaps would lay a cane over your shoulders for less. Good Lord! you walk up to me deliberately, accuse me of being a person other than I represent myself to be, and insult me in the same breath with a proposal that is nothing short of criminal. Pray, sir, what do you think the—er—the Torrances are? Surely, I do not pass for a rotter that would descend to petty swindling!"

Mr. Rider, of Chicago, was not as much impressed as he should have been. "That's all right—let it pass, Sir Per—I mean Captain Torrance. Of course, you have to be careful, but every man has a right to pick up a little when he has the chance, in public office. There ain't so many kinds of pickings that a diplomat has a chance to get next to. I wasn't asking the thing as an out-and-out favor, you see. I expect to come across with a little something for your trouble. I don't expect to get a favor like that for mere nothing. Get me?"

Captain Torrance regarded the man in cold silence.

"It is evident," he said finally, "that that amazing American, Mr. Warren, has broken his agreement with me. He seemed a decent sort, and I agreed to do him a small favor—there was no harm in it. But, by Jove! I didn't think he'd make common talk of it all. I—why, I dare say he's off telling the second-cabin people all about it by this time."

"Now, my friend, let's dispense with all the other preliminaries," broke in Mr. Rider impatiently. "You wouldn't deny a fellow a little help like I want. It don't cost you anything, and it sets me on my feet, ready to buck competition. Never mind what Warren told me; you can rest easy that he wasn't giving his own game clean away. Now, you just take this little package—they're all in it—and when we get ashore on the other side, I'll come and get them from you. Naturally I'm anxious about the outcome of the thing, but there are some officials in high office, sir, who would

jump at the chance to pick up a little cigar money and do a friend a turn without running any risks. I'm not tryin' to get my goods through free and clear for the sake of talking about it: my mouth is as tight as they make 'em when it comes to a case like this.

"Have a cigar while you think it over," he added, extending his leather case to the Englishman.

The latter took a cigar and examined it critically before he lighted it.

"Ah—hm!—it's very evident," he murmured presently, "that I have got myself—what do you Americans say?—ah, 'in wrong,' as it were, by innocently doing Mr. Warren a favor. I dare say that he meant no harm, really, but, by Jove! he does chatter a bit, doesn't he?"

"Come, now, one more small package won't make a bit of difference, Captain Torrance," persisted Mr. Rider.

The Englishman laughed dryly. "But, my dear fellow," he protested, "why in the world do you ask me to smuggle diamonds for you? I say, how can I do it any better than you yourself?"

"Oh, come, now," returned Rider; "I'm not so raw as Warren; I'm not going to stand up here and accuse you of being Sir Tom, Dick, or Harry. You're Captain Torrance or Admiral Togo or anything else you say, to me, just as long as you please. Some folks haven't any tact in these things. But, between us, captain, we know that there won't be no trouble about walking in with those little articles, and there ain't any favors you can't ask of me after that."

The Englishman sighed wearily. "Well, Mr. Rider," he said, "I think it's uncommon nasty of you to force me into a thing of this sort, but I fancy it's my fault all the way; I shouldn't have yielded to the first request. My word! think what would happen if the thing should become known. They'd have cartoons of me in the comic papers, y' know. I say, it would never do, would it? I'd look such a perfectly bally ass! But, give me your packet, Mr. Rider, and let's have done with the stupid business. And pray don't tell me again

what's in it. It's no end unpleasant to think I'm making a smuggler of myself!"

"Come on down to my stateroom and we'll get the things," said the man from Chicago, with vast satisfaction. "I've got a lot of those cigars, if you like 'em; more'n I can smoke in six months. Give you all you'll carry."

Captain Torrance raised a deprecating hand, and a look of pain shot into his large eyes, but the American was already hurrying down the deck, and he followed hesitatingly, protest expressed in his walk and every line of his distinguished figure.

A moment later two other passengers met in the spot just vacated; the indifferent traveler, no longer confined to a steamer chair, but still regarding the rising and sinking horizon line as a factor in life; and the ubiquitous Mr. Warren, of Taunton—the ebullient Mr. Warren.

The former would have been content to pass with a nod, but the Taunton man wouldn't have it so. He stopped, and fetched his victim a cheery clap on the back—an unwarranted liberty even under normal conditions—and said, with the sibilant monotone of a conspirator:

"Oh, what's the use? The thing is too much of a pipe; I've got evidence enough to hang the man, if traveling incognito was a capital offense. I got hold of the valet, like I told you I would, and it was *too* easy. The tip I slipped him wasn't even necessary."

"The valet, then, admitted the soft impeachment without parley?" suggested the other, with his habitual weariness of manner.

"He was a wise one; he didn't have a word to say," related Warren, "but if a grin a foot wide can tell anything, why, I got the whole story. I asked 'im a bunch of questions about his master, and he just about admitted everything I sprung on him, without really saying a word."

"Well, I'm very glad, for your sake," said the other. "It eases your mind, doesn't it? You may now regard the voyage as scarcely a failure, in point of interest. I thought you were satisfied

as to the man's identity when he accepted the little matter you put up to him; wasn't that enough?"

"Sure!" agreed Mr. Warren. "But this business with the valet was just to make doubly certain. I knew well enough, all right; but I wanted to nail it hard—just like getting a check certified. See?"

The indifferent traveler "saw," but he terminated the conversation with a sudden wave of his hand, and walked away with very measured tread. The vagaries of the horizon line were again claiming his attention.

The Taunton man caught sight of a passenger with whom free and open conversation had previously been denied him by circumstances, and he hastened to make fair use of the opportunity.

CHAPTER IV.

"FORFEITS" AND "CONSEQUENCES."

THAT evening there was an impromptu musicale in the saloon, and, to the agreeable surprise of the mixed company, Captain Torrance admitted a certain familiarity with music, and was finally prevailed upon to render two or three vocal numbers.

His selections were typical of the British amateur baritone. He gave the old "English Gallants" with the gusto of a "beefeater," and a couple of familiar Gilbert and Sullivan airs which are rarely omitted from any drawing-room repertoire.

A spontaneous flutter of applause rewarded his efforts, and left him flushed with naïve embarrassment.

"I read in some American magazine that the new British ambassador was not unknown as a more than average musician," remarked Mrs. Chiltern, a *chic* and agreeable little widow from Cleveland.

A chorus of "Oh's" and "Ah's" greeted her sally, but, instead of making the singer more flustered, they seemed to aid him in recovering his habitual nonchalance.

"By Jove! Really, now?" he exclaimed. "Then I am again flattered by learning of something else I have in

common with this Sir Percy Vandeleur."

"From all we've learned of your common attributes, Captain Torrance, you and Sir Percy must come deucedly near being doubles," said the indifferent passenger, who had previously maintained a consistent silence. He probably awakened at that moment to the comfortable fact that the sky line was not visible from the saloon.

Captain Torrance laughed good-humoredly. "Ah, you must all have your little jokes," he said. "But, really, you know, for a shipboard joke, this has gone rather further than any I ever had the honor of being involved in. It's gone quite deucedly far; there's no such thing as ignoring it, you know. I only hope that Sir Percy, wherever the chap may be, would feel half as flattered as I do. Quite an experience, to be taken for a first-class ambassador, when you're only a bally half-pay soldier man, you know."

"I'm curious to know," put in a Boston man of serious aspect, "if an ex-army man who becomes a member of the diplomatic corps still retains his status with the war office?"

"Just what I was wondering myself," quickly seconded Mr. Warren, of Taunton. "How is that, Captain Torrance? A retired captain's pay wouldn't cut much figure alongside the salary of an ambassador, would it?"

For an instant absolute silence pervaded the saloon; the company waited in breathless expectancy.

Then Captain Torrance laughed easily. "You rather have me there!" he exclaimed; and a burst of gratified laughter fluttered over the room, but it was silenced as the captain added: "You see, I never happened to look into the matter of what the diplomat chaps get. It takes all my time to plan how a beggar of a captain can get on with a captain's pay."

The indifferent traveler once more added his voice to the cause. "You seem to forget, good people," he remarked ironically, "that a gentleman qualified to hold a minister's portfolio is logically not a novice in a little matter of polite

repartee. I dare say, too, that ex-army men are not unskilled in the delicate art of evasion and casuistry."

Some of the passengers looked at Captain Torrance for a possible show of resentment, but he was good humor itself.

"I say," he cried jocularly, "this isn't a bad way of passing an evening, is it? Even if one is the—er—what you call in America—'the goat'? It beats 'forfeits,' you know, and 'consequences,' and all that sort of thing; and one can't play bridge *all* the time, can one?"

"For that matter, might not 'forfeits' be involved?" queried the indifferent traveler dryly, with something more than his usual spirit. "And might there not be 'consequences,' as well?"

"That's interesting," said the Boston man brightly; "that opens a new line of thought. Just where is the application, sir?"

"It was merely a passing fancy," sighed the indifferent traveler, almost regretfully. "I fear I couldn't expand it very much, in my present mental state. Why do they have such blasted, pounding engines in a modern ocean liner like this? They shake up a man to the very soul!"

The others laughed politely and cast sympathetic glances at the undoubted sufferer.

Captain Torrance seemed not unwilling to follow up the neglected line of thought.

"Life is really a continuous game of forfeits and consequences, isn't it?" he suggested. "Sometimes, you know, the chap that pays the forfeits most of the time doesn't seem to realize it, and those that never do pay are the grumblers. As for the consequences: who shall say how or when they may fall?"

The Boston man was disposed to take up the question philosophically, and he was ardently seconded by a German traveler of argumentative tendencies, but the evening had waxed and waned, and the people were weary.

A woman bade good night to the people about her, and left the saloon, and her departure was the signal for a general dispersal.

A young *débutante*, with more courage than discretion, paused in the doorway and drew attention to herself with a swish of the train of her evening gown.

"I met all sorts of diplomats and celebrities on the Continent," she announced, in a high soprano tone, "but I really think Sir Percy Vandeleur is the cleverest of them all!"

A roar of doubtful appreciation greeted the shot, and all eyes were turned on the captain.

He smiled, in his calm, unruffled way, and made a low and courtly bow.

"My dear young lady," he said suavely, "I must acknowledge the frank compliment for my countryman. If it is ever my pleasure and honor to meet Sir Percy Vandeleur, I assure you I shall not fail to apprise him of the honor that has been done him this evening."

CHAPTER V.

NOT TO BE DENIED.

IT was the last day at sea, and while the passengers watched eagerly for the first sight of land, many little confidences and courtesies were exchanged by the chance acquaintances of the brief, but traditionally intimate, period of the voyage, who were, in most cases, probably destined never to cross each other's track again.

Captain Torrance met the little widow from Cleveland on deck, and they walked together for a time.

Mrs. Chiltern was vivacious and charming as usual, but she seemed to have something on her mind.

At last she said, hesitatingly and with awkward confusion:

"I hate dreadfully to say what I am going to say, Captain Torrance; but Mr. Warren—you know him—says that you are such a kind, obliging man——"

"Ah, Mr. Warren!" exclaimed the captain, with something like harshness. "Yes, yes; I have reason to know him very well. And what has he been telling you, Mrs. Chiltern?"

"He said only the kindest, loveliest things about you," asserted the little woman. "And I'm going to be very

frank, Captain Torrance, and I hope you won't think too harshly of my temerity. I'm a very poor woman, captain, although I have been traveling in Europe. It's the first time I ever went abroad, you know, and I had *such* a good time; but, dear me! it has taken just about all the money I had to live on for a year.

"And this is what I want to tell you," she continued: "I did all sorts of foolish, extravagant things while I was over there, but I thought I might never go again. I bought myself a beautiful set of Russian sables, and, Captain Torrance, I have scarcely money enough to get them through the customs. I'll be simply strapped, as we say in the States, by the time I get to Cleveland.

"Mr. Warren says," she went on breathlessly, "that you have the courtesy of the port—the right to take in anything you please, without any trouble of any sort; and he says you're awfully good-natured about doing little favors for people. He made me promise not to tell any one he told me, but I was so tempted to ask you if you—if you just *could* get my sables through for me. It would mean so much to me. I know I had no right to be so extravagant, but you——"

The high-bred face of the Englishman took on a look of lofty pain and regret.

"In the first place, my dear Mrs. Chiltern," he said kindly, "I must take the liberty of saying that this Mr. Warren is an unmitigated ass! Whatever transaction I have had with him cannot be discussed now; I was indiscreet enough to consent to do him a favor, and I regret it.

"You have my deepest sympathy, madam," he continued, "in what you properly regard as your extravagant misfortune, but if you will consider all conditions, you will see how helpless I am to do anything for you. My own financial condition would not warrant me in doing anything to aid you, even if your pride would permit such a thing. And I wish you could see, Mrs. Chiltern, that as a good American you cannot, for your conscience's sake, deliberately cheat your country of its just due. I

know for a fact that some of the heaviest smuggling is done by pretty women, who have all the other virtues that we respect, but I deplore it sorely, madam. Good women should give more serious thought to such things; then they would come nearer to the standards we have built up around them."

The little widow was astonished and dismayed. "But he said it would cost you nothing, and be no trouble to you!" she protested weakly. "An ambassador has a perfect right to do such things, hasn't he? Mr. Warren said so!"

"No! An ambassador has certainly not a right to do such things!" declared the Englishman firmly. "And, pray, what has an ambassador to do with this matter, anyway?"

"Everybody knows you're Sir Percy Vandeleur!" the lady insisted, with feminine desperation. "You cannot deny it!"

"Ah, but I can deny it, and I do!" returned the captain. "I am Captain Torrance, late of the British army, and no one aboard this ship has the right to address me by any other term."

The lady from Cleveland drew herself up with more pride than her diminutive stature would warrant.

"I am *very* sorry, Captain Torrance, that I was silly enough to annoy you in this manner," she said, very bitterly. "I assure you I shall never do such a thing again!" And she flounced away, doubtless to find one Warren, from Taunton, Massachusetts.

Scarcely had she disappeared, when the Englishman was intercepted by another fellow passenger. This time it was a small, quiet man, who had hitherto been uncommunicative and inoffensive.

He took but little time to get at the matter which was on his mind. "I'm Henry H. Ripley, of New York," he said, in a businesslike tone. "I guess you've heard of me?"

"Really, I can't say I have; but that's my misfortune," replied Torrance.

"I've got a little matter to put up to you," continued the man, without hesitancy. "A man named Warren has let

it slip, in conversation with me, that you are taking a few—well, a few articles of value through the customs for him and another man——”

“Warren!” cried Torrance harshly. “By Jove, I can’t abide the beastly way that fellow is behaving!”

“Never mind that!” said Mr. Ripley; “I’m going to talk business, sir, and I’ll be brief. I’m a collector of rare curios and antiques. I’m pretty well known, and I can’t afford to take any ordinary chances; but when I see a chance to slip anything into the country with a little additional profit, I’m not the one to let it go by me.

“Now, I’ve got a little casket of antique jewels that stands me about fifteen thousand as it is. They’re mostly pearls, rubies, and emeralds, in antique settings. You can take them in as family trinkets, and not a word will be said. I’m not forcing you to do this as a favor: I intend to make it right with you; I can afford to pay a little for getting the things in without all that duty.”

“You’re *not forcing* me?” exclaimed the Englishman. “Now, my good man, what do you mean by that?”

“I mean that I’m talking business right from the shoulder!” said Ripley frankly. “You’re in danger of standing in with your government and the United States government pretty wrong, Sir Percy. I guess you know about what would happen if I granted a little interview to a few newspaper men at the dock when we land. It would make interesting reading—how the new British ambassador was starting out in his career as a smuggler of jewelry and such stuff, on the strength of his official privileges!”

For a moment the eyes of Captain Torrance seemed to shoot fire, and Ripley quailed for an instant, but only to return to the attack with fresh vigor.

“There’s not much time left,” he said pointedly. “You’d better make up your mind, my friend. You see, I can use the wireless to tell the reporters I’ve got a story for them, and the customs men will be ready to have something to say, too.”

Torrance laughed suddenly. “You’re

too clever, by half, my friend,” he said witheringly. “It seems that I have made mistakes in trying to be a good fellow. Very well, I never play at hazards with men of your stamp; it doesn’t pay. Give me your jewel casket, and when I return it to you I shall require a little document that will exonerate me and release me from further complicity in the transactions of you and this fellow Warren.”

“That’s fair enough,” agreed the man, “and here’s the casket. I don’t need any receipt. The British ambassador can’t get away very easily.”

Torrance laughed dryly as he took a package which the man drew from the pocket of his overcoat.

“I tell you, as I have told the others, that I am merely Captain Torrance, of the retired list. I can say no more,” he remarked.

“Have your little joke, if you will,” returned Ripley. “I’m satisfied with the deal as it lays.”

CHAPTER VI.

AN AUDIENCE.

AT Quarantine, the *Laurentic* was boarded by customs officers, and the usual printed forms were distributed among the passengers for the declaration of dutiable articles.

A little later, as the ship was steaming up the bay, Mr. Hiram Rider, of Chicago, came speeding along the deck to where Mr. Warren, of Taunton, was standing, complacently viewing the New York sky line.

“Say, Warren!” he cried excitedly, laying his hands on the latter’s shoulders; “what do y’think? That man, the ambassador, isn’t doing a thing but declaring your pearls and my diamonds and a lot of other truck. What does he mean by it—that’s what I want to know?”

Mr. Warren laughed heartily and contemptuously.

“Calm right down, Mr. Rider,” he said soothingly. “Just use a little reason. That’s the very thing Captain Torrance would naturally do. He ain’t supposed to be the British ambassador

till he gets ashore, is he? Well, what would he do but declare all the truck he's got, and then, when he gets ashore, show his credentials, as they call 'em, and tell the inspectors who he is? He'll get the formalities over as quick as he can, and then he'll probably go right up to the Hotel Acropolis, and we'll all pay him a little social, farewell visit. See?"

Mr. Rider apparently "saw," and, after a moment of reflection, he nodded comprehendingly, and returned to the saloon.

The great vessel was warped into her dock without delay, and the passengers said their final good-bys, and went their various ways through the mazes of the customs department.

Several interested persons noticed, with satisfaction, that Captain Torrance was treated with something more than ordinary courtesy by the inspectors, and that he was one of the first to leave and take a waiting taxicab.

A few minutes later another cab departed into the city bearing the contented and smiling Mr. Warren, of Taunton.

Two other passengers, Messrs. Rider and Ripley, later joined forces, and went to a telephone office in the neighborhood of the wharf.

Mr. Rider acted as spokesman, and phoned to the Hotel Acropolis to ask if the British ambassador were putting up there. Mr. Ripley stood by and listened to the conversation eagerly.

Presently Rider hung up the receiver and turned to his companion, with a glad smile lighting up his countenance.

"Everything is O. K.," he announced gayly. "The hotel operator says Sir Percy Vandeleur has just arrived—that he came in on the *Laurentic*—so that's all straight! She says his suite got there two days ago, and the whole outfit starts for Washington to-morrow. Now, Mr. Ripley, we'll pay a call on our friend, the British ambassador, in about an hour. Like as not we'll meet Warren up there."

In the state suite of the Hotel Acropolis, the Honorable Harold Mostyn, pri-

vate secretary to Sir Percy Vandeleur, came into the latter's presence and handed him five calling cards.

"You must be very tired, Sir Percy," he said sympathetically. "I dare say you'll scarcely care to see these people to-day? They say—that is, one of them, a Mr. Rider, says that you met them on shipboard, and that you are expecting them."

The British ambassador laughed whimsically.

"I am a bit tired, Harold," he admitted, "but I'll see these people. As a matter of fact, I *was* expecting them."

Ten minutes later the five visitors were ushered into an anteroom of the suite.

Messrs. Rider and Ripley had regarded the other three with some wonderment. They merely recognized them as fellow voyagers on the *Laurentic*, but remembered them only vaguely.

"I didn't see much of those fellows on the ship," Ripley whispered to his companion. "But, by George! they must have got next to the ambassador, too!"

A door opened, and a servant of the ambassador's retinue stepped in and announced formally:

"His excellency, the ambassador, will see you in here, gentlemen."

The five Americans got up, shuffled a little, and then filed into the room indicated, with some nervousness. It was one thing to hobnob with nobility on a promenade deck, and another to meet that same nobility in official state.

The room which they entered was a large one, richly furnished for small receptions and like functions.

A spare man, of medium height, clad in a black morning suit, arose from a chair near a large table and advanced to meet the visitors.

"I am very glad to see you again, gentlemen," he said, with simple courtesy. "I fear I was not always sociable on shipboard, but you will make allowances, I trust. You see, I was wretchedly troubled with the beastly rolling of the ship: that was really about all I could think of."

The manner of the distinguished man

was elegance itself, and his courtesy was beyond reproach, but the five visitors stood silent, as if turned to stone.

Mr. Ripley was the first to find voice.

"Say!" he muttered hoarsely; "if you're Sir Percy Vandeleur, who in the name of Sam Hill was that Captain Torrance, and *where* is he?"

The ambassador continued to smile. "I was expecting this visit, gentlemen," he said calmly, "because I couldn't very well avoid hearing what was going on during the voyage. I haven't the ghost of an idea who your friend Captain Torrance is, but I might venture a guess as to *what* he is."

"A miserable, low, swindling hound—that's what he is, without a doubt!" shouted Mr. Rider. "And I'm stung good and plenty."

"I gave that man five thousand dollars' worth of stuff to get in for me!" howled one of the three strangers.

The other two claimed losses of two thousand and eight thousand, respectively.

"Well, perhaps you'll allow me to ask," remarked Mr. Ripley witheringly, "what you, as British ambassador, was doing all the time, if you knew that shark was doing us up brown?"

"I had utterly nothing to do with the matter," returned the ambassador. "I was not well, and my chief concern was to preserve my incognito. I confess I derived not a little amusement from the antics of you gentlemen, and a few others. It occurs to me, now, that this Captain Torrance behaved quite as creditably as any one on board. I paid little attention to the details of things going on around me, but I could easily see that a number of you were making strenuous endeavors to elude the customs authorities of your country. Whether you succeeded, or not, was of little moment to me. I noticed that Captain Torrance repeatedly denied that he was the British ambassador—surely he could do no more. It looks to me, gentlemen, as if your case were best illustrated by the old saying: 'Hoist with his own petard!'"

"Where's Warren, that man from Taunton, Massachusetts?" demanded

Rider, as though the ambassador might be hiding him.

"I dare say the man that called himself by that name is now speeding away from New York with his friend Captain Torrance," answered Vandeleur. "Even with my indifference to the case, it was not hard for me to see that the two men were something more than chance acquaintances; and the American men of the shoe industry whom I have met have been scarcely of Mr. Warren's type."

"Well, what can we do?" demanded Rider dejectedly.

"Why, it's hardly a matter for the state department, and nothing of an international affair," said the ambassador, "so I don't see that I am called upon to take action officially. I may say that I mentioned the little affair to my friend, the consul general, who was here a little while ago. He said he would report it to the police."

"That's all you gentlemen can do, I fancy," he continued. "But you will have to treat the case rather delicately with regard to your own parts in it, will you not? You see, you are all smugglers virtually; while this Torrance chap paid the duty on all your things without effort to evade it. He is doubtless a member of a far-reaching gang of swindlers. They figured that more money could be made by obtaining jewels in that manner and paying the regular duty on them, than by ordinary smuggling. They must have had a considerable capital to meet the demand, but you see the thing was practically safe for them."

"I can't see that—not on the face of it!" declared Ripley.

"Mr. Warren made it safe," explained Vandeleur. "He was the lookout. I have little doubt that he knew me, and played me very craftily. He managed to keep me in a mood to see the affair as a joke, and he watched me closely enough to see that I made no move toward exposure. Had I done so, Torrance would have given back your jewels and apologized for his little practical joke. He had a decided knack for carrying out the part of a rather

naïve tourist. You must credit him with that!"

"I am going to see a lawyer, first!" said Ripley, and started for the door without ceremony.

The four others followed, muttering vaguely, and clasping and unclasping their nervous hands.

They had *enjoyed* an audience with one of the most distinguished diplomats of the day, but they were hardly appreciative, and not a word of farewell was spoken.

A few hours later, in the evening, the British ambassador took a short automobile ride with his secretary, to see the famous lighter-than-day avenue of the big city, as he was leaving for Washington on the following morning.

On their return, he hurried through the hotel corridors toward his rooms, but chanced to meet one of his fellow passengers of the *Laurentic* face to face. It was the little widow from Cleveland, Mrs. Chiltern, who was staying there overnight with friends, before starting for Ohio.

She recognized him as the quiet, indifferent passenger she had spoken with once or twice in the saloon, but whom she had not once heard called by name, and she nodded and gave him a cordial good evening.

"I understand the British ambassador is staying here, too," she said casually, as they both stood waiting for an elevator.

The ambassador smiled whimsically. "I am having that pleasure," he laughed.

"You!" she exclaimed, aghast.

"I am sailing under my true colors now, Mrs. Chiltern," he explained. "For reasons of my own, I preferred to preserve my incognito while aboard ship."

The woman was speechless for a moment. "But—why—who was that man that called himself Captain Torrance?"

she asked presently, in a hoarse, almost incredulous voice.

Sir Percy laughed. "We have no reason to suppose he was not Captain Torrance, as he claimed," he answered. "Some people who were on the ship called here this afternoon, and were quite as astonished as you are. I believe they were so thoroughly convinced, aboard ship, that Captain Torrance was the British ambassador, that they—well, I think they virtually forced the obliging captain to bring in certain dutiable articles of theirs, which the man did, after a fashion of his own choosing. It's a peculiar case, Mrs. Chiltern."

The widow was thunderstruck, and she was thoughtfully silent as they entered the elevator and it started for the upper floors.

"I, too, was persuaded to ask him to do me a little favor," she said suddenly, with a flush of confusion, "but he refused to do anything of the sort." To herself she added: "I wonder why?"

"I get out here," said the ambassador, as the elevator stopped at his floor. "I am glad to hear what you say, madam. I am glad the chap refused you. He had the manners of a gentleman, and, if he was a swindler, as they claim, I am rather pleased to hear that he had still something of gallantry in his make-up. Good night, Mrs. Chiltern."

Sir Percy Vandeleur turned to his secretary, as they gained the state suite, and smiled a little wearily. "Early breakfast in the morning, Harold," he said, "and then we'll be off. I fancy those visitors, this afternoon, found me rather poor company—even little Mrs. Chiltern didn't seem particularly impressed with me just now. Rather think she's more interested in Captain Torrance, for example. If I am not more of a success with the Americans I meet in Washington, we shall shortly be booking passage for our return. Eh, what?"

A Special Agent

TOURIST (in Crimson Gulch): "Is it a fact that one of your leading citizens, Hair-trigger Hank, shot three men yesterday?"

Lariat Louis: "That's jest what he done, pardner. We got a new hospital now, and Hank, he's been hired t' get business for it."



DO you believe in dreams? Whether you do or not you are invited to send to this department short accounts, not exceeding seven hundred words, of strange dreams you have had, followed by actual events which seemed to be foreshadowed by the dreams; in other words, the sequels to the dreams. No attention will be paid to any "dream" unless the sender gives his full name and address.

EDITOR OF TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE:

A series of dreams which I had last spring, and an incident which followed them, may be put down by some to the common explanation of coincidence, but such an explanation does not satisfy me.

I dreamed one night that I saw an owl sitting upon the footboard of my bed. It was not like the owls I had seen in museums or bird stores, but of a peculiar coloring of yellowish white, flecked with gray. I thought little of the dream until it came again, and then I mentioned facetiously to my family that "the bird of wisdom" had visited me twice during sleep.

My wife, who has the superstitious nature of some women, was disposed to feel some anxiety, but I treated the matter lightly. Several weeks passed and I thought nothing more of the matter, but the owl came again, and I saw it three times within the space of a week, just before I started with my family for a little sojourn in the Catskills. I said nothing about it, preferring my own reflections to those of a nervous woman.

We had been at one of the large hotels in the Catskills about a week, when I took my wife driving one morning in a livery-stable

rig. We were driving along a quiet mountain road, through woods, when my wife cried out: "Oh, look at that!"

And there, on the limb of a tree, about a hundred feet from the road, sat my yellow-and-white-and-gray owl, blinking at us. Almost at the instant of my looking at it, it spread its wings and flapped clumsily away into the deeper woods. Owls, of course, with their peculiar faculty for night vision, do not see well in daylight, and the bird's progress was slow and labored, but it was almost immediately out of sight among the dense foliage.

"Hold on," I said; "I'm going to see that fellow again—that's my owl."

I jumped out of the buggy and ran after the bird, fighting my way through the thick scrub. My wife, unwilling to sit there alone behind a strange horse, got out and waited for me by the roadside.

Suddenly I was called back by her cries of alarm. I ran as fast as I could, but only arrived in time to see our stable rig disappearing in a cloud of dust down the road. My wife said the horse had been seized with some kind of a fit, and, after shaking all over for a minute, had bolted. We found the poor brute dead with a broken neck at the bottom of a deep ravine. The buggy was smashed into matchwood. Had we been seated in the buggy, I dislike to think what our fate would have been.

A number of people at the hotel said that my description of the owl plainly showed it to be of the not uncommon variety known as the barn owl. The fact remains, however, that I had never seen a bird of that description until it appeared in my dreams, and the owl on the tree was the living image of the dream bird. There's the story: take it as you will.

JOHN E. EVANS.

Trenton, N. J.



The Tricolored Sins

By
Barry Wolcott

(A COMPLETE NOVEL)

CHAPTER I.

THE PARACHUTES.

THE hurricane, after blowing for five long days, had decreased until it was nothing more than a stiff gale. The seas, however, still were running uncomfortably high, and with her engines turning only enough to keep her sharp nose into them, the *Arrow* labored heavily.

Bob Braybrooke, who, with his friend and partner, Jimmy Tyrone, owned the great, armed yacht, was clawing his way aft by the help of a handrail on one of the deck houses. To this rail there also clung a large, broad-shouldered young man, Donald Brandreth, whose curly, yellow head was thrown back, while its owner gazed earnestly into the sky.

"Say, old chap, didn't you hear an odd sort of popping noise?" he shouted, at the top of his voice, as the other touched him in passing.

"Yes, I did," bellowed Braybrooke.

Then they both laughed. During the hurricane they had been obliged to shout to be heard above the shrieking wind, and now, if they did not stop to think, the habit remained.

"I heard it, too," said Jimmy Tyrone, who had just come down from the bridge. "Where do you think it came from, Brandy?"

"It seemed to come from above us somewhere," replied Donald Brandreth—or "Dandy Brandy," as he was more commonly known to his myriad friends in nearly all parts of the world, civilized and otherwise.

"And look," he went on, pointing. "See those things? Jolly queer, I call it, eh?"

The other two gazed in the direction indicated by Brandreth's finger.

Through the air, some almost out of sight, some lower, but nearly all well up, a lot of red patches—brilliantly crimson—came sailing through the air, first in ones and twos, then in flocks.

Even as the three men looked, from under one of these patches there came a puff of pearl-colored vapor, which almost instantly dissolved, and a second or two later, there followed one of the pops mentioned by Brandreth. Then another patch, apparently filled with a spirit of emulation, gave two pops.

"What on earth can they be?" asked Bob wonderingly, of no one in particular. "We're some distance away from Coney Island and its pyrotechnics, if I mistake not."

They were indeed some distance away from the spot named. In fact, they were well south of the equator. But Braybrooke received an answer to his question with unexpected suddenness. Brandreth's rosy face turned white, and,

grasping him and Jimmy each by their collars, he whisked them to one side, as though they had been children.

"The beastly things are parachutes!" he cried. "Here comes one—and it's fizzing like a siphon."

Hardly had he spoken when the parachute, flying only a little above the waves, was upon them, fizzing, as the young man had said. A slant of wind took it, hurling it over, so that the crimson cloth started to pass on one side of the foremast, on which was set a storm trysail, its sputtering burden on the other.

Tyrone started to spring forward; Braybrooke jumped to intercept him. Before either could act, the fizzing ended in a resounding explosion. Trysail and parachute vanished together, as the flame of a candle vanishes when blown out. A packet, enveloped in oilskin, which the latter had carried, fell upon the deck, and was whisked aft by the wind. Braybrooke put out his foot as it passed, and stopped it.

Snatching it up, Brandreth gingerly examined the thing, pinching it, until its softness assured him that no more explosive was stored within.

"Seems safe enough now," he hazarded.

"Safe!" snorted Tyrone. "Well, there are lots of its little friends around here that aren't safe. The firmament is choked with 'em.

"Oh, Willis!" he continued, hailing the bridge, "have the remainder of that trysail cleared away—if there is any remainder—and at the same time get out of this. We'll have aëroplanes and dirigibles running afoul of us next."

"Let's go below and find out, if we can, what it all means," suggested Bob Braybrooke, as the officer to whom his friend had shouted waved a hand in token that the order was understood.

"Right-o!" assented Brandreth, and followed by the other two he went through the companionway and into the cabin.

Brandy's fingers shook a little as he opened a penknife and ripped off the outer, waterproof covering of the mysterious packet. This was not at all the

sort of thing that one would suspect of this apparently nerveless young man. The others looked at him in astonishment. He saw those looks.

"You see, I've sort of a hunch, as you Yankees would say, that these things come from—from those whom I'm trying to find," he explained, rather apologetically.

"You mean from Professor Wedgewood?" asked Bob.

"It looks like the sort of thing he'd do," assented Brandreth, ripping off cover after cover, and strewing them over the cabin table.

"Is the professor given to practical jokes?" inquired Tyrone sarcastically. "That bundle was as large as a big tomato can; now it's about the size of a sausage."

"No," replied the one addressed. "There'll be something inside, probably. Yes, here it is!"

He ripped off a voluminous piece of oilskin as he spoke, and held up a sheet of handsome note paper, tightly rolled. Opening it, he glanced at the contents, then tossed the sheet over to his companions.

"I was right, you see," he said.

Bob read the message aloud:

"Having been wrecked, with the schooner *Aloha*, on this island, I send forth these fire balloons, made of cloth intended for use in trading with the natives, and propelled by a mixture of resin and explosive powder taken from signal rockets which were carried by the schooner, in order to call attention to the plight of many records, of a value to the scientific world which cannot be estimated, and which, together with much luggage, is here on this coral atoll.

"Three islanders, composing the crew, attempted to swim to the shore, and were drowned before reaching it, and my daughter and I alone survive."

"Why, hang it all, there's no signature!" cried Braybrooke, as he finished.

"None is needed," replied Brandreth, with some bitterness. "That note, in two sentences, rating Winifred—his daughter—as of less consequence than those beastly records of his, would have told me who wrote the note, even if the handwriting didn't. But he doesn't say where the island is. It's like him to leave that out."

"It's got to be dead to windward; can't be anywhere else," said Tyrone reassuringly. "Wait a shake, you fellows—I'll be back in a second."

He left the cabin. With a painful embarrassment—for what he had to say savored of sentiment, which always is embarrassing to an Anglo-Saxon—Brandreth, after two or three abortive attempts, addressed Braybroke.

"It's awfully decent of you two chaps to take me with you as you have," he said. "You were right when you told me that I'd be more likely to find Winnie by going with you than if I went straggling about over the ocean myself. It's right-down bully of you!"

"Oh, shut up, Brandy," replied Braybrooke, also embarrassed. "Chuck that rot, won't you?"

And so the thanks were spoken and understood. Tyrone, entering the cabin at that moment, announced:

"The wind's falling fast now; so's the sea. Those red parachutes are still going strong, and popping like a Chinese New Year, but we're well out of their path."

"Did you see any signs of that island?" asked his partner.

"I suppose so. There's a smudge of something dipping on the horizon. We probably will know for certain before sundown, at our present gait. Where has my pipe got to?"

Finding it in his pocket, he filled and lighted it, and then a silence fell over them all. They were old friends, these three—as also was Willis, now in charge on the bridge.

CHAPTER II.

SYMBOLS OF SIN.

AMERICANS—and good Americans—as they were, Braybrooke and Tyrone had been sent to school in England before the former returned to enter West Point and the latter Annapolis. Donald Brandreth, the only son of a great Canadian landowner, had been a schoolmate and chum, of whom they afterward had lost sight until they ran across him on the Isthmus, on their way south.

Brandreth had been trying to charter a schooner, in order to go in pursuit of Winifred Wedgewood, who had been taken by her father, presumably on one of his erratic scientific expeditions, which might lead him anywhere before it was finished.

The *Arrow* had been to the United States, in order to leave there, for the winter, the young wives of her owners, and now was on her leisurely way back to their great Central American plantation, "The Arrowhead," by way of the Isle of Pearls, which they also owned.

"Well, *aren't* you the fine young bunch!" called Willis, as he came into the cabin. The three already there started up, rubbing their eyes. The lowering sea had rocked them to sleep. There had been little rest during the hurricane.

"You needn't talk—you had the last sleep," growled Tyrone good-naturedly.

"Not now," laughed Willis. "Anyhow, we've arrived, and will let go an anchor directly. We've struck the right island, fast enough—there's a red streamer flying from one of those coconut trees that must be fifty feet long."

They needed no second summons, but tumbled on deck as an anchor was dropped. Almost at the same moment a boat slapped the water, and into it the three men tumbled. The crew, of Clasonvacas—a tribe of once powerful Indians, now owning allegiance to the Arrowhead, and trained by its owners—gave way with a will, and the boat went shooting toward the atoll's sheltered entrance.

"*Je-rusalem!*" exclaimed Braybrooke, under his breath.

"For the love of Mike!" sighed his partner. "Robinson Crusoe—up to date!"

"Shut up, can't you?" growled Brandreth. "He never did think of the suitability of things—the professor is beyond that."

Evidently the professor was. Rarely before have a top hat and frock coat been seen on an uninhabited, tropical island—never, perhaps, when coupled with white canvas shoes, and a long, mercurial barometer, slung, riflewise,

with its end protruding over a shoulder, and a heavy, canvas-wrapped bundle carried as one might carry a child. But the professor was quite unembarrassed.

"Ah, Donald," he said, as though he had parted from that individual but an hour before. "These two gentlemen are friends of yours, I suppose? Gentlemen, I hold in my arms the records of which I wrote in my notes, one of which you evidently have received. These records, of course, must be safeguarded at all hazards. You will therefore be good enough to put me on board your vessel at once. Afterward you can return for the other, and less important things."

"Where's Winnie?" demanded Donald Brandreth, partially stifling an imprecation.

"Where she would naturally be, guarding the remaining things—together with Envy, Hatred, and Malice."

Few things, in those islands, are strange enough to excite much curiosity. But Professor Wedgewood was one, and the notion of a young girl being set to guard three of the cardinal sins another.

There was no time then to make inquiries, however. Brandreth started off at a run in the direction which the professor had indicated by a backward toss of his head, and, with a word to the Clasonvaca coxswain, bidding him to hold the boat until their return, the other two followed.

On an enormous pile of luggage sat the girl, dressed in a blue yachting suit, her gentle face showing the traces of recent tears, and still full of apprehension. But that face lighted up wonderfully as young Brandreth's stalwart form appeared. It was not until then that his two companions saw how beautiful it really was. Like the gentlemen they were, both pulled up short.

"Get down to the boat as soon as you can, Brandy," Tyrone called.

They they returned to the beach. Those two were very long in coming.

The professor was fuming, in what was evidently an agony of apprehension, as he tramped nervously up and down the coral sand. He wished to be set on board at once, and made his wishes very

plain, indeed. He seemed to think—which, indeed, was the case—that the importance of those records of his quite justified all such demands, and became haughtily reserved when the two young men refused to leave until the others arrived.

He thawed not at all, even when they reached the *Arrow*, and the precious records, together with another package of like size, and even greater weight, were safely deposited in her currency vault, and Winifred in the best stateroom. His apprehension became greater and greater. With growing disfavor his two hosts regarded him. For a time the professor contained himself, but soon reached a point where he could contain himself no longer.

"Why is this anchor not raised?" he demanded.

"Because the boat that was sent ashore for your stuff hasn't returned," replied Braybrooke politely. "And why, if I may ask, are your coat tails on fire?"

Without the slightest appearance of surprise, Professor Wedgewood examined the dangling tails of his frock coat, which were smoking and beginning to burst into flame.

"Ah, I see," he replied gravely. "In sending out the parachutes, I inclosed the fuses of the explosive which I sent with them in wet paper, rubbed with stick phosphorous. When dried, it would automatically ignite. I must thoughtlessly have placed some of it in the pocket of my coat. Evidently it has dried."

Evidently it had. The two young men could not help laughing, and the professor permitted himself a doubtful smile in sympathy.

While speaking, he was emptying the pockets of his coat, so far as the fire allowed. Then he unslung the barometer, and afterward, taking off the coat, flung it overboard.

At that moment the cable began to grind its way inboard, for the boat was returning, and was hoisted in as the *Arrow* got under way. Without invitation, Professor Wedgewood climbed to the bridge. Far away, on the path which

they were following, was the smoke of a steamer. He pointed to it with a trembling finger.

"A war vessel?" he asked huskily. "Of Paisamaríl?"

"Possibly," replied Braybrooke, who, with Tyrone, had followed him. "Why?"

The professor leaned weakly against the bridge rail. All strength seemed to have left his legs, and his face was pasty white.

"Don't let it overtake us!" he begged. "Don't—pray don't! Take any chances before you permit that! It would be fatal—fatal!"

"Why?" asked Braybrooke again. But he was touched, nevertheless, by the old man's distress.

"What seems to be wrong?" he asked solicitously.

"The tricolored sins," murmured the older man absently.

"The *what*?" demanded Jimmy.

With an effort the professor pulled himself together.

"Of course, you cannot understand," he said. "I will show you to what I referred. That will save many words. Come!"

They followed him as he led the way below to the door of the strong room, and signified his wish that it should be opened. Twirling the combination, Jimmy swung the door wide. Taking one of his two packages, the professor carried it to the cabin table, and unfolded its canvas wrapping.

Tossing this aside, he revealed a great, silver casket. Its lid, heavily chased with a semibarbaric design, contained five great opaque stones, respectively red, yellow, blue, green, and black. Taking from his pocket a strangely shaped key, the professor unlocked the lid and threw it open. Inside, from nests of white silk, three jewels blazed and winked in the electric lights.

Blue-white, blood-red, and the most vivid, living green they were; diamond, ruby, and emerald, each as large as an English walnut.

"The tricolored sins," said the professor simply. "They were named, in

the land whence they came—and rightly named—Envy, Hatred, and Malice."

For a time the young men hung over the casket without speaking. Of pearls they were rather good judges, but of brilliants they knew practically nothing. Yet they could not but see that stones such as these must be of a value almost incalculable. Reverently they replaced them in their nests.

"What does it all mean?" asked Braybrooke. "Where was it that they came from?"

"From the East," said the professor, and he spoke rather as one who thinks aloud than as though replying to a question; "many, many centuries ago, when the race which found and cut them was pushed across the sea by an enemy which pursued, but could not conquer it, to take final refuge in some of these islands."

"But how did you get hold of them, and why did you bring them here?" persisted Tyrone, as the older man paused.

"Collecting and arranging the record of that great migration has been my life's work," the professor continued. "It was through these records that I first heard of the jewels, and afterward found them. How, does not now matter. What does signify is that others know of their existence, of the fact that I have found them, and that these others wish to take them from me."

"So that's the reason that you feared a Paisamarilleno man-o'-war," said Jimmy Tyrone. "I understand now. You needn't be afraid, though; there's nothing in these seas that can catch the *Arrow*."

"I wouldn't make too sure of that—as things stand," said Willis, coming into the cabin, but halting at the doorway. "Come on deck, and have a look. Things seem rather queer to me."

CHAPTER III.

IN ACTION.

STOPPING only long enough to close the casket and replace it in the strong room, they returned to the deck. There was no need of going higher to

see the steamer whose smoke they had descried upon leaving the atoll. Her gray hull, with its sponsons, now was plainly visible. With all her speed she was rushing toward the end of a channel between coral reefs, along which the *Arrow* was passing.

"We can put about, if you like, and get out from among these reefs by another way," said Willis. "By doing that we'd leave that ship simply nowhere. What do you say?"

"No," said Braybrooke decidedly. "Nothing doing."

"I'd see her jolly well blowed before I'd get out of her way—if I had any say in the matter," remarked Brandreth, strolling up to them.

"Call the crew to quarters," commanded Tyrone, his jaw setting. "She may lick us, if she wants to fight—she carries heavier guns than we do—but she'll have the time of her fair young life while she's doing it."

Willis grinned appreciatively, the call was sounded, and the dusky, barefooted crew—which didn't lack very much, for that matter, of being bare all over—ran noiselessly and promptly to quarters, their honest faces glowing with joy at the prospect before them.

Bob Braybrooke's face also was joyful, and Brandreth's was frankly radiant.

Tyrone, who knew what a conflict against such odds would mean, and Professor Wedgewood were the only ones who seemed to harbor apprehensions.

The sun, almost setting, sent its last level rays over the steamer, which now could be made out plainly enough as the *Ballena*, one of the two real warships owned by the so-called republic of Painsamaril. And though this ship was doing the best she could, it was evident that she could not succeed in intercepting the *Arrow*, which, trembling from the thrust of her great turbine engines, was making three feet to the other's two.

A string of dots ascended to the warship's forward signal yard, and broke out into brightly colored flags.

"I thought so," said Tyrone.

"What does she say?" asked Brandreth eagerly.

"Tells us to heave to; she wants to speak us."

"Tell her to go jump on herself," recommended the Canadian.

This, in effect, was what the flags Tyrone caused to be hoisted did say. The reply came promptly from the *Ballena*.

A flash of rusty-red flame sprang from one of her forward sponsons, and a shell—a heavy one, by the sound of it—went shrieking, high in the air, over the *Arrow*.

The yacht's after four-inch gun spoke promptly in return.

This shot, also, was a trifle high, but the warship's foremast gave a little jump, as though startled; then lopped over her side, where its resistance to the water served to turn the ship half around before the wreckage could be cut away, and forced her to stop her engines.

A chorus of pleased little yelps went up from the Clasonvacas as another shot rang out from the *Arrow*, and the shell, flying true, burst against the enemy's side.

But Tyrone shook his head.

"No use," he said. "With *her* armor, hitting her in the body with our guns is like flipping peas against plate glass."

"I suppose you know what it means to fire on the warship of a civilized nation, Tyrone," said Willis warningly. "Technically, it's piracy."

"If our guns were ever so little heavier, I'd make her realize what it meant to fire on us," replied Tyrone grimly, the fighting light in his eyes. "Piracy or not. Heavens! What rotten gunners those fellows are!"

The remark was caused by another shell from the *Ballena*, which fell far astern, and short as well.

Brandreth watched it skipping across the sea with much interest.

"I say, old chap," he cried, "soon it'll be too dark for good shooting. I was in the coast artillery, you know, and was a bit of a dab with a light gun. Might I have a try at her conning tower? If I could hit it, it might be a help."

"Go to it," replied Tyrone.

Brandreth trotted gayly away. The others looked doubtfully at the approaching warship.

Two reefs, extending for ten miles or more, held the *Arrow* between them. Beyond them was an interval of comparatively open water; then two more reefs, continuing the passage. Outside these reefs, the *Ballena* was running in a course nearly parallel to that of the yacht, and still somewhat ahead of her, but being overtaken fast. Her only hope was to disable the *Arrow*, and soon her broadsides would bear upon it, as it was passing her.

Tyrone prayed for darkness, but the sun seemed that day to take an uncommonly long time to drop below the horizon—almost as a man might hesitate to take a dive into water that he knew was cold.

The enemy was firing slowly, feeling for her range, and gradually getting it, poor as her gunners were.

One of the shells clipped a forestay. The *Clasonvacas* yelped again, apparently out of compliment to the enemy. A trembling hand was laid on Tyrone's arm, and, looking around, he saw that it was the professor.

"Where's your daughter?" demanded Tyrone, remembering the girl for the first time since the flight from the island began.

"In an apartment below the water line; one of your stewards showed her there when the first shot was fired," the professor answered. "Are we in great danger, Mr. Tyrone?"

"You can see," replied the person addressed, with a wave of his hand toward the enemy. "If she hits us, we are; we carry no armor, you know.

"But we'll do our best for your records and the tricolored sins, professor; you can depend upon that—and incidentally, for your daughter, and our own skins," added Braybrooke.

He intended no sarcasm; after all, the man was his guest. Nevertheless, the professor colored under his sandy skin.

"Listen, gentlemen," he said earnestly. "This is a matter that concerns even more than the records, for that matter.

I doubt if the man who sends that steamer—who very likely has accompanied it—would be interested in them."

"The sins, then?" asked Bob, his curiosity roused.

"Partly. But principally it concerns Winifred, my daughter. I love my child. But love of a woman for a man, before marriage, has not seemed to me essential for happiness. My researches are of paramount importance. Money was needed to pursue them, and I had nearly spent my little fortune. Donald Brandreth has, as yet, only his allowance—though a very large one, I admit—and is dependent upon his father."

"And is it possible that you knew so little about this scoundrel, Peralta, who is now dictator of Paisamaril, that you consented to his marrying your daughter?" asked Braybrooke, astounded.

"I—I certainly did make a conditional promise in her behalf," admitted the professor. "His fortune is ample for three. He expressed himself as being willing to devote it to any cause, if by doing so he could make sure of Winifred. And I had not discovered the sins, then. It was most indiscreet of me, as I now can see, to mention this discovery to Admiral Peralta. But he pretended to be vitally interested in my researches, and so——"

"He's one of the greatest scoundrels unhanged, and one of the most avaricious beasts in existence," interrupted Braybrooke. "It's the jewels that he's after, rather than the girl, I fancy."

"He is after them both. The sins, if sold, would assure him the continuance of his position in his country, which at present is by no means secure. He made that plain when, in conformity to my daughter's most vehement requests—I might say demands—I informed him that the marriage could not take place. He threatened us both, and I think he would, had we stayed, have carried out those threats. We were endeavoring to escape from him when we were wrecked. He must have found one of the parachutes, which——"

"How's that, Braybrooke? I say, Tyrone—look!"

It was Brandreth who spoke. With a

broad smile on his rosy face, he was pointing to the place where the *Bellena's* conning tower had been—and was no longer.

"Good work!" cried Braybrooke.

"Stand by, you at the guns!" added Tyrone. "Look out, boys—here she comes!"

Seven of the enemy's guns now could be brought to bear, and all seven were loosed at once. Another shell flew, singing, a little over the bridge. One of the quarterboats parted neatly amidships, leaving the shattered ends dangling from the davits.

"Let her have it—everything that will reach her!" yelled Tyrone.

Willis gave the orders. A bugle sounded, and the *Arrow's* hull quivered with the crash that followed. From the bridge the shells could be seen as they exploded harmlessly against the warship's armored sides.

But some proved not so harmless. Smoke came curling from a sponson, and one gun thereafter was silent. Two more guns, of lighter caliber, and of the quick-firing variety, hesitated, and then stopped, as the *Arrow's* four Gatlings sprayed streams of bullets around them, and through the ports in their shields.

"Cease firing!" called Jimmy.

The bugles, at Willis' command, repeated the order, and the firing from the *Arrow* stopped.

CHAPTER IV.

A FORMAL VISIT.

THE range was very short, now; the two ships were abreast, one within and the other without the line of reefs. A mile or two ahead lay the end of the first pair of reefs, then the opening, and then the second pair. The sun had gone down, and the sudden darkness of those latitudes was falling almost as a curtain might fall.

Going over to Willis, Tyrone spoke a few hurried words.

"Lights out—all lights!" came the order.

The switches were turned, and the *Arrow* left in darkness. From below came men bringing a great tub, and an-

other man with a lighted lantern. All carried their burdens toward the taff-rail.

"What are they going to do with those things?" asked Brandreth of Braybrooke.

"Going to drop the lantern overboard in that tub, I suppose; then turn and go in a different direction—probably out between the two sets of reefs—and try to make Peralta think we're still in the channel. I can't imagine what Jimmy is thinking of to try such a game as that. It's old as the hills. Every one knows it."

"Of course it's as old as the hills, and of course every one is wise to it. That's the reason that it's going to work," remarked Tyrone, strolling up to the pair. "Watch!"

The *Arrow* had slowed and was plowing through what was now velvety darkness at less than half speed. The tub, with the lantern well displayed, was dropped overboard, and the yacht kept on her course, passing the opening between the two sets of reefs, and halting when she got a little distance within the second set.

"Watch!" said Tyrone again. "She'll be needing a pair of stilts directly."

As he spoke, those on board the yacht heard a faint cheer coming over the water, as the *Bellena's* lights showed that she had changed her course, and was feeling her way through the opening, in pursuit of the *Arrow's* supposed course. As Jimmy had supposed, those on board of the man-o'-war knew the old trick of the lantern and tub, and doubted nothing that their opponents had attempted to deceive them by it as they changed their course.

Cautiously she came on, her searchlight playing through the opening. Then there came a crash, plainly heard on the *Arrow*, followed by cries of dismay. The searchlight vanished, and the other lights stopped short.

"There we are," remarked Tyrone, in a tone of deep satisfaction. "Oh, Willis! Have one of our searchlights trained on her, won't you, and see how she's doing?"

The searchlight fizzed and sputtered,

then shot its brilliant beam far over the sea. It fell upon the *Ballena*. Her bow was high out of water, and she listed heavily to starboard.

Another yell, this time of rage, rose from her decks, and she fired a gun, which, on account of the list, threw its shell so high that those on the yacht could not even hear it.

"There; *that* job's done," observed Tyrone, with deep satisfaction. "There's no better trick than an old one, if you work it backward. Get her going, please, Mr. Willis."

"But, I say, won't those beggars drown there?" asked Brandreth.

"Not they!" was the reply. "Likely they can get their ship off, if they try hard enough. At the worst, they can take to their boats, and make the island we just left. Now let's turn in; we have some sleeps coming."

And so they did.

The next day, and many other days thereafter, were clear, calm, and very hot. Braybrooke and Tyrone lounged in the lightest of clothing, wherever a breeze would strike them. They saw but little of Brandreth these days. He and Winifred were generally occupied with private conversations, which seemed to be of the greatest importance. Still, they got to know the girl, and all became fond of her.

Her father, too, improved upon acquaintance, and when he talked upon the subject of the migration of an ancient Eastern race, and its subsequent development on the islands, he was most interesting. And so the time passed, until, one evening, the Isle of Pearls showed its fringe of palms against the sky.

Notwithstanding the fact that there was a crescent moon, it was not thought safe to run the tortuous passage leading into the lagoon until daylight had come to aid them. Therefore they slowed, and standing on and off, sent up a rocket with blue and red stars, the signal of their coming. They were lounging on deck when a lookout hailed.

"A sail—that is, something—on the starboard bow, sir," he replied, in answer to Willis' question.

"What is it? Can't you make it out?"

"Looks to me like a launch, sir."

It was a launch, and in a very short time a voice hailed from her bow:

"Oh, Mr. Bob—Mr. Jimmy! Are you on the ship there, yet?"

"It's Abey!" laughed Braybrooke. "Surely we're here, Abey—come aboard."

And so Abey came. Brandreth stared in astonishment at the little man, whose enormous ears and nose almost distracted attention from the kindness of his face. But as soon as inquiries as to the welfare of the respective families were concluded, Bob introduced Abey Rabinovich as the trusted agent in charge of the pearl fisheries, and Brandreth at once took to the odd scrap of humanity, as nearly every one who knew him did.

"Well, Abey, how are the pearls?" asked Braybrooke, when the introduction was over.

"They ain't no poils—not here, Mr. Bob," was the reply. "I could to have got a chance to send 'em all away, two weeks ago, so I done it. It's good I could find that there chance once; I don't like them black men, Mr. Bob."

"Black men!" repeated Tyrone, in surprise. "What black men?"

"I dunno, Mr. Jimmy. I never seen one before that could be like 'em. They come a week ago, already, in three little ships, like the *Dart*."

"Schooners," explained Braybrooke, for Brandreth's benefit.

"Yes, sir, schooners," Abey went on. "Some what they have with 'em are from South America; I can tell them kinds, as good as anybody. 'But the others is different. An' they was askin' me if you an' Mr. Jimmy was comin', an' if you could have with you two friends. They said they'd heard in Panama you had took one friend with you, an' thought you might have picked up one more, too."

"That's odd—it seems as though they'd heard of your being with us, Brandy," was Braybrooke's comment. "Can you think who these people may be?"

"Not I," replied Brandreth, with a shake of his head.

"Tell me," the professor broke in, "what sort of men are these—ah—negroes—the principal ones among them, I mean?"

"There could be two of them chief men," Abey replied. "One of 'em is the color like a cigar; the other has the name of Fernandez. He's from South America, but I can't find out where."

"Did you hear the former called by name?"

"Sure. But I can't make to say it right. It sounded kinder like Runder."

"Could it be Ruran Da?"

"That's it. I know when I hear it, all right," replied Abey, relieved.

"Do you know the man, professor?" asked Braybrooke.

"Indeed I do. I knew him in India. He told me that he was likely to come to these seas, on a quest similar to mine. We have long been friendly rivals. He, too, had the records which led me to the sins. But he misinterpreted them. I shall be glad to see him—very!"

And in anticipation of his triumph over a brother savant, the professor rubbed his hands and chuckled.

"It didn't happen that he wanted Winnie, too, did it?" growled the young Canadian.

"Why, strangely enough, he did say something of the sort," replied the professor, blinking through his round spectacles at the young man who raised the question. "I could not think of allowing such a union—between races so different, of course. But how did you happen to guess?"

"Easily enough. They all do want her—and no wonder," replied Brandreth, and, so saying, he took himself off, to be seen no more that night.

Abey's launch was slung on board, and the little man himself stayed until morning, when, at the first tinge of dawn, the *Arrow* ran in, and at sunrise was at anchor in the sheltered lagoon.

Anxiously enough the two partners, standing on the bridge, scanned the shores as they entered. Despite the professor's assurance of the strictly scientific nature of the excellent Ruran Da's expedition, they were troubled with doubts. The Isle of Pearls had come to

Braybrooke through his wife, and so into the partnership which included the great Arrowhead tract. The pearl fishery was a most valuable one, and they had tried, so far as they could, to keep its location a secret.

The three schooners of which Abey had spoken were at anchor in the lagoon, but no one seemed to have gone ashore. There was no sign of festivity or excitement among the white buildings, of coral rock, nestling among the green coconut palms.

Yet those schooners were armed; that they could see through their glasses plainly enough, and it was so unusual as to have caused comment anywhere in those seas. How heavy their guns might be, laced, as they were, in their canvas jackets, they could not tell.

"Ah, they were so sure of finding the sins that they provided cannon for their protection," chuckled the professor.

This, all three of the young men agreed, was doubtless the answer; that is, the reason for mounting guns, and for providing the schooners with the motors which all three possessed. But one thing was sure—they would have a very hard time, indeed, should they attempt to take the *Arrow* by means of this armament of theirs.

"Ah, my friend Ruran Da has an expedition which I well might have envied, a short time since," the professor went on. "Doubtless he was attracted to this place by those strange, sculptured images of which you have spoken to me, Mr. Braybrooke. I hope to see them. But here comes Ruran Da now."

"What does he want to bring three boatloads of men with him for?" asked Tyrone, his suspicions waking.

"Oh, he is an Oriental—some sort of a prince in his own country. He always goes in state when paying a formal visit."

CHAPTER V.

TOO MUCH APPRECIATION.

TYRONE, for the time, said nothing more. As a matter of fact, he recollected that there did exist on the Isle of Pearls some images of stones, with carved inscriptions, which might well

excite the curiosity of a scientific person on the lookout for such things. He had intended to show them to Professor Wedgewood.

The boats of which he had spoken came in a procession, and in the stern of the leading one he saw an individual, "cigar-colored," as Abey had said, wearing a turban of a dull green color, and another man, in white ducks, evidently a South American, beside him.

"Do you know them fellers, Mr. Jimmy, or Mr. Bob?" asked the little man, as the boat came alongside. "Them's the ones what I was telling about."

"No," replied Braybrooke hastily. "Keep still now, Abey; they might hear you."

"But I can't get to like them mutts," Abey persisted. "Not nohow."

Good-naturedly, Tyrone placed his great hand over the little man's mouth, so shutting off his speech. The boats hooked fast, and, led by the person in the green turban, the men came on board.

It was the professor who met them; it was he, after a continued chatter, in a language which his companions—save one—could only guess was an Indian dialect of some sort, introduced them to the others as fellow workers in the field of scientific research. Their conversation, thus carried on, naturally did not especially interest Bob and Jimmy. Soon they drifted away. After a little, Brandreth came up to the spot where they lounged on the deck.

"Say, you fellows, I agree with Abey," said the Canadian decidedly. "I don't like that bally Hindu. I don't believe he's a scientist at all; I can understand what he says. I was stationed in India for a while, you know, and was obliged to learn the 'bat.'"

"Well, what is the beggar saying?" asked Braybrooke indolently.

"Oh, he's talking, more or less, the scientific stuff you'd expect—about the migration, and so on. But he's lots keener on those stones than I like—and the old professor is going to show 'em. They've been talking about it for ever so long."

"Oh, for Heaven's sake let 'em prat-

tle, if they want to. They aren't bothering us," said Tyrone tolerantly.

"Still, we'll go below when *they* do, and see that no funny business takes place," added Braybrooke, with an uncommon gleam of prudence. "And here comes the professor, I fancy, to get us to open the strong room."

He was not mistaken. They went below. Soon the records, in beautifully kept notebooks, were opened, and, with them, the casket.

As soon as the stones were exposed, Abey wormed his way into the front rank, and taking the tricolored sins, one by one, subjected each to a rapid examination. Then he returned to the place where the three young men were standing.

"Well, Abey, what do you think of 'em?" laughed Braybrooke.

Abey shook his head.

"I couldn't call it a good investment," he said. "Stones big as them you can't get a customer for. And if you cut 'em up once, you lose too much value already. I wouldn't buy 'em."

"Nor I," laughed Braybrooke, in return. "We have some money, between Mr. Jimmy and me, it's true, but we haven't managed to corral a mint, as yet."

"I wouldn't call 'em no good investment," Abey repeated.

And since the two men to whom he owed such devoted allegiance were not likely to be financially concerned with these jewels, he lost all interest in them.

"Wonderful—those stones—are they not?"

It was the South American who spoke; he whose name Abey had given as Fernandez.

"Their value would go far to rescue my unhappy country—Paisamaril—from her present bondage," he added.

"Are you a friend of Peralta's?" asked Jimmy quickly.

"Ah, no," the man replied, with a meaning smile. "An enemy, but a rather unsuccessful one—until now!"

The last words were shouted, and as though they were a signal, which doubtless was the fact.

He sprang at Tyrone, who happened

to be nearest, and, clutching him by the throat with one hand, flashed out a knife with a movement as quick as that of a cat.

Tyrone was taken off his guard, but with a heave of his powerful arm he sent Fernandez whirling into a corner of the cabin.

The South American rebounded like a rubber ball, and came back, to meet Brandreth's fist, with the weight of the young Canadian's body behind it.

He crumpled to a heap on the cabin floor.

"My word!" said Brandreth, and turned to find other antagonists.

He found them, quickly enough. Rarely was a surprise more complete. Powerful as the three young men were, and all trained to use the muscles of their splendid bodies, they had no chance from the first.

Men whose individual prowess would have been as nothing fairly swarmed over them, and one after another they went down, each the nucleus of a clutching, struggling mass of humanity, too earnest to waste breath, and luckily too tangled to allow the effective use of weapons, even knives.

Braybrooke saw Ruran Da grasp the tricolored sins and pocket them; he saw others gather round him, and then, together, make a rush for the open companionway.

Then something fell upon his head from behind; he saw a firmament full of brilliant, shooting stars, which vanished instantly, leaving blackness and oblivion behind them.

CHAPTER VI.

ABEY ON DECK.

BRAYBROOKE became conscious of what he thought was a hard sea running under the yacht's hull. Some time later—how long he could not tell—he discovered that this was due to the fact that his head was behaving in a most peculiar and extremely uncalled-for manner, and that the yacht was still at anchor.

Opening his eyes, he discovered that

the professor was bending over him, that Tyrone was flooding him with liberal doses of water from a carafe, and that the sting of brandy was in his throat.

"Let up on that water," he said weakly. "Do you want to drown me? What's the matter, anyhow?"

"Lie still—you'll be all right in a minute," said Tyrone. "Somebody handed you a rap on the head with a blackjack, that's all. All of us—except the professor—got the same thing, more or less. Can you stand? Try. And then get busy with a rifle."

"No use," said Brandreth, who, as Braybrooke then saw, turned away from an open port with a rifle in his hand. "They're pulling away dead ahead of us, so we can't see. I got two, but I didn't dare fire at the boat that Winnie was in."

"Winnie!" repeated Braybrooke, as he struggled, with Tyrone's aid, to his feet, and staggered toward the companionway.

"No use," repeated Brandreth sadly. "They've battened us down. They did that when they left—or, at least, coiled cables on the hatches, and fastened the companion doors somehow. We can't get out."

"Did they take Winnie with them?" asked Braybrooke again.

"They took everything that they had time to take," replied Tyrone gravely.

"Not everything," corrected the professor, with a sigh. "They left my records. They didn't seem to care for them."

At any other time Braybrooke would have laughed at the evident disappointment shown by this man of science, that the pirates did not consider the records of his researches as of enough value to be stolen along with the tricolored sins and his daughter. But just now there was not a laugh left in him, and what he said about those records was unprintable.

Going to a port, he looked out, but there was nothing to be seen through it, save the end of a reef and the open sea beyond.

Inside the wrecked cabin two bodies were lying. One of them, an East Indian, Braybrooke recognized as a person whose head he had twisted, and who would never speak again. Another, a little South American, lay in a corner, groaning from the pain of a nose that had been flattened by the blow of some one's fist until it was hard to see there ever had been any nose there.

Catching him by the collar of his shirt, Braybrooke hoisted him to his feet, but the man would not, or could not, remain in a standing position; his legs seemed to be as limp as two strips of cooked macaroni. So Bob placed him in a chair.

"Now, then, my pirate friend, suppose you give an account of yourself," he said grimly.

The man with the flattened nose tried to draw himself up as he sat, and assume an air of dignity. In view of the circumstances, the attempt was not particularly successful.

"I am not a pirate," he said grandly. "I am Ramon Santiago Maria Aurelio Nicanór Ysabelo——"

"Oh, forget it, and get down to brass tacks," growled Tyrone.

"I am a colonel in the Paisamarilleno army of liberation," the man replied. "Your country—or, rather, the one which contains your plantation of the Arrowhead—is at war with Paisamaríl. Therefore what we took were legitimate spoils."

"Is a young girl a legitimate spoil?" demanded Brandreth.

"Ah," replied the other, "but she was beautiful." And he seemed to think that this was explanation enough.

And considering the persons with whom they had been dealing, perhaps it was. At all events, it left no room for argument. To get the girl back was the first thing to do.

But how to go about it; that was the question. Their first move, obviously, would be to free themselves—if they could. Then this war—which long had been pending, but which had not broken out when they had sailed from a port reached by telegraph—would leave them

a range of action much wider than had the time been one of peace.

"We're fast in the cabin here, right enough," remarked Tyrone, who had been on a tour of investigation. "We can't even go forward."

"We've got plenty of rifle cartridges, though," returned Braybrooke. "We'll take the powder and blow open the companionway. Then——"

A knocking at the doors of the companionway interrupted him. All ran to the spot whence it came.

"Hello!" cried Braybrooke.

"It's me—Abey," came the reply.

They started. In the confusion they had not realized that the little man was missing.

"Where in blazes have you been?" asked Tyrone, voicing a question which all three had in mind.

"I see the fight come, an' I beat it," was the response. "I ain't so much good in a fight; I'm too little, an' I don't know how. I was yellin' once to all them Clasonvacas, when somebody could try to kick me dead. So I crawled into a boat that hangs on the hooks, here, and then pulled the cover over me, so they couldn't find me no more. Can you think which way you'll get out yet, Mr. Bob?"

"No," replied Braybrooke. "What keeps those doors shut?"

"An anchor there is, shoved tight against them."

"Where are the men?"

"Downstairs, like you. And over the holes in the floor there are many things piled."

The enemy would naturally pile many things—and very weighty things over those "holes in the floor," by which Abey, whose nautical vocabulary was limited, evidently meant the hatchways. And these things undoubtedly would be impossible for Abey to remove, unaided.

So, in words as simple as they could make them, Abey was instructed how to clear a fall from one of the boats, to hook it into the ring of the anchor which held the companion doors, and then to lead the running end to the after capstan.

It was new work to the little man, but his quick mind caught the notion readily, and after a few intelligent questions, he said that he understood what was needed.

"Take care that those fellows don't come sneaking back and get you," warned Braybrooke.

"I ain't afraid," the little man replied. "They've gone clean away once. And, anyhow, I got one o' them little cannons pointed out to the way they could come back, Mr. Bob. I know how to make it go; I seen Mr. Jimmy do it."

Thereupon Abey departed, and they could hear him moving about the deck. Soon the slow clicks of the capstan pawl, each achieved at the expense of many grunts, told that Abey was heaving, lone-handed, at the obstacle between them and their freedom.

"My records are complete; not a note is missing," said the professor, joining the little group which stood listening to the work in which they were powerless to aid. "I have arranged them all—see?"

He pointed, as he spoke, to the casket in which the jewels formerly had reposed, but which was now filled to the brim with papers. Evidently the marauders had considered it too heavy to be carried away, and so had left it in their flight.

"Still," he went on disconsolately, "that's very little comfort, now. It is surprising how little it is—most surprising."

They all understood him. In his way, the only way he knew, he was expressing sorrow for his daughter's plight, and a very deep sorrow, too. Whereupon Brandy clapped him sympathetically on the shoulder, which made him wince. There was no time for more.

A series of sounds, each one short, that showed that a heavy object was dragging along the deck, told that the anchor was gradually being pulled to one side. Pushing against the doors, Bob found that one of them could be opened a little. With an effort which all but crushed his ribs, he squeezed his way out, and the others followed him.

CHAPTER VII.

A COUNCIL OF FOUR.

THE deck was not the scene of disorder which they had expected to find it. One of the Clasonvacas, desperately wounded, lay in the scuppers. That and the cables piled on the hatches, and reënforced with all other weighty things that could readily be found, were all.

With might and main, Braybrooke and Brandreth began to clear the stuff away, helped by Abey, and even the professor, in a sort of way. Tyrone, a glass slung over his shoulder, ran like a cat up the main shrouds, swept the sea carefully, and then came down again.

"They're out of sight," he announced, as he began to lend a hand to the work on deck. "There's a smudge that looks like smoke out there, somewhere, but that's all. I wonder if Mackenzie has steam up, still."

They all wondered. A portion of the engine-room hatch was cleared now, and pounding on it, Tyrone shouted:

"Are you there, Mac?"

"Aye," was the muffled reply.

"Are you all right?"

"Aye."

"Is there steam up?"

"Aye. Why not?" There was a note of indignation in the reply of the old chief engineer. It should have been understood without asking such a foolish question, that unless ordered otherwise, he had steam up. The mere fact that the ship had been captured had nothing to do with that.

"Who's down there with you?" asked Braybrooke, smothering a laugh.

"All han's an' the cooks, sir. Also Captain Weelis, wha cam' skelpin' doon the hatchway like an auld beson, juist afore it was closed."

"Was he hurt?"

"Weel, forbye a——"

"I've got a sprained ankle, but otherwise I'm all right," interrupted the voice of Willis. "Open the hatch, can't you, and let us out?"

It did not take long now to do this, and the added hands then made short work of what remained to be done. The

dead were disposed of, the wounded cared for, and the one prisoner secured, his nose previously having been bandaged until his head looked like that of a mummy.

Then the anchor was weighed, and the *Arrow* put out to sea. As soon as she was under way, a council of four—Willis, Brandreth, Tyrone, and Braybrooke—assembled on the deck, and also Abey, for they placed much dependence in the hard sense of this little friend and servant of theirs.

"The trouble is, we don't know where to look for the beggars," said Tyrone, ruefully rubbing his head, as he always did when puzzled. "The ocean's an awful big place, in a case like this."

"Where was that smudge of smoke you saw, Jim?" asked Braybrooke.

"Dead ahead of us, as we stand. You can't see it now."

"The ship what made that smoke couldn't to be comin' this way," observed Abey. "If it was, it would be nearer yet, now. And if it was going the other way, it would 'a' had to go by here once. So it must 'a' turned, and maybe is chasin' them fellers what was here, or tryin' to see who they is."

This was an idea which appealed to them all. The clew was not a very good one, it is true, but any clew, they felt, was better than none, and there was no other.

So the *Arrow* was kept on her course at top speed, sending two whispering waves to each side of her sharp bows as they ripped through the calm sea. On the bridge the three young men strained their eyes, hoping once more to see the smudge of smoke on the horizon, and vainly listening for the cry of the lookout, now perched in the crow's-nest, halfway up the foremast.

"Hark!" said Braybrooke suddenly, after an hour or two had passed. "Don't you fellows hear something?"

They listened more intently, and there came to them a succession of muffled booms from somewhere out in the ocean.

"Distant firing—and heavy firing, too!" exclaimed Brandreth. "It's not

the first time I've heard that sound. What in blazes can it mean?"

"Simple enough, it seems to me," returned Tyrone. "Didn't we just hear that Paisamaril was at war?"

Braybrooke shook his head.

"I doubt if that's it," he said. "Most likely some one after the tricolored sins, and——"

"Sail ho!" called the lookout.

"Where away?" called Willis in return.

"Dead ahead, sir. There are one, two, four of 'em, sir. And they seem to be fightin'—or else on fire. Anyhow, there's lots o' smoke."

"How far away?"

"Dippin', sir, but not quite hull down. We're comin' up on 'em fast, now."

It was not long before the vessels could be seen from the deck; four of them, as the lookout had said, and all wreathed in smoke of their own making.

Minute by minute the reports of the guns became more and more distinct.

At last Tyrone lowered the glasses through which he was looking, and gave a surprised exclamation.

"It's the *Ballena*!" he cried. "She's fighting those schooners. They're hanging around her like sparrows round a hawk!"

"Not for the same reason, though," said Braybrooke excitedly. "Sparrows attack a hawk; those schooners are hanging around because they can't get away. Look!"

This last injunction was quite unnecessary. Every eye already was bent on the group of vessels which now grew momentarily more and more distinct. The warship of Paisamaril evidently had warped herself off from the reef where the *Arrow* had left her. Now, as Tyrone had said, she was fighting, and her opponents were the three schooners which had so suddenly departed from the Isle of Pearls.

Their guns were blazing, but it would have been an act of lunacy for them to have attacked voluntarily that armored ship, semiobsolete though she was.

Even as Braybrooke spoke, one of the smaller schooners, looking, at that dis-

tance, like a tiny toy, cocked her bow high in the air, and went down, quite gradually, stern foremost.

Brandreth shuddered.

"It ain't that one what had Miss Winnie on," volunteered Abey, seeing the shudder. "She's on the biggest one—the one that ship is shootin' at now."

Even this was not cheering. Brandreth shuddered again, and the face of Winnie's father went ghastly white as he turned away.

"It's the two factions of that beastly, yellow republic fighting between themselves," remarked Tyrone. "We needn't have butted in on this at all; we'd let 'em slaughter each other if it wasn't for — By Jove, there's another of the schooners out of business! And doesn't it strike you that the *Ballena* herself is low in the water? They've made a pretty general average of it if she's in trouble. I didn't think the guns those schooners carry could damage her."

There was some uncertainty as to whether or not the *Ballena* was in distress, but as to the schooner there could be no two opinions.

Smoke, but not from her guns, enshrouded her, and soon this smoke was lighted by flames that licked upward from her interior.

Boats, like tiny water insects, passed between her and her comparatively unharmed sister, whose guns still were blazing, but whose sails were flapping helplessly in the calm, and whose motor seemed to be disabled.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN OPEN BOAT.

STILL the man-of-war made no effort to close upon the schooner. Instead, the steady fire carried on by both sides, by ineffective gunners, who sent most of their shots wild, continued without cessation.

"Why in blazes doesn't that ship go in and have it over with, I wonder?" said Braybrooke, shifting uneasily.

"I don't believe she can," returned Tyrone. "She's lower than she was, Bob. I've been watching carefully. And here comes a slant of wind. See?"

He pointed, as he spoke, over the *Arrow's* quarter, when an approaching breeze tarnished the polished surface of the ocean as a wet finger dulls a mirror.

"What does that mean?" asked Brandreth anxiously.

"Mighty fine luck for you, old man," cried Braybrooke, with a slap of congratulation on Brandy's broad back. "It means that the schooner can get away from the fire of that old Paisamarilleno junk pile, and then we'll follow and pick her up when we want her—don't you see?"

"D'you really think so, old man?" asked Brandreth.

"Think! Why, it *must* be so. Just watch!"

The Canadian watched. They all did. They watched each shot, which was fired by schooner or ironclad; watched the wind as it overtook the *Arrow*, passed her and went on to fill the schooner's limp sails; then watched the latter as she heeled over and drew away from her powerful antagonist, which could do nothing more than send steel bolts, tons of them, screaming after, to drop into the sea, for the most part.

Still the *Arrow* kept her course, reeling off the miles behind her, and pointing straight for the *Ballena*. Braybrooke grew uneasy, and at last could stand the suspense no longer.

"Aren't we going to stand away after her, Jim?" he asked. "What's wrong with you, anyhow?"

"Nothing with me," replied Tyrone gravely. "It's the *Ballena*. Look at at her—yes, I thought so!"

Even the eyes of the landmen, Braybrooke and Brandreth, told them that now the man-of-war was much lower in the water than she had been when first they had sighted her, and now, as Jimmy finished speaking, her red, blue, and yellow ensign, bearing a condor in its union, fluttered to her decks, to be raised again instantly, but reversed, with the national bird of Paisamaril flying talons uppermost.

"Is she sinking?" asked the professor, who had drawn near.

"She is. And we can't leave 'em there to drown in that leaky old kettle, scoun-

drels as they are. I wish we could, almost," replied Tyrone gravely.

To this the others silently assented. It was Abey who spoke the only words of comfort which could be spoken, just then.

"Anyhow, so long as that other ship don't sink, we can get it most at any time when we could to want it once," he said philosophically. "It can't go fast enough to get away from us. But ain't it awful what men will do—kill each other and sink ships what is worth money, just on account of one goil—an' a little one, too."

"And, after all," added the professor mildly, "these people, ill-advised though one or both may be, are battling for what they consider the good of their country. It is a civil war."

The others smiled at this, but left it to Abey to reply.

"I guess if one o' them low-lifes could to find a buyer for them sins, as you call 'em, their country wouldn't see no more of 'em," said he, with an air of conviction. "They'd beat it to Paris, where all them fellers goes. Are we going to take them fellers here on the ship with us already, Mr. Jimmy?"

Tyrone nodded. But at the same time he made it plain that he did not trust those whom he was aiding any too far.

Even as the boats were lowered, the crew went to quarters, and it was a grim array of half-naked brown bodies, lithe and stalwart, which greeted the remnant of the *Ballena's* crew as it came on board.

It was not a large remnant. Peralta himself, the admiral and would-be dictator of Paisamaril, and about forty enlisted men; that was all.

Peralta—against the advice of Braybrooke, who distrusted profoundly all of that name—was put on parole; his men confined in the hold. And the great yacht then, to the satisfaction of all, changed her course, and took up the pursuit of the schooner, now a black speck almost hull down on the horizon.

"She isn't wasting much time," grinned Brandreth gleefully, as he came forward, after hanging over the dial of the taffrail log.

"And she isn't going to waste any more, if we can help it," said Braybrooke, and Tyrone nodded emphatic assent.

"The sun'll drop in an hour or two," he said. "Afterward there'll be a moon, but we want to close in on those brutes before dark—and the schooner has changed her course—see? Hi, Willis—— Well, what is it now?"

The last words were in answer to a hail from the lookout.

"A boat, sir, I think—I can't quite make out," the man replied. "She's two points on our port bow. I think I can make out something red in her."

Taking a pair of glasses, Braybrooke ran up the weather shrouds, and focused the binoculars on the object which the man had seen. In a moment those on deck heard his voice from his lofty perch.

"It is a boat!" he called. "There's only one person in her—and, by Jove, I think it's a woman—I'm sure it is. Yes—I can see well, now. She's standing up, waving a red shawl, or something. What on earth can a woman be doing out here?"

"It's Winnie—I'd lay a horse to a hen!" cried Brandreth. "She has escaped, somehow, and is waiting for us."

"Bosh!" grunted Tyrone. "She lowered away a boat herself, I suppose, when no one was looking."

To this sarcasm Brandreth could think of no reply. Nevertheless, he hung over the bridge rail, never moving the glasses from his eyes, as he peered over the expanse of sea ahead, while Tyrone and Willis sent messages to the engine room, urging MacKenzie to get a little more speed out of his purring turbines.

And, somehow or other, MacKenzie managed to do it.

There was a woman out there, alone on the open sea, and now it had come to be a race between the *Arrow* and the sun. If darkness should come before that boat was picked up, she might easily be missed, and a boat is but a little object in that great expanse. The chance of sighting her again would be correspondingly small.

By a very narrow margin, the yacht won. One of her boats struck the water and unhooked before the yacht's reversed engines could stop her. Unrebuked, Brandreth slid down one of the falls, and clumsily—for he was not accustomed to small boats in the open sea—managed to seat himself in her stern as she cast off.

As she pulled away the sun disappeared, and the darkness fell, thick, black, and star-spangled.

Already men were getting a searchlight ready, but this took a little time, and until it could be done the *Arrow's* siren hooted dismally at short intervals to tell of the yacht's whereabouts. Through the darkness those on board heard voices hailing from the boat that just had left, and once Braybrooke thought he faintly could catch the sound of a feminine voice calling in answer.

Then the hails ceased. Those who waited the boat's return fidgeted impatiently until the ray of the searchlight burned a silver cone through the darkness. Once or twice it flashed here and there, then settled, framing in a brilliant oval the *Arrow's* boat. And in her sat Brandreth, a white bundle clasped tightly in his arms, and his face pale with a rage that even those who knew him best never before had seen there.

No one offered to cheer, which, under ordinary circumstances, would have been the natural thing to do. None could see the face of the woman whom Brandreth held, but all knew that it was Winnie. An accommodation ladder already had been lowered, and, amid a sympathetic silence, the Canadian carried his burden to the deck, and thence, followed by Winnie's father, below. The *Arrow's* engines started once more.

"East by south, a half east, Mr. Willis, if you please," snapped Tyrone.

"I hope you know where you're going—I'm hanged if I do," observed Braybrooke, as Willis repeated the order, and the quartermaster at the wheel answered.

"We can't see that accursed schooner now. But where do you suppose that any one who is against the Peralta faction in Paisamaríl would naturally

make for?" asked Tyrone, by way of reply.

"For Los Santos, I suppose," replied Braybrooke. "It's a little port, but it's the opposition headquarters."

"Well, that's the answer. We've lost him, as it is. If we can pick him up there, well and good. If not—well, we'll see."

Braybrooke was thoroughly satisfied with this arrangement. The country to which the Arrowhead owed allegiance was at war with Paisamaríl. Tyrone and he held commissions respectively in the navy and army of its enemies. Winnie now was safe, and much in the way of reprisals might be done. And he felt like making reprisals just then. They all did—savage reprisals, too.

Nor was this disposition flagging when Brandreth came again on deck, and gazed from one to the other, for both had donned the uniforms of their ranks.

"What's this?" he inquired wonderingly.

They told him, and his face lighted with a fierce satisfaction, but his voice, when he spoke, was very quiet—ominously so.

"Do you know what those unutterable brutes did?" he asked. "But I know you don't, so I'll tell you. They saw the *Arrow* coming, and just before they changed their course they put Winnie over in that boat—an open boat, without food, water, or oars—for us to stop and pick her up—if we happened to see her—while they went off in another direction. And if we didn't see her—well, you know what would have happened. I—really, old chap, I can't bear to think about it any more, d'you know."

Braybrooke's face was nearly as grim as Brandreth's own. "Why, oh *why* couldn't that old tub of a *Ballena* have captured them, instead of letting them sink her?" he demanded, of no one in particular.

"Pardon, señor; it was not that schooner which sunk the *Ballena*. It was the injuries which she received on that reef. The loosened plates afterward worked looser still."

It was Peralta who spoke, and even Bob believed that for once a man bearing this hated name was telling some measure of the truth.

"And allow me, señores, to offer the services of myself and my men, if we can be of any assistance when these scoundrels are overtaken. For Fernandez—it is with shame that I say it, for he is my unworthy countryman—is as great a rascal as this East Indian, his ally."

"Quite as great. Thank you, Admiral Peralta; we'll let you know if your services are needed," replied Braybrooke. "And in the meantime I think we'd better all turn in."

Peralta bowed and left. As he went, Tyrone turned to Braybrooke, with surprise written large on his face. "Would you really accept that man's help?" he asked incredulously.

"Are you dotty, or just plain idiotic?" asked Braybrooke in return. "If he thinks he can fool us, and we let him think so, he may give himself away if he meditates starting anything. When will we sight Los Santos?"

"Day after to-morrow, somewhere around daybreak," replied Tyrone, and, leaving the question of dealing with Peralta to Braybrooke, as he always did leave questions of this sort, he went below.

CHAPTER IX.

CLOSE QUARTERS.

THEY did not, however, have to wait long. It was late on that very same night that they sighted the South American coast, and soon after daybreak that a schooner was reported as being in sight.

She was the one they were after; there was not from the first any doubt as to that. Her conduct would have betrayed her identity, even had she not borne many marks which no sailor could have mistaken.

Tyrone, on satisfying himself as to who she was, dove into the chart-house, and shortly afterward emerged, using language of the sort which a naval experience brings to such perfection.

"Look at her!" he exclaimed, in answer to their questions. "Going along in there as easily as though her conscience was as clear as a baby's—and we here, out of gunshot, without a chance in the world!"

"We haven't a chance?" echoed Braybrooke. "Why not, pray?"

"Shoals, you chump! Can't you see the green water there? They reach for about a million miles in the next three hundred, between here and Los Santos. And along a little way there's a bay, that's really the mouth of a river. Yes—there it opens; and there she goes into it!"

As he said, the bay was a shallow one, into which the *Arrow*, with her greater draft, could not enter or even approach very closely.

Her crew were called to quarters, her engines slowed, and with both leads going, she crawled as close as she dared.

She managed to get within extreme range, in time to see the schooner edge her way into what seemed a winding stream, emptying into the bay, and so out of their sight.

The four-inch gun sent three shells screaming after her, but it was only a waste of ammunition, firing, as they were, at an object whose exact position they could only guess. Tyrone ordered the firing stopped, then turned blankly to Braybrooke.

"Well, here we are—wouldn't that jar you?" he said blankly.

"It'll jar them before we finish," was the reply. "Things are getting into my department now, Jim. I don't believe they can get far."

"They can't," agreed Tyrone, and, without asking questions of which he knew the answers already, he went away to give necessary orders.

Boats slapped the water as an anchor was let go. They were provisioned and armed. Clad principally in cartridge belts, knives, and appreciative smiles, the Clasonvacas bundled into the first ones, which then were taken in tow by one of the two launches which the *Arrow* possessed, and went streaming away toward the shore. Sitting by

Braybrooke's side in the launch, Brandreth glanced behind them.

"Why, I didn't know that Tyrone was coming with us!" he exclaimed.

"Neither did I," replied Braybrooke uneasily. "It looks as though he is, though, and with practically every man we left on board. I wonder what he can be thinking of?"

He soon had an opportunity to ask the question direct, for the other launch, with a much lighter tow, shortly overtook them.

"Did you think you were going to have all the fun yourselves, you chaps?" asked Tyrone indignantly. "Not on your fair young lives. I didn't leave the *Arrow* alone; old MacKenzie and his men are there, and they'll be enough to take care of her and the prisoners, now that there's nothing to attack her. Pull on, Bob."

So, with misgivings, Braybrooke did pull on.

Their way was slow, for the river, twisting and turning as it went, was so covered with tropical growth that the channel, at times, was hardly discernible save by the path that the schooner had made as she passed through, and of sound there was none, save now and then the call of a bird, somewhere concealed in the thick jungle.

Then a distant crash, like that of a falling tree, followed almost at once by another, reached their ears.

"Building barricades," muttered Brandreth. "Best go easy, Braybrooke—'ware ambushes."

The same notion had crossed Bob's mind, and the boats went onward still more slowly than before, one of the lighter ones being sent on as an advance guard. After a little, she came paddling back, for the water weeds were too thick to permit rowing.

"It wasn't trees, sir," her coxswain reported. "It was her masts; they've cut 'em away. They're lying plumb across the channel, sir."

This they found to be the literal truth, and there was a sickening delay while the obstruction was cleared with axes by the Clasonvacas.

"They must have been hard pressed

when they did that, which is one comfort," observed Tyrone.

"Or else they repaired their motor, and jettisoned their rigging so as to pass this mess of growth more easily," supplemented Braybrooke. "There—the way's open. Let the dinghy go on in and stand ready to report; the rest of us will follow."

Again there followed a period of silence and racking suspense, as they made their way almost inch by inch along the weed-grown stream.

At last Bob could stand it no longer.

"Halt!" he cried; then added, as the call was sounded: "Jim, no schooner could have got through here, unless she had a tow from an aeroplane. What do you think?"

"No schooner did get through, whether she could or not; these weeds haven't been disturbed by anything so big. But where is she?"

Braybrooke did not answer in direct words. They had left the jungle behind, and one of the banks was forested with heavy timber, with comparatively clear ground underneath the trees. To this bank, in obedience to his orders, the boats forced their way.

The Clasonvacas, always ready to fight anywhere, but preferring the land, when land was available for that purpose, sprang ashore, and fell into line with the readiness of the trained soldiers they were.

The order to start trembled on Braybrooke's lips.

"Down! Drop! Quick—drop, I say!"

It was Tyrone's voice, coming from somewhere above them.

Translating the command into native vernacular, Bob set the example, and the others fell prone.

They were not a second too soon. Hardly had they touched the ground when there was the crash of a volley close at hand; bullets sang their shrill, whining song through air that a moment before had been occupied by their standing bodies.

A rifle or two snapped in return. Braybrooke turned to his men angrily.

"Hold your fire!" he ordered. "What

do you think you're shooting at? You can't see a soul yet. Oh, Jim—can you tell where they are? And where are you?"

"I'm up here in this tree," was the response. "And one of those fellows has just sighted me. This is the time when I come down."

It was indeed time. He descended the tall, thin trunk as only a sailor could, but, as he said, the enemy had seen him, and from the unseen riflemen an irregular chorus of shots cracked, chipping bits of bark from the tree as he came.

His cap was lifted from his head, and a red welt appeared on one of his cheeks as he slid to the ground.

"They're behind that line of bushes, in a ditch," he said, wiping his face with his hand, and looking critically at his reddened fingers. "You can't dislodge 'em from here, if you fire for a fortnight. And the boat's guns can't help any.

"Moreover, we can't flank 'em," he added.

"There's only one way, then," said Braybrooke eagerly.

"Only one," his friend agreed; then spoke in the vernacular:

"Fix—*bayonets!*"

The bayonets flashed and rattled as they were snapped in place amid a joyous murmur from the men who handled them.

The bugle sounded, and with a wild, savage war cry, which had for centuries accompanied the entrance of their men into action, the Clasonvacas charged.

CHAPTER X.

JUNGLE TACTICS.

FLEET of foot though both Braybrooke and Brandreth were, they had trouble in keeping ahead of those seminude savages. Tyrone and the white men whom he led were nowhere, but came puffing along, as best they could, bringing up the rear.

With another yell, the attackers broke through the screen of bushes and dropped into the ditch behind it. It was empty. Not a man of their opponents remained.

But many tracks in the soft soil led to a series of paths running through the jungle, which at this point began again. There were three of these paths, narrow and tortuous.

"Take the one to the right with *your* men, Jim," ordered Braybrooke. "Brandy, take half of the Clasonvacas and go to the left. I'll take the middle one. Shout now and then, so as to keep in touch—and don't try to hurry. Go slow, and look out for ambushes. Now, start!"

The paths wound drearily through tunnels of living green and stifling heat. Sometimes they approached each other so closely that ordinary words could be heard from one of the columns to another; at other times hardly could a shout carry through the trees. No living thing was seen. The tracks, however, led steadily onward, and, after much time had passed, ceased at the bank of a narrow and sluggish, but deep, stream.

Here there were marks on trees where a vessel had been moored to the shore, and even the imprint of a gangplank, so deep was the water and so steep the bank.

Tyrone voiced his opinions with force and fluency: "If we hadn't been a set of blithering asses, we'd have spotted this from the start. As it is, we've allowed those mutts to get away with it, like the abject fools that we are! A trick that a child, if it had any natural sense, should have caught onto."

"I'm hanged if I can see what happened," said Brandreth ruefully. "I fear I haven't any sense, old man."

"Of course you haven't—who ever supposed you had?" retorted Tyrone. "It's so simple that it's ridiculous. This stream, of course, empties into the one up which we came, and probably the mouth is so choked with weeds that we didn't see it when we passed. They cut away their masts, so as to pass under the trees; got their motor to running again, I suppose, or else warped up. Then they left a gang to check us while they made a clean get-away, schooner and all."

"That's it," agreed Braybrooke.

"Break back to the boats as fast as you can, boys. There's no use in sending them here; they mightn't find the mouth of this stream for a week. Hike!"

So they "hiked," retracing their steps. This took time. It took time, also, to run back through that tortuous channel. And, as usual, haste wasted speed, for they ran aground, which caused another delay. Tyrone was fuming, Braybrooke morose, and Brandreth, though perhaps the most unhappy of the three, did his best to be philosophical.

"Anyhow, they'll have to pass the *Arrow*," he said, after a long time, offering the only crumb of consolation he could think of.

"That's just what they will do—and who's to prevent 'em?" snorted Tyrone. "We were such unutterable fools that we didn't leave any one aboard to man her guns."

"Hark!" said Braybrooke. "Hear that?"

All heard the sound to which he referred. They hardly could help hearing it; it was the sharp, splitting crack of the *Arrow's* four-inch gun.

Others of her guns joined in the chorus, and a desultory fire answered them. The Clasonvacas yelled, and the white men cheered as they heard the sounds.

The stream was wider at this point, and oars were shipped and frantically pulled to aid the launch's engine.

Hardly could they believe their ears as the firing continued without cessation. It was a little ragged, to be sure, but anything, under the circumstances, was good.

And then the last turn in the stream was rounded, and the bay once more opened before them.

The schooner, dismasted, was lying low in the water, even as the *Ballena* had been, and evidently her motor was dead, for she was slowly drifting by the *Arrow*, which, still anchored, was pouring shot into her at point-blank range. And she was almost past replying now.

Up to the accommodation ladder, which still was as they had left it, the string of boats pulled, and Braybrooke, followed by his friends, ran to the deck

of the yacht. There they were met by old MacKenzie, a spanner of formidable length in his right hand, and on his rugged face an expression of serene satisfaction.

"How's Winnie—Miss Wedgewood?" called Brandreth, as he came up over the side.

"She's weel, sir. Just noo, she's below, wi' her feyther, an' yon little mon Abey. But, oh, Mr. Braybrooke, we'd ha' had a fearsome time with yon schooner, if it hadna been for thae prisoners."

"The prisoners!" echoed Braybrooke.

"Aye, sir. It's they who han'led the guns. Ye can see for yersel'."

And as Braybrooke and his friends looked, they saw that this indeed was the fact. Each gun was manned by a crew of those whom they had been keeping under hatches, and back of each gun crew stood a number of the engine-room force, the nozzle of a hose gripped in his hands.

"Tha hoses are connected up wi' the boilers," explained MacKenzie, with pardonable pride. "Tha yellow men wad rather han'le the guns than get cooked. I offered 'em the choice. An' forbye the mon Peralta an' ane or two mair—naethin' to signify—they cam' tae little harm."

CHAPTER XI.

THE NEXT MOVE.

MACKENZIE was praised and congratulated, as well he might be. As Brandreth afterward observed, the pitting of one set of enemies against another, by threatening to parboil them with live steam was, so far as he knew, an entirely new strategic move.

There was no further use for the prisoners on deck, and they were herded below, and the regular crew took their customary stations.

Hardly had they done so when the standard of Paisamaril, its halyards shot away, came fluttering to the deck of the sinking schooner.

The crew of the *Arrow* cheered, and the firing stopped instantly.

Then upon the schooner's rail leaped

Ruran Da, shaking an impotent fist at the *Arrow*, and pouring forth a stream of what both Braybrooke and Tyrone assumed to be imprecations.

His eyes blazed with a rage that approached insanity; his white teeth gleamed like those of an animal about to spring.

"What's the beggar trying to get at, Brandy?" asked Braybrooke curiously.

"Hush—listen!" was the reply.

For a few words more the tirade went on; then suddenly Brandy snatched at the pistol that hung in his belt, but too late.

Before he could get it out of its clumsy holster, Ruran Da plunged his hand into the bosom of his shirt, and, withdrawing it, flung from him, as far as he could, the three famous stones.

They flashed like sparks of red, green, and white as they flew through the sunshine, and splashed in the bay to vanish forever.

"The beast!" exclaimed Braybrooke. "That was a——"

"Below! Get below!" cried Brandreth, his face white. "Get all hands below! There's no time to waste—do it now!"

That he was in deadly earnest there could be no doubt, and Jimmy sent the order booming along the deck, so that the astonished men obeyed it with their bodies almost before their minds were conscious of its import.

"Now, tell us what on earth all this is about, Brandy," said Braybrooke, as they were going down the companion stairs. "Was it something that old Ruran Da was saying that made you——"

The speech was never finished.

Bob reeled as though struck by an invisible hand, fetching up against the bulkhead by which he happened to be standing.

The others clutched at the handrail as a violent gust of wind passed them, and with it came a crashing report, as though the earth itself had split open.

For a little they stood there as though stunned, then Tyrone and Braybrooke staggered on deck, and the Canadian went with them.

Far and near the water was covered

with floating bits of *débris*. A cloud of smoke was drifting to leeward.

No schooner was to be seen.

"That's what I heard that Ruran chap say—that he was going to blow the whole bally show into the next world," explained Brandreth, "and when I saw him chuck those stones away, I knew he meant it, and called for the rest of you chaps to stand from under. What's the next move?"

"Up anchor and get back home to the Arrowhead, to rest up, if we can. Thank Heaven we have a ship under us to get there in," replied Braybrooke, and his partner nodded hearty acquiescence.

"We'll have to go down and break the news of the loss of those jewels to the old professor, though," he said. "It's a hard job, that, and an unpleasant one—when one thinks of all it means. I don't want to do it."

None of them wanted to, and the outcome was that all three agreed to attempt it together, for greater moral support.

They waited until the *Arrow* was under way, picking her path to the open sea; then all three went into the cabin.

There, around the table, sat Abey, the professor, and Winifred, with a chafing dish between them.

One of the professor's arms was passed around the waist of his daughter, who, though still pale from the fright which now had passed, nodded and smiled at them as they entered. The professor also nodded.

"Ah, Donald, so you have returned," he said. "Have you a match? This lamp was extinguished by the shock of the explosion. Thank you."

In blank astonishment, Brandreth furnished the required match. All thought that the professor must have suddenly become mildly insane. But Abey, reading the thought in their faces, smiled and shook his head. So, without comment, they watched the older man, as he proceeded with what he had set out to do.

His conduct did not tend to reassure them as to his sanity, however. The

chafing dish, filled with water, was set to boil. Then the professor drew toward him the silver cabinet, now containing his records, and began to pry at the colored bosses on its lid with the tang of a file.

Soon three of them were released, and he tossed them into the boiling water. A moment later he extracted them with a spoon, dried them carefully with a napkin, and laid them on the table.

Then all saw, winking in the light, three stones—white, red, and green—the *tricolored sins*!

"They are somewhat smaller than the imitations," the professor remarked, before his astounded friends could find words for questions. "But then, those imitations were made along lines indicated by a somewhat unreliable, because exaggerated, description in an ancient poem. But the imitations served very well—really, very well indeed. No one thought of the simple expedient of covering the real stones with sealing wax. But I find myself much fatigued by the events of the day. I think I will retire." And he arose from his chair.

"Good night, sir," Braybrooke managed to say.

The other two still were speechless.

"Good night," answered the professor. "Are we going to this plantation

of yours, Mr. Braybrooke? Yes? Good! It is an excellent place to rest, and there may be data there which will help me in my researches. I have been talking about it to your Clasonvacas. Once more, good night." And he went to seek his bunk.

Braybrooke turned on Abey.

"Did you know all along that those stones were imitations?" he demanded.

"Sure I did!" replied Abey, rather indignantly. "Why wouldn't I?"

"Why didn't you tell us, then?" asked Tyrone.

"You an' Mr. Bob wasn't thinkin' of makin' no offer for 'em, so 'twasn't no skin off none of us," responded Abey indifferently. "But, say, Mr. Bob—Mr. Jimmy, too—I don't think them two have got no use for us down here. Let's beat it upstairs once."

He spoke of Brandreth and Winnie, who, for the time, they had utterly forgotten, but who, in their turn, had forgotten all but themselves.

They were seated on a cushioned locker, their heads close together, and their minds, at last, in peace.

And so, recognizing the truth of what Abey had said, they "beat it" to the bridge, and with a spirit of thankfulness looked out over the sea and reflected that each wave that they left behind brought them nearer to their home.

Dangerous Habit

A YOUNG Englishman, after he had been in the far West for a couple of months, began to grow thin. Wyoming cooking did not appeal to him. Besides his squeamish appetite, there was another thing that the natives held against him—his outlandish custom of taking a bath every morning. One day his landlady was discussing him with a friend.

"I tell yer what, Sal," said the visitor, "he's jest a-wastin' away a-grievin' for some gal back East thar."

"Nothin' o' the kind," said the landlady contemptuously. "You mark my words, now—that young feller he's simply just a-washin' of hisself away."

Her Idea

LADY PASSENGER (on board liner): "What is the ship stopping for?"

Obliging Seaman: "She's stopping to send the pilot ashore, miss."

Lady: "Why, I thought he went with us; but I suppose he just points the rudder in the right direction before he leaves."



The Fire Fighter

By BERTRAM LEBHAR.

(A SERIAL NOVEL)

FORMER CHAPTERS.

Condensed for those who have not read them

Larry Harvey wishes to leave his position in a bank and become a fireman, and when he meets Chief Forbes, of the fire department, and the latter tells him he is physically unfit for the work, he is only more firmly resolved to try to win out.

By hard training he manages to pass the entrance examinations, and enters the training school. His first experience with the scaling ladders gives him a slight attack of "stage fright," which he soon overcomes; but an experienced fireman, "Bull" Donovan, taunts him with being a coward, and Harvey retaliates by striking him.

The affair is settled by a boxing bout in the cellar of the engine house, and Harvey is beaten by Donovan, who is the boxing champion of the department. They resolve to be friends after that, but bad blood again comes between them through rivalry for the favor of the sister of Fireman Brooks.

Donovan breaks his arm while fighting a fire, and while carrying it in a sling he strikes Harvey, and the latter is forced to defend himself by throwing him down. Harvey is then tried before the commissioner for brutality and cowardice, but he accepts a reprimand without incriminating Donovan. The resulting unpopularity of Harvey is presently increased when a number of firemen are killed at a fire, through the failure of the defective hose to carry water to the upper stories of the burning building, and it is learned that his father, Mike Harvey, the contractor, sold the hose to the city.

CHAPTER XIV.

ROUGH JUDGMENT.



EVERYBODY in the little group of weary, depressed fire fighters stared at Larry in astonishment.

Until now he had succeeded in keeping from them all the fact that he was the son of Mike Harvey, the well-known and wealthy contractor. Not even to his friend, Tom Brooks, had he confided this secret. He had wished his brother firemen to suppose that his circumstances were the same as their own, for he feared that if it became known that he was the son and heir of a rich man they might hesitate to look upon him as one of themselves.

Now, however, his dismay and horror at Captain Brooks' accusation of his father had caused him to blurt out the truth, and his comrades looked at him half incredulously.

"You—Mike Harvey's son!" exclaimed the elder Brooks. "I didn't know that. How is it you never said so before?"

"I didn't think it was necessary," replied Larry.

"You were ashamed of it, I guess," declared the captain, with an ugly laugh,

for the old man was beside himself with grief at the loss of his men. "I don't blame you for tryin' to hide the fact that you are a son of that dirty crook."

Larry's face was very pale. "My father isn't a crook, Captain Brooks!" he cried hoarsely. "I can't permit anybody to say that in my hearing!"

"He's worse than a crook!" was the savage retort. "He's a traitor to the city. He's a murderer. The blood of those seven brave fellows is on his head. He killed 'em just as surely as if he had taken a gun and shot them. If we'd had proper weapons to fight that blaze with, it never would have got away from us, and those poor boys wouldn't have been sacrificed. What chance did they have with that rotten, leaking hose? What chance did any of us have? It's a wonder that there ain't more of us lying dead in those smoking ruins."

"But are you sure that it was my father who sold the hose to the city?" cried Larry. "I can't believe that he would do anything dishonorable."

"There ain't no doubt about it," replied the captain. "I tell you I know positively that Mike Harvey got that contract. And so you're his son? You're a fine family—the father a crook, who puts our lives in danger for the sake of a few extra dollars; the son a coward who fights cripples. What in blazes did you join the department for, anyway? We don't want your kind."

The other men nodded bitter approval of his words. "Yes, what right has he to be wearin' the uniform? We don't want the likes of him among us."

Fireman Tom Brooks was the only man present to speak a word in Larry's defense.

"Say, you fellows make me tired!" he exclaimed indignantly. "What's the use of rubbin' it into Harvey? Even if his father did sell the rotten hose to the city, is he to blame for that? Is he responsible for his father's doings? Didn't he risk his life as much as any of us at that fire? That rotten hose came near being the death of him, too. If it hadn't been for us seein' him up there on the roof, and shooting the life line to him just before the roof fell in,

he'd be lying there now in those ruins along with the other poor lads. That shows, boys, how unfair it is to blame him."

This argument, in spite of its unquestionable logic, did not carry much weight with the angry men. They were not in a mood for arguments. They were maddened by the loss of their comrades, and by the bitter remembrance of the defeat they had suffered at the fire, and they couldn't help visiting their wrath upon the son of the man who was responsible for those things.

Even Captain Brooks, generally kind-hearted and just, was not influenced by his son's words. He pointed his finger at Larry, and growled:

"If you're wise, young man, you'll get out of the department. It don't seem decent that Mike Harvey's son should be wearin' the same uniform as those brave fellows who owe their death to him. It's true, as Tom says, that you ain't to blame, but you're your father's son, and every time we look at your face we won't be able to help thinkin' of our seven murdered comrades."

"Yes, that's it," chimed in one of the men. "Let him get out. If he don't, we'll force him out."

CHAPTER XV.

BASE INGRATITUDE.

EARLY the following morning Larry called at his father's office. He clung to the hope that the man who had sold the worthless hose to the city might be some other Mike Harvey. He refused to believe that his father was guilty unless he heard from the latter's own lips that such was the case.

Father and son had not seen each other for some days, and the old man glared at Larry as the latter stepped into the private office.

"What's all this that I've been readin' in the papers about you?" he demanded fiercely. "It ain't bad enough that you should go and be a fireman against your parents' wishes, you've got to turn out to be a coward in the bargain, eh? Never did I think that a son of mine

could be mean-hearted enough to strike a crippled man. Your mother and sister are half dead with the shame of it."

"Never mind about that now, father," returned Larry curtly. "As far as I'm concerned—well, you shouldn't believe all you read in the papers. But I've come to see you about a different matter. Are you the Mike Harvey who sold the last lot of hose to the fire department?"

"Yes, I had that contract. What about it?"

Larry's face had turned a shade paler. "What about it?" he groaned. "Haven't you read about the fire last night?"

"No; I haven't seen the papers this mornin'. Was it a bad fire?"

"A bad fire? I should say it was. Seven of our boys were killed there—killed because of the rotten hose you sold the city. Oh, father, I didn't think it could be true. I didn't think that *you* could be as bad as all that."

The old man scowled at his son. "What do you mean by talkin' to me like that?" he roared. "What do you mean by *rotten* hose? Who says it was rotten?"

Larry laughed bitterly. "If you had been at the fire, father, and had seen the way it burst, you wouldn't ask such a question. There were so many leaks that we scarcely had a stream to fight that fire with. That is why it got away from us and those fellows were killed. The boys say that you are responsible for those deaths, father. They've been calling me the son of a murderer and a crook. They want me to get out of the department, because they say that the son of Mike Harvey isn't fit to associate with them. I came here hoping that I could go back and tell them that they lied."

"Oh, what made you do it?" he went on bitterly. "You're a rich man; you didn't need the dirty money—the price of men's lives—as badly as all that. Why have you disgraced us?"

His father's face had turned as white as his own. "My boy," said the old man huskily, "'tis sorry to hear this I am—sorry to hear that the hose is no good, and that they blame me for it."

I swear that I didn't mean to cheat the city. I thought the contract was bein' filled in good faith, the same as every other contract I've ever undertaken."

"Then how did it happen that you unloaded that worthless stuff upon the fire department?" demanded Larry, half incredulously, although he was beginning to gain fresh hope from his father's words. "Do you mean to say that you didn't know what you were selling?"

The elder Harvey nodded. "Yes, that's it. I didn't know. I don't understand much about that line of business, and I took it for granted that those goods was all right. I've been made a tool of by others. I suppose if there's goin' to be trouble I'll have to bear the brunt of it. But I want you to believe, my boy, that it ain't my fault. If they tell you that your father is a crook you can tell them that they lie. 'Tis a poor dupe I've been, but not a crook."

He proceeded to explain to Larry how he had been induced by some political friends to lend his name to a new company they were forming. The sole purpose of this company was to land the contract for supplying the fire department with new hose. The company was to be called the Harvey Hose Company, and Larry's father was to be its president and receive thirty per cent of the profits.

The hose for the filling of this contract was supplied by a manufacturing company in which these political friends were heavily interested. Old Harvey had not suspected for a minute that there was to be any attempt to increase the profits by handing the city inferior goods.

Armed with this explanation, Larry went back to the engine house, and narrated to Tom Brooks, the only man in the company whom he could now look upon as his friend, what his father had told him.

"It's too bad," said Brooks sympathetically. "I haven't any doubt, Larry, but what your old man is as innocent as he claims; but unfortunately he's going to have a hard time proving it. As he says, they'll make him the goat. I guess there'll be a big fuss raised about that

hose, and possibly the grand jury will take up the matter.

"Now, old man," he went on, "I don't want to hurt your feelings, but don't you think, under the circumstances, that what my father said last night was about right? Wouldn't it be a wise move on your part if you were to get out of the department?"

Larry received this suggestion with great indignation. "I didn't expect this from you, Tom," he said. "I thought that you were my friend."

"I *am* your friend," insisted the other, "and that is why I am giving you this advice. I honestly believe that it would be foolish of you to remain here under the circumstances. Although, of course, you are not to blame, the boys won't look upon the matter in that light. They can't help feeling sore on you. I guess, after all, Larry, it's only human nature for them to dislike the son of the man whom they blame for putting their lives in danger, and being responsible for the death of those poor fellows."

"If you stay in the department, old fellow," he continued, "I'm afraid they are going to make it very disagreeable for you. Even if you were to be transferred to another company, things wouldn't be much better for you, for I guess all the boys in the department feel pretty sore about that hose. And, after all, Larry, there isn't any reason why you should be a fireman, is there? It isn't as if you had to earn your living this way, as is the case with most of us. Your old man is rich, so you don't have to worry. There's lots of other jobs besides fire fighting."

"Maybe there are," replied Larry grimly, "but I think I prefer this one. I'm grateful to you for your advice, Tom, and I think you mean well enough, but I want to tell you right now that I'm going to stick. No matter how disagreeable they make it for me, they won't succeed in making me quit. If I did I'd be the coward they think me."

Brooks slapped him approvingly on the back. "I guess you're right, Larry. I meant to advise you for your good, but, on second thought, I must admit that you would be a coward if you were

to let them force you out. Stay and fight 'em to a finish, old fellow. You can count on me to help you all I can."

"Thanks," said Larry, as he grabbed his friend's outstretched hand. "You're the right kind of a pal, Tom."

The two men had been alone in the sitting room of the engine house during this conversation. They were now interrupted by the entrance of Bull Donovan, who came toward them with a scowl upon his face, and a wicked glint in his small eyes.

"Say, Brooks," he exclaimed, "what do you mean by talkin' with this fellow? Don't you know that the boys have held a meetin', and decided that we're all goin' to leave him entirely to himself? We think that the son of Mike Harvey ain't fit for honest men to associate with."

Larry was so taken aback by this thrust from the man who had so much cause to feel grateful to him, that for a few seconds he stood staring at the speaker, unable to give expression to the indignation that was surging within him.

Then, his voice trembling with rage, he cried: "You dirty cur! What right have *you* to class yourself among honest men? I've kept silent long enough about you, Bull Donovan. It was more than you deserved, but I made up my mind that since you weren't man enough to come out with the truth I wouldn't show you up. And I would have continued to keep my mouth shut, too, if it hadn't been for this."

"But now," he went on, shaking his finger in Donovan's face, "I'm not going to spare you any longer. I'm going to tell the real story of what happened that day, and let the boys judge who is the least worthy for them to associate with, you or I!"

CHAPTER XVI.

A QUESTION OF VERACITY.

STRANGE as it may appear at first blush, Donovan's animosity toward Larry Harvey had been increased instead of diminished by the fact that the latter had shielded him in the trial room at headquarters and afterward.

And yet, taking into consideration the

moral caliber of the man, his attitude was exactly what might have been expected of him. He could not think of his generous rival's self-sacrifice without despising himself, and the more he despised himself the more he hated the man who caused him to do so.

We have all met this type of fellow—the surly brute who, having done you an injury, will hate you more if you heap coals of fire upon his head than if you retaliate in kind. Put yourself on his level, and he can almost feel kindly toward you because you do not cause him to experience a sense of inferiority; but show that you are a bigger man than he, and you will increase his enmity tenfold. Thus it was with Donovan in his attitude toward Larry.

When the men of the engine company held a meeting to decide what course of treatment should be handed out to the son of the man who had imperiled their lives by the crooked deal in hose, Donovan, instead of keeping in the background out of a sense of gratitude to Larry, had been the most fierce in denouncing him, and in insisting that he be punished for his father's offense.

It was he who had suggested that it would be a good thing to give Fireman Harvey a "silence," as they call it in the navy, and let him live and work among them henceforth without taking any more notice of him than as if he had been deaf and dumb. This drastic treatment, he argued, would pretty soon break the young man's spirit, and result in his handing in his resignation.

The other men agreed that this sounded like a good plan, and voted to put it into effect. Brooks had not been present at the meeting, and therefore, seeing him now in friendly conversation with Larry, Donovan had lost no time in acquainting him with the will of the majority. He realized that it would spoil the whole effect of the silence if its victim was on speaking terms with even one member of the company.

At Larry's threat to reveal the truth about his encounter with Donovan, the latter laughed contemptuously. He had been expecting this, and was fully prepared for it.

"Tell them what lies you like, if you can get them to listen to you," he sneered.

"Tell it to *me*, Larry," exclaimed Brooks eagerly. "I've felt sure all along that you didn't get a square deal in that matter. I'm mighty glad that you've decided to speak out at last. Tell me the story, and I'll tell it to the other boys. They'll listen to *me*, I guess."

Donovan scowled at him. "Do you mean to say, Brooks, that you ain't goin' to abide by the will of the majority—that you're goin' to remain friends with this feller when all the rest of us have decided to cut him out?"

"I don't let anybody pick my friends for me, or tell me who I mustn't talk to," was the cold reply. "You fellows can do as you please about Harvey, Bull, but, as I was telling him, just as you came in, he can count on me as his friend."

"I guess I understand why," sneered Donovan. "Crooked money will buy as much as the other kind, of course."

"Just what do you mean by that?" demanded Brooks angrily.

"I guess my meanin's plain enough," retorted Donovan. "I don't suppose you'd be so anxious to claim this fellow for your friend if he wasn't the son and heir of Mike Harvey, the rich contractor. It's surprisin' what a difference a few dirty dollars make. But the rest of the bunch ain't so mercenary, Brooks."

Tom's face flushed with anger, and he raised his clenched fist menacingly. He was not as powerfully built as Donovan, and he was first on the civil service list for promotion to the rank of lieutenant, so that he could ill afford to engage in a brawl in company quarters; but, nevertheless, he would have fought the sneering champion of the department then and there if it had not been for the sight of the latter's limp left arm resting in its sling.

Suddenly realizing the bully's disability, he managed to check himself.

"You big stiff!" he cried. "I can understand how Larry, here, couldn't help assaulting you, the other day. I suppose you made him so mad with that

foul tongue of yours that he lost all control of himself."

"He did more than that, Tom," declared Larry. "He struck me, before I laid a hand on him. He was about to strike me again, and I grabbed him by the throat and threw him off. That is the truth about that affair. Chief Forbes came in just as he fell to the floor, and, not knowing that it was in self-defense that I did it, accused me of attacking a crippled man."

"But why didn't you tell that story at your trial?" demanded Brooks, looking at Larry in astonishment. "What on earth made you keep mum? You might have got off without even a reprimand if you had explained matters to the commissioner."

"I didn't want to snitch on Donovan," answered Larry. "He was lucky enough to escape a complaint, and I thought I might as well suffer alone instead of putting him in bad, too. You see, it wasn't his fault that Chief Forbes came in just as I knocked him down. It seemed to me that it wouldn't have been quite white to have snitched on him. The chances are that both of us would have been punished, in that case, for quarreling and fighting. I thought I might as well be the goat. I didn't figure that as a result of doing this I'd become so unpopular with the men."

"And this fellow was satisfied to keep quiet and let you be branded as a coward, eh?" exclaimed Brooks, with a contemptuous glance at Donovan.

"It isn't true," declared the latter sullenly. "The story he tells is a fake from beginning to end, Brooks. I never laid a hand on him. Does anybody suppose I'd be fool enough to start a fight in my present condition? We was havin' a friendly argument about a civil service rule—at least I thought at the time that it was a friendly argument—and suddenly this fellow jumps up, and he says: 'The other day you knocked me out; now is my chance to get square, Bull Donovan,' he says."

"Of course, I was helpless with this arm of mine in a sling," went on the bully, "so I says to him: 'You wouldn't hit a man in my condition, would you,

Harvey? Give me a chance. Wait until this bum arm of mine gets well again, and I'll give you all the fight you're lookin' for. Don't be a coward and take advantage of the fact that I'm a cripple,' I says to him. As soon as I'd said that he grabs me by the throat, and throws me to the floor on the back of my head. I guess he'd have done a whole lot more to me, too, if the big chief hadn't come in just then and caught him at it."

Donovan had been rehearsing this story for the past few days, in expectation of being denounced by Larry Harvey, and he was therefore able to deliver it with a fluency which gave it a striking semblance of truth.

Larry, who had never before heard anybody lie so glibly, stared at him in astonishment.

"That is the *real* story of what happened, Brooks," Bull went on. "I didn't tell all of it to the commissioner at the trial, because I didn't want to be too hard on this fellow. But now, since he's lookin' for trouble, I ain't goin' to keep quiet any longer."

The cool audacity of the man in thus twisting the situation completely around took Larry's breath away. He was greatly relieved to hear Brooks declare that he did not believe a word of Donovan's story, and that he felt confident that their comrades would accept Larry's version.

"We'll see whether they will or not," snarled Bull, shaking his fist at the two friends as he moved toward the door. "The boys have known me for years, and never yet caught me in a lie. They don't know anything about Harvey, except that he's the son of the man who sold the rotten hose to the department. We'll see which of us will be believed."

"Don't worry, Larry," said Brooks, after Donovan had gone out. "I guess I won't have much trouble in persuading the bunch that they have done you a great injustice in branding you a coward. And I am in hopes that when they hear how white you've treated Bull, and what a rotten deal you've had, they'll be willing to listen to reason about this unfortunate hose business. They're a

pretty decent crowd of fellows, taken all in all, and I reckon that when they've heard your story there won't be a man that won't want to shake your hand."

The other was greatly cheered by this prospect, of course, and it was a bitter disappointment to him when Brooks came to him, that evening, with a look on his face which told Larry, even before he spoke, that he had failed in his mission.

"They wouldn't listen to me, confound 'em!" said Larry's friend gloomily. "Donovan told his story and they fell for it—every one of them. When I tried to argue with them they laughed at me. They said that it was a mighty queer thing that you had waited until now to spring that defense. They wanted to know, Larry, why you hadn't come out with it before, and refused to believe the reason I gave them.

"You see, old man," he went on apologetically, "as Bull boasted to us, they've known him for such a long time, and they don't know you very well. I guess it isn't more than natural that they should take his word in preference to yours. I'm awfully sorry."

"Well, it can't be helped," replied the other. "I'm much obliged to you, Tom, for your trouble. I'm lucky to have such a stanch pal. As for the other fellows—well, I guess I'll be able to jog along without their friendship. I suppose it'll be pretty lonely here, with nobody to talk to when you're not around; but if they think they can force me to quit by such treatment, they'll find that they've got another guess coming."

A savage glint came to his eyes, as he went on: "And as for that contemptible liar, Donovan—well, you just wait until he is able to use that left arm of his again, Tom. Last time we fought, down in the cellar, I wasn't able to stand up against him for more than six rounds. My lungs were full of the smoke I'd swallowed at my first cellar fire, and I was half licked before I started to fight. But this time I'm going to be in proper condition when I meet him in the ring, and I rather think, Tom, that when the fight is finished the New York fire department will have a new champion."

CHAPTER XVII.

"SILENCE."

THE days that followed were wretched, soul-trying days for Larry Harvey. If his had been a less rugged and resolute character, and if his fighting blood had not been continually kept at the boiling point by the consciousness that he was being unjustly dealt with, the chances are that he would have succumbed to the strain, and been forced into sending his resignation to fire headquarters.

To be shunned entirely by the fellows one is working with; to be among them, but not *of* them; to have to work day after day without a single person to talk to, that is one of the most cruel and severe tortures to which a warm-hearted, companionable young man could be subjected.

Larry wouldn't have been so badly off if he could have continued to enjoy the society of his good friend, Tom Brooks. But, unfortunately for him, an official order temporarily transferring young Brooks to another engine company at the other end of the city, came from headquarters a day after the "silence" was put into effect, and thus Larry's excommunication was complete.

To add to his suffering, the grand jury, after looking into the matter of the worthless hose which had been sold to the city by the Harvey Hose Company, decided to find an indictment against Larry's father, making him the scapegoat for the rascally band of politicians who had beguiled the old man into lending his name to the company.

The newspapers were full of the scandal. The elder Harvey was held up to public scorn, and his protestations of being innocent of intentional wrongdoing were sneered at by the press.

Mrs. Harvey and Larry's sister, Kate, were heartbroken with shame and fear.

The young man, who felt that he should be constantly with them in this time of trouble, was unable to give them more than one day out of every five, that being all the liberty which a mem-

ber of the New York fire department is allowed.

Larry came in for a lot of painful notoriety. The newspapers had until now been in ignorance of the fact that the son of Mike Harvey, the wealthy contractor, had joined the fire department, but they discovered that such was the case, and made much of the discovery.

They rehashed the report of the proceedings at fire headquarters, when Larry had been tried for "conduct prejudicial to good order and discipline," and denounced by the commissioner for striking a crippled comrade.

Larry was horrified to find his picture in every morning and evening paper, and columns about himself under such humiliating headlines as:

MIKE HARVEY'S FIREMAN SON CALLED COWARD BY COMMISSIONER

The papers had all printed short accounts of Larry's trial at the time it had taken place, but they had not known then that the Fireman Harvey mentioned therein was the son of Mike Harvey, and, therefore, they now republished the story, giving it twice as much space as it had occupied the first time.

In spite of these afflictions, Larry maintained a stiff upper lip. His face became paler, and he appeared to have lost some flesh under the strain, but he held his head high, and went about his duties with a forced cheerfulness which showed his persecutors that they could not break his proud spirit.

Fortunately for him, the engine company of which he was a member was one of the busiest in the city, and he and his comrades were kept on the jump day and night answering alarms and fighting fires.

One morning he was on the apparatus floor, doing his turn at sentinel duty, when the street door opened, and Florence Brooks entered.

Larry had not seen the girl since the day when she had called him a coward, and told him that she did not wish him to address her. He therefore made no

attempt to speak to her now, and was much astonished when she came toward him with her hand outstretched, and a cordial smile upon her pretty face.

"Fireman Harvey," she said, "I want to apologize to you for what I said the other day. I had no right to form an opinion so hastily, and I am sorry for it."

"Then you—you believe *me*, and not Donovan?" he stammered, an expression of joy lighting up his pale face.

He guessed that Tom Brooks had told his sister the real story of his trouble with Bull, and that that was the reason for her changed attitude.

"Well, I can't say that exactly, Mr. Harvey," the girl answered, with a frank smile. "You see, I don't know which of you to believe. Tom has told me your side of the story, and tried to persuade me to believe it; but, on the other hand, Mr. Donovan has sworn to me that his version of the affair is true. That leaves me in doubt.

"You see, I have known Bull for a long time," she went on earnestly, "and while I know that he is rough and something of a bully, I should hate to think that he is the contemptible fellow he must be if—pardon me for putting it so bluntly—you are telling the truth. At the same time, Mr. Harvey, I have great respect for my Brother Tom's judgment, and since he believes in you so thoroughly, I am almost inclined to do so, too. Therefore, I have decided to form no opinion in the matter at present. I hope that some day the truth will come out. I feel confident that it will. In the meantime I hope you will forgive me for my meanness of the other day, and look upon me as your friend."

Tom eagerly seized the hand that she extended. "This is good of you, Miss Brooks," he said earnestly. "It is what I might have expected of—of Tom's sister."

After that the cheerful look upon Larry's face was not as forced as it had been. The lonely fellow felt so encouraged by the girl's altered attitude toward him that he did not mind the treatment of his comrades as much.

There was another factor which tended to keep up Larry's spirits, and that was the knowledge that Donovan's broken arm was rapidly healing. He knew that the time when he would be able to settle scores with his enemy was not far off now.

And one morning, when Larry came down to the apparatus floor to line up with the other men for roll call, a thrill of joy shot through him as he glanced at Donovan, standing at the other end of the line.

For the latter's left arm was no longer in a sling. The surgeon had pronounced it cured, and Bull was once more an able-bodied fireman.

After the roll call the other men crowded around Donovan to offer their congratulations. After they were through, Larry approached him, an eager smile upon his face.

"I'm glad your arm is all right again," he said quietly. "When do we fight? I don't want to rush you. I guess that arm will be stiff for a while yet. I'll give you all the time you need to limber up, but please don't keep me waiting a day longer than is necessary."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SECOND FIGHT.

THE second fight between Harvey and Donovan was one of the greatest ring battles that ever took place, in either professional or amateur sport.

The battle did not take place in the cellar of the engine house, which had been the scene of the first encounter between Harvey and Donovan, when a large circle chalked on the cement floor had served as a ring. Both men considered the issue of this second fight too important for such informality.

The private gymnasium of Professor "Biff" O'Brien, ex-champion middle-weight of the world, and the man who had trained Larry for the physical part of his civil-service examinations, had been selected by mutual agreement as the scene of the combat.

By mutual consent, too, O'Brien was selected to act as referee. Although Larry had been the man's pupil, Dono-

van was satisfied to allow the "professor" to take charge of the fight. He knew Biff's reputation for squareness, and had no fear that he would show partiality.

The event took place on the afternoon of Harvey's day off. Donovan was also off duty, so there was no danger of the fight being interrupted by a sudden call to a fire.

The spectators were mostly firemen, men from various engine and hook-and-ladder companies who were off duty, or had taken a chance, and sneaked out of company quarters; and as Fireman Harvey was the most unpopular man in the department their sympathy was all one-sided.

Larry was made to realize this when he stepped into the ring and was greeted at first by a stony silence. With some men the knowledge that the crowd is against them will take a lot of the fight out of them; upon others it will produce an exactly opposite effect. Larry, fortunately, belonged to this latter class. As he gazed upon those cold, unfriendly faces at the ringside, and read in each one of them the hope that he would go down to defeat, he scowled defiance at them, and said to himself grimly: "I'm going to disappoint 'em all."

Then he heard a man in the front row say: "After all, it doesn't seem square not to give the poor beggar a send-off. Come on, boys!"

He started to clap his hands, and a good many of the other men followed suit. Larry, however, was not at all conciliated by this round of applause, for the patronizing manner in which it was given was even more humiliating than the stony silence which had at first prevailed.

Then Bull Donovan stepped into the ring, and was received with such noisy enthusiasm that O'Brien was compelled to warn the audience that if they were not careful they would attract the attention of the police, with the result that all hands would be "pinched" for participating in a prize fight.

Because of his reputation as a bully, Donovan had never been particularly

popular in the fire department, but his fellow fire fighters cheered him wildly now, because they regarded him as an instrument of vengeance.

They were thinking of their seven brave comrades who had perished because of the rotten hose which Mike Harvey had sold to the city, and they yearned to see Mike Harvey's son thrashed unmercifully by the husky champion who stood in the center of the squared ring, acknowledging their plaudits by a broad grin.

A formidable-looking opponent was Bull Donovan, as he stood facing Harvey, eagerly waiting for the signal to begin fighting. Almost nude, the wonderful muscular development of the man impressed itself upon the audience, and conveyed the belief that he could not possibly go down to defeat.

The other combatant, however, did not impress the onlookers as being any weakling. Grudgingly they were forced to express their admiration of Larry's broad chest, the spread of his shoulders, the solidity of his thighs, his wonderful back development, and his long, slim arms, under the skin of which the muscles played like writhing snakes.

As the spectators at his previous fight with Donovan had noted, he was not quite as tall as his adversary, and was at least fifteen pounds lighter. His chest and shoulders, too, huge though they were, were not as powerful as Bull's, and the latter's arms were of greater circumference.

Observing this difference in the physical proportions of the two men, Tom Brooks, who was acting as Larry's second, was filled with anxiety. He derived some comfort, however, from the recollection that at the last fight Larry had shown that he possessed more science than Donovan, and, moreover, he had managed to stand up against the latter for six rounds on that occasion, although he had been in no proper condition to fight. Now, Larry had assured Tom, he felt in perfect shape, and was confident that he was going to win.

"For the love of Mike, be careful, old pal," Brooks whispered, as he adjusted the fastenings of Larry's gloves. "If

you let that cur lick you, you'll break my heart, boy."

"I tell you he isn't going to lick me, Tom," was the confident reply. "When I think of the dirty deal that fellow has given me I feel that I can't lose the fight."

As the two men faced each other in the center of the ring, Biff O'Brien, not being aware of the deadly enmity which existed between them—for they had told him that it was merely a contest to decide who was the champion of the fire department—said briskly: "Now, boys, shake hands."

Both Larry and Donovan shook their heads emphatically.

The latter growled: "With your kind permission, Mr. Referee, we'll dispense with the handshaking."

Biff frowned at this. He did not like grudge fights. In his long experience in the ring he had never once refused to shake hands with an opponent. He did not argue the matter, however. With a shrug of his shoulders, he gave the signal to commence, and the battle began with a rush.

The fury with which they immediately hurled themselves at each other showed how each had been looking forward for weeks to this encounter, and how bitterly each hated his opponent.

Generally the principals in a finish fight, mindful of the necessity of preserving wind and vitality, do not put their full force into the first few rounds. But neither Harvey nor Donovan was in a mood, now, to consider the value of conservation of energy.

They went at each other like two savage bulldogs who have slipped their leashes at the same moment. The sound made by their gloved fists as each rained blows upon the other's face and body caused the onlookers to realize the terrible power behind those whirling, piston-rod arms. The blows landed in such rapid succession that they sounded like the steady thud-thud-thud of a man hitting a punching bag.

"Wonderful fighting!" exclaimed a man at the ringside, as the bell sounded the close of the first round. "But the

fools can't keep that up. They'll have to slow down in the next round."

Over in his corner, Larry was being lectured by Brooks: "For Heaven's sake, old man, don't lose your head. You went at him like a fiend in that round. He's a bigger and heavier man than you, and he'll beat you at that game. Don't forget your science. You don't stand much chance against him in a mere slugging match; but you're twice as clever as he is, and you can put him down and out if only you'll be sensible, and take things easy."

Larry nodded his approval of this advice; but when the bell rang he rushed at his opponent with the same ferocity which he had displayed at the opening of the first round. Brooks groaned as he saw the energy his man was expending as recklessly as though the fight was to be only a three-round affair, and the terrible punishment he was receiving.

It was small comfort to Larry's second to perceive that Donovan was using up an equal amount of vitality, and receiving quite as much punishment; for Brooks felt sure that in a mere endurance contest the enemy must finally prevail. He knew Donovan's extraordinary capacity to take punishment, and his marvelous vitality. At the end of the second round he again warned Larry, and implored him to fight more carefully.

Larry promised that he would hearken to this advice. He had recovered his self-control by this time, and in the next round he began to display his cleverness. He dodged and ducked several of Donovan's savage swings with a skill which caused the onlookers to forget that they wanted to see him go down to defeat, and they applauded him generously.

From that round on, Larry showed that he was easily the master of his opponent as far as science went.

He got in three blows for every wallop Bull was able to land. The latter's punch, however, seemed to have more force behind it than Larry's. Every time his huge fists came in contact with his adversary's head or the vital parts

of his body, the spectators expected to see a knock-out.

They were amazed at the indifference with which Larry received those vicious blows, and marveled at his endurance. The more punishment he received the stronger he appeared to grow, and the faster he fought.

Several times during the twenty-six rounds of terrific fighting he was knocked down by the swing of Donovan's mighty arms; but he was always up again before the referee was halfway through the fatal count, hurling himself at his antagonist with a vigor which compelled the latter to give way.

When the twentieth round was reached, Larry presented a spectacle terrible to look upon. His eyes were almost hidden in the mounds of swollen flesh which Donovan's powerful fists had raised. His nose was battered. His lips were puffed and bleeding.

His opponent, however, was not in much better shape. His face was cut and swollen, and there were angry red patches on the white skin over his ribs and abdomen, which showed that Larry had not neglected to pound his body as well as his head.

The men at the ringside, observing these evidences of the awful punishment which each had received, said to each other confidently, as the bell rang at the close of the twentieth round, and the two combatants staggered to their corners:

"The Bull will win. Both men are groggy now. They can't keep it up much longer. Harvey has put up a game fight, but he will go out first. When it comes to endurance, there isn't a man living that has it on Donovan."

But to their great astonishment and dismay, it was Donovan, and not Larry, that first showed signs of going to pieces.

The latter, tired, battered, half blinded though he was, stepped into the ring as the bell rang the opening of the twenty-first round with a vim which made him appear almost sprightly in comparison with his opponent's labored advance.

Something which his friend Tom Brooks had whispered to him as he sponged and fanned him with a bath towel had acted as a powerful stimulant upon his exhausted body.

"Larry, you've got to win, old man," Brooks had said. "I've promised my sister to hurry home as soon as this fight is over, and tell her the result. She has been praying that whichever of you two fellows has told her the truth will be the victor. If you lose she'll feel that Donovan's story is a true one."

Those words sent Larry into the ring with a feeling that it was not in the power of any human being to knock him out—and that is a fine feeling to have in the twenty-first round of a fight.

And there was another incident which served still further to stimulate him. In the twenty-fourth round a warm adherent of Donovan's, noting with deep concern the fact that the champion was tottering, and seemed on the verge of collapse, sprang to his feet and yelled frantically:

"Brace up, Bull! Put him out! Are you going to let the son of that dirty grafter, Mike Harvey, win this fight?"

These words did more good to Larry than they did to the man for whose benefit they were intended. Furious at the taunt, and the memory it brought up of the wrongs he had suffered at the hands of his comrades, he hurled himself at his opponent with such savage fury that it was only by desperate clinching that Donovan saved himself from being knocked out in that round.

After that the end of the fight was apparent to all. Donovan's pitiful efforts to save himself in the next two rounds convinced the onlookers that he could not last much longer.

Nobody was surprised when the finish came. A straight left from Larry, delivered with so little force that his opponent would scarcely have felt it if it had been received in one of the earlier rounds—for Larry was too much worn out to have much of a sting in his punch—landed on Donovan's chin, and sent the champion of the fire department unconscious to the canvas floor of the roped arena.

As his seconds carried the defeated man away, and Larry stood clutching the ropes, so groggy that he could not stand alone, Tom Brooks jumped into the ring, and addressed the group of dazed firemen.

"Boys," he shouted, placing his hand affectionately upon the shoulder of the department's new champion, "this man won because he had the right on his side. I'll leave it to you. Is there a man here who believes that a fellow as game as Larry Harvey could be coward enough to attack a cripple? If you think so, keep silent, and continue to do injustice to one of the best fellows we've ever had in the department. But if you believe, now, that this man has had a rotten deal, let me hear you tell him so."

The fireman who had shouted the slurring remark about Larry's father—he was the driver of the engine of Larry's own company—jumped upon a chair, and, waving his arms excitedly above his head, shouted:

"Boys, three cheers for Larry Harvey—*our* Larry."

And there was not a man present who did not join the hoarse chorus that followed.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BEST OF ALL.

AFTER that there was no attempt on the part of his comrades to subject Larry to the torture of the silence.

There was not a man of them, now, who did not believe Larry's version of his trouble with Donovan. They agreed with Tom Brooks that a fellow who could put up such a gallant fight was not the kind of man who would be guilty of a cowardly act.

It was not the fact that Larry had won the fight which caused them to hold this view. Even if Donovan had been the victor of that great battle their opinion would have been the same. Winner or loser, any man who could stand up against such grueling punishment for twenty-six rounds was entitled to their respect.

They were willing to make manifest their admiration of the young man's

gameness by abandoning the boycott which had caused him so much wretchedness; but they could not forget that he was Mike Harvey's son—could not help feeling some prejudice against him still because his father had been at the head of the corrupt concern which had imperiled their lives by supplying them with worthless equipment.

It was not until a month after his fight with Donovan that Larry, by a single brave act, managed to regain the full measure of his popularity with his comrades, and caused press and public to sing his praises.

It was at a six-story factory-building fire that Larry thus distinguished himself.

The flames had started on the first floor, and, shooting up the stairway, had taken hold of the entire building so rapidly that every window was belching flame and thick black smoke when the boys of Larry's company arrived with the engine.

Up the extension ladder which was quickly raised against a third-story window Larry and his comrades swarmed. They entered the inferno which was raging inside that window, and for twenty minutes waged a gallant fight against the fierce flames.

Then the officer in command, glancing up at the fire-swept ceiling, saw something which caused him to give his men a hurried order to retreat—to regain the extension ladder with as little delay as possible if they set any value upon their lives.

All but one member of the company obeyed that order. He did not hear it, and remained with the pipe in his hands after his comrades had fled.

A few seconds later there came a thundering crash, the ceiling above him gave way, and a mass of burning beams tumbled upon him.

Then the third floor—the floor on which he was standing—gave way, too, and the unfortunate man fell with the avalanche of débris to the story below, where he was pinned beneath a huge pile of burning timbers, plaster, and brick.

When his comrades returned to res-

cue him they found that only the fact that one big beam, stretched across his body had fallen in such a position that it supported the entire mass of wreckage had prevented his life from being crushed out instantly. He was lying under a sort of protecting arch made by the peculiar position of the beam.

Chief Forbes, who had been brought to the fire by the turning in of a third alarm, was quick to realize that the saving of the man's life depended upon immediate action.

Unless he was extricated from his perilous position at once, he would be roasted to death, for tongues of flame were already licking their way through the pile of débris, and stretching toward him like the tongues of wild beasts.

And any minute another one of the upper floors might fall through and smother him beneath a mass of plaster and woodwork, for there was not much breathing space as it was in the tiny tunnel in which he was lying.

"There is only one way of getting him out alive!" declared Chief Forbes grimly. "Somebody has got to crawl under that beam and saw away that part of it which is lying across his stomach."

Then he added, still more grimly: "It may mean the life of the man who tries it. From the position in which that beam is lying, I am afraid that if it is disturbed the whole mass it supports will come down. That means that both men beneath it will be crushed to death. Still, it's the only chance of saving that fellow's life. Who wants to run the risk?"

Several men stepped forward and saluted. One of them was Larry Harvey.

"Chief," he cried huskily, "let me do it! I am Mike Harvey's son."

Forbes stared at him in silence for a brief second. Then he nodded, and said gruffly: "All right, my boy; go to it!"

The other men gasped as Larry, saw in hand, began to crawl through that narrow tunnel of burning wreckage toward his imprisoned comrade.

They realized the nobility as well as the bravery of his act, for the man

pinned under the pile of wreckage, the man for whom Larry Harvey was taking a hundred-to-one chance on his life, was—*Bull Donovan!*

Breathlessly they waited while Fireman Harvey slowly sawed through the thick beam which was lying across Donovan's middle.

Tensely they wondered what would happen when the work was done, and the big pile of débris was robbed of its chief support.

It seemed to them scarcely possible that either Fireman Harvey or Fireman Donovan could come out alive.

But to their great joy and relief, when the big beam parted under the last stroke of Larry's saw, the mass of smoking wreckage did not settle down upon the imperiled men. It held up long enough for them to drag both Larry and Donovan to safety.

Then one of the smoke-eaters—the grime on his face streaked with sweat—shouted excitedly:

"Three cheers for Larry Harvey—the bravest man and the best fellow in the department!"

And in the great shout which followed the voice of Chief Forbes was louder than all the rest.

CHAPTER XX.

THE GREATEST REWARD.

LARRY received the "Bennett" medal as a reward for his heroism, and the fire commissioner shook his hand, and told him that he wished to apologize for once having called him a coward.

Larry was very proud of the medal, of course, but nevertheless he did not keep it. The day after it was presented to him, Tom Brooks discovered that his sister Florence was wearing it.

"Where did you get it, sis?" he asked, with a broad grin. "Did Larry loan it to you?"

"Larry gave it to me," she answered, with a blush. "He gave me this, too," she added, holding up her left hand, and displaying a big diamond, which glittered on its third finger.

"Why, that's the diamond ring which the boys presented to Fireman Harvey as a mark of their esteem and regard!" cried Tom, with pretended indignation. "He's got an awful nerve to give that away!"

"I guess the boys won't mind," replied Florence. "Larry says that diamond rings don't look well on a fireman's hand. He thinks that they look much better on the hand of a fireman's wife."

"So you're going to marry him, are you, sis?" chuckled Tom. "This is indeed a surprise. I thought for sure that you were going to become Mrs. Donovan."

"Don't be silly, Tom!" she cried indignantly. "But, talking about poor Bull, I was awfully glad to hear that he chipped in with the rest of the boys to buy that presentation ring for Larry. It shows that there's some good in him, after all."

"Oh, Donovan's all right, now," declared Tom Brooks. "He's a changed man since that fire. He and Larry are good friends. He was the first of us to congratulate Larry when the jury acquitted his father of criminal intent in selling that rotten hose to the city."

Then Tom broke into another chuckle. "So you're going to marry Fireman Harvey—plain Fireman Harvey—are you, sis? I thought you said you wouldn't be the wife of any member of the department under the rank of lieutenant?"

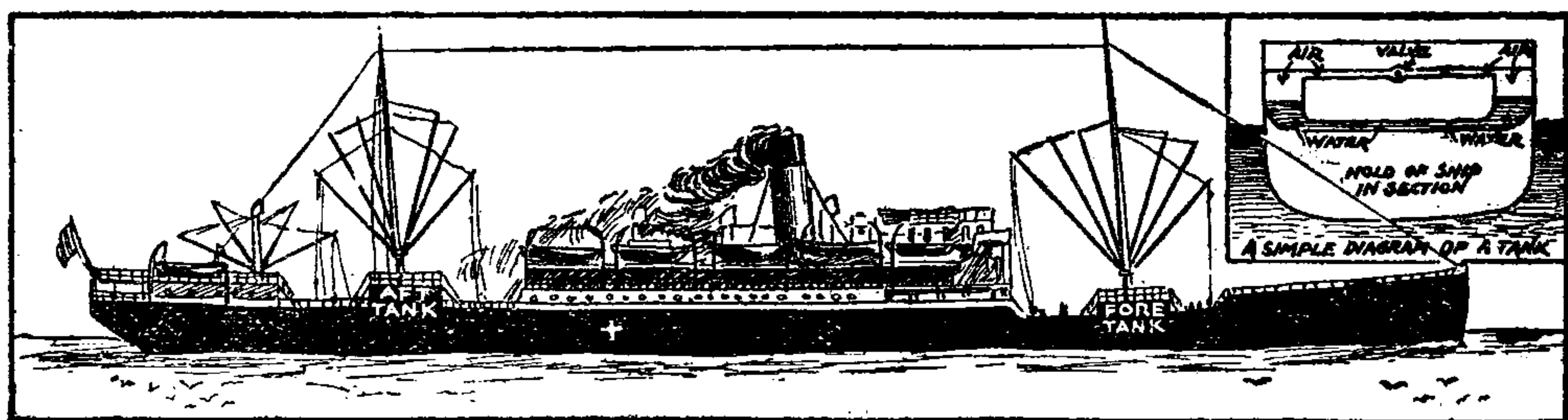
"I'm going to be the wife of a battalion chief, sir," retorted Florence confidently. "Larry is bound to get there in time. I shouldn't be at all surprised to see him in Chief Forbes' place some day."

MECHANICS FOR TOP-NOTCH READERS

Steadying Tanks for Ocean Liners

Schemes galore have been devised to prevent seasickness, but now we have some ships which carry their own waves. These miniature waves are contained in

water flows freely from one tank to the other as the ship rolls to and fro, but if the valves are closed, the water in the tanks remains stationary, since it has



SHIP EQUIPPED WITH STEADYING TANKS.

a pair of tanks located on the starboard and port sides of the ship, and connected by a pipe laid under the deck.

Air pipes connect the tanks at the top, and these pipes are fitted with valves. When the valves are open the

the pressure of the air in the tanks to contend with.

The reason a ship provided with anti-rolling tanks is steadier than one not so provided, is that the waves of the ocean are long in dimension and in time,

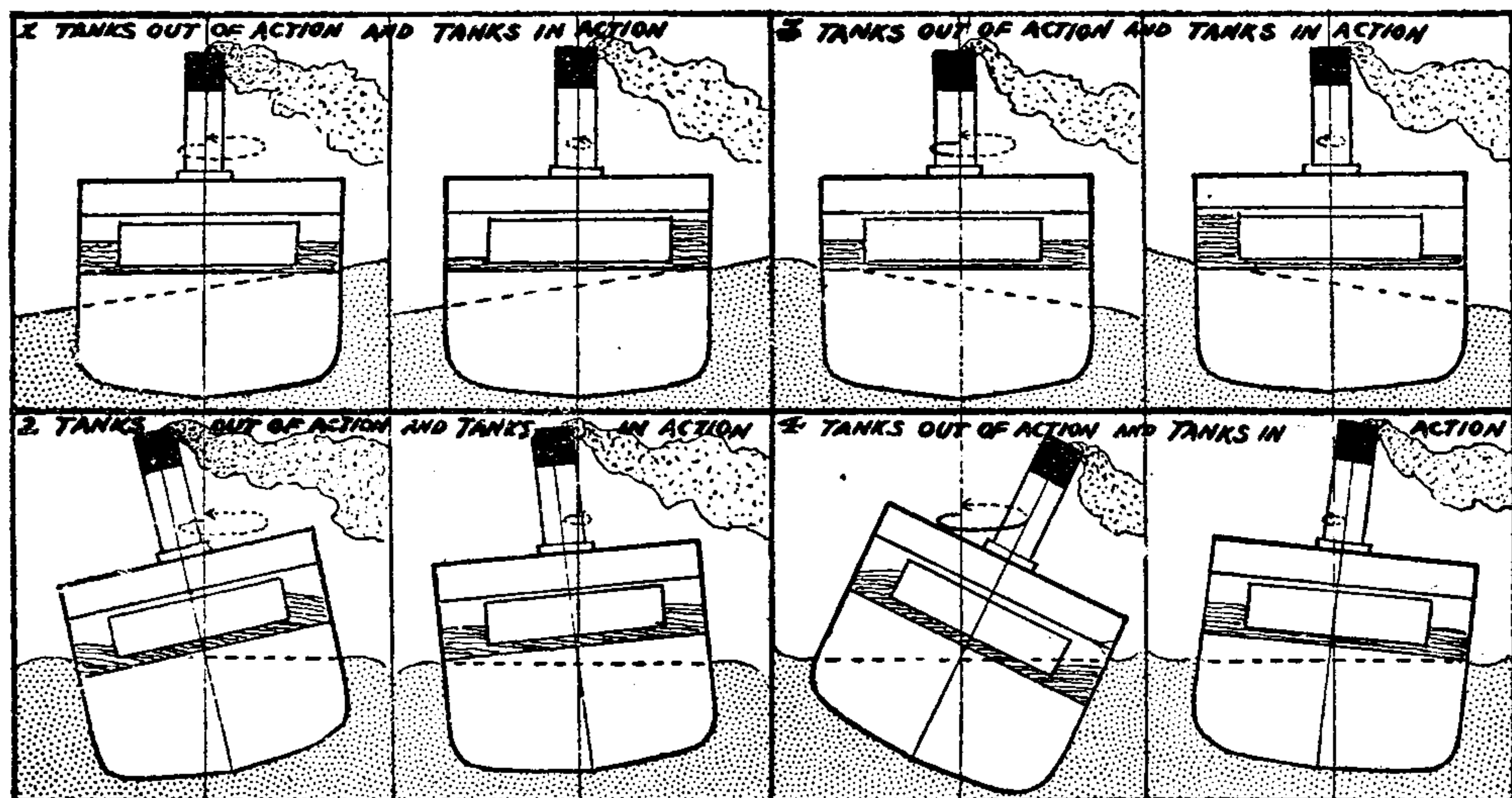
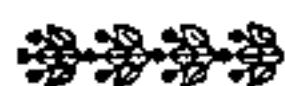


DIAGRAM SHOWING ACTION OF TANKS.

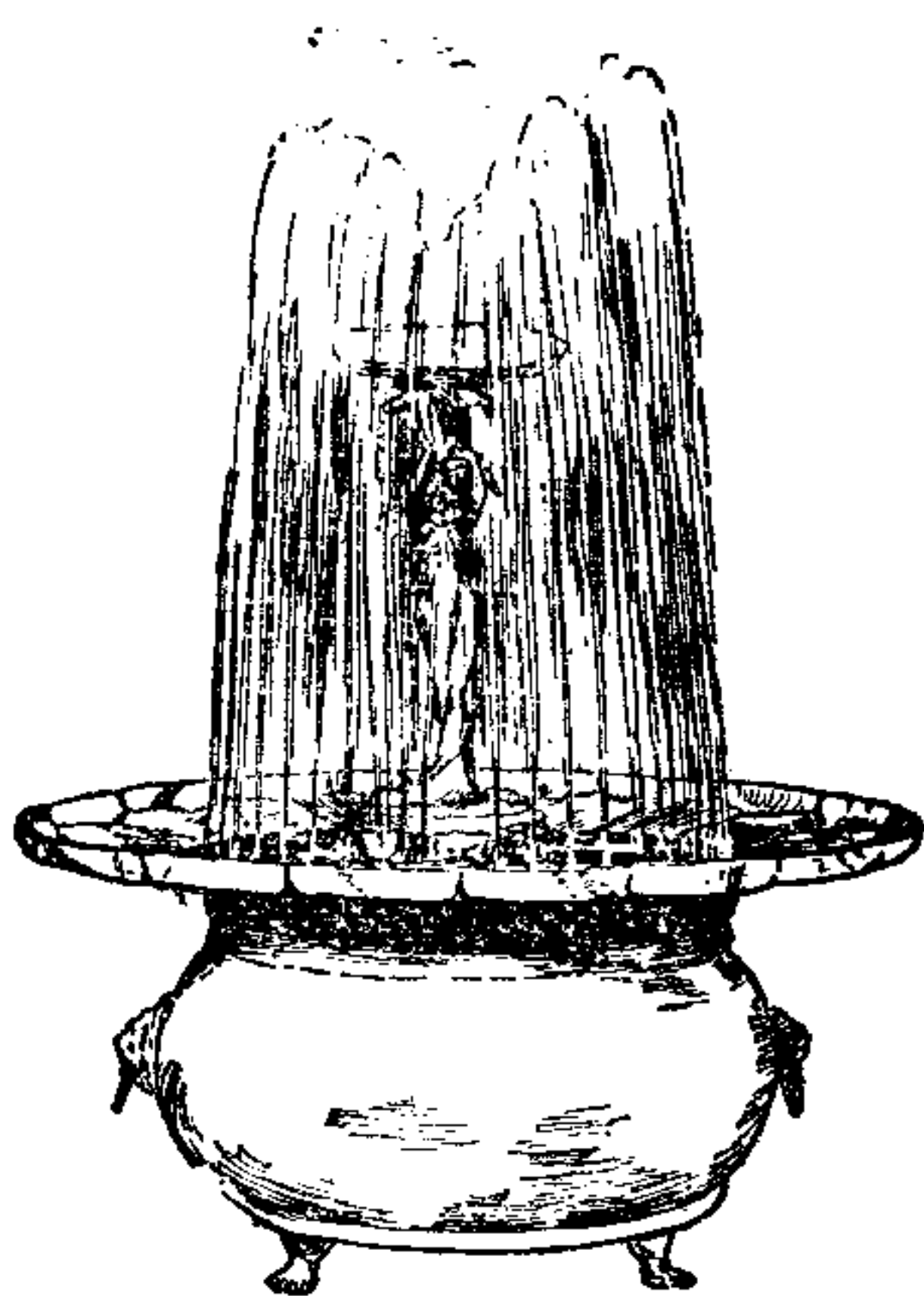
whereas the miniature waves set up in the tanks are short. Since the time of the two sets of waves is different, the action of the tank waves opposes the action of the sea waves to such an extent that the ship rides the sea steadily, as the accompanying diagram indicates.

Travelers who have crossed the ocean on ships already provided with these tanks say that the steadiness almost precludes the possibility of seasickness.



A Portable Electric Fountain

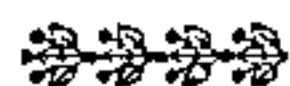
The construction of this fountain is extremely simple, and consequently it is not likely to get out of order. The mechanism consists of an electric motor attached to a centrifugal pump. The latter is placed in the interior of a metal basin. The pump gets the water directly from the basin, and conveys it through the pipes to a number of nozzles, which direct small streams over the dome. The water then flows back into the basin, to be used over again



by the pump. The dome is revolved by a single jet from below, thus doing away with complicated devices.

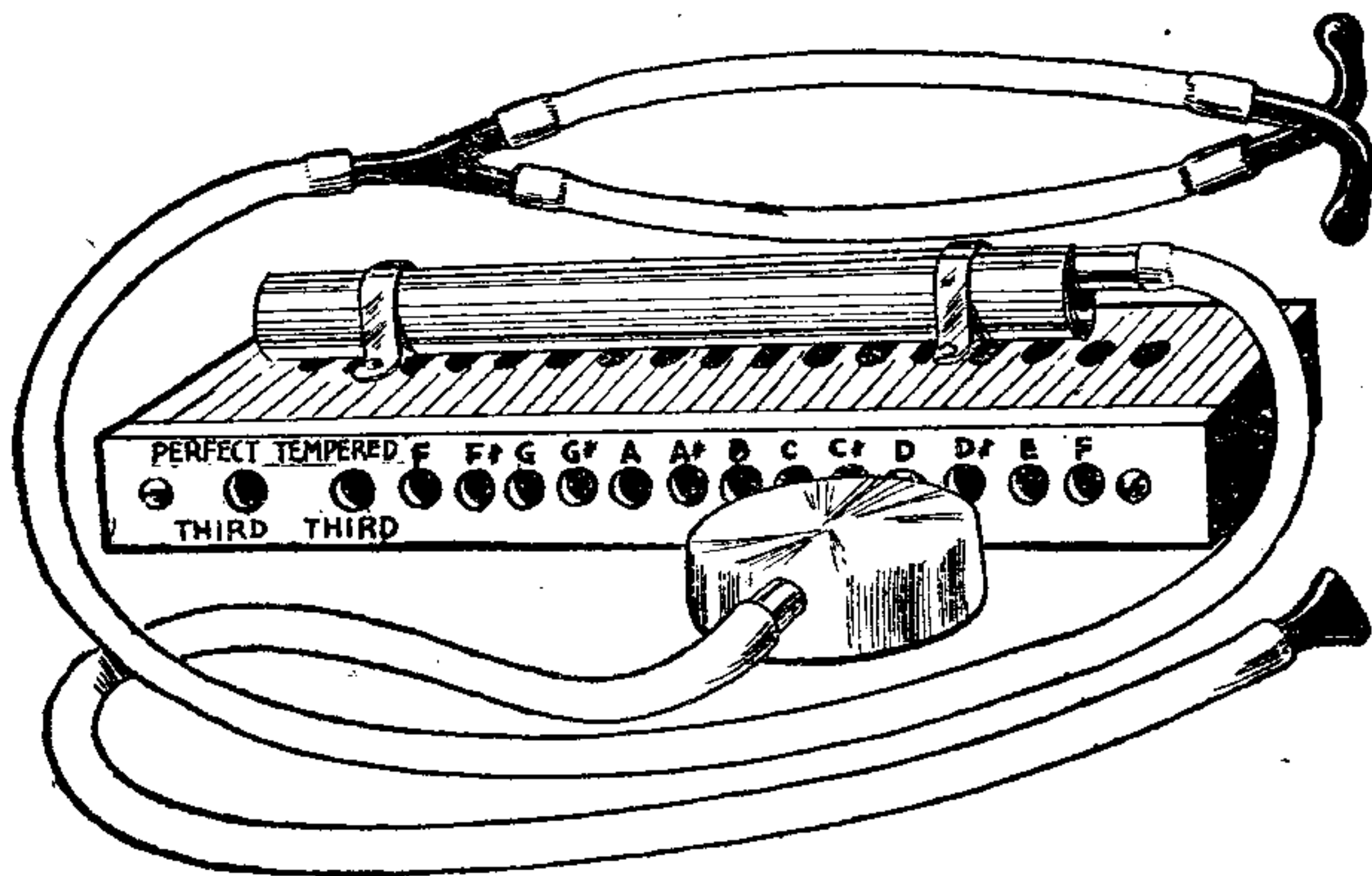
The portable electric fountain embodies all the beautiful effects that the combination of colored glass, flowing water, and electric light can produce. Either alone or in combination with

table decorations of ferns and flowers it may be used to advantage, not only on account of its beauty, but also for the soothing effect of softly falling water and ever-changing colors.



The Tune-a-phone

The Tune-a-phone is the invention of Mr. Miles Bryant, and makes piano tuning at once simple, practical, and sci-



entific. It is an instrument provided with a set of reeds, which represent the fundamental notes. On top of the case in which the reeds are placed is a brass resonator. The reeds develop sound when the tuner blows into the mouthpiece, and the sustained sound is heard in the ear tubes.

The Tune-a-phone is attached to the frame of the piano to be tuned, and when in operation it gives a demonstration of the exact rapidity of vibrations that should occur. The purpose of the resonator is to augment or magnify the vibrations, and at the same time to eliminate the musical effect. It is especially valuable to those learning to tune pianos and to musicians who wish to tune their own instruments.



A Geographical Clock

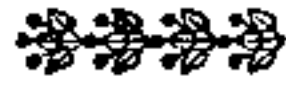
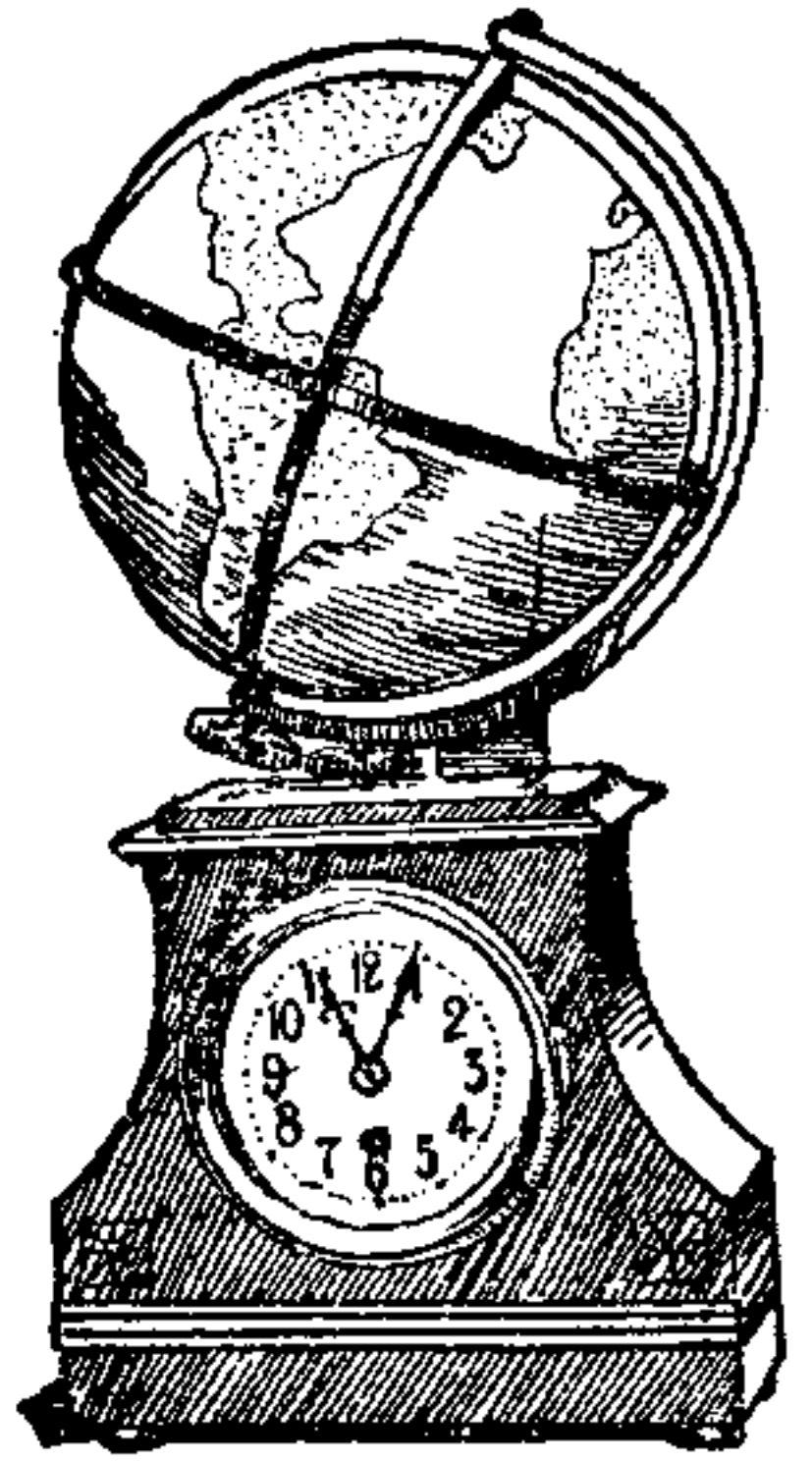
This clock is an instructive as well as an ornamental timepiece. It has a geographical globe mounted on top, and on this globe the meridians of longitude are marked, as well as the countries and

cities. The axis of the globe is connected with the clock mechanism by beveled gears.

A reference to the cut will show that the axis on which the globe revolves is set $23\frac{1}{2}$ degrees off the perpendicular, just like the earth itself. It is on account of this slant that beveled gears are necessary to rotate the globe instead of gears in alignment.

By means of this clock the time at any city in the world can be instantly found. It will be observed that there are three brass circles surrounding the globe. Only one of these is important; the others are merely supports. The one that encircles the globe at the equa-

tor has the hour divisions marked on it. As the hour hand of the clock passes twice around the dial the globe makes one complete revolution—i. e., it revolves once in 24 hours. To find the time of any city you need only see what meridian the city is on or near. As the meridian on the globe crosses the hour scale, the hour at the point of intersection is the time at the city in question.



Electrical Music

At last the realization of Bellamy's dream: electrical music!

Music produced without the use of pipes, reeds, or strings. And it may be heard wherever a wire can be run. This

new kind of music, generated and distinguished by alternating-current dynamos, is the invention of Doctor Thaddeus Cahill.

Electric music is produced at a central station, like electric light, and distributed like the latter to a thousand or more hotels, clubs, and homes, in each of which music is heard as if the performers were present in the room.

The apparatus is electrical, the music is electrical, everything, except the sounds produced, is electrical.

The music the Cahill machine renders in a hotel or parlor is not the whisper of the telephone, or the sound of the graphophone, but pure, clear notes and chords as loud as if an orchestra were on the spot.

Only a mere outline of the general features can be given here. The generating set consists of a separate dynamo for each note of the musical scale. Each of these dynamos produces as many electric vibrations per second as there are air vibrations per second in that note of the musical



THE OPERATOR

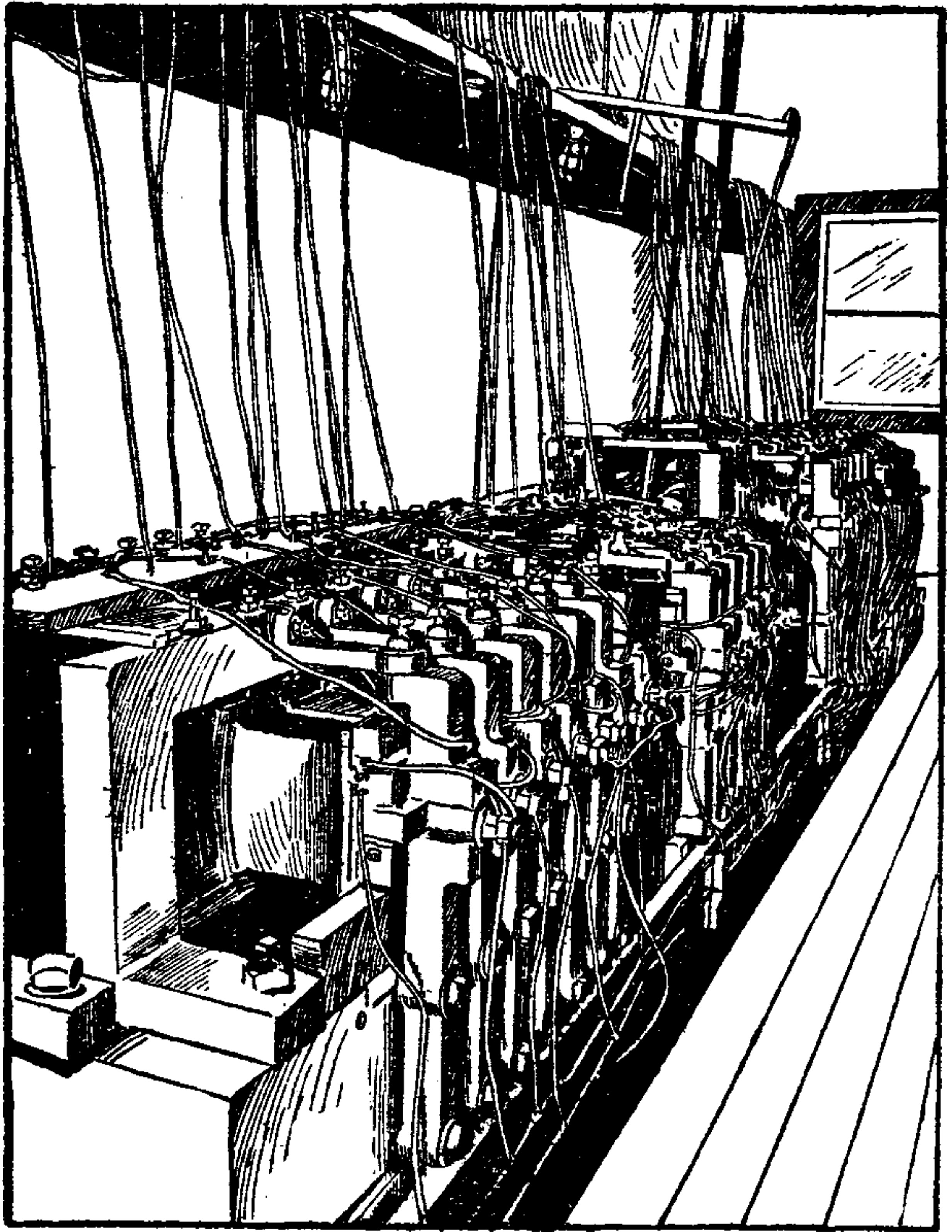
scale for which it stands. Several of the dynamos for single notes have an output of from 15 to 20 horse power.

When it is remembered that one man can supply energy for the whole of a great pipe organ with its many pipes speaking at once, some idea may be obtained of the number of receiving stations that can be supplied by the electric organ.



Color Photography

To Frederick E. Ives, an American inventor, is due the credit of having been the first to obtain photographs in the colors of nature. This he does with a special camera and an apparatus called a *Kromskop*. In this system three negatives of the same object are made; the first through red glass, the second through green glass, and the third through blue glass. From these negatives three positives are made on glass. These are

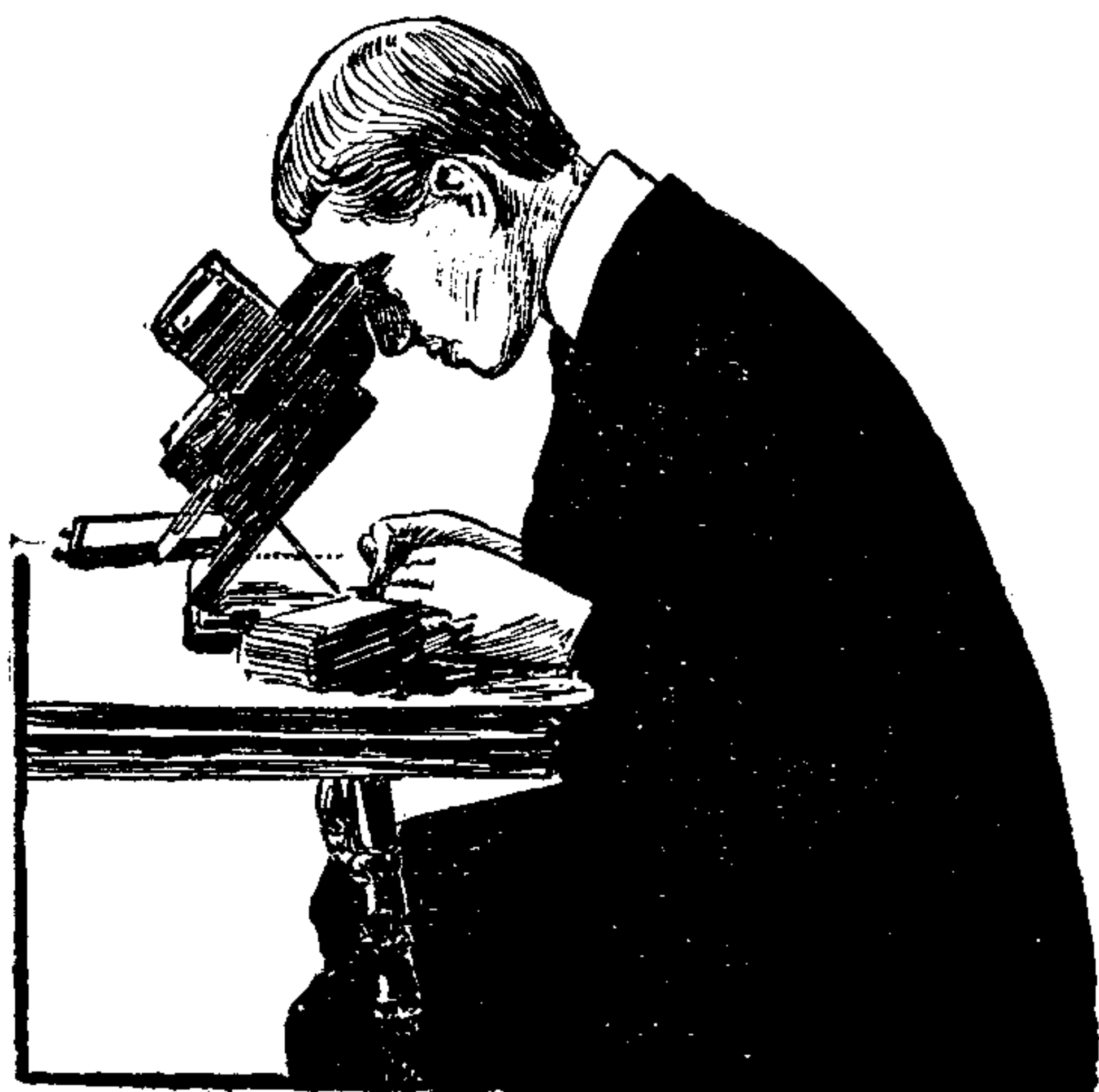


THE DYNAMOS

lenses like a stereoscope, and is so arranged that the three positives can be viewed simultaneously. A red glass is over the first, a green glass over the second, and a blue glass over the third, in the order in which they were photographed.

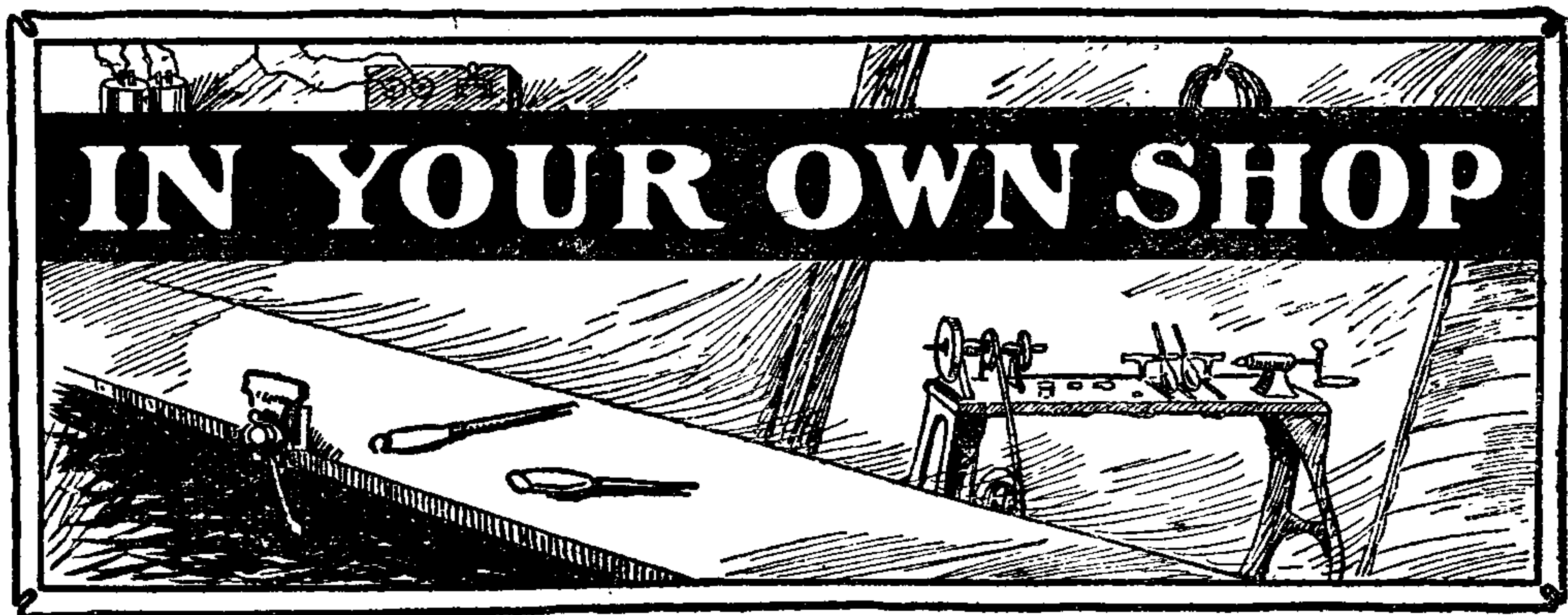
The pictures are then viewed through the *Kromskop*, and so perfectly are the colors brought out that all suggestion of photography vanishes and the object itself, be it fruit, flowers, portrait, or landscape, seems to stand before the eyes again with every quality of color, texture, atmosphere, and solidity.

As the graphophone disk must be placed in a graphophone before the recorded sounds can be reproduced, and the biograph film must pass through the biograph to reproduce the moving scenes, so the *Kromgren* must be placed in a *Kromskop* to reproduce an object in natural colors.



not colored, but are merely records of color.

The *Kromskop* is fitted with viewing



How to Use a File

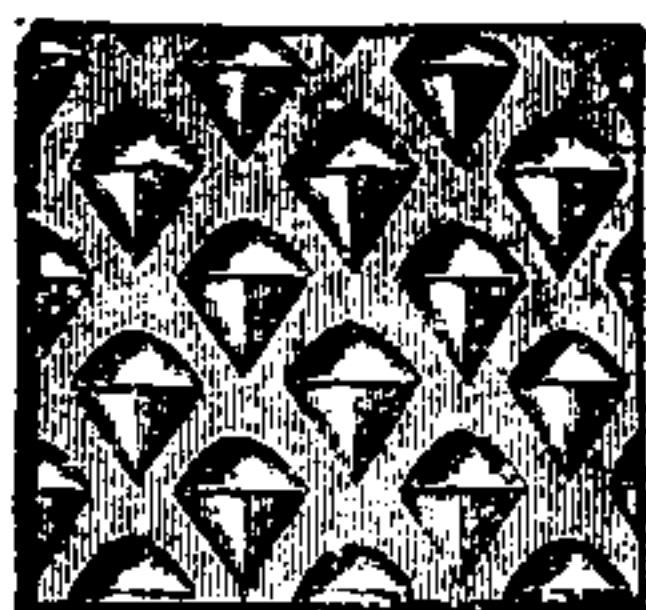
To use a file may seem a very simple matter, but there are few operations more difficult than that of filing well. Unlike the bit fixed in the plane, whose movement is guided by an unyielding block, the file must be guided by hand, and the skill with which this is done depends largely upon patience and perseverance.

While a good file is necessary to secure the best results in filing, knowledge as to the selection of the proper file for the work in hand, and skillfulness and practice in handling it, are equally essential.

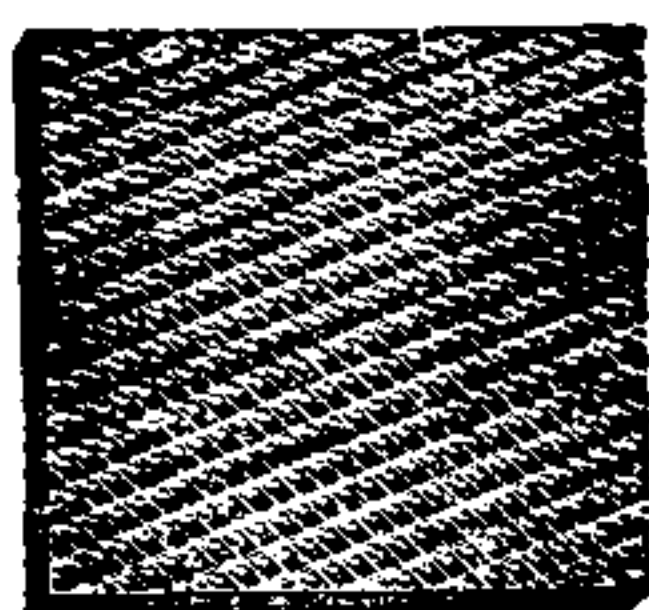
Before using a file, it should, first of all, be fitted with a proper handle; not, as is too often the case, by driving the handle halfway down upon the tang and

thereby doubling the chances of breaking it, but by forcing it well up to the shoulder. Some of the file handles found on the market will not stand this

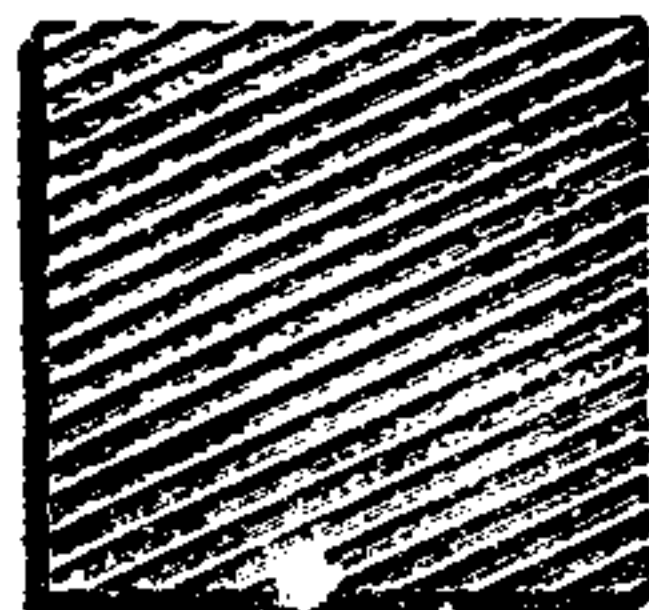
amount of driving without splitting. In such cases, the tang of an old or worn-out file of similar dimensions should be heated, taking care, of course, not to draw the temper, and the hole in the handle burned out to nearly the desired size and shape before driving it up the tang. It often happens that the tang hole is not drilled centrally, or that it is badly out of line. This may also be corrected by using a heated tang.



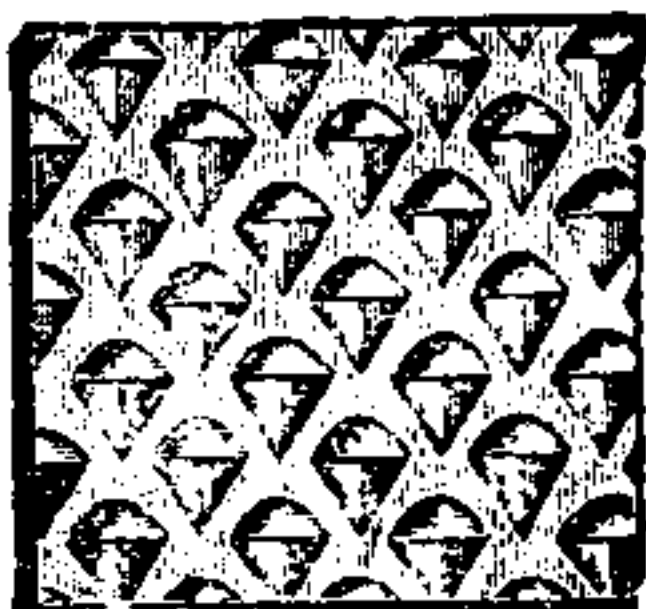
Rasp Coarse



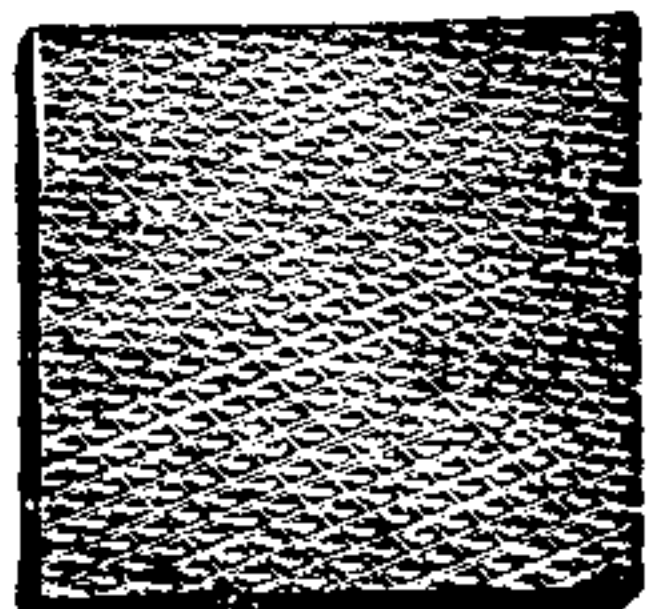
Double Cut Coarse



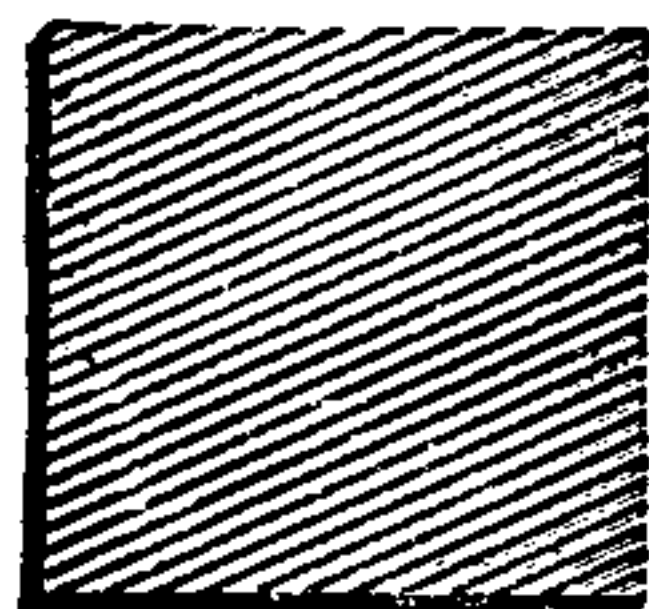
Single Cut Coarse



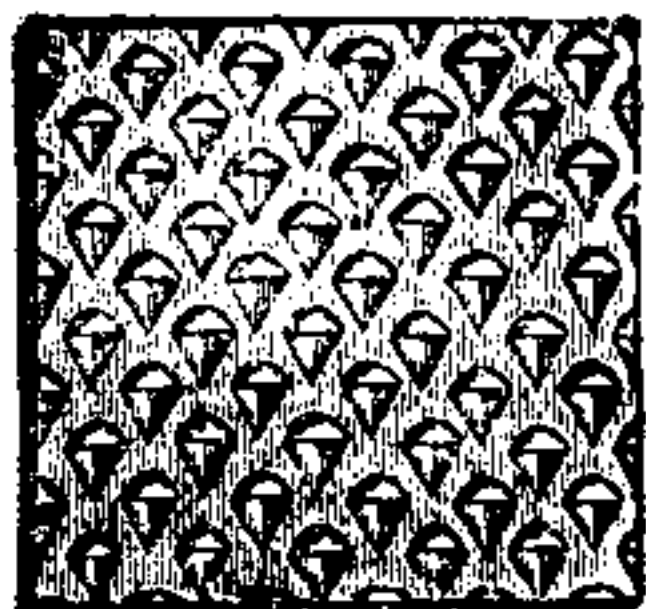
Rasp Bastard



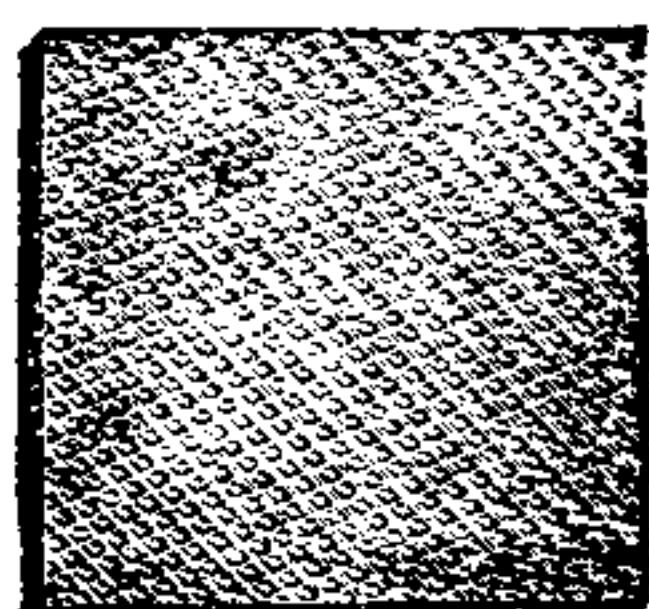
Double Cut Bastard



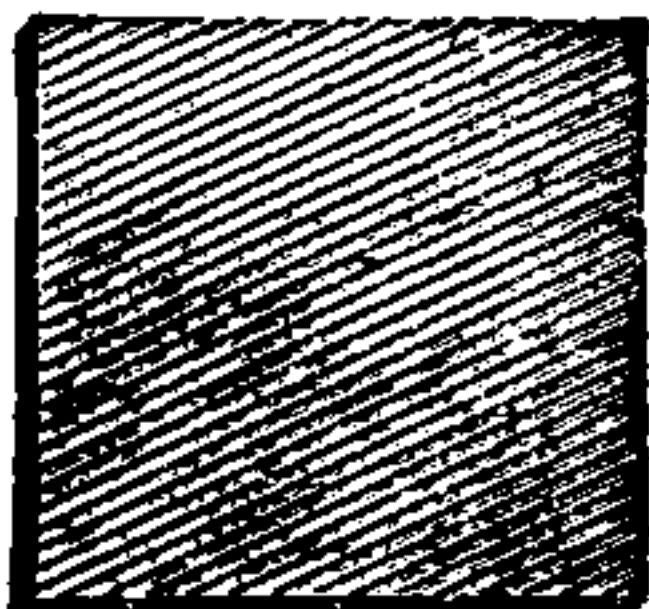
Single Cut Bastard



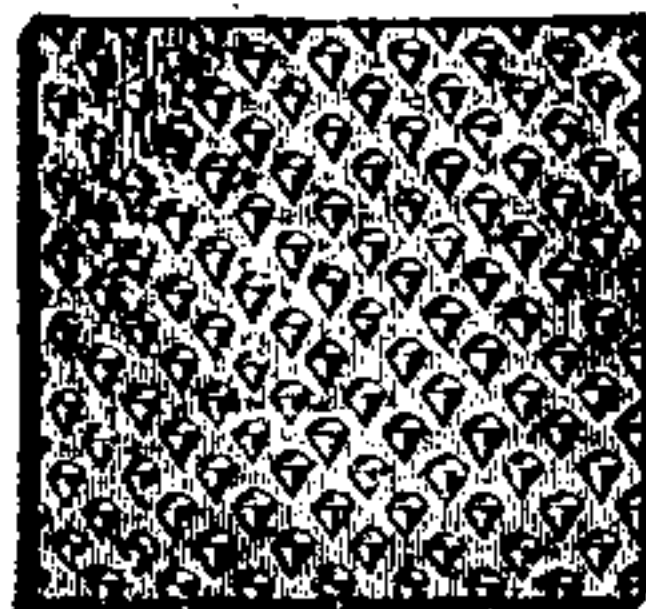
Rasp Second Cut



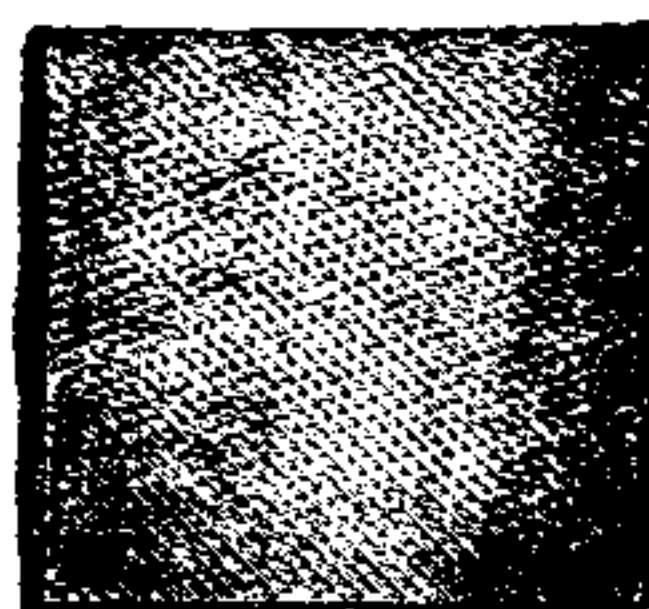
Dbl. Cut Second Cut



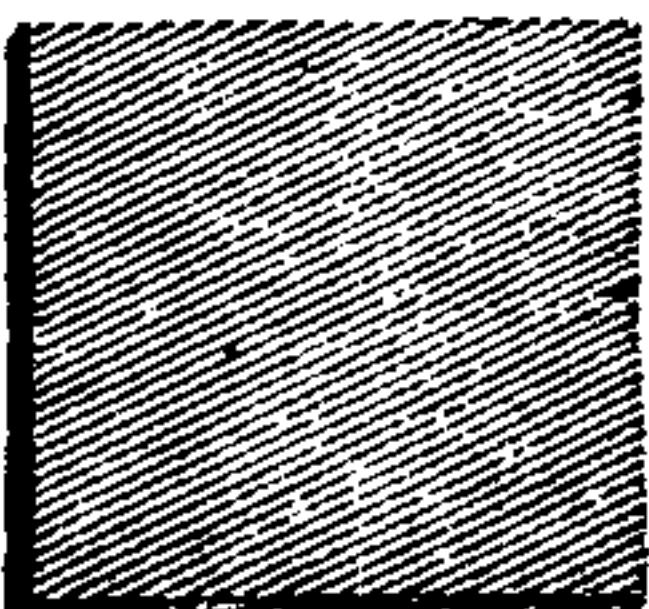
Single Cut Second Cut



Rasp Smooth



Double Cut Smooth



Single Cut Smooth

COMMON VARIETIES OF FILES

In using large files which are intended to be operated by both hands, the handle should be grasped in such a manner that its end will fit into and bring

up against the fleshy part of the palm below the joint of the little finger, with the thumb lying along the top of the handle in the direction of its length, the ends of the fingers pointing upward, or nearly in the direction of the operator's face.

The point of the file should be grasped by the thumb and first two fingers, the hand being so held as to bring the thumb, as the ball presses on the top of the file, in a line with the handle when heavy strokes are required. When a light stroke is desired and the pressure demanded becomes less, thumb and fingers may change their direction until the thumb lies at a right angle, or nearly so, with the length of the file.

In holding the file with one hand, as is often necessary in filing light work, the handle should be grasped as already described, with the exception that the hand should be turned a quarter turn, bringing the forefinger on top and lying along the handle nearly in the direction of its length. In this position, the least action of the hand and wrist may be had upon light work.

Amateurs will find that by following these directions, the movements of the file will be simplified and made somewhat easier than if grasped at random and without consideration.

The accompanying illustration will aid the amateur mechanic in the selection of fine and coarse files for special work.



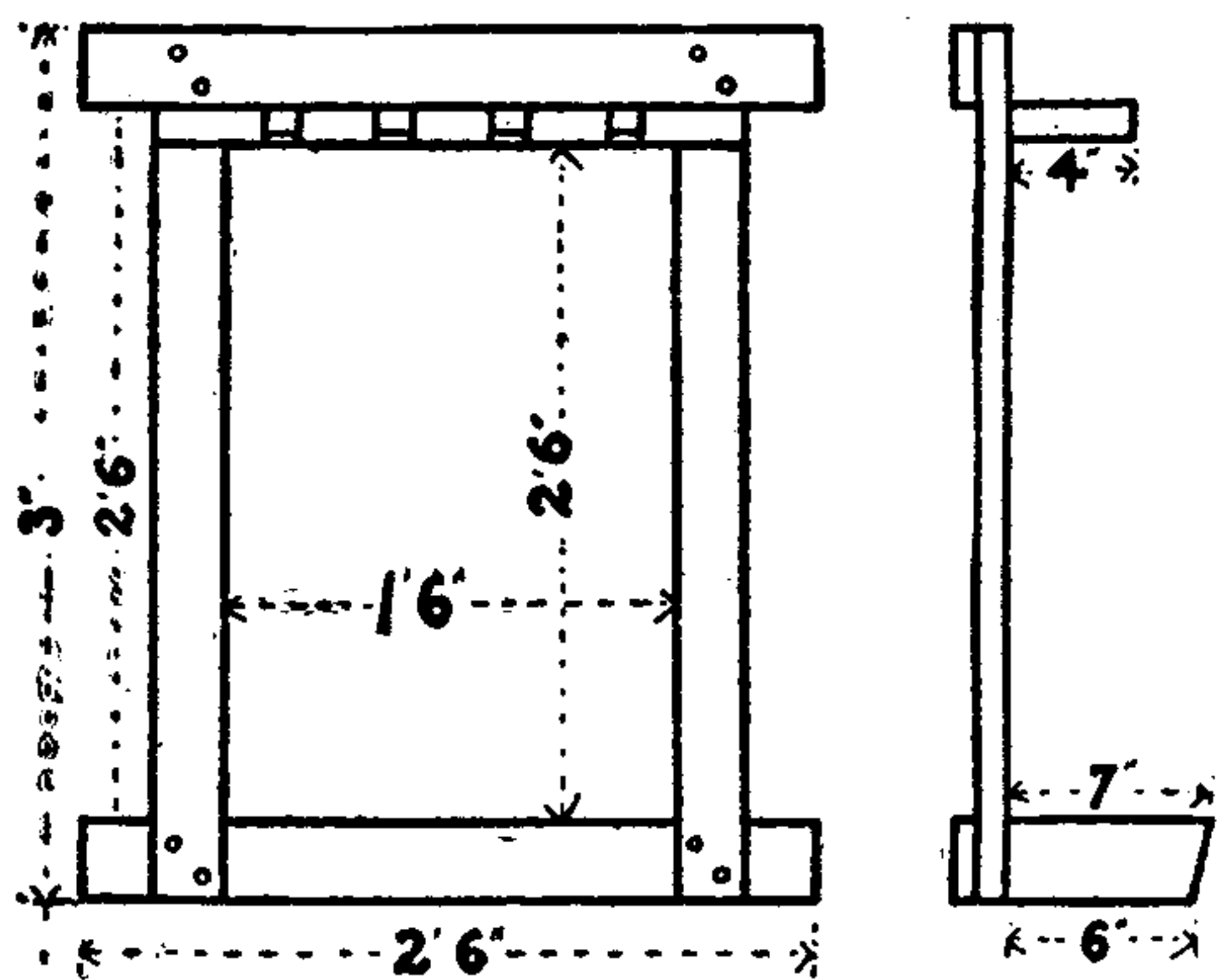
A Practical Umbrella Rack

The plans shown in the illustrations are for an inexpensive umbrella rack, which will be an attractive piece of furniture for any home.

A frame is constructed of oak, cherry, or mahogany. Four strips are required, two of which are 3 feet long, and two 2 feet six inches long; all of these are $\frac{7}{8}$ of an inch thick and 3 inches wide. The longer strips are laid over the shorter ones, and where these cross two 5-16 inch holes are bored, in which wooden pins are set in glue.

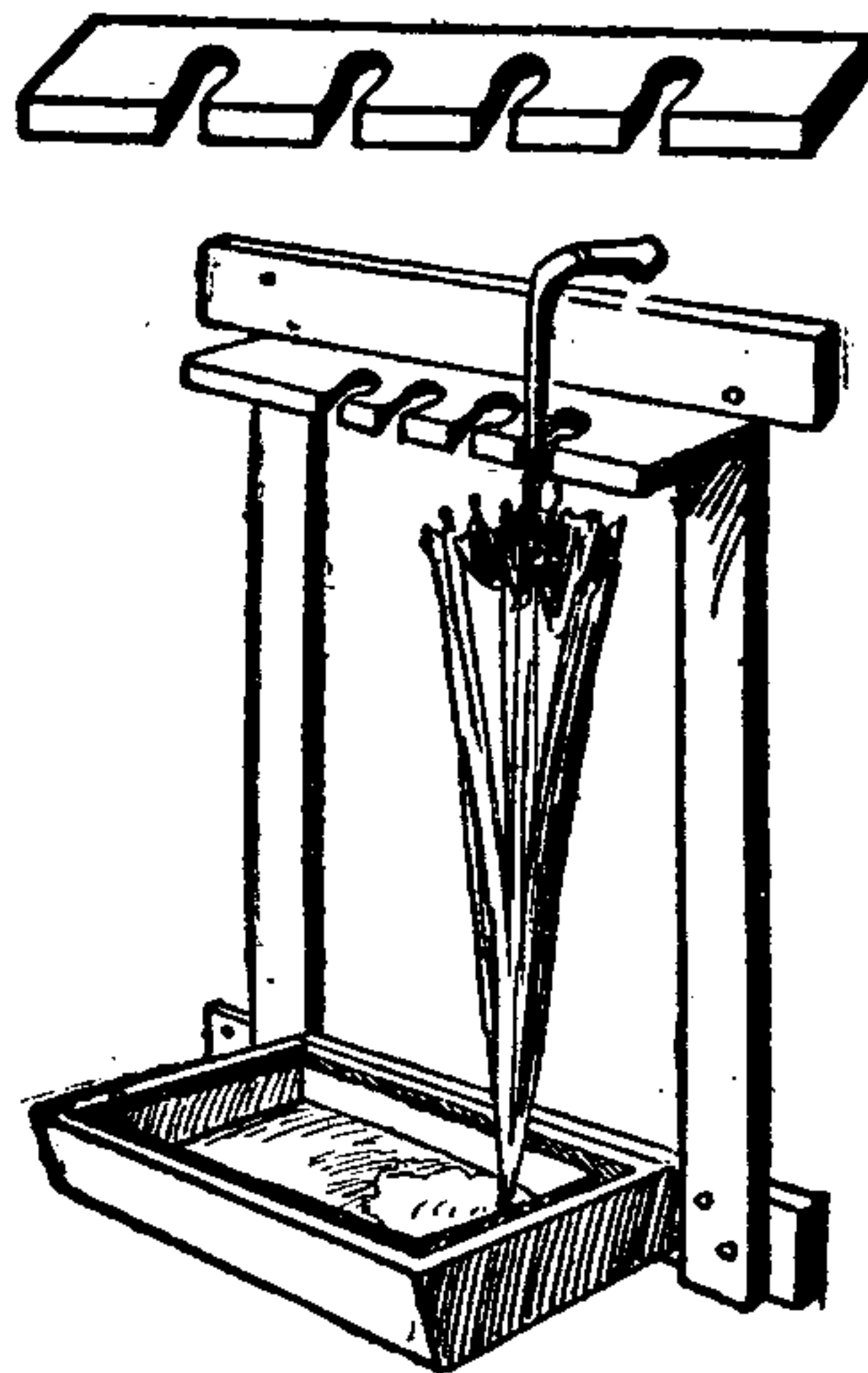
The holder proper is made of a strip

2 feet long, 4 inches wide, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches thick. Four oval openings are cut out with a keyhole saw at equidistant points, as shown in the detailed drawing. This holder is screwed to the uprights of the frame at a point 3 inches



PLAN OF UMBRELLA RACK

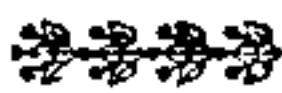
below the top crosspiece. A trough to catch the dripping water, which also serves as a base to support the rack, is made of $\frac{7}{8}$ -inch stuff; it is 18 inches long and $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide at the top, and



UMBRELLA RACK COMPLETED

$6\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide at the bottom. It is screwed to the lower crosspiece of the frame. A zinc pan to fit the trough can be made at home, or by a tinsmith, but

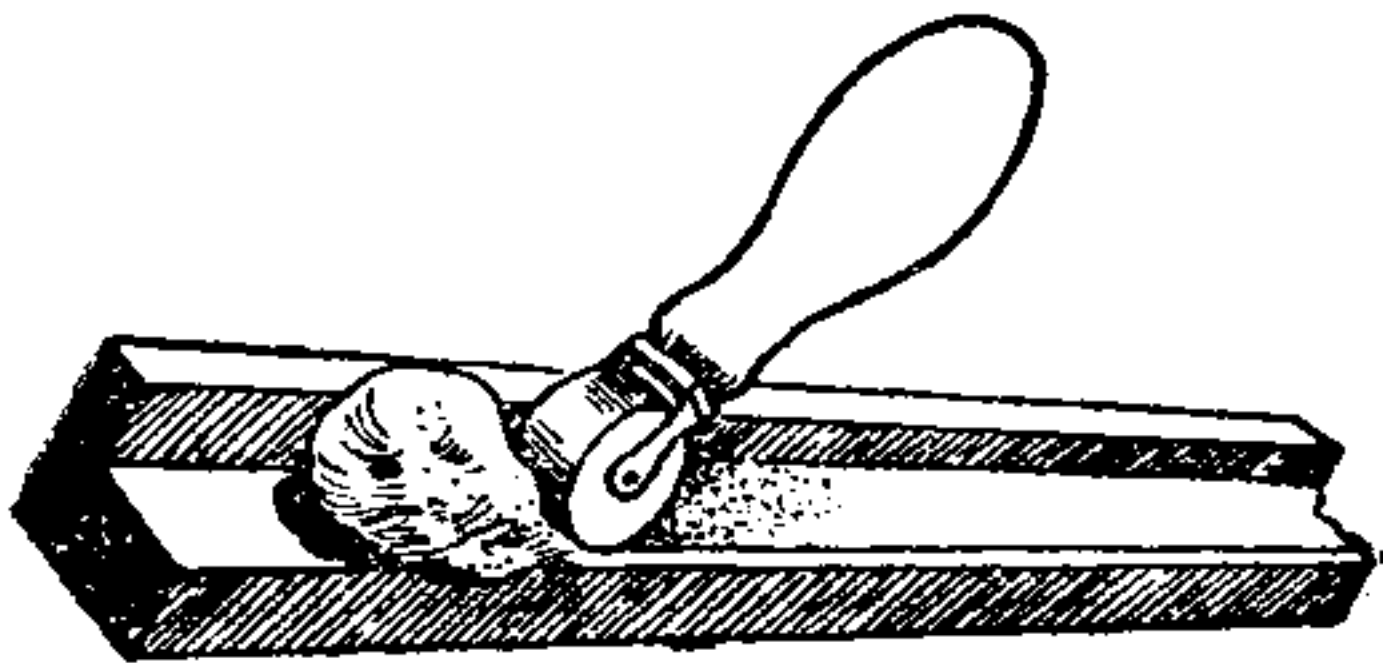
this is placed in the trough without being fastened, so that cleaning will be a simple matter. The detailed drawings show clearly the method of construction.



To Putty Windows

The amateur who has tried to putty a window with a knife knows only too well that it is no easy matter to make the putty lay smoothly and to do a neat job. The tool here shown consists of a smooth wood roller, made of a spool,

mounted on a handle. The putty is laid along the edge of the pane of glass and the window sash in the usual manner.



The putty roller is grasped by its handle and pushed along the length of the pane and the sash.

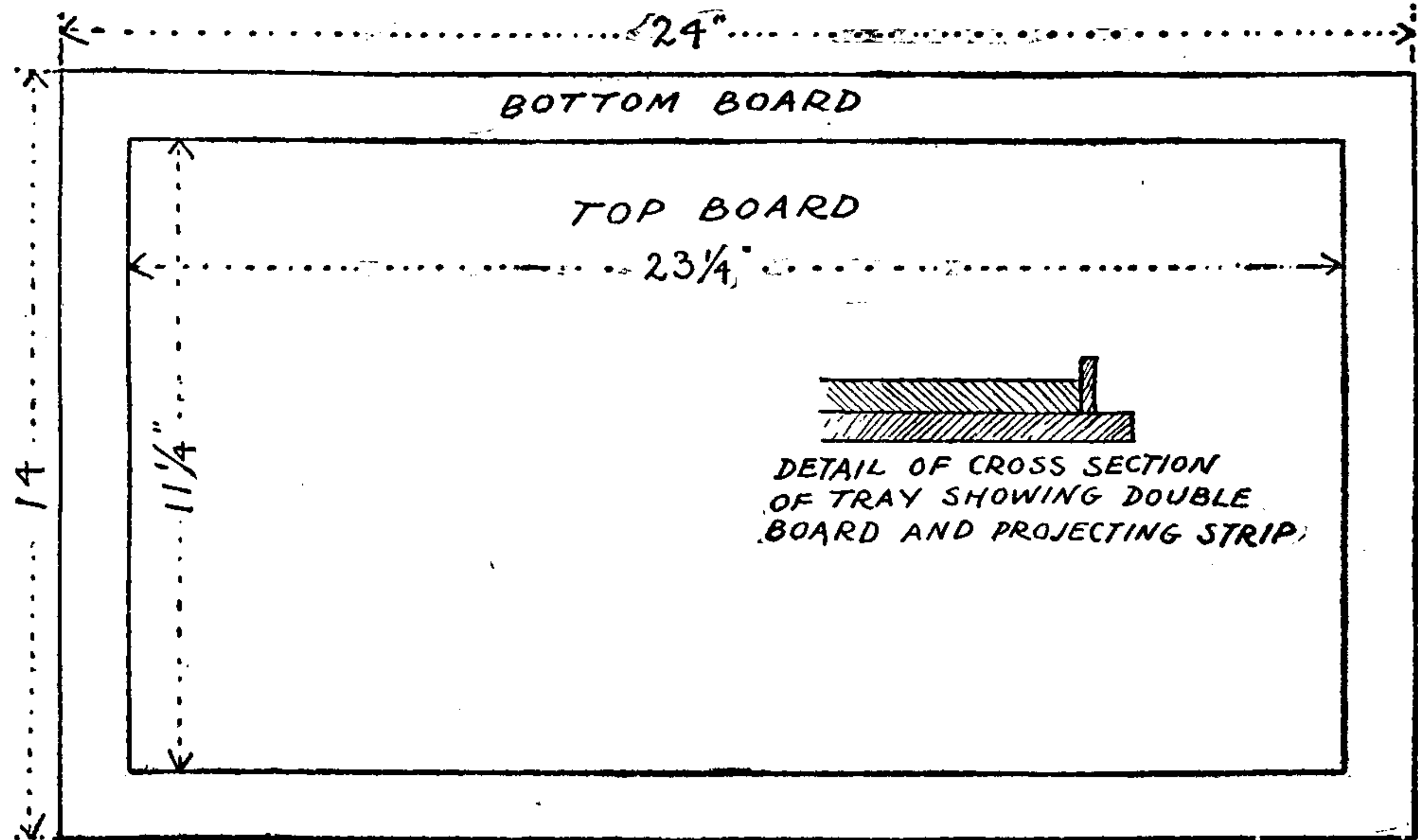


Homemade Serving Tray

Where the furnishings of a dining room are in the mission style, a handsome serving tray can be made which will conform to the general scheme.

Procure two quarter-sawed oak an inch long, and use a gimlet to bore the holes for them.

This arrangement of the boards will prevent them from warping, and also provide a ledge or projection of 1/2 inch,



PLAN OF SERVING TRAY

boards, one 14 inches wide, 24 inches long, and 7-16 of an inch thick, and the other 11 1/4 inches in width, 23 1/4 inches in length, and 7-16 of an inch thick. See that these boards are perfectly flat and true and then glue and screw them together. Use flat-headed screws 5/8 of

caused by the difference in the size of the boards.

Around the upper board fasten four strips 7/8 of an inch wide, beveled at the corners, with glue and brads, care being taken not to split the strips.

The tray must then be well sand-

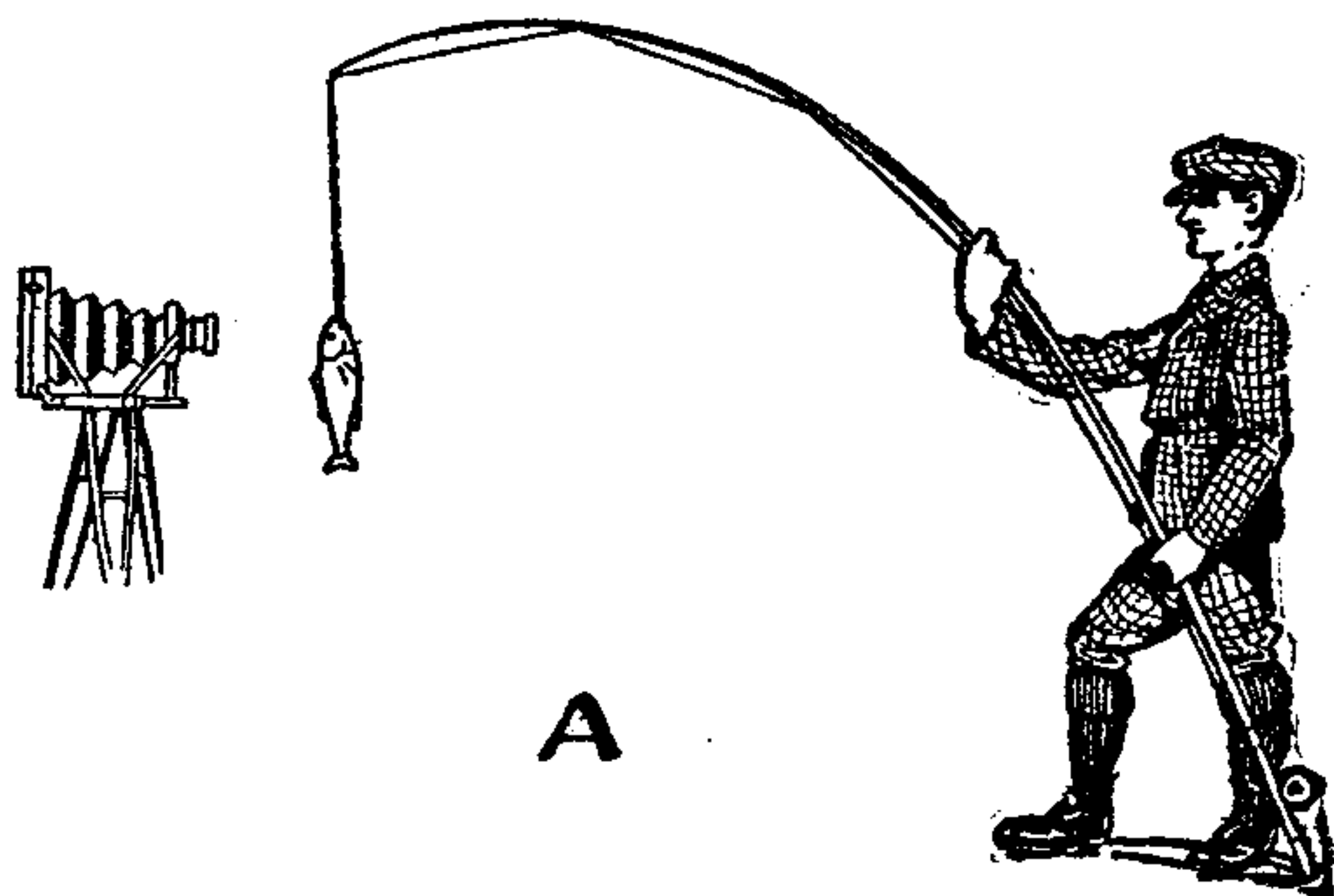
papered, stained with a dark oak stain, and rubbed down with wax.

The handles should be of brass, and can be purchased at any hardware store. The total cost of this tray should not exceed 75 cents, but the same tray would cost, in the shops, at least \$3.50, and would give no more satisfaction.



A Big Catch

A bragging fisherman not only told of his enormous catch, but produced



photographic evidence to prove his assertions. The friend who made the photograph finally gave up the secret, and told how the camera lied.

By posing the fisherman with a small fish at the end of his line in front of the camera, as in the sketch *A*, a result like figure *B* was secured.

The effect is, of course, due to the fish being near the lens, and

therefore greatly exaggerated in size when compared with the man who is some distance away and in a different plane.



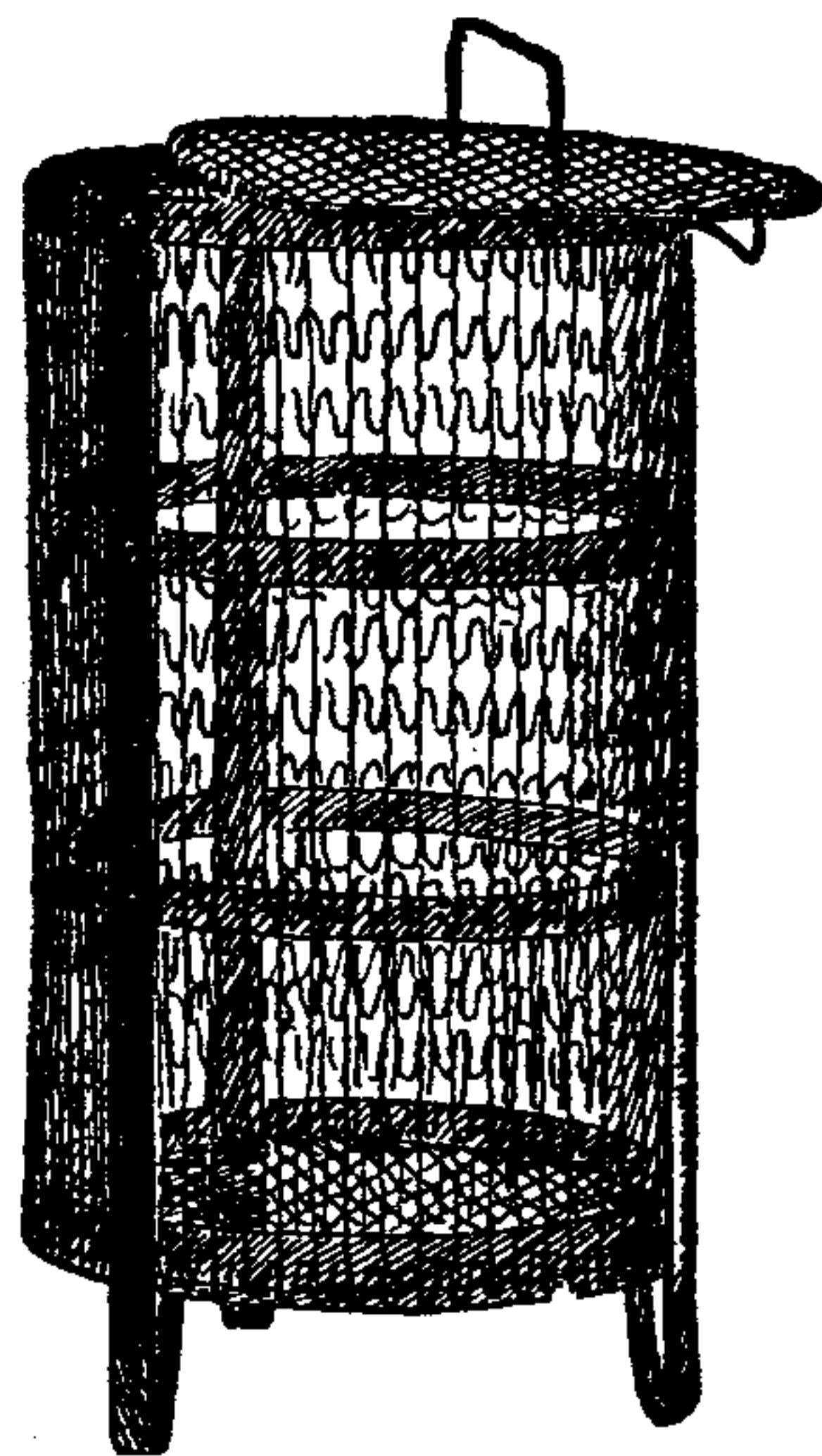
A Perfect Rubbish Burner

The use of the burner here described, for the disposal of waste paper and all kinds of rubbish that accumulates about

your house, office, or store, is most highly commended by fire-insurance companies.

A very large proportion of the disastrous fires are caused by burning rubbish in the open, or by overheating stoves and their pipes in attempting to burn waste paper in the house.

To make a rubbish burner, procure three lengths of flat bar iron $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch in width, $\frac{1}{8}$ of an inch thick, and 28 inches long. These are for the supports. The hoops, of which there are four, may be of almost any diameter, but preferably about 15 or 20 inches. They may be made of strap iron, or old iron barrel hoops may be used. The



RUBBISH BURNER

hoops are riveted to the iron supports. Around this skeleton cage rivet, or otherwise fasten, a length of wire netting of any available kind, the heavier the better.

A bottom of wire netting must also be cut to fit, and either riveted to the lower hoop or bound to it with heavy iron wire. A top of wire netting with an iron handle completes the burner.

Into this fireproof basket the rubbish is put, sprinkled with kerosene, and burned, and the wire keeps ashes and glowing embers from blowing about the neighborhood and setting fire to inflammable matter.



By the King's Favor

Richard Hatton

(A COMPLETE NOVELETTE)

CHAPTER I.

THE MAN OF MYSTERY.

SIXTY thousand enthusiastic souls surrounded the historic gridiron of the Polo Grounds—sixty thousand tense, straining atoms of humanity whose every nerve and fiber throbbed and stilled as the pigskin zigzagged over the trampled field. Alternate waves of color surged over the crowded stands, while the air was rent with rival cries to the twenty-two struggling, heaving athletes whose very life seemed to depend upon the outcome.

To the teams the stands were but a blur of orange and black, or blue and white, and the cheers came as the muffled roar of speeding trains to the ears strained to catch the quickly snapped signals. The score stood a blank for each side with five minutes more to play. The ball was nearly in the middle of the field, and the teams were lined up for the last scrimmage.

Something of the intensity of the situation seemed to communicate itself to the spectators, for the stands were stilled; the rival flags were lowered; the bands were silent; the crisp air had lost all life, and even the miniature spectators silhouetted high on the sky line of the rocky cliffs of Harlem seemed to brace themselves for the last rush.

Then it was that Phillip, our captain,

stooped to tie his shoe, and at the same time called Larinski and me to him back of the line. A few crisp words were all he had time to speak before the shrill whistle of the umpire sounded "play."

The time had come for the supreme test. Phillip, the sturdy quarter, trotted to his place behind the stalwart center. Larinski and I, the halves, dug our cleated heels into the trampled ground, and strained forward. Silence—the silence of the dead everywhere.

I remember thinking how cold it was, and being intensely annoyed by the clang of some distant cable gong. Then came one short word from the crouching quarter back. No string of signal numbers, no intricate cipher, but just one fiercely hissed word: "Now!"

What followed is scarcely clear to me, even when I have had years in which to think it over. At that word, I sprang forward, Phillip jammed the ball into my side, and I, crouching, clasped my arms around it in a fierce hug. Then I seemed to strike a seething yet solid wall of moleskin jackets and padded legs.

I heard Larinski's tense voice in my ear, felt him drag the ball from its place against my breast, and caught one fleeting glimpse of his streaming hair as he darted back out of the crush in a wide, sweeping circle, and tore across the field.

Then I went down, smothered under

the human blanket. When I recovered consciousness in the dressing room the game was over and won, and Larinski, the best half back of many seasons—dear old "Count" Larinski, my classmate and chum, the one man of mystery in the class—was again the hero of our college world.

We were graduated the following June, and, with the first keen sorrow that comes to man's estate, bade farewell to our Alma Mater and the classmates whose lives for our short college years had been woven together into a fabric that covered the dearest and best years of each of us.

The class scattered to the four quarters of the globe, and, gradually, as the years passed, our meetings became fewer and more infrequent.

Shortly after graduation, I was appointed a second lieutenant in the regular cavalry. In the years of service with my regiment on the plains and in the island possessions, I was completely cut off from college friends.

I knew that Larinski had gone back to his continental home in the little kingdom of Walsach, and the title of "Count," which we had lovingly bestowed upon him at college, was in fact nearer the truth than the familiar names of the undergraduates usually come.

In fact, in a vagabond copy of a Paris newspaper that drifted, months late, into my quarters in the Philippines, I had seen mention of the doings of a certain Prince Fritz Larinski, and I concluded that it was my old friend.

Shortly after receiving my captaincy, I had the good fortune to be ordered as military attaché with our embassy to one of the great continental powers. The duties were nominal, but my field of observation covered the smaller kingdoms and dependencies of the great state to which I was accredited.

Thus it was that I journeyed from my headquarters to the little independent kingdom of Walsach to witness the great military review attendant upon the coronation of the new sovereign, King Frederick XII., in his capitol at Litchburg.

Even at the imperial court we had heard mutterings of intrigue and dissatisfaction in the far-away little state, but, as such matters concerned only the imperial chancellor, I paid little heed to them, and set out on my journey in happy anticipation of witnessing a brilliant military spectacle and being back in time for the next state ball at the palace.

I arrived at Litchburg the day before the ceremony attending the coronation, and, after presenting my credentials, was assigned a place with the staff of the commanding general, where I would be able to witness the review that preceded the new king's march into the city at the head of his troops. This was a time-honored custom that had preceded the coronation of the hereditary rulers of Walsach since the medieval days when no king was sure of his throne without his army at his back.

CHAPTER II.

A PRETTY CONSPIRACY.

THUS it was that on the morning of the coronation, I rode with General Von Zurich and his glittering staff to the great plain outside the city, where were assembled the fighting men of Walsach.

I was surprised to notice, as I rode with the numerous officers of rank and their aids, that there seemed to be some sort of unrest in the air. A nervous tension had gripped the entire staff, and the furtive glances and strained silences were hardly explained by the remark of the young captain who rode with me, that his majesty was scarcely known to the army, having been educated abroad and having spent most of the later years in travel.

"In fact," added my companion, "it is no secret that Colonel Prince Ulrich, who commands the cavalry of the guard, would be much more acceptable to at least a portion of the army than the rightful heir."

My friend, the captain, spoke to me in English, and I answered him in the same language, though I was con-

versant with German, which was, with slight modifications, the language of Walsach.

However, as I had spoken only English, I presume I was not credited with any other tongue; else I was considered of little importance in the affairs of the moment, for I caught from time to time snatches of conversation that told me all was not well with the new king. For instance, I heard one grizzled colonel mutter through his drooping mustache to a savage-looking officer of mountain artillery:

"We can thank Heaven, my comrade, if a coronation is all we witness to-day."

But the growled reply amazed me still more.

"You and I have been good comrades, old friend, but if that dog Ulrich raises his hand and you stand by him, we will for once be on opposite sides. I served the king's father, and I'll serve the king, or die for him, and if, as rumored, Ulrich means treachery to-day, I've a thousand men of the crags to stand by the son of my old commander.

"Ulrich's plan, I have heard, is to wheel out of line as he passes in review with his horsemen, sweep the staff off its feet, capture or kill the king, and, with what of the army will follow him, ride to the city, and proclaim himself.

"It's the wild scheme of a wilder man, but he'll not be able to carry it out, even with these doddering old women in command. There are ten thousand troops here, and, while Ulrich's horse may be disaffected, I'd stake my life on the infantry and mountain guns. If it were not that Ulrich is of the royal blood and hand in glove with that old snake, Von Hess, he'd be out of the country long ago."

This and more of the same tenor I heard in low-voiced conversation as we rode out to our position, and it occurred to me that the poor king was not so sure of his crown, after all. It seemed that I was likely to witness more perhaps than the ceremony of a coronation parade.

As we reached our position in the

middle of the plain, I caught a still more significant scrap of talk. This time it was between two young captains. One of them, a hussar, quietly drew from under his tunic a cavalry revolver, and, holding it as nearly as possible out of sight, reassured himself that it was loaded; then he nervously whispered to his companion, a captain of lancers:

"We may need these if that old fox Ulrich carries out his plan. Remember Adolph, when the guards charge us, we are to keep every one away from the king until Eckstein and his men have surrounded him. Then our part is done, and King Ulrich's reward is a colonelcy for us both, and for you a title in addition."

Indeed, I felt sorry for His Majesty, Frederick XII., for here was a full-fledged conspiracy to deprive him of his crown before it was placed on his head. I mentally resolved to be well out of the way when Ulrich and his horsemen galloped into our ranks. I had no desire to sacrifice myself under the hoofs of the guard's powerful horses in a scrimmage for a puppet throne in which I had no interest.

General Von Zurich's party took station on a little bit of raised ground over which floated the royal standard, and a few minutes later the trumpets blared forth a flourish as the king galloped toward us at the head of his suite. He had come on the field from the opposite direction, from his castle at Elfstein, where he had spent the last few days in preparation for his coronation.

We were drawn up in a rigid line, and sat with hands at salute as his majesty rode up. There was something familiar in the appearance and manner of the new king, despite his glittering uniform and the silver helmet that shaded his eyes. For a moment, I puzzled my brain to think where I had seen a picture of the crown prince of Walsach.

Then of a sudden it came to me. I had never seen his picture, but I had seen the original many, many times. I had seen those same fearless blue eyes glance quickly up and down the straining line of moleskin backs, searching

for an opening between a guard and tackle. I had seen that same head crowned, not with a silver helmet, but with a leather head guard, and I had seen that straight aristocratic nose plow up yards of mud under the feet of a struggling football team.

Yes, and I had helped push his majesty's sacred body over, under, and through a heaving, bucking line of college athletes for a two-yard gain that meant as much to us in those days as did a kingdom now.

No doubt about it! There was the scar in the left cheek made by Braham's heel in the Yale game during our junior year. So I had met my classmate again, and His Majesty Frederick XII., of Walsach, was Count Larinski, the best half back that ever wore the orange and black of Old Nassau.

CHAPTER III.

BEFORE HIS MAJESTY.

I THINK I muttered: "Well, I'll be hanged!" for a dignified officer beside me said: "Pardon, Herr Captain," in a surprised and injured voice. But I paid little heed to him or anything else. My mind was working faster than it had ever gone since the days when I would try to bluff through a Greek recitation by making the professor think I was thoroughly familiar with a passage I had never seen before.

And I had plenty to think about, too. Here was my old chum, Count Larinski, the hereditary monarch of Walsach, come to his coronation, and over there, across the field, was one Ulrich, who, it was pretty certain, was conspiring to steal the crown, if not to take the life of his cousin king.

It was of course impossible for me to speak to his majesty and warn him of what a pleasant surprise his dear cousin had planned for him. So I sat and thought until a wild scheme, born of I know not of what madness, entered my head.

The troops were being aligned preparatory to the march past, and I acted without heed of the consequences to

myself. Something had to be done to keep Ulrich from leading his men in front of the reviewing party, and I took the first course that occurred to me.

I gradually edged my mount away from my place in the line until I was well clear of the group. Then, reaching my foot well under the belly of the horse, I twisted my heavily roweled cavalry spur under the girth, and gave the poor beast dig after dig.

With a frightened snort, the animal leaped forward, and in a moment was out across the plain in a mad flight. But I had a steady hand on the rein, and guided the maddened brute straight for the center of the line of the famous guard regiment, where, on his powerful black, sat the traitor, Ulrich. He saw me coming, and, like every one else, thought I had lost control of my mount; but I had not kicked my spur free of the girth, and had my horse well in hand.

Ulrich anticipated a collision, for I rode straight at him, and he endeavored to avoid me, but, good horseman that he was, I managed to range close alongside, and, as I flashed past, I struck him a stinging blow in the face with my open hand!

I was gone in a second, but I heard the hiss of his saber as he swung a vicious back cut at me, and as I raced my horse back to where the red and gold of the royal standard fluttered above the knoll, I could hear the pounding of his horse's hoofs in pursuit.

I was thinking rapidly as I tore along across the smooth parade. In truth, my position was hardly an agreeable one for an American army officer to be in. I had come as the representative of a friendly power to witness the coronation of a king. Hearing rumors of a plot to assassinate that king, and without warrant other than the love I bore an old-time college mate, I had interfered in affairs of state that did not concern me. I had grossly insulted the king's cousin, and was now flying for my life to the protection of a man who might resent my interference in his private affairs.

As I leaned low over my speeding

horse's neck, I caught a glimpse of a horseman galloping at full speed diagonally across the plain in front of me. I recognized the artillery colonel whom I had heard speak of his mountaineers on the way to the review.

Then I glanced back over my shoulder, where, twenty yards behind, I could see the wrathful face of Prince Ulrich, and on his right cheek flamed the blood-red stigma of my insult.

Farther back stood the cavalry of the guard. Their alignment was not so perfect now, and there seemed to be some confusion among the officers, but there had been no general movement.

I learned afterward that my blow had been struck so quickly that it had not been seen, and the regiment was in doubt as to what course to pursue, thinking that perhaps I had brought some urgent message to the prince that had caused him to change his plans and seek the presence of the king.

I rode straight to the king, and pulled my horse back on his haunches as I ranged alongside of him. Then, leaning as near to the royal ear as possible, I spoke in the lowest tone that would carry.

"Larry, old man, *your majesty*, for the love of Mike, get out of this. They're going to kill you in about three minutes. I'm Kenyon, ninety-four. Quick! Get some troops about you and—hike——"

By this time, Ulrich had pulled up on the other side of the king. Apparently he did not dare attack me so near the person of his monarch, but I could hear and see that he was relating the incident of my unwarranted attack and demanding instant vengeance.

The glittering staff was thrown into confusion by our onslaught, and had drawn together in two compact groups, watching our little drama in their midst.

At length the king raised his hand, and the prince ceased his tirade. Then the two drew a little apart, and continued to converse.

Far off across the parade, I heard a bugle call, and a minute later my old friend, the colonel of artillery, galloped

toward us, followed by two mule batteries of mountain guns. Apparently he was the only one there besides the king who was in complete control of his faculties, for, without waiting for an order, he swung his artillerymen into a hollow square around our agitated group, and I could see his wiry brown gunners skipping about like monkeys as they assembled their guns into action front, and stood by their ammunition mules. It was all done in a moment, and the king of Walsach faced his army from behind a square of shotted brass field pieces.

Then I saw the king extend his hand to Ulrich, who, bending low in his saddle, raised it to his lips; then, straightening up, he saluted, wheeled his horse, and rode out of our cannon-walled square, and so back to his regiment.

Then the king turned to the generals.

"Gentlemen," he said, "an unfortunate incident that we will not explain now has marred the customary loyal greeting of our troops. We will dispense with the remainder of the review, and proceed to the cathedral. General Von Zurich, you will give the order to form for our entry into the city."

Then, turning to my friend, the artillery colonel, his majesty extended his hand.

"Colonel Zies," he said, "we congratulate you on the excellent maneuver of your batteries; they are well trained, sir, and you should be proud of them. Our escort into the city will be the blue lancers, and your guns, colonel, will follow immediately behind."

Then to General Zurich, he continued:

"The cavalry of the guard, at the request of our cousin Prince Ulrich, will precede us into the city, and will then be excused from further duty to-day."

His majesty did not even glance at me, but, turning his horse, trotted off toward the right of line, and I fell in with the staff, and so rode back to the city as I had come. But there was no conversation this time to distract my somewhat turbulent thoughts.

CHAPTER IV.

'RAH FOR PRINCETON!

THUS the new King of Walsach entered his ancient city of Litchburg, according to custom, at the head of his army, and thus we proceeded to the cathedral in the great square. There, before an immense concourse of his nobles and his people, surrounded by the high officers of his army and his court, King Frederick XII. was crowned by the venerable bishop of Walsach, and ascended the throne of his fathers.

After the ceremony at the cathedral, I rode directly to my hotel, where I proceeded to pack my belongings, as I intended to start on the return journey to my post the next day, after paying one or two official calls. I had no particular desire to try for an audience with the king, not knowing what policy he had decided upon toward my wild behavior at the review. That I had saved him from assassination, I felt sure, and I knew that he appreciated it, although for the moment he might be compelled to keep me at a distance.

I was tired after the somewhat exciting events of the day, and was having a little dinner in my room when no less a person than the manager of the hotel appeared, closely followed by a young officer in the fatigue uniform of the royal staff.

This gentleman was introduced by "mine host" as Captain Count Von Shroeder, who had come on urgent business; hence the intrusion which it was hoped I would overlook, considering the importance of the matter in hand. Thus speaking, the smooth-tongued boniface bowed himself out, and I was left alone with my visitor.

Von Shroeder was a handsome, well-built chap, who spoke English perfectly, and in spite of the slight embarrassment natural under the circumstances, came straight to the point.

"Captain Kenyon," he began, taking the chair I offered him, "I am sent by his majesty the king to request you to come to the palace as soon as possible. His majesty has told me that you are

old friends, and he is very eager to see you. You can come just as you are, as his majesty will see you in his private apartments, quite unofficially, of course. I have a carriage waiting, so if you find it convenient we will start at once."

My packing was about finished, and, as I was off the next day, I was more than delighted with the chance of again seeing old Count Larinski, especially where we could talk over old times in quiet. So I was ready in a jiffy, and my guide and I drove rapidly through the illuminated streets where the crowd of merrymakers were beginning to become hilarious.

Our carriage stopped at a little side gate in the wall of the palace grounds, and Von Shroeder led the way up a garden path to a small door in the rear of the building. Through this we passed to a long corridor, at the end of which we ascended a flight of steps, and finally brought up before the door of the king's private apartments.

Here Von Shroeder left me for a moment to stare at a silent, stony-faced sentry while he passed inside. He was back again in a minute, however, and motioned me to enter. I passed into a sort of library, and there in a dressing gown, stretched at full length on a leather-covered divan, lay the dear old "Count." He sprang up as I entered, and, with a smile on his tired face, almost leaped across the room to clasp me in his arms.

"Good old Kenzie!" cried his majesty of Walsach, slapping me on the back with a mighty thump. "Good old Kenzie! By Jove, after all these years! And to turn up here just in time to pull me out of a hole, too! Gad, boy, it's like old times. Sit down and tell me all about it. Say, I feel like sending my people out to collect wood for a freshman fire. 'Rah for Princeton!" And again the mighty hand almost thumped the wind out of me.

Larinski shoved me into a chair, and thrust a pipe into my hand.

"There," said he, "that looks like old times in Witherspoon. But say, that was a great run you made to-day, and hang me if I don't think your touch-

down won the game. Cousin Ulrich must feel to-night like a championship team that loses on a fluke."

We sat far into the night smoking our pipes and talking of many things. We went over the old, old days of freshman year, the victories and defeats on the gridiron, the escapades of college days, and the work of after years. And finally, as the hour grew late, he talked frankly of the present and then of the future.

His majesty was far from being securely seated on his throne, although the world did not know. There were many intrigues within and without his small kingdom, and over all was the shadow of the great power, his neighbor, which was the final arbiter of the fortunes of the little states that clustered about her.

The early morning hours found us still discussing affairs of state, and the king insisted that I remain the rest of the night in the palace.

Just before I was shown to my room, Larry made a proposal to me that had the effect of keeping me tossing about, wide awake on my bed for the few hours that yet remained of the night. It was no less than an offer of a colonelcy in his army with a snug competency for life if I would resign from the service of my own country and enter that of Walsach.

It was a hard nut to crack, but the innate love of adventure that had sent me into the army in the first place conquered, and by morning I had decided.

CHAPTER V.

ENTER AN ANGEL.

AT breakfast his majesty and I concocted numerous telegrams, which were intrusted to a secretary to forward to my embassy, to the state and war departments at Washington, and one signed by the king himself to the president of the United States.

"There, that ought to settle things," said Larry, pushing his chair back from the desk after signing the last of these messages. "And now, Colonel Kenyon, it but remains for us to send for your

traps, get you a new uniform, move you into the palace, and you are a full-fledged aid-de-camp in waiting to his majesty the king of Walsach. How's that? From a captain of U. S. cavalry to a colonel on the staff of a king in one jump!"

So it happened that within a week of my first entry into the little kingdom of Walsach, I had ceased to be an officer of the United States army, and appeared at the grand coronation ball in the glittering uniform of a colonel of the blue lancers, the regiment I had the honor to command when not detailed for duty on his majesty's staff.

Of my friend, Prince Ulrich, whose little coup I had balked at the review by drawing him away from his men and leaving the conspiracy without a leader at the crucial moment, I saw but little. Of course we were both present at the usual state functions that followed the coronation, but I studiously avoided him. At the end of a week or so he withdrew from court, and retired to his estates in the hills of Baratavia, "for his health," as was published in the court gazette.

The king, to all outward appearances, was now firmly seated on his throne, and life at court was beginning to settle down. We did not lack for amusement, for his majesty was a keen sportsman, and we varied the excitement of the chase with tennis and long rides about the beautiful hills that ringed Litchburg.

One morning, after an unusually tedious state function that kept me in attendance on the king rather later than was customary, I awoke early, and, feeling the need of exercise and fresh air to brush the cobwebs from my brain, I sent for my horse, and prepared to ride off the devils of the night's dissipation.

With no particular object in view, except a good hard gallop, I cantered through the old north gate of the city and out along the highway that led away to the hamlet of Zuyden in the foothills of Baratavia.

Finding myself near the delightful little inn on the first rise beyond the

village at about the same hour I usually broke my fast, I rode into the cobble-paved court, and, dismounting, gave my horse to a stableboy, while I interviewed the buxom tavern frau as to the possibilities of a country breakfast.

My inquiries met with flattering success, and in a few minutes an immaculate table was set out on the porch overlooking the road that wound away on to the plain below whence I had come.

The ride had given me an appetite, the air was crisp and invigorating, and the breakfast fit for the gods. In truth, the world in which I lived seemed to border as near paradise that morning as mortal man can expect to attain and still keep his earthly attributes. At least so I fancied, as with the vigor of perfect health I attacked my steaming breakfast.

And then into the heaven that my self-content had created drifted the one thing needful to complete the picture—an angel. Yes; she was an angel in very truth, as she stood parting the bushes on the opposite side of the road with one slim, gauntleted hand, while with the other she held her clinging drab riding habit clear of the ground, showing the tiniest of feet incased in polished riding boots.

Apparently the angelic vision was satisfied with her scrutiny of the inn, for she let the dew-dripping bushes fall behind her, and, with quick, springing steps crossed the road. She was evidently expected, for the good housewife met her at the steps with a low curtsy.

"Ah, Frau Muller, a fine morning for a fine gallop!" rippled forth my lady of the woods. "And I'm famished for my glass of milk; so please hurry. I came by the long path through the woods, and, oh, it's glorious! Cupid is tied to a tree over there, and I guess he'll be glad of a rest, for I rode him hard trying to catch the sunbeams that flittered through the trees always just ahead of us."

The hostess of the inn disappeared, and a moment later returned with a glass pitcher foaming with fresh milk; she also carried a deep pewter mug.

"Trying to catch the sunbeams," I murmured. "Jove! She has caught them all, and tangled them in her hair, and the little wretch has stolen the silvery tinkle of the woodland brooks for her voice, and robbed the skies of their blue for her eyes. What? Sentimental? Surely. Who could have helped it?"

Standing with one foot on the lowest step of the porch, the lady raised the pewter mug high above her head.

"Prosit, Frau Muller," she said, "may your cows never cease to furnish you with this most excellent drink."

Then she tipped back her dainty head where the clinging drops sparkled like diamonds among the wavy brown curls, and I caught a glimpse of a soft, white throat as she drained her tankard to the last drop.

With a long-drawn breath of satisfaction, the maid handed the empty mug back, and, drawing a little gold purse from her pocket, she settled her score. After a few more words, she gathered her habit again in her hand, and tripped back across the road, passed through the bushes, and was gone.

I lighted my pipe, but did not get much contentment from it. As I sat blowing the fragrant clouds of smoke out into the clear air, I fancied that they wove themselves into the form of the vision of the bushes. When I sent for my horse and paid my bill, I inquired of the good wife who the lady was. Frau Muller seemed greatly surprised at my question, and glanced keenly at me before she replied:

"Surely you must know the Princess Olga, sister of his highness, Prince Ulrich, our overlord? She lives at her brother's castle in the hills, and comes here frequently for a glass of our milk, which she declares is the most delicious in all Walsach. But you are not long in the city, perhaps, and her highness has been in the hills for the last two months, therefore you do not know her."

I did not know her, of course, but there and then I swore that I would know her, and that, too, before another week should pass.

How soon I was to make good, and under what circumstances, I did not know then, or I would not have ridden so gayly back to the city.

CHAPTER VI.

A FIND IN THE WOODS.

WHEN I reached the palace, I found the king in his library, and with him General Zurich and the prime minister, old Count Waldeck, and another little ferretlike man, whom I recognized as the chief of the secret police.

"I'm glad you have come, Kenyon," said the king, as I entered as directed to do by the usher in waiting, who had informed me that his majesty had inquired for me. "We need your Yankee wit, for we seem to be in a pretty kettle of fish here. The short of the matter is that for some time the emperor has been negotiating with us for the hand of our cousin, the Princess Olga. He wants to marry her to the Grand Duke of Holbeck-Rauenstein; and it is a most desirable alliance for us from every point of view. But here's the rub. Olga is our dear Cousin Ulrich's sister, and Cousin Ulrich, as you know, does not love us with the cousinly affection that is supposed to exist between blood relations. Therefore, he keeps his sister shut up in his castle of Hoffberg in the hills, and refuses to give an answer to our proposals on behalf of the grand duke.

"There you have the situation as it stands, except that the emperor is growing impatient for an answer, and, as you know, we cannot afford, at this time, to run counter to the wishes of his imperial majesty. What do you think of the problem, my colonel?"

"You are indeed in the dark, your majesty," I answered. "Not knowing the mind of the lady, I would suggest that you forward the whole matter to her and let her decide it."

"Oh, the lady's mind does not matter at all," answered the king confidently. "It's Ulrich we must approach. The lady marries whom she is told, and that's an end of the matter as far as she is concerned. But how to get

around Cousin Ulrich? That's the point at issue now."

"Your majesty," began the little ferret man, "there is a way. I have positive information that the prince is plotting with Von Hess and others for your overthrow. Why not arrest them all? You will have sufficient evidence to warrant you in exiling his royal highness, and then the princess becomes your ward. The matter is quite simple, your majesty."

Frederick thought this bit of advice over for some time in silence, and then rejected it with a curt "No."

"I have a better plan, gentlemen," he said; "I'll make peace with Cousin Ulrich. I'll go to him in the hills, forgive him his little slip at the coronation review, and lay the matter before him. Ulrich is a good fellow at heart, and will see the benefit we are sure to derive from acceding to the emperor's wishes. Yes, I'll waive ceremony and call on Ulrich."

"Yes, and hang it all!" thought I, "you'll send my poor little wood nymph off to marry some dissolute grand duke or other, and that is a matter I do not care to contemplate." However, I held my peace.

Twice during the week in which his majesty and his ministers perfected their arrangements for making peace with Ulrich did I ride to the little inn in the foothills, and each time did I gaze upon the wondrous beauty of the Princess Olga.

And then I made a discovery. I found out why I hated the Grand Duke of Holbeck-Rauenstein, and why I utterly disapproved of his majesty's reconciliation plan. I loved the Princess Olga myself. That was the interest I had in the affair, and I decided that it was a bigger interest than the shares of the emperor, the king, the prince, and the grand duke combined.

I had been sulking several days as the result of my reflections on the ways of kings, and had kept aloof from his majesty. Perhaps he divined my trouble and understood. At any rate, he was considerate enough not to send for me, and I haunted the inn of Frau

Muller, and so was not informed of the date of the king's proposed journey to his cousin's castle.

I am not an idle dreamer, and I had not traveled to the village of Zuyden without an object. I haunted the path in the woods that led from opposite the little inn in a winding course to the very gate of the old castle, and I had explored its every yard as well as numerous bypaths that intersected the main bridle road. In one of these trips I picked up a little gold purse with the arms of Walsach marked on the cover in diamonds. No need for me to wonder who was its owner. I knew only too well, and, with my treasure safely stowed in the pocket of my riding coat, I patiently waited for an opportunity to restore it.

It happened that my chance came one morning in a clearing in the wood where I met my lady returning after her visit to the inn. I saw her as she entered the little bower, and made bold to ride directly toward her. As the path was narrow, I reined to one side, and, as the princess reached me, I bared my head, and spoke to her.

"Your highness," said I, "I think I have found something that belongs to you; permit me to return it."

With a glad little cry, she reached over, and took the trinket from me, and I nearly fell off my horse when her highness, looking straight at me, said: "Thank you so much, Colonel Kenyon. I thought you never *would* find it."

So my lady knew of my meanderings in the forest, and had set a trap for me. Also she knew my name. The game was beginning well indeed.

Emboldened by the princess' gracious manner, I wheeled my horse, and rode beside her down the narrow glade, and we were soon in a merry mood.

"Of course," pouted the princess, "Frederick and Ulrich do not get on together, but that is all going to be made right to-day, for the king is coming to pay us a visit, and I am sure that whatever the trouble is all about, it will be settled. They used to be such good chums in the old king's time."

We chatted gayly as we rode through the wood until we came to a little rise in the ground from which we could see the road that wound away toward the city. Far down this road we saw three horsemen approaching at a sharp canter, and, as they came nearer, the princess' keen eyes recognized the king and two officers.

At this she gave a little gasp of fright.

"Oh, I must hurry," she cried. "I must be at the castle to meet his majesty, or Ulrich will never forgive me. Good-by, Colonel Kenyon, and thank you for a very pleasant ride."

With that she was off through the woods at a gallop, while I sat watching her until she disappeared. Then I turned again toward the road by which the horsemen were approaching.

In order to see who was with his majesty, I dismounted, and, tying my horse, pushed through the bushes to get nearer the road. I was standing almost concealed by the thick underbrush and tree trunks when my attention was attracted by the noise of some animal crawling through the brush at some distance to my left. I gazed keenly in the direction of the sound, and, to my amazement, saw a man on all fours crawling toward the edge of the wood.

A moment more, and I recognized Prince Ulrich. He was clad in the garb of a forester, and his right hand carried a long rifle as he pushed forward. As I watched, the prince settled himself behind a fallen tree, and, deliberately loading his piece, laid it along the log, and sighted on the road.

CHAPTER VII.

A KING'S MERCY.

"AH, my friend," thought I, "a nice piece of treachery this. You've invited your dear cousin to visit you, and by the time you've finished him, you'll be the head of the family, and the king will be conversing with his ancestors in the great beyond. Nice little game, indeed."

I loosened the revolver in the holster under my jacket, and, as stealthily as

the prince had advanced, I crept along in his wake. So intent was he upon the approaching horsemen that he heard no sound. By the time the king and his two officers came within range, I was within ten feet of the prince, and he had not once glanced behind.

I saw him slowly shift the muzzle of his rifle to bring it to bear on the king, and then I sprang forward. As the prince's finger pressed the trigger, my foot kicked the barrel of the gun into the air, and the next moment I had rolled him over on his back and had the muzzle of my revolver pressed against his temple.

But in turn my wrist was gripped, and a voice broke in: "Let him get up, sir; I've got his gun. It was only loaded with a dummy cartridge, anyway. I bribed his head keeper, and looked out for that."

In amazement, I looked up. It was the ferret man, who stood leaning on the prince's gun, looking down as inscrutable as the Sphinx. Then the king leaped the ditch at the edge of the wood, and, followed by his two adjutants, Heinz and Uhlman, came up to us.

His majesty motioned us all to withdraw, and, raising his cousin to his feet, linked his arm in that of the would-be assassin and walked a little way into the wood. I noticed that the ferret kept the prince covered with a revolver during the whole of the conversation, which lasted some twenty minutes, but this the king did not see.

When the cousins came back to us, the king spoke in a quieter voice than I had ever heard him use.

"Gentlemen, my cousin is not at all well. He has been suffering from a serious mental disorder for some time, and is now going to travel abroad until he is cured. What you have witnessed to-day was merely one phase of the malady." And here his majesty's voice became cold and hard as steel. "It is my desire, my command, that each one of you wipe what you have seen from your memory. Our cousin leaves Walsach to-morrow morning for Paris to consult a specialist. He may never

come back, and by your loyalty to me, I again command you to forget what you have seen. If this incident becomes public, I shall know where to look for the traitor."

Then, turning to the Princess Olga, who had now approached:

"Come, Cousin Olga," he said; "you will ride back to Litchburg with me. We have long needed a woman's hand in our affairs at the palace. Your luggage will be sent on by your women at once."

Then, turning to us, where we stood at attention, listening wide-eyed to this exhibition of a king's mercy: "Gentlemen, you may not see His Highness Prince Ulrich again. I bid you salute the cousin and friend of the king."

Our hands snapped to the visors of our caps in military salute. Prince Ulrich as stiffly returned it, wheeled on his heel, and walked off through the forest. And ten yards behind him went the ferret, with a hand suspiciously near his hip pocket.

The next day her highness' luggage and maids arrived at the palace, and it was announced in the official gazette that His Highness Prince Ulrich had gone to Paris to consult an eminent specialist concerning a malady that threatened to deprive the kingdom of one of its stanchest props.

The same issue contained the information that his majesty by virtue of the right vested in him, the hereditary ruler of Walsach by the imperial grant of 1653, had, for eminent services to the crown, created Reginald Kenyon a prince of the kingdom, and had conferred on him the title and estates of Elfstein.

There is another copy of the official gazette of the kingdom of Walsach that I love to read over and over again. It is of a date a year later than that announcing the departure of Prince Ulrich for Paris.

Under the heading "Court News" is this item:

"His majesty announces the betrothal of Her Highness, the Princess Olga Marie Beatrice, to His Highness, Prince Reginald, of Elfstein."



Mightier than the Sword.

By May Edginton

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

CHAPTER I.

THE OPEN DOOR.

THERE were very few people in the car in which the girl in shabby blue serge sat. She looked tired, and sat dejectedly limp and still, clutching a bulging envelope, from which some typewritten matter protruded.

Opposite her was a tall, thin, elderly man in an opulent-looking fur overcoat, whose glance strayed ever and again to her pale face, with the gray eyes set darkly, like shadowed lakes, in it.

The subway train stopped with a jerk at the Fourteenth Street Station, and she dropped her envelope on the floor. A few people got out.

"Allow me," said the man opposite, stooping for the envelope.

His keen eyes took in the evident nature of the contents as he handed it back, and he studied her more attentively and very kindly. She uttered a brief word of thanks and sat mute again. The train rumbled on.

He hesitated, seeming to be making up his mind to speak. In a moment he bent forward, and asked:

"May I take that seat by you? And may I speak to you?"

The girl started, flushed, and stammered, opening great, gray eyes half resentfully. He did not wait for permission, but took the seat by her.

"I shall be getting out soon," he said, "and before I do I want to ask if you have not perhaps one or two manuscripts in that envelope which you have been trying, not very successfully, to sell? Will you forgive this apparent impertinence of mine?"

"I hardly know—what to say," replied the girl.

"Time is short," he said. "You have manuscripts there, haven't you? Now, you see, I know the woes and struggles and difficulties of a young author's life pretty well. But where there is merit, it should meet with success, and—I hardly know how to put it without appearing impertinent—your face arrested my attention just now."

It was said so quietly, courteously, and, above all, so kindly, that it was not possible to take the statement as impertinence. She looked back at him, regaining her breath after the amazement.

He handed her a card. She read it silently to herself:

"MR. GEOFFREY TRAVERS."

"You know me?" he asked whimsically, watching her face.

"I'm afraid—not."

He explained, smiling kindly:

"Well, the only interest I should have for you, Miss—Miss——"

She hesitated, and then said: "Charters."

"Thank you. Well, the only interest I should have for you, Miss Charters, lies in the fact that I am one of the directors of the Eastern Magazine Company, Limited."

Her cheeks flushed brilliantly, and she stared at him, catching her breath.

"You are"—he was taking in unobtrusively the poverty of her shabby costume—"an author, are you not?"

"It's my living," said the girl rather shakily.

"Not a very good one at present, Miss Charters?"

"Very poor," she said hurriedly; "very, very poor. It's so difficult to get a start. Your own magazines—I mean, your company's magazines—for instance, are horribly exclusive. Some editors won't read things at all, and some delay in replying, and some, when they accept, hold up one's work for months, and one has to wait for payment——"

He interrupted.

"I know. But if you find editors rather inaccessible at times, you must remember they really have to protect themselves against what would be a regular invasion of useless authors. The point now is—time is flying—will you grant me a glimpse of one of those stories?"

She handed him one, and he ran his eye hastily down the first page or two.

She sat, watching his face breathlessly.

A word or two of commendation escaped him presently, thrilling her. Hope ran high. She clasped and unclasped her little, shabbily gloved hands on her blue-serge lap. He skimmed and slipped over to the last page, and turned to her.

"A fine ending, that!" he said, with frank approbation; "very fine. I wasn't deceived in your face just now. You've

got power, you've got insight, and you've got grit! You show all that in a story whose shortness gives you little scope for it, besides a very good plot. Now I want to suggest that you send that story at once to *The Gilt Edge Monthly*."

Her face fell a little.

"*The Gilt Edge Monthly*! Oh! But that's——"

"The most difficult of all our magazines to gain access to," he flushed.

Then he took out pencil and notebook.

"But I will write a note now to the editor, recommending you to him, which you can inclose with the story," he explained. "I'm going away myself; I sail to-morrow for Cannes. My doctors insist that I winter abroad. But I can do this much for you, anyway."

"How can I thank you?" she began.

"I don't want thanks," he replied, penciling vigorously. "I'm only too pleased to *discover* you, and I hope my friend, the editor, will agree with me as to the merit of that story. Anyway, send this in with your story."

He handed her the note. "Read it." She read:

DEAR FEN: I have just met this young author, who, I believe, shows great promise. I hope you'll agree with me that this is a rattling fine story, and if you can arrange for regular contributions, please do so. Do what you can, anyway, if this story suits you. I'm off for Cannes to-morrow for three or four solid months. Yours very truly,

GEOFFREY TRAVERS.

"Thank you," she said, folding it slowly; "thank you—thank you!"

"My dear young lady," he said, looking at her with kind, tired eyes; "I'm only too delighted. When I come back, I shall hope to find that you and the *Gilt Edge* have both benefited by this chance meeting to-day, and that your contributions are being sought by other magazines as well. If we can give you a good start, it will be useful. A good start is everything!"

"It's wonderful—wonderful!" she whispered ecstatically, her eyes shining, her lips trembling, new color in her white cheeks.

The train rumbled in to the Seventy-second Street Station.

"I get out here, I'm sorry to say," he said.

"So do I."

"You live in New York?" he asked, as they ascended the stairs.

"Yes. I have a—a room—near Columbus Avenue."

"You mean you live alone?"

"Yes. Oh, well, why not? Lots of people must—and do, you know."

She stammered a little under the kind interest in his eyes.

"I hope Cannes will do you good," she said, putting out her hand.

"Thanks, Miss Charters. Good-by, and good luck to you!"

"A dear little girl," he said to himself, as he hailed a taxi, "and a clever little girl. I don't suppose I need write Fenn further on the matter. When I come back, I'll remember to inquire."

CHAPTER II.

THE TRANSFER.

SUE CHARTERS entered her room on the fourth floor, and sat down to take breath. Her great eyes danced, her heart sang; her fingers fluttered, trembling, about the manuscript and that slip of magic paper on which an open sesame was written, plain for all to see.

"It's come!" she said aloud. "It's come! The gate's unlatched, and I can go in. What a splendid piece of luck! I'll go round and leave the story to-morrow."

Her eye fell on an illuminated card pinned to the wall above the mantel. The verse it bore ran:

Hang on! Cling on! No matter what
they say;
Push on! Sing on! Things will come your
way.
Sitting down and whining never helps a bit;
Best way to get there's by keeping up your
grit.

"Things are coming!" she whispered joyously, as she read the familiar lines. "Thank fortune I've never sat down to whine! 'Hang on! Cling on! Push on! Sing on!'"

She stopped suddenly, and listened to the sound of feet dragging rather heavily up the stairs. A door slammed, and a chair grated faintly on a bare floor. Her mouth drooped.

"He's had bad luck again," she said. "He's come in dog-tired, hopeless, and heartless. I wonder if——"

She hesitated, then opened her door, looked out, and listened. Silence. She crossed the hall, and tapped at the opposite door.

No answer. She tapped again.

"It's I, Mr. Romans—Sue Charters. Can I come in—and hear what——"

A faint sound, which she took for a "Come in," came to her ears. She opened the door, entered, and stood aghast.

It was a badly furnished place. A litter of papers lay on the center table, and a man sat there, with his head on his arms, motionless.

"Mr. Romans——"

He started violently, lifting a handsome young face to look at her. A thick shock of curly hair surmounted it, and his hands—long, nervous, trembling hands which lay before him on the table—were sensitive and delicate.

"You!" he said dully.

They looked at one another. She sat down on the other side of the table, her heart heavy, all the recent happiness fled from her face.

"I came to ask—what luck——" she faltered.

"Luck! Luck! Luck!" He struck his hand on the table, and looked at her despairingly. "I've had no luck, and never have had, and never shall have! Everything I sent out came back this morning, and when I called to-day to see if I could get an answer about those sonnets, an office boy brought them out to me, with the eternal 'editor's regrets'! I had some hope for those sonnets. If they had taken them, it would have meant such a lot! I've just come back from another editor now with this."

His fingers worked over the manuscript on the table, crackling the thin pages.

"What is it?" she almost whispered.

"The thing I wrote last. You liked it, you remember—a country idyll sort of story. Lord! the irony of making a country idyll in a garret like this! But it was good, Sue; you know that. You said so yourself."

"I know—it was splendid."

"They won't have it," he said dejectedly. "I can't sell a line; haven't for a month, and I'm about at the end of my tether. An author has to wait for his pay, but his landlady won't."

"Don't!" said Sue gently.

Romans looked at her with a momentary smile flickering over his face.

"The good sympathizer!" he said, stretching out a hand over the table.

She put hers in it a moment, looking away.

He pulled himself together a little.

"And yourself?" he asked perfunctorily. "You always ask about my luck. What of yours?"

She caught her breath a moment and hesitated. She could not tell him of her splendid fortune, while his own was still at such low ebb.

"Much as usual," she answered.

He suddenly put his face down on his arms again.

"I'll go," she said very gently. "And I'll come back in five minutes, with some tea for you."

She went back to her room, and began the tea-making by means of a tiny kettle over an oil stove.

While the water heated she stood in the middle of the floor, frowning and racking her brain for the completion of a faint, elusive idea that all at once began to flit through it. The idea broke suddenly with a staggering, overwhelming shock, and she stood revolving it.

"No! No! No!" she said quickly, half aloud. But in a moment it was: "Why not? He will never know. 'The Idyll' is good; it would be taken, and—and—and 'regular contributions' would be arranged for, and——"

She walked over to the mantel, and stared at the card above it.

"And I would—'hang on—cling on'—as usual."

Her own manuscript was on the table, with the director's note. She

picked up the latter. The wording, by chance, presented no difficulties to the carrying out of her scheme.

"*I have just met this young author, who, I believe, shows great promise. I hope you'll agree with me that this is a rattling fine story——*"

No title mentioned there.

"*If you can arrange for regular contributions, please do so——*"

No name mentioned throughout.

"It is quite easy," she said simply.

The kettle boiled. She got out her cups and saucers, and measured tea into the pot.

"It is—very little—to do for him," she murmured faintly.

The slip of paper was folded in her hand. She took up the tray, went out, and tapped at Romans' door.

"Come in!" he called.

He was still sitting at the table. She moved forward, gave him a cup of tea, took the other herself, and sat down opposite him as before.

"This is good of you!" he said, with dreary gratitude.

"I've been thinking," she said abruptly, "that you—you mustn't give way like this."

"Mustn't give way?" he laughed ironically. "What a—what an ineffectual way of putting it! As though I succumbed to nerves or sick headache. *Mustn't give way!* I tell you, I'm right at the end of my tether. Broke, clean broke. Can't even pay for this room—or the food I eat. What's a man to do when he's right up against a blank wall?"

"Well," she said abruptly, "what's a blank wall for but for you to put your back against it, and fight?"

"I've fought," he retorted.

"I know. But I've been thinking." She sipped her tea, and forced composure on herself. "I want you to try again with 'The Idyll.' I have a—sort of—presentiment that it will be accepted, if you'll take my advice."

"A presentiment?"

"Am I foolish?" She smiled faintly. "But women have instincts, you know. I want you to send the story to *The Gilt Edge Monthly*."

"That's the hardest magazine to get access to——"

"So they say, but there'll be no harm in trying. Where's the story, and where do you keep your envelopes?"

"The story's on the table, and the envelopes are over there, but——"

"But me no buts," said Sue. She had the story in her hand, and she got up to find the envelopes.

Her back was to him as she slipped it in—with the director's note.

She turned round, laughing a little, and sealed down the flap.

"Mind," said she, "it's to go to *The Gilt Edge Monthly*!"

He got up, looking rather hopeless.

"No use," he said. "Still, I'll send it, of course, to-night. You make me rather ashamed, with your glorious optimism. I wish I had your temperament."

"I have unbounded confidence in this story," she said seriously.

Romans sighed. "I wish I had. It's your optimistic temperament again."

"No," she called over her shoulder, as she went across to her own room. "It's not entirely—my—optimistic temperament."

No. It was that magic letter which inspired her unbounded confidence.

She shut her door, sat down, bit her lips, and studied the mocking card over the mantel through a mist.

CHAPTER III.

THE REWARD.

SUE was lingering over a late breakfast the second day after, when she heard Christopher Romans' feet on the landing, and his hasty knock at her door.

She pushed away the unappetizing food, opened the door, and stood before him pale and quiet, with the shadows of a sleepless night under her gray eyes.

Christopher's own eyes glowed, and his whole face was alight with some new enthusiasm. He had undergone a complete metamorphosis. In his hand he brandished a letter.

"I had to come and tell you!" he gasped. "Read that! Look at that!" He thrust a letter into her hand. "Oh! It's ripping! What a presentiment that was of yours! Are you also among the prophets, then?"

She was leaning against her door, reading the letter. It seemed to burn through the thick mist in her eyes into her brain. It was a splendid, overwhelming fulfillment of her "presentiment."

"DEAR SIR: I have pleasure in accepting for *The Gilt Edge Monthly* your story, 'The Idyll,' which I received this morning. We will pay you the sum of one hundred dollars for all rights to it, and would be glad of a line from you in acknowledgment.

"We should also like to arrange for half a dozen more stories in the same vein, at the same price, and of the same length. They should all be stories of rustic life, and if you are able to undertake the work, we should be glad to receive them, one by one, as they are completed, with as little delay as possible. I am, yours truly,

"G. FENN, Editor."

Romans could hardly wait for her to read it.

"Well," he asked, "what do you think? What have you to say? Isn't it splendid? Congratulate me!"

"I do," said Sue; "I do."

She looked up at him with wide gray eyes.

He rattled on: "I'm mighty grateful to you, really——"

"Nonsense!" she replied. "It is nothing."

"It's turned out trumps, hasn't it, though?" He laughed, not looking at her, his shining eyes roving restlessly, scanning the glorious visions ahead. "I'll tell you what I'm going to do. When I get my first check, I'll pay my bill here, pack my traps, and—leave!"

"Leave?" She was always pale, and her added pallor now was hardly noticeable. He did not notice her stillness, either; he was too self-absorbed.

"Yes, I'll go into the country, or by the sea, and write those other rustic stories, surrounded by the real thing. They must be a success. And my book—I'll get on with that now. I've got new heart and hope and zest, and I'll finish it. There's no tonic like a little

good luck, is there? Well, I mustn't stay talking here. I've got things to do——"

"Yes—you must have—if——"

"If I'm leaving to-morrow. Yes. You've been splendidly sympathetic and understanding all the time we've known each other, and I thank you so much. I wish your luck would——"

"Oh, it'll turn—some day!" She wheeled round, and walked back into her room. "I'm going to be very busy—and so are you—so—good morning."

So he was going, was he? Right out of her life?

She closed her door, but through it she could hear him singing. She went up to the card over the mantel, and struck it with a little, clenched fist.

"Oh! Oh! Oh-h-h! You—you fraud!"

CHAPTER IV.

TRAVERS INVESTIGATES.

THE first story by Christopher Romans which *The Gilt Edge Monthly* published brought the author a good deal of notice, and more commissions than he could undertake, being hard at work on others for the same magazine, and on his novel.

He went down to a beautiful little village on the New England coast, and reveled in rural atmosphere, while he laid sure stepping-stones to triumphant success.

He read and thought and wrote, all for himself, his work, and his talent, which he fed jealously and assiduously. Once or twice he wrote short letters to Sue, but by and by he became too absorbed to write letters.

Fortunately he obtained almost immediate publication of his book when finished, and before it had been out a month it was creating no small stir in literary circles.

Christopher paid one or two flying visits to town to see his publishers, and retreated again to the country. He forgot to arrange a meeting with Sue before he went up, and, somehow, his two days in town were crammed so full that he could not find time to go to

the boarding house on the chance of finding her in. She answered his letters with little cold, carefully worded epistles, and he was surprised to find that she could be uninteresting.

So the winter slipped by, and with the advent of spring Geoffrey Travers, of the Eastern Magazine Company, Ltd., returned to New York.

He had an excellent memory, and he lost no time in calling on the editor of *The Gilt Edge Monthly*.

"How do you like the little contributor I sent you?" he asked.

"Little contributor? Do you mean Christopher Romans? He's not a little contributor. Oh, well, he's a very valuable addition to our staff—a brilliant chap, there's no doubt. His novel is going very strong, they say——"

"No, no!" said Travers; "I know nothing about Romans. I mean the little girl I sent to you with a very good story. I met her in a subway train, of all places. I was just off to Europe, so I scribbled a note on the leaf of my notebook, and told her to send it in to you with the story. I wanted you to give her regular work if you could. Surely you remember it?"

"I can't remember what hasn't taken place," said Fenn bluntly. "I've had no story from a lady recommended by you. I had a penciled note of yours, with Romans' first story, and, as the story was good, and you seemed interested in the man, I gave him regular work, with most satisfactory results."

"There's a big mistake, then," said Geoffrey Travers, with a keen memory of the shabby, gray-eyed girl; "I never saw Romans in my life, and don't take the least interest in him. I did not write you regarding him. We must get to the bottom of this at once."

A letter from Fenn the next morning summoned Christopher to town. He found the editor and Travers both in the former's office. They dispensed with preliminaries, and explained the matter at once. Could he account for a note purporting to be from the director being inclosed with a manuscript of his, when the director flatly denied having given him that note?

The author was astonished.

"I sent in no note with my first story, Mr. Fenn," he said. "And I have no knowledge of such a note."

"Yet I received it," Fenn put in.

Christopher was already becoming a little arrogant with his success, and he stared haughtily.

"Are you accusing me——" he began.

Travers' keen eyes were on the author's handsome face.

"Let me explain further to you, Mr. Romans," he said abruptly. "I met a Miss Sue Charters in a subway train last fall, and, after some conversation about a manuscript she had in her hand, I read it, and was struck by its originality and charm. I gave her a note, and asked her to take it with the story to Mr. Fenn here. Since then I have been abroad, and did not think it necessary to inquire further into the matter at the time. But on my return, I am confronted with the fact that not Miss Sue Charters, but *you*, benefited by my letter of introduction. Are you a friend of Miss Charters? What are we to think, and how did that note find its way into the envelope containing your story?"

Romans had flushed, and paled, and flushed again.

"Good heavens!" he stammered, "I—I don't know—I—I—can't explain how——"

But light had broken.

"I can," he cried, "I can! I—I see it all. I—we were friends—I'd had bad luck—she was sorry for me—she put 'The Idyll' into an envelope herself, and made me bring it here. She must have——"

"Have thrown her chance in your way, and put her bread into your mouth," said Travers strongly.

"Yes," said Christopher slowly. "Yes."

He stood a moment irresolute, while they looked at him, and from him to each other. He turned to the door.

"Where are you going, Mr. Romans?" asked the editor.

"To see her," answered Christopher simply, and went out.

"She's in love with him," said Travers abruptly. "I wonder if he's worth it?"

The editor smiled.

"Yes," said he, "a man that can write like Romans is sound at bottom. He may be selfish, and he may take on him the airs of popularity, but the beautiful themes he touches can only emanate from a good mind. This is rather a pretty story, eh? I wonder if we could get one of 'em to work it up afterward——"

"Don't blaspheme!" said Travers, going out.

Christopher had hailed a taxi, and was driving uptown. He was furious with himself. Her sympathy, her silence, her strength, her resource, her sacrifice—all the dear memories of her came crowding.

"Good heavens!" he said, gritting his teeth, "what a brute—what a beast I've been! The cold-blooded cruelty of it!"

And when he came to the boarding house, he heard that she was in. He mounted the stairs to the fourth floor, stood outside the familiar door, and knocked.

"Come in!" said a voice faintly.

He went in, and saw her sitting at the table writing, with her back to the door. He stole up behind her, put two hands down on hers, and held the pen still. She looked up, and sat rigid.

"Sue, I——" he faltered. "Sue, I have——"

"Oh, *you*!" she said hoarsely.

But she had known it with the first touch of his hands.

"I have only just found out what you have done for me. I came at once to tell——"

She got up slowly, and turned round, so that he saw her proud, pale face with the gray eyes burning in it.

"To thank me, Mr. Romans? But I really don't—require—thanks. It was—was nothing. That letter was of no value to me——"

"You threw your chance in my way; you put your bread into my mouth." He was quoting Travers huskily. "Why did you do it, Sue?"

She was silent. Romans caught her slim shoulders.

"I hope you did it because you loved me," he said, "as I love you. Sue, my dearest, I don't know how I've lived without you these months. Don't pun-

ish me for my ingratitude now." His arms went round her. "You did it because you loved me. Am I right?"

Her lips quivered, and she looked away, but nodded a joyous affirmative.

Two Home Runs

By Robert Carlton Brown

Showing the power of baseball to change international customs

BASEBALL, my dear Northrup, is the great leveler. That's why it's our national sport. Why, I've seen a millionaire author slap a poor publisher on the back, swing him around, and dance the Boston with him on the grand stand, all on account of a home run. It's the game of a republic, a glorious game, for the land of the free and the home run of the——"

Tillinghast paused in his speech as Lord Northrup interrupted with a very French shrug of his shoulders, and said, in a very bored English manner:

"Rather good. Too theatric. But it interests me, you know. My dear fellow, one mustn't forget cricket in one's savage interest over a new sport."

"Cricket!" exclaimed Tillinghast, dropping the smooth ivory whist counter he had been toying with in the card-room of the Van Rensselaer Club, and leaning over the light table to punctuate his remarks with energetic thrusts of his forefinger. "Yes, cricket. It's a nice, homy little game, well adapted to your slow, blue, British blood. Good fireside game, like chess. Cricket on the Hearth! Quite the place for it."

"But baseball is so tedious!" objected his companion, opening his mouth like a fish and showing his resentment of Tillinghast's tirade by becoming the more reserved and languid in manner and speech as Tillinghast grew freer and more enthusiastic. "Now, cricket is rather more exciting, you know. Makes one's blood stir."

"Say!" exclaimed Tillinghast, again leaning over the table and fixing very serious big eyes on the slippery little ones of the aristocratic Englishman. "That may be all right. But cricket is a joke compared to baseball. Give me three men on bases and two out, with somebody to drive out a three-bagger. That's fun! Or the opposing team, with a man on third in the ninth inning of a tied game; somebody knocks a zigzag fly, the grand stand gets up on its back legs, and holds its breath. The ball's course is as erratic as a meteor's; it skips through space, and the right-fielder leaps for it like a trout to a fly. He nabs it. That's sport! Why, I'd rather go to a ball game than a bullfight."

"Oh, so would I, infinitely rather," scoffed the other. "That is, if I were the bull."

Tillinghast smiled, and slid back into his chair. "You know, Northrup," he remarked, "that's one subject I'm carried away on. Such stress of argument! It really isn't worth while trying to convince a cricket-loving Englishman that there is anything in baseball. But, now, let's play fair. I went to cricket matches with you in England, you come with me to a real baseball game."

"I've an engagement to drive with my sister at four," answered Lord Northrup, glancing at his watch. "You know, we are here for such a short time; but I really would like to give your baseball a fair hearing, so I can tell them about it at home. I suppose it will be quite

droll—all rough-and-tumble and sub-way crush, like everything in your dear, outlandish America. By the way, could a gentleman play your game?—the awful costume, and all, you know.”

“A gentleman could play the game, if he had enough brawn—and brain,” replied Tillinghast. “But, come, phone your sister to go with us. She’ll enjoy it, I’m sure. It’s almost time.”

II.

TEN minutes before the game was called Sardonis Tillinghast ushered the Honorable Evelyn and Lord Northrup into a box at the Hilltop Field. They were right beside the little inclosed bench at the edge of the grass, occupied by the Yankee players. Tillinghast pointed out to his guests the famous players on the New York team, and explained the principles of the game.

“Tillinghast says this is the great American leveler, my dear,” remarked Lord Northrup, turning to his sister. “I do hope you won’t elope with the catchee, or whatever they call that muzzled chap behind the bat.”

“They’re a clean-looking lot,” the girl remarked, leaning forward in the box and watching the practice with evident interest. She asked Tillinghast several rapid-fire questions.

The game was called, and Cleveland took the field, Chase to the bat for the Yankees. Chase eased out a two-bagger, and the crowd broke loose, applauding wildly. Even Lord Northrup sat up, and his bored manner began to slip through his fingers as he placed his palms on his knees and assumed the neck-free position of a typical “fan.”

As the game progressed, the Honorable Evelyn became enthusiastic. She quickly gathered the drift of things, and an excited flush came into her cheeks, making them vivid. Her eyes sparkled with the fun of it, and she leaned forward breathlessly.

In the second inning a Yankee player came to bat, and a slight murmur ran through the audience.

“Who’s that?” asked the girl, taking

in the well-knit, capable figure, poising with the bat, his keen eyes glinting at the opposing pitcher.

“That’s Fordham; catching for the Yankees. He was discovered only a month ago. He’s been doing wonderful work, but they say he’s a bit erratic,” replied Tillinghast.

“Looks the part, I should say,” put in Lord Northrup.

“Yes, but he has such an air about him,” answered the sister. “Now, one would pick him out of a thousand as a gentleman. He has the earmarks. He wears the ball suit as easily as though it were evening dress. Did you hear him talking to that other player before he went to the bat? Rather neat English he used—for an American. I wonder what he is in private life?”

“Probably the father of nine baseball-playing children, with an anxious wife who stays at home and does the weekly wash while he flits about the country like the gay young Lothario he looks,” was Lord Northrup’s prompt reply.

“Hardly that,” put in Tillinghast. “You know, baseball is as profitable as politics. Some of those boys get as high as ten thousand dollars for a season’s work.”

“Rea-ally!” exclaimed Lord Northrup. “What a country this is, to be sure! One might better forget the diplomatic service, the army, and the law, and train his young hopeful to baseball.”

“Look!” exclaimed the Honorable Evelyn, grasping the rail and leaning forward tensely as Fordham bunted the ball, chopping it off so that it sizzled through the grass halfway to the pitcher.

The third baseman and pitcher both sprang for it, but before one of them got it and snapped it to first Fordham had slid, and was safe.

“Fine!” cried the Honorable Evelyn, jumping to her feet with the rest of the throng and watching Fordham intently as he rose, jerked his face into a grim smile, and dusted his clothes carefully, stooping to inspect a rip in his trousers, near the knee.

“Get a valet!” cried a Cleveland fan.

“You’re all right, Fordham!” New

York drowned out the josher. "That was a beaut!"

"Evelyn," drawled Lord Northrup, when his sister dropped back limply into her seat, her lips parted and eyes in a glow. "You're becoming quite barbarous." He turned abruptly, and finished: "Tillinghast, I was just wondering where he could place that—uh—that round leather ball, you know, without this other set of chaps with the funny hose catching that man on the second—ah—bucket, you call it? Rather neatly figured out, I must admit. Approaches cricket on that point."

"And passes it on all others," smiled Tillinghast, his eyes happy with the success of his team.

III.

THE lord's younger sister was on her feet half the time during the crucial fifth inning, when New York tied Cleveland. Lord Northrup seemed uneasy at her youthful demonstration, but he rather liked the spirit of the thing, too, and when the Honorable Evelyn gave a little shriek of disappointment as a Cleveland fielder caught a difficult fly, Lord Northrup turned to Tillinghast and remarked:

"The game is a leveler, to be sure. I do hope the gentleman protecting his face and stomach behind the catchee will give correct decisions, and play fair, or Evelyn will jump the bars and help mob him. But, really, the players are quite decent; it's only the audience that's so vulgar, loud, and disagreeable."

"Oh, I say, don't! Please stop carping," said his sister. "You know, I'm rather worse than most of the rest at this shouting ga——"

At that moment a bat whizzed over the railing and fell at her feet, causing no little consternation as Lord Northrup and Tillinghast bobbed for it together and crashed into each other's hats.

Fordham, who had been swinging two bats near the bench, preparatory to choosing one and following the batter on the plate, was responsible for the accident. One of the bats had slipped

from his grasp and shot over the railing of the near-by box.

He rushed up at that moment and exclaimed, in a soft, anxious tone, with an English intonation:

"Oh, I say, I'm awfully sorry. You're not hurt? I'm so sorry. I didn't——" he looked anxiously into the Honorable Evelyn's flushed face, and then past it to Tillinghast's, when he stopped abruptly.

Forcing a calm expression, he looked at Tillinghast with a mild, curious interest.

Tillinghast's face shifted in quick changes. His eyebrows shot up in recognition, then his hand tightened on the back of Lord Northrup's chair, the corners of his lips drew down, and he looked blankly at Fordham.

The Honorable Evelyn caught the by-play as she was helping to hand the bat back to Fordham.

"It's quite all right," she smiled to the player, looking deep into his blue eyes and wondering mightily. "I want to tell you how we have all enjoyed your playing."

The field was waiting for Fordham. He stood easily, unconcerned, in the gaze of the anxious audience, who had missed the little scene and was impatient of the slightest delay.

"It's good of you to say so. I do hope the bat didn't strike you. It was carelessness on my part. My bat handling must seem very amateurish."

Quite an unusual procedure for a professional ball player, to linger in conversation at a box with the whole country waiting for him to go to the bat, and possibly decide the tie.

"It's quite all right," she repeated, with finality.

Fordham lifted his cap, smiled softly, cast a quick look toward Tillinghast, then swept the box with an inclusive glance, not missing Lord Northrup lolling in the corner, and turned resolutely toward the field.

It was all extremely interesting to the audience, and some of the Yankees stared from their bench and exchanged snatches of talk concerning their fellow

player, the looks on their faces clearly showing there was some mystery about him.

"Wasn't he jolly! So finished! So nice!" exclaimed the girl.

"Oh, Evelyn, do be rational," replied her brother. "I dare say he's only a common enough sort of chap, after all." But his very intonation showed that he, too, was startled by the easy manner of Fordham.

Tillinghast said nothing, until the girl turned abruptly and remarked:

"He seemed to recognize you. Do tell me, what's the—the answer? That's what you say here, isn't it?"

"Oh, I've an ordinary enough face," answered Tillinghast. "Probably he took me for some one else—or maybe he was taken aback by the thought that I was your husband."

"Don't be dragging love and that sort of thing into this," drawled Lord Northrup. "Evelyn is so young and romantic, she'll be eloping, I tell you. America has a horrible influence on your young girls. Imagine; politeness in a footman causing surprise! Why, my dear, servants must be more polite than their masters, or there would be no need for them. I dare say he's had training in one of your good old Southern families."

"Don't talk like that," pouted the girl. "He had such an air. You jolly well know he's no commoner. Oh, see!"

Crack! Fordham had swung on the ball, and it was swooping in a long, graceful curve toward the boundary fence.

The audience was on its feet in an instant, screaming:

"Go to it!"

"Make it a homer!"

"Oh, skyrocket!"

"Eat up the mileage!"

"Make it home!"

"Home!"

Cleveland's right fielder, the sun in his eyes, failed to judge the ball. It went over his head, bounced, and rolled almost to the fence. The shortstop and left fielder filled in, forming a relay to forward the ball. But before it had reached second Fordham had touched

third in a swinging circle, and was leaping home.

Yells split the air. Lord Northrup clapped hands to his sensitive ears, but the Honorable Evelyn screamed with the rest.

The ball came suddenly flashing home. Fordham and the ball were neck and neck. He made a hulking lurch for the plate, threw his body at the catcher's feet, and slid safe on his ankle.

The spectators went wild. Tillinghast was standing on the seat of his chair shouting madly, and the Honorable Evelyn had jerked her more retiring brother to his feet and was hanging to his arm, shouting in his supersensitive ear. Even Lord Northrup broke down, contracted the germ, and let out a little squawk of approval.

But Fordham didn't get up. The audience hardly noticed it in their enthusiasm, until the umpire and the catcher got hold of Fordham and lifted him carefully. The second he touched his right foot to the ground the muscles of his face tied themselves into an excruciating knot. It wouldn't support his weight.

IV.

THE audience jabbered wildly, and the Honorable Evelyn let out a surprised, startled gasp.

Tillinghast stood nervously watching. As they carried the injured player toward the long, low shed occupied by the Yankees, Tillinghast put a hand on the box rail, and seemed on the verge of vaulting over.

Fordham glanced up at the box, and smiled bravely to the girl as she leaned forward, gazing at him with a moving sympathy.

Again Tillinghast started as though to vault the rail, when Fordham looked at him strangely, and Tillinghast, with an abrupt explanation, sank back into his chair.

"Fordham sprained his ankle," announced the umpire to the anxious audience. There was a low murmur of pity, and the game proceeded.

But the little box party was disgusted. "It's brutal! Horrible!" exclaimed

the Honorable Evelyn, shuddering slightly, "and he was such a fine, frank chap. Why couldn't some one else have been hurt?"

"I told you what to expect," her brother replied.

Tillinghast said nothing. His perturbation was evident. They left before the end of the game, and parted when they reached Fifth Avenue. Just before Tillinghast dropped them at their hotel the girl, who had been very quiet during the ride, asked anxiously:

"Don't you know something of this man that was injured, Sardonis? I wish somebody could do something for him. He was so unusual."

"Poor chap," was all Tillinghast replied.

"But I'm sure he knew you. He looked at you again when he passed, and there seemed to be a challenge in his eyes. Do tell me—I'm so interested."

Tillinghast pressed his lips together thoughtfully for an instant, then smiled to her frankly:

"We may know each other. If anything interesting occurs I'll let you know."

"Oh, do!" she exclaimed.

"Yes," mocked Lord Northrup, "do give Evelyn a chance to make a fuss over your hero. He was such a gentleman! Probably a reformed floorwalker. Such a delicate air! One might think he had once worked in a delicatessen shop. Oh, these young women, Tillinghast!"

That night Tillinghast made several casual inquiries by phone and messenger, but evidently he found nothing satisfying.

The next morning, as he was glancing through the "Personal" advertisements at breakfast, as was his wont, he came upon the following, and mused long over it:

SARTO: Sprained ankle. Off for season. Can't meet payment. Try loan from H. E. Nothing serious. Don't worry. Will try something else. P. E. R.

"It's a frightful shame!" exclaimed Tillinghast, throwing down the paper. "Imagine Prescott having to resort to the 'Personals.' But then he couldn't

have cabled direct for fear of giving up his name, and the resultant publicity. The paper was doubtless instructed to cable the ad."

Jumping up abruptly, he ordered his motor, and went at once to the Flower Hospital, where he found the injured baseball player lying in a public ward.

With much difficulty he managed to have him removed to a private room, for Fordham wished no favors from any one. That afternoon the Honorable Evelyn, properly chaperoned by her brother and Tillinghast, called on the injured man, and extended her sympathy and appreciation of his brilliant work. It was an unusual thing to do, but Tillinghast had arranged it at the prompting of both the girl and Fordham.

Lord Northrup seemed charmed with the baseball player, but he objected strenuously during the following week when his sister insisted on going daily to the hospital and reading to the poor fellow.

The friendship grew, and became intimate by the time Fordham was allowed to leave the hospital. Tillinghast insisted that he be his guest, and he arranged many jolly parties, which left Lord Northrup in a wondering mood, and made him threaten to take the Honorable Evelyn home at once. But their departure was postponed from time to time, until finally there came a disturbing element.

Fordham got well, and wanted to join his team. Tillinghast and the Honorable Evelyn objected, but he was resolute. Fordham seemed to grow more uneasy daily. He had several long letters from London, and after each insisted that he must join his team, which was then on the road. Tillinghast made a thousand excuses to keep him from it, which was all very strange to Lord Northrup.

Tillinghast made no effort to account for his interest in the baseball player; in answer to the importunate questions of the English couple he insisted that he knew nothing more than they of the man; that he had taken him at his face value as a gentleman and congenial companion.

Fordham grew so uneasy that he began to avoid the Honorable Evelyn, and things seemed coming to a climax, Lord Northrup daily threatening to go home, and the Honorable Evelyn insisting that Tillinghast explain the mystery surrounding Fordham.

V.

ONE evening Tillinghast arrived home alone after dinner, having left Fordham to complete an errand. Asking for his mail, he received several letters and a telegram. He glanced at the wire, and found it addressed to his friend.

His eyebrows raised slightly, the envelope trembled in his fingers for a moment, and then he loosened the poorly pasted flap, took out the message, and read it deliberately.

He had no more than finished, and hastily resealed the envelope, when Fordham entered, and Tillinghast handed him the message.

Fordham's color quickened as he glanced at the envelope, and, excusing himself, went to his room to read it.

Tillinghast stepped to the telephone, called a number softly, and, having secured it, whispered several abrupt sentences, hanging up directly, and calling his man. He gave the man definite instructions concerning something in a low tone, and then settled himself to reading. Fordham entered shortly. He seemed perturbed and anxious.

Dropping into a chair beside Tillinghast, he sat silent for some minutes, occasionally opening his mouth, as though he would say something, and then closing it sharply. Finally he reached out and touched his companion's arm.

"Till," he said, "you've been more than a friend to me. I'm going to get even with you for all this some day."

"Oh, you're at that again. Please remember that gratitude is shown in actions, not in words," replied Tillinghast. "I suppose you are merely prefacing another appeal for freedom."

"Till"—there was a catch in the other's voice—"I know you're right, and I hate to go back. But I've got to do

something. You don't understand. It isn't only that Sarto and I need the money."

"No?" There was a smile in the reply.

"No. There's something else. I've—I've——" He struggled for expression. "Well, I'm not man enough to fight it out, that's all."

"Why don't you marry the girl?" smiled Tillinghast, not looking up from his book.

"Confound you!" cried Fordham, jumping up. "You're the coldest-blooded man I ever knew, Till. I'm going back, I tell you. I'm going back to the game. There're some things a man can't stand being jollied about."

"Well, it's on your own shoulders. But you won't go back. You know you won't. Your better judgment has got to assert itself—if you have any."

Fordham paused a moment, stepped over and shook hands, then said "Good night" curtly, and went to his room.

VI.

AT half past eleven Tillinghast slipped to the front door, and opened it quietly in response to a slight tap, admitting Lord Northrup and the Honorable Evelyn, who seemed charged with electrical wonder.

Stepping to the library, he put out the lights, turned on the low burner in the hall, and pressed his friends into a concealed window seat in a nook by the stairs which led to the second story.

There was breathless silence for five minutes. Then, from above, came the noise of a door being softly opened. Something heavy scraped along the floor for a moment, and then the stairs creaked with the weight of a man descending.

They saw him through the shadows. It was Fordham, struggling down, with a heavy grip in each hand, and two precious baseball bats in a case clutched under one arm. He had a burglarious aspect, and a quick, nervous way of looking about.

As he left the last step, and started across the hall for the door, Tillinghast

jogged the Honorable Evelyn's elbow in signal, and, a second later, she had swished across the intervening space, and was standing between Fordham and the door.

At that moment Tillinghast turned up the light, and a clatter followed as Fordham dropped his bats and bags.

"Caught red-handed!" cried Tillinghast.

Lord Northrup gasped.

Fordham's gaze was leveled steadily on the dazzling English girl before him, standing with a pathetic, whimsical little smile on her eager face.

"You—you were going away?" she said, breaking the silence.

"No—no. Yes——" he faltered, stepping toward her.

"No," smiled Tillinghast, "he was just sneaking out for a little baseball practice by moonlight."

Fordham turned and stared at Tillinghast, passing his hand nervously over his flushed face.

"What's all this about?" he asked.

"We wanted to say good-by. We didn't want you to slip off alone in the night like this. I've had my man watching to see that you didn't slip out," replied Tillinghast.

"But how—how'd you know I was going?"

"I intercepted your telegram, like the villain in the play, and when I found it read, as I suspected: 'Leave New York Grand Central twelve-thirty-eight tonight; join team in Detroit,' I simply couldn't resist this little party to see you off."

"Oh!" cried the girl. "You're not going back to baseball?"

Fordham wavered.

"He's not going back if——" Tillinghast prompted.

"Oh, I can't. Till, you haven't played fair!" Fordham turned and drew closer to the girl. "I could have made my getaway. But I can't stand farewells."

"You—you weren't going without saying good-by to *me*?" the girl asked.

Fordham stepped closer, and said something in a very low tone.

"This is no place for us, Northrup," said Tillinghast, taking the Englishman by the arm, and pushing him into another room, in spite of his reluctance, assuring him: "It's all right. It's all right. I'll explain. Fordham's real name is Prescott, the Edgeworth Prescotts, you know; quite as good a family as any in the land. Father died in the midst of financial reverses, left debts. Prescott came home from two years in China, unknown here; a good deal changed. Shaved off his mustache, went into baseball to make his living—only work he knew, you see, used to be a star on his college team, and had kept in practice by organizing a team of his own in Shanghai—and support his mother. Calls mother 'Sarto,' they're rare pals. He was bucking a tough game, trying to pay off father's debts, and not making enough out of baseball to support himself and mother decently."

"The deuce you say," remarked Lord Northrup.

Several days later, at the club, Tillinghast met young Tyson, and fell into conversation.

"I hear old Prescott, who used to belong here, is to be married in London to the Honorable Evelyn Northrup next month. Looks like fortune hunting in the wrong preserve, doesn't it?" remarked young Tyson.

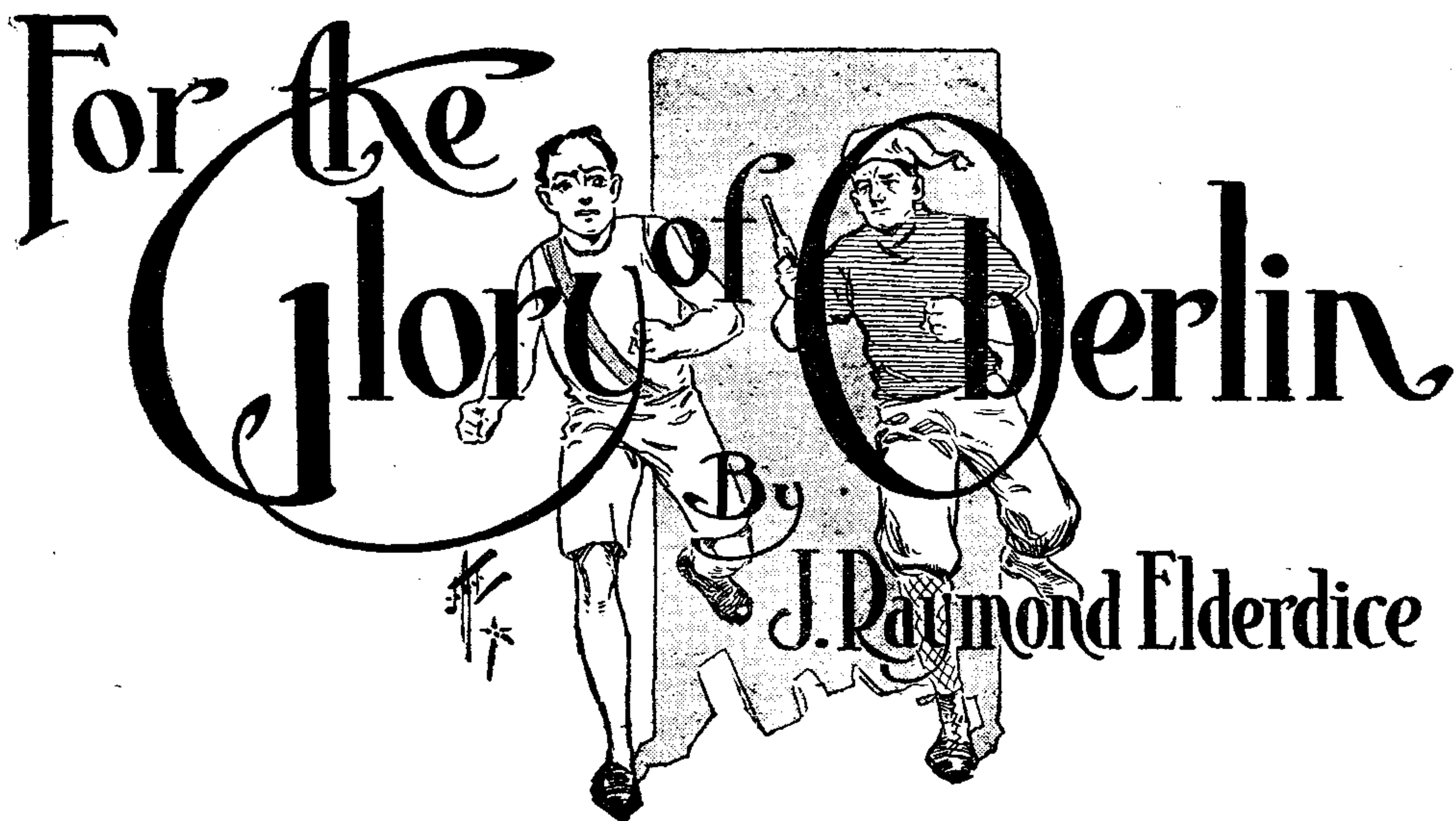
"Hadn't heard. Was Prescott here in New York?"

"So it seems. But just privately; sort of incog, like a traveling prince or something, you know. Nobody seems to have seen him here; sailed back quietly with Lord Northrup and his sister. They say he's marrying her to recoup the family fortunes. She has such a lot, you know. Rather odd, for a ruined young American to marry an English woman with a title and a fortune, isn't it?"

"Very," said Sardonic Tillinghast.

For the Honor of Oberlin

By J. Raymond Elderdice



(A COMPLETE NOVELETTE)

CHAPTER I.

COLLÈGE SPIRIT.

DONALD THORNE, standing before the open window of his room in Dascomb Cottage, spending the beautiful early spring afternoon in study, gave vent to an exclamation of anger as a chorus of exuberant voices from a room in Baldwin Cottage came to him.

He knew that a crowd of sophomores, his classmates, gathered in Budworth Stanhope's room, were having a jolly time, and he bitterly resented the fact that they could be happy and care-free while he must grind to keep up with his class.

"Let them tutor and sell books to pay their way through college," he told himself vindictively; "then they won't talk so much about college spirit, or loaf around the campus singing foolish songs. It's all foolishness, this mad wasting of time and talent on the athletic field because the coach says our Alma Mater needs our help."

Thorne was neither a favorite, nor unpopular, with the student body at Oberlin. They knew that he pressed clothes, tutored deficient freshmen, and

roamed the adjacent country trying to sell books in his efforts to give himself a college training. He had never come out for an athletic team, or given any physical prowess to his college, and consequently he was a nonentity.

Once in a debate at the Phi Kappa literary society, he had gone on record as stating that students should indulge in athletic sports only for the aid they gave in keeping a sound mind in a sound body, and that competition should be abolished.

At last Thorne closed his book, further study being out of the question for him so long as the singing continued in Baldwin Cottage. Feeling dull from his afternoon of application to books, he decided to don his track suit and go out to the athletic park track for a brisk half-mile run.

On arriving at the quarter-mile track, he found Coach Kemp and Ralph Palmetter, the track captain, in earnest conversation.

"We have got to unearth a fairly fast half-miler before we run the two-mile relay with Miami next month," insisted the coach. "With Rothrock, Miles, and you running in fast time, a fourth man will give us a crack relay team. I want to find a promising candidate before

our open meet here Saturday, so I can give him a try-out in it."

"That is the meet in which I want to win the individual point cup," said Palmetter. "Here I am, a senior, and I have never won it. I have a show for the open half mile and the shot put, if some other fellow doesn't show up better in those events between now and Saturday. But, as you say, we need a half-miler for the Miami race."

"Hello, here's new material!" exclaimed the coach, as Thorne jogged out on the track. "Come right here, Thorne; have you ever run the half mile?"

"I have," admitted Donald coldly, "but——"

"Get on your marks!" ordered the coach joyously, and the personality that had made Oberlin's football squad ready to die for Kemp impelled the sophomore to obey against his will.

Reluctantly he prepared for the start, and Coach Kemp held the pistol in one hand and the stop watch in the other.

"Bang!"

Almost instinctively Thorne shot away with a beautiful start, and fell at once into a long, ground-covering stride that brought a gleam of delight to the coach's eyes and a look of apprehension to the face of the track captain. He was afraid that a fast half-miler brought to light before the open meet would endanger his chances in that event, and the chances of winning the cup offered to the Oberlin athlete making the most points in the meet.

Faster and faster Thorne sped around the quarter-mile track, running in a natural, almost perfect, form, and apparently in the best of training. The coach held the stop watch in readiness, and the track squad, realizing that perhaps old Oberlin had found the much-sought fourth man for the two-mile relay team which was to meet Miami, cheered Donald on, and urged him to finish with a sprint. Keeping his stride strong to the last, the sophomore fought his way grimly to the tape, and reeled across it as the coach snapped the stop watch on the runner.

Captain Palmetter looked at Coach Kemp inquiringly, and, for an answer, the latter held up the watch as it had caught Thorne.

"Two minutes, flat!" gasped Palmetter, concealing his dismay with an effort, for his fastest time in that distance was two seconds slower. There could be no doubt as to the record, for the indicator had been checked flatly on the sixty-second mark.

"I think the relay problem is settled," said the coach happily. "We have a matter of three weeks before the race with Miami, and Thorne can be trained to run an even faster half mile. Thorne, I want you to join the training table tonight, and appear on the field for practice every day at half past three sharp."

A crowd of track men and students had gathered around after Donald had run his sensational trial, and from these to the coach the sophomore looked with a pale face.

There were several reasons why he did not intend to obey the coach's orders; reasons that for the most part he must keep to himself. The college would think that he was afraid to run, perhaps, but that must be as it would. He did not believe in competitive athletics, and thought it a waste of time to train on the track each day.

"I am sorry," he said, with grim determination, "but I cannot spare the time from my studies to indulge in track work, sir. I have never been in sympathy with the athletic madness in our colleges, and because others waste their time is no cause for me doing it. Beside, I have my tutoring hours and my time for canvassing."

He could not have struck greater consternation to the crowd had he smote the coach squarely in the face.

Even Palmetter, though he felt a thrill of relief that this phenomenal half-miler had refused to run and would not be his rival in the open meet, was surprised at Thorne's action, and he virtuously rebuked the sophomore for his lack of college spirit.

"Oberlin needs you sorely, Thorne," he declared. "Unless you make the

fourth man on the two-mile relay, we must run a poor half-miler, and Miami will defeat us. You must have some other reason for your refusal to run for your college; almost every track man stands high in his classes. We need all the points we can get to win the open meet here Saturday."

"Why, Thorne!" exclaimed Coach Kemp, "you are a novice, and we can rely on you to win us five points in the novice half, as well as place in the open eight-eighty. Surely you can't go back on your Alma Mater at the hour when she needs you most. Have you no college spirit?"

Thorne faced them angrily. Here was a chance to express his views on athletics and this so-called college spirit.

"College spirit!" he repeated bitterly. "I have heard that strain harped on again and again. Students must cast aside their studies, and fall behind their classes because the college needs them on the athletic field; they must forget their obligations to their sacrificing parents, and play football because Miami or some other college has a strong eleven. If I slight my studies and fail in my exams, to run for Oberlin, I suppose I'll have college spirit.

"I am working my way through college," he continued, "and by the time I have tutored and tried to make some money selling books, I have barely enough time for my studies. If I came out for the track team, my afternoons would be thrown away and my studies would suffer. Frankly, I never believed in this craze for athletic victory at any cost, and I shall not suffer by it."

He could not have made himself more unpopular by any other speech. For a student of Oberlin to refuse to run for his college at a time when his services were sorely needed, to throw down the track team just when his brilliant prowess had been discovered and himself hailed as a rescuer, was the height of treason.

He had deemed his life bitter enough already, forced as he was to forego many pleasures because of having to work in his spare time, but the past was

as nothing compared to the odium and condemnation he was now to endure.

"Very well!" the coach said coldly; "I shall not ask you again, Thorne. The man who will not give his best ability to his college on the athletic field when it is needed most is a cad and a coward, and he will never bring glory to his college in any way. You could have helped us to win the open meet Saturday; you could have enabled us to defeat Miami, for we need you on the relay. But you have made your decision."

In silence, Donald Thorne turned from them, and left the field. A hiss or two sounded from some in the crowd, but the coach wheeled angrily, and the derisive noise ceased at once. After the sophomore had gone, Coach Kemp faced the track captain more in sorrow than in anger.

"Well, Palmetter," he said, "it is up to you to win all the points you can in the open meet Saturday, for we shall need them to win from Ohio Wesleyan."

A few minutes later, Palmetter left the field, and made his way to his room in Baldwin Cottage, where his roommate was entertaining the same merry crowd of sophomores that had disturbed Thorne's study. As the track captain entered the room, the joyous students burst into a song of welcome in honor of one of Oberlin's athletic stars:

"For he's a jolly good fellow, which nobody can deny!"

Across in Dascomb Cottage, Donald Thorne heard the words, and knew for whom they were sung. And yet he was sincere in his conviction as to athletics. And though he was mistaken in thinking that college spirit was a demoralizing influence, he had more of it even at that moment than did the track captain.

As for Ralph Palmetter, knowing as he did that Oberlin sorely needed Thorne's points in the open meet and his running on the relay, he was glad at heart that Donald had refused to run, for now he was sure of winning the point cup.

CHAPTER II.

AN ODD TRY-OUT.

THE next afternoon Donald Thorne started out in the country near Oberlin with a copy of the book he was trying to sell on commission.

His heart was bitter within him as he left the town limits and walked out in the open country. Since his decision on the athletic field, he had been ostracized in college; the news of his refusal to run for Oberlin had spread rapidly, and, where previously he had been unnoticed, now he was pointed out and avoided.

All this only served to make him the more miserable, especially as he had begun to question his own convictions.

He had canvassed the farms for three miles out unsuccessfully when he came to a beautiful country home on the road.

The house was at the end of a lane half a mile in length, and the sophomore had hopes of making his first sale of the day as he walked slowly toward it. He knew the natural antipathy of housewives toward agents of any kind, and his heart was too bitter for him to assume a light manner.

Near the house he came upon a boy lying at full length on the grass, deep in some interesting magazine story. As he approached, his footfalls aroused the young fellow, and he looked up at Thorne. Seeing the book under Donald's arm, he immediately guessed his mission, and scowled.

"No 'Life of Roosevelt' or 'Dash for the Pole' to-day," he growled. "There ought to be a law passed against such public nuisances as you fellows. This past week we have had no less than nineteen college students trying to sell us everything from a clock to a mouse trap."

"But just look at the volume," pleaded Thorne dispiritedly; "perhaps your mother would——"

He never finished, for at that moment there came a most unearthly howl, a cross between the war cry of a Sioux Indian and the wail of a lost soul, and around the corner of the house came

the most weirdly dressed human being that Thorne had ever seen. He was a tall, finely built young man, but there was a wild gleam in his eyes, and Donald backed away apprehensively.

"It's my brother!" cried the boy. "He's a Yale man, and he hurt himself by overstudy. They sent him home to rest his mind. He doesn't often get this dangerous, though."

Even in his alarm, Donald Thorne could not help gazing in wonder at the fearful and wonderful costume of the young man, whose mind was apparently unbalanced from overstudy. He wore a light-blue running jersey marked with a big "Y," a pair of football pants, heavily padded basket-ball stockings, a cross-country shoe on one foot, and on the other baseball footgear, while, to cap the climax, literally, he bore a golf toque on his head, and its tassel streamed out wildly in the breeze.

In his hand he carried a murderous-looking army revolver, and with wild yells he bore down on the helpless Thorne.

"Whoop!" howled the Yale man exuberantly; "I am captain of the Olympic games team, and I am looking for a fast half-miler to take to Sweden this summer. Got to have a man who can do it in less than twenty-two seconds. Hello, here's material!"

"Now, Bill!" began his brother soothingly, but the Yale man was beyond the power of argument and persuasion. He was possessed of the one idea that a fast half-miler must be found, and Thorne was the only victim eligible for his insane determination.

"I ran for Yale in sixteen hundred and seven!" he announced dramatically. "There were twenty-three hundred of us in the race, and I beat the field in the half mile by twenty-six miles. They gave me a cheese sandwich, and begged me not to run again. Say, you long-legged nuisance, I want to give you a try-out for the half. We will run down to the gate; it is just a half mile from here."

"But," argued Thorne, "I am not dressed for running now. Just wait till I go back to college and get my track

suit, will you? Then I'll run you a half mile."

"Oho!" laughed the young giant cunningly, "they never come back! No; you can take your shoes off, and run now. Say, what do you think of my running suit; isn't it a fine one? Well, let's go; I'll hold the pistol and start us with it."

He was twirling the big revolver in a dangerous way, and in some anxiety Thorne laid down his book, and prepared to run. He was determined to keep on running when the gate was reached and not stop till he got to college.

He was sure he could leave the weak-minded Yale man far in the rear. The man was much the larger athlete, and a glance at him showed Donald that resistance was useless, while the younger brother could give no assistance.

"On second thought," said the Yale man, "I'll carry this gun along, and then, if you start to loaf on me, I'll have to shoot you up some. A fast half-miler must be got, for the eyes of the civilized world are upon us, and our nation needs us now!"

From the Yale man's conversation, Thorne got the impression that over-indulgence in athletics and not in study had turned his brain, so he did not dispute a single point with the big student and the bigger revolver, but got down on his marks when the other ordered it.

The starting commands were given, and, when the big gun barked, the Oberlin man shot forward, with his rival lumbering at his heels.

Remembering his fast running of the day before, Thorne let out in a few seconds, and had the satisfaction of hearing the thundering of the Yale man's strangely assorted shoes grow fainter. He would not have felt so secure had he known that the big athlete was trotting along with the greatest of ease, studying his form carefully, and taking an occasional aim at his heels with the revolver. As the gate was neared, Donald put his strength into a final sprint.

"Going some!" whooped his pursuer, closing the gap between them with ease

that was ridiculous. "Here we go, beaten at the tape!"

He let go a volley of shots, and Donald thought his last hour had come.

Then, in the last ten yards, the Yale runner shot past the bewildered Oberlin man, and finished an easy winner.

The sophomore, who had run a fast race, was too surprised at its result to be alarmed now, so he staggered to the bank by the roadside, and sat down.

His captor sat down beside him, and began to massage his muscles beneath the basket-ball stockings. As he glanced down at his outlandish garb, he was unable to restrain his mirth any longer, and he rolled on the grass, laughing convulsively.

"Oho!" he howled, "if my chums at Yale could see me now! What would the track squad say if they saw Bill Parmalee chasing a poor book agent down a dusty road in such a get-up as this? But say, fellow, that was a crack half mile you tore off. It couldn't have been worse than two minutes, for I let out pretty well, and my best record is a minute and fifty-seven seconds."

Donald Thorne had risen, and was staring at his big companion in wonder.

"Bill Parmalee!" he cried. "Yale's famous half-miler and Oberlin's former champion at that distance? Why, you are a hero at college! If only we had you there to run——"

He stopped abruptly, for he remembered that Oberlin needed him and that he had failed his college.

Parmalee gazed at him quizzically.

"I didn't know you were an Oberlin man," he confessed soberly. "My brother and I saw you coming, and, as we have been so pestered with agents of late, I decided to have a little fun with you. He gave you the impression that I wasn't right in the mind, which may be more truth than jest, and I donned this garb, seized this young cannon, and trailed you. But I had no idea you would run such a fast half. Of course, you are going to help Oberlin out. The coach told me yesterday that a fourth man was needed on the two-mile relay."

Donald was silent. He wanted to confess to this big, good-natured ath-

lete just why he could not run for Oberlin, but he could not bring himself to lay open the wound that hurt him so. Parmalee's unquestionable loyalty to old Oberlin made him doubt his own beliefs, for there was something wholesome and bracing in the faith of the Yale man.

"I can't spare the time from my studies," he faltered at last. "I—I don't believe a fellow should slight his class work to engage in athletics."

Parmalee gazed at him in surprise.

"I am not going to condemn you," he said at last, "but I think that, when it comes to an understanding of college life and ideals, you are a novice. A college is a world to itself, and the student who does not take part in all its phases is missing something. A well-balanced existence with a proper proportion of each thing makes the manly, wholesome collegian."

"I don't believe that your studies keep you from running," he continued; "I have yet to see the honest, wholehearted athlete who is a flunker. The one that fights to make his college a winner on the athletic field will stand high in his class. I was in athletics at Oberlin, yet I ranked well in my studies. College spirit, my friend, is simply the willingness to sacrifice personal interests and ambition for the good of one's Alma Mater. Now, I don't ask you to fall down in your studies to run for Oberlin, but there is surely some personal interest that you can sacrifice."

Donald had experienced a revulsion of feeling. The talk of Parmalee had shown him how utterly out of sympathy he had been with college life as an entirety; he had misjudged his fellow students, and missed much of the all-round existence the Yale man spoke of. He knew that he could easily keep up in his studies and run, and that the sacrifice must be made along another line.

"I think I see things clearer," he said at last. "It will mean a mighty big sacrifice to me, Parmalee, but, if the coach will have me now, I'll run in the open meet Saturday."

"And I'll be there to cheer you on,"

answered the Yale star heartily. "After you get out of college and into the university, you will come to know that college spirit is the finest thing in the world. Good-by, and good luck!"

As soon as he reached Oberlin again, Donald Thorne went straight to Coach Kemp, and informed him that he was sorry for his refusal of the day before, and that he was ready to run now, if his college could use him in any race.

With a glad smile, which was not reflected on Captain Palmetter's face, the coach held out his hand.

"That's the true spirit, Thorne!" he said heartily.

CHAPTER III.

THE SACRIFICE.

DONALD THORNE'S decision to run for his college was costing Captain Ralph Palmetter a lot of worry. The stop watch had shown that the sophomore covered the half mile in two minutes flat, and Palmetter knew that *he* could not do it within a second of that time in the meet. That meant that Thorne had a better chance of winning the open half than he did, and if he won the novice event with ease he would have more points than his captain, even if Palmetter took first in the shot put. So the captain began to question Thorne's past performance with a view to ascertaining his standing as a novice.

From Hopewell, Thorne's roommate, he learned that the sophomore had run second in a half-mile race at a meet held by his prep school three years before.

Craftily counting on the sophomore's comparative ignorance of athletic rules, the track captain had a talk with him in his room one day.

"You are still a novice, aren't you?" he asked, with every appearance of interest; "you have never won a place in any event, have you?"

"Yes," answered Thorne regretfully; "at my prep school I won second place in the half mile at a meet we held. Does that debar me from the novice class?"

"I am afraid it does," sighed Palmetter sorrowfully. "Of course, it is

best that we should know this in time, for you might win the novice half and be protested; then we should lose the points. I'll see the coach about it."

He consulted Coach Kemp, carefully keeping from him a bit of knowledge he had gathered from Thorne about his past victory. The coach, believing Palmetter to be acting in a sportsmanlike manner, gave his opinion.

"I have already entered Thorne in the novice half and the same event in the amateur class," he said, "and I counted on his winning the novice and placing in the other. But, of course, he can't run now, since he isn't a novice. I'll just keep him in the open event, and try him out for the relay team."

Palmetter's conscience troubled him, for by a bit of trickery he had gotten his rival out of the novice half, in which he had a perfect right to run. He had learned that in the race in which Thorne had run second, back in his prep days, *there had been no prizes offered*, and by the rule of the Amateur Athletic Union concerning the novice, *a runner is a novice until he has won a prize for placing in some open event*. Therefore, Thorne was perfectly eligible as a novice, but as the coach naturally inferred from Palmetter's talk that he had won a medal, he was to withdraw him from the race.

It was the day before the open meet at Oberlin that Palmetter, afraid lest his rival should defeat him in the open half mile, his favorite event, laid his plans to insure victory for himself.

He decided that he would rather have Thorne win the novice half mile, in which he was not entered, than for himself to beat the fast sophomore in the amateur race. This would bring more glory to him, for beyond a doubt the speedy novice would have an easy time winning the novice half, but, if he could defeat Thorne in the other event, it would be much to his credit.

Accordingly he went to Coach Kemp that night as though he had accidentally stumbled on a bit of information that would make sure of Oberlin's winning five points by Thorne in the novice half.

"Thorne has just told me that he did

not receive a medal or prize for placing in his event," he said, with apparent joy. "There were no prizes given at all in the meet; therefore, he is eligible as a novice, isn't he, coach?"

"He is!" exclaimed Coach Kemp, who had the college's best interests at heart and was planning for her success; "I am glad you found this out, Palmetter, and came to me with it. I'll run Thorne in the novice half, too."

Palmetter winced at the undeserved praise, but his mind was made up, and from the coach's room he hastened to find Donald Thorne, to approach him with a plan which apparently meant a big sacrifice on Thorne's part. He found the sophomore alone in his room, and he lost no time in getting to the root of the matter.

"Thorne," he began carefully, "I don't know whether you have any college spirit or not. You didn't have it once, and this coming out to run may be a bluff to win back the respect of your college mates, which you forfeited. However, I am going on the assumption that you are awakened, and that you are ready to sacrifice your own ambition for the good of old Oberlin."

He had come to Thorne at a moment most propitious for his own plan, for Donald had been awakened by Parmelee's talk on college spirit, and he was now heartily ashamed of the way he had refused to make any sacrifice for his Alma Mater.

"No sacrifice is too great for me now," said Thorne, in a low tone; "I have acted the cad and the coward, but I understand things better. What can I do for Oberlin?"

"Ohio Wesleyan will push us for the meet to-morrow," explained the crafty Palmetter, "and one event may win or lose for us. You are sure of winning the novice half; we want to make certain of the open half mile. Our most dangerous man is Stanton, of Ohio Wesleyan, who is a fast runner. Now, will you admit that I am more seasoned and experienced in track generalship than you, a novice?"

"Yes," said Thorne, wondering what was to come.

"Then," said the captain firmly, "one of us must sacrifice his hopes of winning the open half mile by running to let the other win. If you will start a wild sprint in the first quarter mile and keep it up as long as you can, Stanton will be carried away with it, and will run his head off in the first lap. Both of you will hardly be able to finish, and, if I have been running an even race and holding for a final sprint, I can pass the winded Stanton and win."

"I understand," replied Thorne slowly; "you want me to sacrifice my hopes of winning the open half mile by running myself out in the first of the race, so that Stanton will run himself out also and you can finish strong and win the race. Do you give me your word of honor that this will put Stanton out of the running, and that it is for old Oberlin? Does he lose his head when some one starts a sprint?"

"I give you my word!" said Palmetter eagerly. "He simply can't lay back and watch another runner gain a big lead. Are you willing to sacrifice your chances of victory, Thorne?"

Without a moment's hesitation, the new Thorne gave his answer.

"Yes," he replied simply; "I said that no sacrifice is too great for me to make now, and I mean it!"

Ashamed of his action, yet glad that Thorne had so readily agreed to give up his hopes of winning the race, Palmetter hastened from the room.

It was all fixed now; Thorne would run himself out early in the race, and Stanton, who had never shown himself to be as fast as the watch had caught either Palmetter or Thorne, could be easily defeated by the Oberlin captain.

It was not true that Stanton could be persuaded to sprint his head off, but Palmetter was sure of defeating him; it was the speedy Thorne he had feared.

The next day was that of the big open meet at Oberlin College. Most of the Ohio colleges had entered men, but the contest for first honors seemed to lie between Oberlin and Ohio Wesleyan, and so closely were they matched that one event might decide the result. Thorne found that he was to run in the

open half mile first, and that there were several numbers before the novice half, so that he would have time to rest.

Palmetter was standing near the edge of the track when he chanced to see a big-framed man in earnest conversation with Coach Kemp. He recognized him as Bill Parmalee, the once famous Oberlin star, now performing athletic wonders for old Yale.

He overheard what they were saying.

"I scared the wits out of him," laughed Parmalee, "by pretending I was mentally unbalanced and making him run me a half mile. But let me tell you, he made me run my prettiest to win. I found that he was an Oberlin man, and was not running for his college, so I read him a lecture on college spirit. He told me he would run, and I see he is entered. But let me tell you why he would not run at first."

"Why not?" asked the coach, and Palmetter listened.

"I talked to his roommate a while ago," continued Parmalee, "and I learned that by dint of clothes pressing, tutoring, and book selling, Thorne is barely paying expenses here. He is ambitious to get a college course, but he can't save any money ahead. To come out each afternoon and train as he has done means that either he must slight his studies or give up some of his time in which he made money. Consequently he has practically sacrificed his next year's stay at Oberlin to run for his college. College spirit? Why, that fellow has more of it in his finger than most of us in our worthless hides!"

Palmetter gasped in dismay. As soon as Thorne had learned that his views were mistaken ones, he had made this big sacrifice cheerfully. He had done this for the college he had come to love, while Palmetter was sacrificing Oberlin's glory for his own personal ambition.

In that instant the senior saw how mean and small he was in the light of the sophomore's abnegation, and he resolved to do right.

"Coach Kemp," he said bravely, "I have been a cowardly cur, and I ought

to be kicked out of college. But I know that I was a sneak, and I shall make amends before it is too late."

Then he courageously told of his deceit, and Bill Parmalee's heart grew glad as he saw the fruits of the seeds he had sown in Thorne's mind. The track captain finished his confession, and the clasp of the coach's hand told him that his repentance was believed.

"Hike right over, and tell Thorne how to run the race," said Bill Parmalee heartily. "Hurry; your open half is about to start. And after the meet, I'll have something to tell Donald Thorne that will make him happy. Now, beat it to him, Palmetter!"

But it was too late. As Palmetter neared the starting line, the pistol was raised in air, and he had barely time to shout his name to the clerk of the course and get on his mark. The shot sounded, and together the two Oberlin men leaped out, with Stanton clinging at Thorne's side. Palmetter had Donald's promise to run himself out for the purpose of exhausting Stanton, and with this in mind the sophomore prepared to start a mad sprint.

As he ran, Donald Thorne was thinking over and over to himself:

"College spirit is sacrificed! For my college I shall lose the race to my captain!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE UNEXPECTED.

THAT half-mile race will go down in the history of Oberlin as the most sensational track event ever seen on the athletic park oval.

Within fifty yards from the start, Donald Thorne, on whom the coach relied to win the race, startled and dismayed the rooters by sprinting madly. Foot by foot he drew away from the field, and so engrossed was he in the thoughts of the sacrifice he was making, that he did not notice he had quickly shaken off Stanton. Only the coach and Parmalee, besides the two Oberlin runners, knew the meaning of this mysterious dash of Thorne's.

The Ohio Wesleyan man had been surprised by Thorne's action, but, knowing that he was a novice, he attributed it to nervousness and inexperience, and he kept on with a steady stride. At the end of the first quarter, Thorne was far in the lead, but his wind was going fast, and at times he staggered slightly.

Then Stanton began slowly and steadily to increase his speed, and Palmetter drew up beside him. Almost frantic with remorse, the Oberlin captain knew that he must win the race, or he would have helped to defeat his college.

"What can Thorne be thinking of?" the surprised students asked each other.

He was still keeping up that heart-breaking sprint, and, as he flashed around the track three hundred yards from the tape, even Stanton awoke to the fact that there was a big lead to be cut down, and he let out his power in a fast finish sprint.

"I must beat him!" breathed Palmetter, and he, too, cut loose and threw his reserve strength into a fast dash. Together they gained rapidly on the faltering Thorne, and the Oberlin crowd burst into a cheer as they saw their captain forge into the lead, and then——

Palmetter's right foot slipped as he stepped into a hole dug by some sprinter for the start of the hundred-yard dash, and his ankle turned. A sharp pain shot through the injured member, and he went down on one knee.

In a second he struggled up, and was fighting gamely on, but, despite his grim determination to finish, he was forced to limp as he ran, and the Ohio Wesleyan man left him quickly in the rear. Of all this the tired Thorne was in ignorance; he heard the shouts of the spectators, but he believed that his captain was passing the supposedly fatigued Stanton, whom he had thought to be giving out in keeping up with his sprint.

He heard the patter of spikes behind him, and he sighed with relief. In an instant more, Palmetter would flash by him and break the tape in the race *he* could have won.

A form loomed up at his side, and then went to the front. He stared, for he saw the well-known jersey of the Ohio Wesleyan man!

The two of them were well ahead of the field, and fifty yards from the tape. Palmetter, still limping along, was keeping ahead of the rest, and seemed fairly sure of holding his lead and getting third place. If only he could have taken first and the tired Thorne third, but now Stanton would take the race and the five points unless, by some miracle, Thorne beat him out.

Stanton was tiring now. He had allowed Thorne to gain a great lead, and the sprint to catch him had taken all of his strength. Physically he was a shade better than his rival, but he lacked the great awakening that had come to Donald.

He uttered a sharp gasp of wonder as the Oberlin man crept even with him and then went slowly past. Gamely he battled to regain the lost few inches, but they crossed the line in the same positions as they ran the last five yards, and Palmetter won third place by fully as gallant a fight.

"Hurrah!"

It was big Bill Parmalee, the Yale star, who caught the almost-fainting Thorne in his arms. "Think of it, old man, you ripped off that half in a minute and fifty-nine seconds; it is a new State record! We thought the race was lost when you started that mad dash, but you pulled out. How did you ever keep up at the finish?"

"College spirit!" panted Donald, with a happy smile. "I knew I had to win for Oberlin, and I did it."

Then he learned of Palmetter's mishap, and the repentant captain made a clean breast of his treachery, and received Thorne's freely granted forgiveness.

"I was eager to win the point cup," said Palmetter, "and I tricked you into running yourself out so I could beat you. But before the race I learned of how you sacrificed your chances of next year here to run for Oberlin, and I saw what a mean sneak I was. I tried to tell you before the race, but I

was too late. I hurt my ankle, and you ran a wonderful race, Thorne!"

"I have been a fool, too," confessed Thorne. "I was bitter because I had to work all my spare time when others could loaf and get into athletics. I condemned them for it, and I had no friends. Now that I have learned what it is to sacrifice and work for my college, I am happy. I don't know how I am going to earn money for college next fall, but something may turn up."

"Something has turned up," said Bill Parmalee. "You just run your best for Oberlin this season. My kid brother needs tutoring this summer to get him ready for college in the fall. You shall come and stay with us, and not a cent shall it cost you; so you can save your salary. Not a word; he needs a tutor, and you are the man for the place. When you get ready to come to Yale, we sons of old Eli will stand by you, Thorne."

Palmetter was sincerely happy that Thorne's sacrifice was rewarded and that his hopes of the next year at college were not dashed, because of his act in running for Oberlin. He held out his hand to Donald.

"Go in now, and win the novice half and the point cup," he said. "I'll carry off the shot put, but your first in the two races beats me. I don't deserve the cup, and you do."

The coach smiled as he interposed:

"I think you do deserve it now, Palmetter. You are a senior, and Donald has other chances at it. Anyhow, he cannot run in the novice half now, for the moment he crossed the tape and won the open half he became an amateur and lost his novice standing. So, if you win the shot put, you'll have six points to his five, and the cup is yours."

"I am glad!" exclaimed Thorne. "My own victory for Oberlin is all I want, Palmetter. I may come back here another year before I go to Yale, and I'll have a chance to win the cup next spring. I am glad you will win it now."

"And another thing," said Coach Kemp; "all Palmetter's alarm about your running a faster half than you did was needless. When I timed you

the other day, I had just snapped the watch on a quarter-miler in fifty-seven seconds, so I started it from that point on you, and, as the hand went around twice and I caught you at sixty, your time was two minutes and three seconds, or a second slower than your record to date."

"Well!" gasped Palmetter, "so my time was better than his, and yet I tried to keep him out of the race! What a jealous fool I was!"

"I don't think I can ever run it again as fast as I did to-day," said Thorne seriously. "It was my awakening that sent me so fast. But I am ready to help Oberlin win the two-mile race from Miami."

A few minutes later he walked from the field. Big Bill Parmalee was on one side of him, and Ralph Palmetter had thrown an arm across his shoulders. He felt all the old bitterness gone from his heart and life forever.

Now he was one of them, united by that great desire to work for old Oberlin. Even the buildings took on a new meaning as he gazed on them.

As he neared Dascomb Cottage, a group of students burst into a joyous chorus:

"For he's a jolly good fellow, which nobody can deny."

And this time Donald Thorne was thrilled, for he knew that they were singing of him.

Why, of Course

By James Edmond Casey

How easy, when it is all over, to see just what was in the wind, all the time!

THE stout, loud-waistcoated man struck out of the swirl of the Broadway crowd and into the dazzling jewelry store of Radlang & Co., at Oakland, California.

"I want to buy a diamond ring for my daughter," he informed the first clerk behind the polished glass counter. "Doubtless you've read about my daughter and her coming marriage," he pompously went on, as his thick fingers fumbled amid the array of rings. "Dorothea De los O'Brien, you know. I'm Pedar De los O'Brien." And he proffered a card.

The clerk was astounded. For he had judged the man, from appearances and manner, a cheap sport, or politician of the prosperous saloonkeeper brand. But De los O'Brien! That was a name to conjure with across the bay in San Francisco. Here, in Oakland, O'Brien was known only by reputation as the lumber and shipping king of the Pacific Coast.

"This about hits what I want." The expensively though flashily dressed Mr.

De los O'Brien held up a plain band gold ring set with a handsome diamond. "What may be the price of this?"

"Two hundred and ten dollars, sir."

Without another word, the portly money king drew out as portly a wallet. But, after a quick examination of its contents, it appeared something was wrong. Mr. De los O'Brien looked up.

"I have only a hundred and sixty-five dollars here," he explained. "And, worse luck, I haven't my check book on me. But—oh, I forgot——" And he withdrew from another recess of the wallet a crisp pink check.

He handed that to the waiting clerk.

"This is for one thousand dollars," he said. "You can take it out of that."

But the clerk seemed doubtful.

"I don't think we can cash it," he hesitatingly explained. "You see, sir, it is a rule with us never to accept a check for more than the amount of the purchase. But, if you'll pardon me a moment, I'll see Mr. Radlang, the boss, and find out just what we can do for you in this case."

Quickly the clerk reappeared, in the

wake of a small, gray, wizened man, who was red of face and evidently angry.

"Look here, sir!" said this little person, leaning across the glass case. "You sure have got your nerve with you! Coming in here and trying to work off a bad check and pocket the change! But I'm too wise to fall for any such old game as that! Tut, tut! I don't care who you say you are! I never saw you before in my life! But I think you——"

"That'll do, sir!" The portly man had drawn himself up, indignant. "You've gone far enough. So I am trying to swindle you—I, Pedar De los O'Brien! I'll have you to know, sir, that I could buy your store ten times over and never feel it. Bad check! I wouldn't have offered it, only I never for a minute thought there was any one in business in Oakland who didn't know Pedar De los O'Brien, of San Francisco."

The stranger's hurt, confident manner, and his quiet repetition of that powerful name, all had an effect on the little jeweler. He calmed down with surprising suddenness, and when he spoke again, it was in a more reasonable tone of voice.

"But can't you see it's a business proposition, Mr. De los O'Brien?" Radlang expostulated. "My attitude is only businesslike and perfectly proper. Personally, I would take your word for it and cash your check right now. But that isn't good business."

Mr. De los O'Brien saw that.

"You're right," he said. "You're perfectly right. But, just the same, it roiled me a bit to be mistaken for a swindler." Suddenly his face brightened, as though with an inspiration. "Jingo!" he exclaimed. "I'll tell you what I'll do. I can't let you take my word for it and cash this check. No; that isn't good business, as you say. But I'll prove to you who I am, and that will show I am far above committing any swindle."

His enthusiasm was contagious.

"How?" from Radlang. "What is it?"

"This, just this: I'm going away for

a few days—up to Eureka to look over some shipments of timber. I'll call in when I return. In the meantime, you can find out whether my check is good by putting it through the bank. You will keep both check and ring till I look in again. Now, what do you think of it?"

The jeweler failed to see how he ran any risk so long as he retained both check and ring. Added to this, his curiosity had been aroused in regard to his would-be customer. For his own benefit, he wanted to determine the true status of the man.

"I guess the old fellow's Pedar De los O'Brien all right, after all," he said to himself, as he indorsed the check and inclosed it with others for the banks.

And, as the days passed, the stronger his convictions grew that the check was good. Why, otherwise, should the portly stranger so desire to have it put through and proven? Imagine his surprise, then, when, three days later, the check for one thousand dollars came back from the bank on which it was drawn, with a little slip attached which read: "No funds."

"Well, I see it all now," the jeweler said, communing with himself, after the first shock. "He was just saving his face by trying to make good on his bluff. Anyhow, I'll keep this as a souvenir of Pedar De los O'Brien, or whatever his real name is. For I know I'll never see him again."

II.

THAT very afternoon, who should stride largely into the store but the smiling, portly Mr. Pedar De los O'Brien.

"Well, how about that check of mine?" were his first words.

Radlang broke into that "I-told-you-so" smile so common after elections and prize fights. Without a word, he laid before the stranger the pink check and the attached "no funds" slip.

A look of blank amazement came over the other's face. He studied the check as though unable to believe the evidence of his eyes. Then, of a sud-

den, he burst out laughing, his ample stomach heaving up and down and his broad face going red with merriment.

"Well, and no wonder!" he exclaimed when he had regained sufficient control of himself. "No wonder it came back! I asked the clerk up at my hotel for a blank check on my bank—and he gave me this. Why, it is drawn on the wrong bank. Ha, ha! No wonder it came back. But no matter——"

He drew out his now well-filled wallet, and deposited the check therein. Then he withdrew two one-hundred-dollar bills and a gold eagle, which he tendered, amid profuse apologies, in payment for the diamond ring.

"I guess you won't object to taking this kind of money," he laughed. And, pocketing the ring, he departed.

Behind him, he left a sadly muddled little gray jeweler. What in the world, Radlang asked himself, was beneath all this jugglery? That something was afoot he felt in his bones; but what it was, old business man though he was, he could not tell. He had an uncomfortable feeling of being the victim of an exceedingly clever swindler. It was uncanny, like a premonition of danger; but all he could do to combat it was to breathe the hope that he had seen the last of the suave, well-fed Mr. Pedar De los O'Brien, of San Francisco.

III.

IT was the intention of the portly check giver that he should see no more of the uncheatable Mr. Radlang. Yet that fact did not account for his going to another jewelry store that day.

It appears that Radlang was not the only jeweler in Oakland whom Pedar had favored with his patronage. For, when he called at Hatton & Jenkil's "Diamond Palace" that afternoon, the head of the firm, Mr. Jenkil, gave him a nod of recognition.

The store was pretty full with the Saturday afternoon shopping crowd. De los O'Brien went to the repair counter, presented a ticket, and received a diamond ring which he had left there to be reset. He had decided to give this

commission to Hatton & Jenkil after Mr. Radlang had cruelly refused to favor him with change in real money on the thousand-dollar check.

Strangely enough, however, the usually wise Pedar De los O'Brien had not profited by that humiliating experience. For here he was standing at the cashier's window, bill for the resetting of the ring in hand, and again tendering that scorned thousand-dollar check in payment.

To be sure, the check now bore the indorsement of a certain financially sound jeweler—Mr. Radlang, to be exact.

Mr. Jenkil, who was taking cash that day, said, after examining the check on both sides:

"I beg your pardon, sir, but we have never done business with you, except to the extent of resetting this ring; and this is rather a large check—one thousand dollars—to offer in payment for that service. There would be nine hundred and seventy-eight dollars change."

Mr. Pedar De los O'Brien's face began to take on that look of indignation which he could so easily summon to his aid. He did not have a chance to speak, for, noting the change in his countenance, Mr. Jenkil went on, in a conciliatory tone:

"As Mr. Radlang has indorsed this check and put his O. K. on it, it must be good. It's after banking hours, as you say, and there is no other way you can cash the check, so——"

He did not finish the sentence. Instead, he stepped off his high seat, backed out of the cash cage, slammed the grated door behind him, and stepped briskly to the rear of the store, where there was a telephone.

De los O'Brien's first impulse was to "beat it"; but by the time he got to the door, he reflected that he might be throwing away a chance to get that nine hundred and seventy-eight dollars change.

He had lived on chances several years, and his waist measurement had increased steadily. Chances were his stock in trade. The present one was rather desperate, he had to admit. He

knew that Jenkil had gone to the phone to ask Radlang about his indorsement of that check. Of course—well, time enough to lay down your cards when you see the other chap has you beaten.

Mr. De los O'Brien decided to remain just where he was, standing at the door; and when Jenkil came away from the phone he would be able to see from the man's face just what had happened—whether the reply had come from Radlang himself, exposing the attempted game, or whether the reply had come from a clerk, Radlang being absent.

De los O'Brien had figured that it was about time for Radlang to be absent from his store, on his way to the ball game. If some one else answered the inquiry, the information given about the check might be such as to make Jenkil waver and possibly cash it. A slim chance, to be sure; but a chance, nevertheless; and Mr. De los O'Brien did not find it in his heart to throw it away. If it became necessary to beat a swift, undignified retreat, he had a taxicab awaiting him.

So he stood by the door, pretending to be looking at articles of jewelry, but really with his sharp eyes fixed on the telephone and the man before it.

Presently Mr. De los O'Brien saw the jeweler rattling the hook excitedly, and heard him crying "Hello!" repeatedly. Evidently the connection had been broken before his talk was finished with whomever the person was who had answered the call.

After a while, Jenkil hung up the receiver and walked back to the cashier's cage, an annoyed look on his face. The watcher at the door saw him take up the check again, put it in a drawer, and begin counting out the cash.

Expanding his chest, with renewed courage and a tolerant smile on his ample countenance, Mr. Pedar De los O'Brien moved toward the cashier to receive his hard-earned change.

IV.

RADLANG, the rich jeweler, but poor casher of strange checks, was an ardent baseball fan. It was his delight on Saturday afternoons to take off his

collar and sweat on the grand stand, rooting riotously for the Oakland team. Usually he was accompanied by a man the public believed his bitterest rival, Mr. Jenkil, of Jenkil & Hatton, manufacturing and retail jewelers, of Broadway.

Radlang was about to call up his friend to see if he were going to the game that afternoon, when a call came from Jenkil himself.

"Say, Radlang," came over the wire, "there's a man named Pedar De los O'Brien here with a check for a thousand dollars bearing your indorsement. Did you indorse it?"

By the time Jenkil had got to his question, Radlang was so excited that he burst into hysterical laughter. "Oh, yes, I indorsed it," he answered, his fingers twitching so that he could scarcely hold the receiver to his ear. "Oh, yes. But don't you pay it, Jenkil! Don't you take it. I'll be right around. Hold the scoundrel, and I'll pick up a policeman on the way, and we'll have him locked up. Be sure you hold him, now. Get me?"

There was no response.

"Jenkil!" shouted Radlang into the transmitter. "Do you understand?"

Still no answer. Then the jeweler began to rattle the hook, just as Jenkil was doing at his end. Blessing the girl at central, and realizing that there was not a moment to be lost, Radlang caught up his hat and tore out of the store.

"Afraid of missing the first of the game," sneered one of the clerks.

"Yes," chimed in another. "The boss is getting to be a bigger bug every day on baseball."

As Radlang dashed through the street, it all came to him in a staggering flash. It was plain to him now that the purchase of the diamond ring and the putting through of the one-thousand-dollar check was only a brilliant scheme to get his good indorsement on a worthless check. Then the portly swindler, by means of having a ring reset, or something, had scraped a business acquaintance with Jenkil. And now in payment he was proffering that bad check with the excuse that he could not change it

elsewhere because the banks were closed.

And poor Jenkil was falling for the swindle—until he had been told not to pay it. A horrible thought entered Radlang's mind. Had Jenkil heard that part of the message? Had it reached him before the connection was broken?

With a cold shiver from head to foot, the little gray jeweler vaulted into control of himself. He arrived at the store, and stepped forward just in time to block the way of Mr. Pedar De los O'Brien.

But the latter was not in the trade of swindling business men because of any lack of brains on his part or presence of mind. His right hand shot forward to grasp that of Mr. Radlang.

"Why, how d'ye do?" he beamed. "So glad to meet you again. But I'm in a fierce hurry to get a train for Los Angeles! Good-by!"

But the jeweler, though a small man, held so tightly to the swindler's hand that he could not wrench away.

"Not so fast, Mr. O'Brien," he said loudly, to attract attention and help. "It was a close shave, but I got you by the skin of my teeth. And I'll trouble you, before I hand you over to the police, to return Mr. Jenkil his one thousand dollars."

"Wrong again, sir," returned Pedar, still calm, although a policeman now appeared at the door. "The amount is nine hundred and eighty-seven. As well be precise in business matters."

Bank of England's Night Guard

VISITORS in London who happen to be in the vicinity of the Bank of England at about half past six in the evening may witness one of the most interesting customs in that city, for it is at that time that a detachment of armed guards march into the bank with fixed bayonets for the purpose of guarding the twenty million pounds in gold and silver with which the vaults of the "Old Lady of Threadneedle Street" are usually stocked.

This custom dates back to the Gordon Riots of 1780, when it was deemed necessary to call in soldiers to prevent the mob raiding the bank. Since then the bank has been protected every night by a detachment of guards.

The detachment usually numbers about thirty men, in parade dress, with fixed bayonets and loaded ammunition belts, in charge of two sergeants and a lieutenant. These are the only troops that have the privilege, on ordinary occasions, of marching through the city of London with fixed bayonets.

For guarding the bank the soldiers receive extra pay, which is given to them as soon as they enter the bank each night. Privates and drummer boy get one shilling each, corporals one shilling, six pence, and sergeants two shillings, six pence. This sum is exclusive of the

subaltern's allowance. The aggregate cost of guarding the Bank of England is about one thousand pounds per annum.

The bank authorities do all they can for the soldiers' comfort. They provide them with extra blankets for the winter, and a selection of books; while the lieutenant in charge has a snug little room, a dinner being brought in to him from a neighboring tavern. He is also allowed to entertain two guests, the only stipulation being that they must depart before midnight.

Failing any emergency call, the majority of the soldiers merely perform sentry go once a night for an hour. They are posted throughout the rooms of the bank and in the courts, the sentries being increased in the middle of the night, and remaining on duty till the detachment returns to barracks at six o'clock in the summer and seven in the winter.

With regard to the lieutenant, there is a curious stipulation that he shall only have one bottle of wine for himself, and two for each of his guests, while the regulation is that each soldier shall not be allowed more than one pint of stout from the small canteen which has been established inside the bank for the convenience of the night guard.



The Vanishing Ambulance

by J. Lenivers Carew.

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

CHAPTER I.

A HURRY CALL.

AN electric bell trilled on the floor of the hospital where the quarters of the house staff were located, and was heard faintly by Doctor Denzil and Doctor Gresham, as they sat reading in the library on the top floor.

Denzil started slightly as he heard it, but continued to study with his head bowed low over a textbook on medical jurisprudence.

Gresham smiled quietly, and waited a moment.

"Hear the bell, Stephen? The bus is going out," he said dryly, using the expression of the medical vernacular for what the layman knows as an ambulance.

"Yes, confound it!" cried Denzil, springing to his feet and clapping the book shut; "I might have known the bus would go out. If I didn't want to bone for that exam, there wouldn't be a call to-night."

"Doctor Denzil, the ambulance is waiting," said a low-voiced nurse, stepping into the room.

"Yes, Miss Morton; thank you," answered Denzil, with polite irony. "I gathered as much from hearing the bell, and I'm delighted."

Without further delay, he ran down the stairs to his room, clapped the uniform cap of the hospital service on his head, slipped a raincoat over his white ducks, and ran on to the courtyard, catching up the emergency bag, and grabbing the official record slip of the call from an orderly as he passed through the receiving ward.

The ambulance was standing just within the gates, and the big gray horse was pawing the air and champing its bit restively. But as Doctor Denzil appeared, the driver gave the horse its head, and the ambulance whirled out into the street, the surgeon catching the hand strap and landing on the tail board in a flying leap.

"It's a hurry call, doctor," shouted Pat Kelly, the driver, as he let the great horse out to its long, free lope.

"So I see, Pat," answered Denzil, holding the official slip up to the light of the lantern.

"Up to the North End, the clerk said," added the driver.

"Um, yes; a good way out, too," said the doctor, squinting at the paper; "it's number fifty-nine Beaver Street. You'd better let up on your horse a bit."

The ambulance whirled through the quiet city streets, and the big gong under the busy foot of Pat Kelly woke the echoes, as well as some of the early sleepers.

Doctor Denzil presently climbed over the back of the driver's seat, and took the place beside the good-humored Irishman.

"I hated like the deuce to come out to-night, Pat," he said sociably. "I had just settled down to study hard for that exam to-morrow when the bell rang. Now it's a cinch that I'll get no more study to-night."

"Ah, don't ye be worryin', Doctor Denzil," said Pat encouragingly. "It's no fear I have, sir, that ye'll not get th' appointment. But between you an' me, sir, it's Doctor Fraser I'd be hatin' to see gettin' it."

Denzil laughed without much mirth. "I guess Doctor Fraser is all right, Pat," he replied, with some restraint, "but he feels his authority a bit too keenly for a man just graduated."

"Sure, he's after thinkin' I'm his coachman when he's on the bus, sir," growled Pat. "The airs the man puts on, sir, would be makin' ye think we was ridin' in a bayrooch, 'stead of a horspit'l bus."

"Never mind, Pat; maybe he'll tone down a little if he gets the appointment," murmured Denzil absently; "hospital life is good training for any man."

"Ah, bad cess to 'im!" muttered the driver, with yet franker feeling. "I've got me fingers crossed agin' his gettin' it. Git ap, Jerry hoss!" And he banged the gong violently, as though he had the despised Doctor Fraser under the pedal.

They were out of the thickly settled districts now and among the scattering houses of the outskirts.

"Pull up, Pat," ordered Denzil suddenly; "Beaver Street is the next turn."

But Pat scarcely checked the leaping

horse, and the ambulance rounded the turn into Beaver Street on two wheels.

"Now for number fifty-nine," cautioned Denzil.

"I'll spot it, sir," assured Pat; "the numbers begin at the other end."

In another minute he pulled up with a jerk in front of a somewhat ramshackle cottage. "This'll be number fifty-nine, doctor," he said. "I ray-member comin' before to number fifty-three."

Denzil caught up the emergency bag, dropped from the tail board, and ran up the garden path to the house. There was a dim light burning at one of the windows, but the cottage had a bare look, as of a place untenanted.

As the ambulance surgeon's footfall sounded on the rickety porch, the door was flung open, and a large man, bearded and in rough clothing, appeared in the doorway, holding an oil lamp aloft and peering into the outside darkness.

"Roach live here? Is this number fifty-nine?" queried Denzil.

"Ah, thank heavens, you've come, doctor!" exclaimed the man. "He was took awful bad 'bout two hours ago."

"Well, who is 'he,' and where is he?" demanded Denzil, with the curtness of the busy public physician.

"Right this way, doctor," said the man, leading the way to an inner room. "He's my brother-in-law; his name is Greene. My, but he's been takin' on somethin' terrible. You was a long time comin', doctor."

"Got here as fast as the horse could run," replied the doctor, as he followed the big man into the dimly lighted room, and peered curiously at another huge fellow who was doubled up grotesquely on a rough couch, groaning and panting stertorously.

"Now, take it easy, and tell me what's the matter," said Denzil to the sufferer, as he laid off his overcoat and placed the emergency bag on the floor.

The man on the couch rolled his head wildly from side to side, and laid a hand tenderly upon his abdomen.

The doctor bent over, and pressed

gently upon the spot indicated. "Hurt much?" he inquired gently.

The redoubled groans answered him clearly.

"An acute inflammation—probably," said Denzil tersely. Then, turning to the other man: "This isn't necessarily a hospital case, but you don't seem to have very good facilities for taking care of the man. I guess we may as well take him back with us. I'll give him something to quiet the pain now."

The sick man squirmed protestingly, and managed to mutter: "No, no, no!" between his groans.

"He don't like to take dope," explained Roach. "He's got a heart trouble, doctor, an' dope near did for 'im once."

"Well, if you can stand it till we get to the hospital," said Denzil, "I'm satisfied. But there's no need of your suffering so. I won't harm your heart."

The man continued to wag his head and protest, so the doctor made no effort to give temporary relief, but stepped quickly out of the room and to the door.

"Oh, Pat!" he called; "back the bus up to the porch, will you? And then bring in the litter."

He went back to the side of the sick man, and counseled him to keep calm and agitate himself as little as possible, and presently Pat Kelly came quietly into the room with the litter, which he opened and placed on the floor.

The doctor and the driver quickly lifted the patient with the deftness of experienced hands, and placed him gently upon the litter. The man Roach offered to lend a hand, but Denzil waved him aside.

"Kelly and I know just how to handle this thing," he said, "so don't you bother about it, Mr. Roach."

Having settled the man as comfortably as possible, the doctor and the driver lifted the litter, and started slowly for the door, Kelly leading and Denzil supporting the rear handles.

But at that moment something happened which is not included in an ambulance surgeon's daily program.

The big fellow, Roach, following in the rear, suddenly whipped a blackjack from his sleeve, and felled Denzil with a quick blow.

The young doctor staggered backward and fell. The rear end of the litter dropped. The patient, who had seemed so helpless, sprang to his feet with astonishing agility, and joined Roach in grappling with the surprised Kelly, who was taken utterly unawares.

CHAPTER II.

FOR RANSOM.

WHEN Doctor Denzil regained consciousness, he found himself lying on the floor of the room in which the bogus patient had lain. His hands and feet were tied firmly and uncomfortably, and there was a gag in his mouth.

He noted that it was still night, and, upon turning his head to the right, he saw a clock upon the mantel whose hands indicated the hour of eleven. He turned his head to the left, and discovered Pat Kelly, similarly bound and gagged, lying upon the couch.

Kelly was looking at him, fully conscious, and his eyes were vividly eloquent. They expressed clearly his views upon the awkward situation, and sparkled darkly with predictions of events to follow.

The two prisoners were alone in the ill-furnished room with the ticking clock and the smoking oil lamp, but vague sounds came from outside the cottage, and Denzil presently made out muffled voices and the stamping of a restive horse—undoubtedly Jerry of the ambulance.

A quarter hour passed with increasing torture for the trussed and helpless prisoners, and then Roach and Greene—as the former had given their names—came in hurriedly, picked up Kelly, snorting with fury, and bore him out of the house.

They returned directly, and carried Denzil out in the same manner, and placed him, none too gently, beside Kelly in the ambulance—in his own bus.

Roach sat on the tail board to guard

the prisoners, and Greene mounted to the driver's seat, and started Jerry at a trot out of the yard and down the broad macadam street toward the open country. The lantern and side lights of the ambulance had been extinguished, and Greene was careful that no accidental movement of his feet should wake the gong to action.

Denzil's head was sore from the blow of the blackjack, and it throbbed cruelly, but his senses were keenly alert, and when the ambulance stopped at last he roughly estimated that it had traversed something like ten miles.

The smell of the sea came to his nostrils, and, when he was lifted out of the ambulance, he saw, by the faint light of the early dawn, a low, dilapidated fisherman's hovel and a rudely constructed barn close beside it.

The two victims of the mysterious night's work were laid on the floor of the hovel, and left alone again for a half hour. Denzil heard noises which indicated that Jerry was being stabled, and the ambulance concealed from the view of possible intruders.

Toward daylight the two ruffians came into the house, and removed the gags from the prisoners' mouths. Kelly exploded in such a wealth of invective that, instead of impressing the captors as he desired, he only succeeded in amusing them.

"Don't waste your breath, Pat," said Denzil, speaking for the first time; "we must keep cool, old man."

And then he turned his eyes scathingly upon the two men that stood over him.

"What do you blackguards want, anyway?" he demanded, with cold calmness.

Roach laughed almost good-humoredly. "Never mind the compliments, doctor," he said. "We can state the case pretty easy, without any fuss.

"It ain't a very common thing to kidnap grown men, and I suppose all this ambulance business looks like we went to a great deal o' trouble. But that's our lookout; we figgered it all out beforehand.

"'Tain't generally known, I believe,

but we happened to know that you've got a rich brother that thinks a heap of you—edgercated you an' set you up for a doctor, an' all that. He'll pay up, *at our price*, when he finds out his brother is in all kinds o' trouble.

"Course we took quite some trouble an' risk, but we been watchin' you for some time, an' we found out there wa'n't much hope of gettin' you away from the horspit'l 'cept on the ambulance. The Irishman is no good to us, but we got to keep 'im as long as you stay."

"Look here," interrupted Denzil, cringing under the torture of his bonds; "I don't care for all the details of your scheme. I've got a few things to say myself. I won't waste any time in telling you what chances you two are taking with the law—you both ought to know what it means to assault and abduct two men, steal a horse, and interfere with the ambulance service of a city hospital—but I'll tell you just what it means to me."

"Yer comin' on fine, doc," remarked the hitherto silent Mr. Greene; "yer a man after my own heart; business is business, says I."

"Don't interrupt me," said Denzil sharply; "I want as little talk with you as I can have. Assuming that you expect to get ransom for me, you can't possibly communicate with my brother and make any arrangements within twenty-four hours. He's in the woods, fishing, out of the way of telephone and telegraph."

"That's all right," said Roach; "we can wait. Our tracks are covered. I'm not afraid of the police locatin' us here for a week. This place was made for the job."

"But I can't wait!" exclaimed Denzil impatiently. "Under ordinary circumstances, I'd see you fellows in Tophet before I'd make a move toward a compromise, but my career for the next two years depends on my presence at the Samaritan Hospital to-day.

"I'm not officially connected with the hospital," he continued; "I'm only substituting for another doctor, but I'm in line for appointment, and it's the most

valuable one in the State. The competitive examination takes place at two o'clock to-day, and the appointment practically lies between another man and myself. I have both professional and personal reasons for beating the other man—he has already tried to keep me out of the race by fair means and foul—and if I do not report to the examining board at two o'clock, I shall lose the appointment by default.

"Here's my proposition," he went on earnestly: "I've got nine hundred dollars in the bank, and I'll give you a check for that amount now if you'll release me. I'll stay here till one of you goes to town and cashes the check, and then I'll have time to get to the hospital. Do this, and I'll consider the incident closed, and I'll fix things all right with Kelly. If you reject the proposal, why, I'll see that my brother has nothing to do with the affair, even if you kill me! But I'll spend the rest of my life, if it's spared, in running you two down and getting you right. That's all I've got to say!"

"Hooroo fer you, me lad!" cried Pat Kelly. "It's no ransom they'll get out o' Mary Kelly fer the likes o' me, an' I'm an awful bad feller when I get on the track of a man."

CHAPTER III.

TREATMENT FOR THE DOCTOR.

THE man Greene had listened to Denzil's statement attentively, and he showed signs of weakening, but Roach spoke decisively.

"You're a pretty fair lawyer, doctor," he said sneeringly, "but I've got to tell you that the proposition is declined with thanks. Nine hundred dollars wouldn't pay us for the fuss we've been to already. You just keep quiet, an' we'll get a line on your brother quicker than you think."

Denzil flushed darkly, and writhed for an instant in impotent rage. Kelly made the atmosphere sulphurous with his remarks, but succeeded merely in amusing the captors again.

"There's more back of this than ap-

pears on the surface, Roach," said Denzil, when he had recovered his composure; "there's a 'man higher up.'"

Roach laughed irritatingly. "I'm high up enough, doctor," he said calmly; "this ain't no corporation deal."

A futile exchange of words went on for another hour, and then Roach announced his intention to go to the city and see what the police and the newspapers were doing about the disappearance of the two men and the ambulance.

"You'll be all right here," he said to Greene. "There's nothing to be done yet. Only you mustn't talk to these fellers—it wouldn't do no good, an' the doctor's a sharp one. You leave him for me to deal with. I'll be back here in two or three hours."

The morning waned, and the two captives suffered untold mental tortures, to say nothing of pain from the tightly laced fetters.

"Greene," said Denzil at last to the silent watcher, "you are at least a man with half a heart, by your looks; will you do something for me—merely to ease this torture? You don't know how I'm suffering!"

Greene shifted his feet uneasily, and looked at the captive's pale face.

"I—I won't let up on them ropes a bit," he said, with decision. "'Twouldn't do! Do yer want a drink o' water—either of yer?"

"No, Greene, I want some dope—that's plain enough, isn't it?" answered Denzil. "Tell me: did you bring that bag of mine along in the ambulance?"

Greene fidgeted nervously.

"Yer bag's in the nex' room," he said, after a minute.

"Well, then, you certainly won't be taking any chances if you put me to sleep for a few hours, will you?" pursued Denzil, with his eyes fixed intently on the watery orbs of the jailer.

Greene got up and shuffled into the adjoining room, returning at once with the emergency bag.

"I don't jes' know what yer game is," he said hesitatingly, "but I don't see no harm in putting yer to sleep. How'll I do it?"

"Thank you, Greene," said Denzil simply. "Open the bag, please."

The man fumbled with the lock, and laid the large bag open, disclosing an assortment of instruments and several rows of small vials.

The doctor raised his head painfully, and looked at the bag.

"See that fourth bottle from this end, with the green label?" he asked. "Well, Greene, I wish you'd fill my hypodermic with some of that liquid, and give me a shot of it. Then I can sleep for a few hours in peace."

Green got up from his kneeling position, and frowned peevishly.

"Oh, I don't know nothin' 'bout yer hypodemics an' things!" he protested. "What do yer think I am, a doctor?"

Denzil sighed profoundly and impressively.

"It's not a great favor to ask, Greene," he said. "If it took a doctor to fill a hypodermic, all the poor drug fiends would have to smoke opium. Now, all you have to do is to unscrew that needle, draw the liquid up into the barrel, replace the needle, give the piston a touch to press out the air bubble, and the thing is done."

Greene was decidedly bored, and he muttered vaguely and scowled, as he condescended at last to follow the prisoner's directions and fill the syringe.

"Now, what do I do?" he asked foolishly, as he stood with the loaded hypodermic in his hand.

"Well, Greene, I don't think you'd better do very much more of the operation, if your hand shakes like that," answered Denzil. "You're a nervous man; this life of brigandage doesn't agree with you, my friend."

"Now, suppose you put the hypo into my hand?" he continued, with a certain subtle authority. "I'm tied up pretty tightly, but I can manage two fingers and a thumb, I guess. And then please roll up that left trousers leg. I can't very well get at my own arm, so we'll try a shot in the leg, if you'll kindly hold just a pinch of skin between your thumb and finger. Remember, Greene, when you have a job like this, you

mustn't put the needle into the muscle—just get it under the skin."

The man put the syringe into the cramped fingers of Denzil's right hand, and continued to grumble to himself as he turned up the duck trousers until the calf of the leg was exposed. Then, as Denzil drew up his knees until he could reach the calf, the man tremblingly picked up a fold of skin, and held it as he was directed.

"Now for relief!" cried Denzil, with a strange, wild gleam in his eye.

And with a movement like a lightning flash, he struck the needle of the hypodermic into the loose, wrinkled skin on the back of the man's hand, and pressed home the piston.

The burly ruffian gave a roar like a wounded bull.

For an instant he hesitated in bewilderment, and then sprang upon the supine form of Denzil.

"I'll kill you! I'll choke the life out of yer fer that!" he bellowed.

And he proceeded to carry out the threat. His great hands closed on the doctor's throat, and Denzil felt his breath and life slipping away from him. He struggled feebly, but could do nothing under the weight and strength of the brute.

Then—suddenly—the viselike clutch weakened and relaxed. An uncanny gurgle came from the parted lips of Greene, and he toppled over across the body of Denzil, and lay inert.

Pat Kelly viewed the scene with eyes of incredulous wonder. But when he saw the big fellow collapse and move no more, he let out a yell that brought the half-conscious Denzil to himself.

He stared about the room in a dazed fashion for a minute; then he regained his faculties, and wriggled from under the dead weight of his recent assailant.

"Pat! Pat!" he cried; "we're free! I've filled the man full of hyoscine! He can't wake for hours!"

Almost sobbing with excitement and delight, the surgeon rolled over and over on the floor until he lay beside the emergency bag.

There were gleaming, keen-edged instruments lying temptingly within it,

and it was but the work of a moment for him to pick out a long, curved bistoury, a knife with a blade like a razor. His hands were too cramped to wield it freely, but he managed to hold it with some firmness as he drew up his legs and sawed at the ropes on his ankles. Half a dozen slashes severed every strand, and the prisoner was free except for the cords that held his wrists.

When he tried to stand up, his legs seemed paralyzed, but the restored circulation did its work rapidly, and he was soon able to free Kelly from his helpless position on the couch. Then the wildly happy Irishman seized the knife, and completed the liberation of his comrade.

"Will ye looker that, now!" cried the ambulance driver suddenly, in the midst of frantic jubilation, pointing at the clock on the mantel.

"Great Heaven! It's one o'clock, Pat," answered Denzil, and his face paled.

"Doctor!" cried the faithful driver hopefully, "doctor, lad, if Jerry hoss is in that barn out there, we'll beat yer exams, sir, by a length!"

Out to the barn they staggered, and found the big gray horse and the ambulance. And even with their benumbed fingers it was but the work of five minutes to make the equipage ready for the start.

"Pat," said Denzil, "we'll take our friend Greene with us, and make sure of handing him over to the police."

So they dragged the senseless body of their late jailer from the house, and laid it in the ambulance.

"We're off, Pat!" shouted Denzil, mounting the tail board.

"An' it's a hurry call, doctor!" returned Pat Kelly from his seat.

And then he gave the word to Jerry, and, for the first time in months, let the big horse feel the sting of the whip.

Suburban folk heard a mighty gong clanging and the rush of a charging horse's hoofs, but they reached their windows and porches just in time to see an ambulance whisk out of sight in the distance.

Over the macadam and asphalt of the city, the horse, though almost spent, made even greater speed, and the policemen and horrified citizens shook protesting fists from the sidewalk and windows, but Pat could see the four slender towers of the Samaritan Hospital, and nothing less than a stone wall could have stopped him.

Many people recognized the outfit as the missing one, the mysterious report of which they had read in the morning papers, and policemen, reporters, and curious citizens began a mad race for the hospital.

Pat pulled in his frenzied steed only when dangerously near the hospital gates, and the ambulance rolled into the courtyard with a clatter that brought out the staff in a body.

Doctor Denzil swung down from the tail board, handed the emergency bag to an orderly, and bowed respectfully to the house surgeon.

"Doctor," he said to the latter, "I have to report that I have brought in the case after which we went last night. It is a case of an overdose of hyoscine. After treatment, the patient is to be turned over to the police to answer charges of assault and battery, abduction and larceny. I will make a full report, later in the day, in regard to my absence and that of Driver Kelly and the bus."

CHAPTER IV.

A CHANCE SHOT.

THE examining board of the Samaritan Hospital met at two o'clock in the hospital library.

There were fifteen applicants for the new appointment of junior interne, and among them was the wealthy and influential young Doctor Fraser.

"Are all the men here who filed applications for this appointment?" inquired the elderly chairman.

Doctor Gilbert Gresham, who acted as clerk, glanced over his lists, and said reluctantly:

"They are all here, sir, except Doctor Stephen Denzil. And, if you'll pardon me, sir, I'd suggest that the meet-

ing be asked to wait for a few minutes. I am sure Doctor Denzil will be present."

"This board never waits for applicants who are not prompt," said the chairman testily, and rapped on the table with his gavel.

The board of examiners was declared in session, and then the clerk distributed examination papers among the applicants.

Doctor Gresham was discouraged as he viewed the aspiring physicians, all striving for the coveted hospital berth. His friend, Stephen Denzil, had committed an unpardonable breach in the eyes of the hospital authorities; he had defaulted in a contest which meant much to every ambitious beginner.

Some said that the disappearance of the ambulance, surgeon, driver, and horse was precisely of a color with some of Denzil's early escapades in college, and there were plenty to indorse this view.

The class of applicants had been writing busily for ten minutes when a brisk step sounded from outside the library door, and Doctor Denzil walked into the room, and bowed to the chairman of the board.

A pencil clattered to the floor, and one of the applicants uttered an exclamation plainly heard by all.

"Stephen Denzil—the devil!" he said.

Denzil whirled, and looked at the man, and in his eyes he saw more than mere rivalry and jealousy. Ignoring the dignity of the board in session, he strode round the table, and leaned over toward Doctor Fraser.

"Fraser!" he said incisively, "you made a mistake. You ignored the fact that a man who has been bought still has a price!"

It was a random shot, but it went home. Fraser turned a sickly white.

"Roach! Damn 'im!" he cried.

"And I have your other friend, Greene, in the receiving ward," continued Denzil. "He is not yet in fit shape to be turned over to the police. Pat Kelly and I have had rather active service during the last twelve hours."

Fraser got on his feet, but he was deathly pale, and his chin quivered weakly when he tried to speak.

"I—I must go and see those—those scoundrels," he faltered. "They lied to you, Denzil; I'll take oath I had nothing to do with the affair!"

"*What* affair, Fraser?" asked Denzil triumphantly.

But Fraser strode out of the room, and clattered down the stairs.

Denzil turned to the wondering board of examiners.

"Mr. Chairman," he said, "I beg to offer you my apology for disturbing the order of this session, but I hope you will allow that the circumstances are unusual, when you see the report I shall submit to the house surgeon.

"And I would further beg you, sir," he continued, "to allow me to take this examination, as I shall prove to your satisfaction that I was forcibly restrained from reporting to this board at the time of assembly, and that the irregular events of the last eighteen hours were the direct results of a conspiracy to discredit and dishonor me."

"I see no reason, Doctor Denzil, why you should be barred from this examination under the circumstances," answered the chairman, "provided that any decision of this board in your favor shall be held, pending the results of whatever investigation may be made of this mysterious affair."

Gave Him the Right Tip

MY dear friend, I must ask you to lend me five dollars at once. I have left my purse at home, and haven't a cent in my pocket."

"I can't lend you five dollars just now, but can put you in the way of getting the money at once."

"You are extremely kind."

"Here's a nickel; ride home on the train and get your purse."

Tale of Central New York and Its Hundred-Million-Dollar Waterway



The Barge Canal Mystery

Roland Ashford Phillips

(A SERIAL NOVEL)

CHAPTER I.

WHILE STANDING IDLE.

CONTRACT No. 206—as a certain stretch of barge canal work is officially known—was a ten-mile length of resounding bustle that afternoon. To the onlooker whose eye was not trained there might have seemed to be confusion along with this riot of activity. But there was not. Every man had his task cut out for him, and performed it in an orderly though by no means leisurely way.

There was only one idler.

He stood at a middle point of the section, or where the State's new inland waterway breaks straight across the marshes, deserting the old, twisting Erie Canal.

The idler had footed it from Rome, New York, to the huge cofferdam at Oriskany.

He was tall, wide-shouldered, and bronzed. His flannel shirt was open at the neck, and his suspiciously clean corduroys were tucked into high-laced, mud-stained boots. His placid face and steady eyes gave mute proof that the din of the barking drills, the shrieking

"dinkies," and the creak of mighty cables tightening over the donkey drums fell upon accustomed and unperturbed ears.

Directly below him, in a bed hollowed out by itself, a great, almost human dredge dug and lifted and dumped with unceasing regularity. The idler had been watching it for perhaps half an hour when abruptly his eyes narrowed, and a quick line furrowed either side of his mouth.

"That brace will buckle on you in a minute," he said, addressing a foreman beside him who was engaged in sticking pins in a plat.

The foreman did not even look up. The stranger took in a deep breath, and bent his gaze once more on that portion of the steel web that shifted back and forth against the sky. The dredge, each time the dripping mud was lifted in the big shovel, snorted wildly, as though protesting against the strain, and then swung about on its circular track, depositing the load down behind the big, white, concrete wing wall.

"That brace is buckling," he said again, louder this time.

The foreman stuck in another pin, and lifted his head.

"Did you make a noise?"

"I was merely warning you about that——"

"Warning, eh?" the foreman growled. "Well, let me tell you, young fellow, when I want warning on this particular job I'll take it from somebody who knows his business."

A new color crept beneath the tan on the younger man's cheeks. His brown fingers doubled. At a critical moment like this the other's insolence was maddening.

"If you'll be kind enough to take a look at it," he said, trying to keep his voice respectful, "you can see for yourself."

Again the slim, steel arm dipped and lifted; again the plume of steam shot from the engine house; again the idler's eyes clouded.

"It will drop right among those laborers!" he cried out impulsively. "Heavens, man, are you deaf?"

The foreman's jaws came together with a snap. He thrust the map—pins and all—into his pocket, and took a few steps nearer the younger man.

"See here, you!" he bawled. "What's the answer? Where do you get*eff, eh? What you doing around this job, anyhow? This ain't the first time I've seen you poking about. What are you trying to find out, eh?"

"I can't see that that is any of your business," the other returned, in an even tone. "This is a State towpath, and I don't think you or any other bull-necked, thick-headed boob can put me off. I'm minding my own affairs."

"The devil you are!" shouted the now thoroughly aroused foreman. "Trying to tell me my braces ain't O. K. Suppose they ain't? What's that to you?"

"Nothing at all, except that I dread to see human lives unnecessarily sacrificed. Those laborers down there will be crushed."

A laugh, that was half a snarl, leaped to the other's lips.

"What's one or two wops worth to me, anyhow?" he said. "There's six after every job. And as for you——"

He didn't finish his threat. The dripping bucket, lifting from the marsh bottom, and swinging high over the heads of the men below, suddenly caught. There was a tearing as of a

dozen rivets snapping. A cable broke as cleanly as a bit of cord might break between a man's hands. The long, spiderlike arm bent double, as if hinged.

The two men uttered simultaneous cries. The foreman's was more of a curse; the stranger's was one of rage and contempt.

By all the good fortune in the world the arm and the loaded bucket fell on a solid concrete abutment. The laborers, too frightened for words, scampered in all directions.

In a minute or two, after the bucket had rolled to a stop, and the steel arm tumbled firmly into a bed of soft concrete, the calmer heads began to reason. Orders were shrieked from one side to the other; men were venturing once more into the hollow, but cautiously.

Standing on the high bank, the foreman, his face now like chalk, his eyes bulging, stared dumbly ahead of him. The man who had warned him in vain shrugged his shoulders, put his hands into his pockets, and sauntered off without a word. When he had covered possibly twenty feet, a voice sang out:

"Hey, you!"

The other gave no heed. The hail was repeated, and then the foreman came running up the towpath.

"Don't be in a hurry, young fellow," he panted.

The idler turned.

"What makes you change your mind?" he asked innocently.

The foreman stared into the latter's face. "You're no greenhorn at this game, are you?"

"Oh, I might have taken a course in engineering at a correspondence school."

"Why," the canal man burst out, paying no attention to the jest, "a buckling brace was the only thing what could have done this job. How did you guess it?"

"I don't guess about such things. It doesn't pay."

"What might your name be?"

"It might be Darion," answered the idler, smiling.

The foreman frowned—then his face brightened. "So it might," he said. "Come along and work for me?"

CHAPTER II.

ON A SILVER PLATTER.

THE man who had announced himself as Darion drew in a long breath and squared his shoulders. A job! And offered to him without being in the least suggested. What a contrast from former experiences! What a musical voice that foreman had! It rang so joyously in his ears that Darion felt he had to hear it once more.

"What was that last remark?" he asked.

"I want you to work for me. I'm in charge on this piece of work. We've got a tough proposition to buck up against. I need some good men. What do you say?"

For the moment Darion had nothing to say. He lifted his eyes and swept a glance away down the twisting length of canal. On either side of him the construction work was in progress. A city seemed encamped in the valley. Everything breathed the spirit of conquest—the conquest of nature!

This new hundred-million barge canal, an undertaking that equaled the Panama job; a three-hundred-mile course, with its locks, its bridges, its movable dams, its monster retaining walls, its vast reservoirs. What a privilege to say that he had had even the slightest hand in forming this matchless waterway from the lakes to the tide!

He could not keep the flush from springing to his cheeks, nor his eyes from sparkling at thought of the impending battle. The foreman read the signs instantly.

"Start you at a hundred and fifty a month."

Darion allowed himself to calm down. He put aside the thought of the work, and faced the man.

"I don't think I care to work for you," he said quietly.

The foreman, confident of victory until this last remark, stepped back in surprise.

"Blamed independent, aren't you?"

"Somewhat."

"I've got a list of sixty-odd men waiting for just this same job," the fore-

man said. "Old men, mind you. Men twice your age."

"Poor devils," Darion remarked sympathetically. Then he tightened his belt another notch. Somehow his stomach felt peculiar—protesting against its treatment.

At that moment, before the other man could continue with his arguments—or drop the affair entirely, owing to Darion's apparent indifference—a bare-headed, sweating worker, covered with mud and the spatter from the air drills below, interrupted.

"Mr. Carreau," he panted, "the engineer of the dredge was hit by the cable. Broken end smashed his ribs. They're carrying him down to the doctor."

Carreau swore angrily. "Johnson knocked out! That leaves a devil of a hole in the force!" He whirled to face Darion once more. "You see how matters stand, don't you? I'm no fool! You've run a dredge, haven't you?"

"If you say so, yes," Darion replied.

"We've got a new arm and cable," Carreau burst out, turning again to the man who had brought up the report. "Get all the available men together, and get the dredge fixed up. We can't waste more than an hour. Hurry, now!"

The man darted away, lurching, and slipping down the wet bank. The foreman watched him for a second and then faced Darion.

"The engine will be ready in an hour!"

"That's good!"

"See here, man!" Carreau took Darion by the shoulder, and fairly shook him. "What's got into you? You're an engineer—I know that. Still, you don't seem to want to work. Come, now, I need you on that dredge."

"Fifteen minutes ago you threatened to run me off the ground," Darion retorted.

"Oh, hang it all, don't you understand? I wasn't wise. We have so many know-it-alls hanging around here slipping us advice."

"I suppose so," Darion looked reflectively at his finger tips. "But after this, when I mention a fact, will you be kind enough to pay attention?"

"The drinks are on me; I'll remember," said Carreau, and he laughed weakly, not quite certain as to the other's proposed determination.

Darion's heart was fluttering strangely, and his fingers already seemed to be itching for the feel of a throttle.

"And please remember one thing, Mr. Carreau," he spoke out frankly. "One important thing."

"What's that?"

"I didn't ask for this job."

"Of course I'll remember. But what's that got to do——"

"No matter what happens," Darion broke in, "bear it in mind. *No matter what happens!* I didn't ask for this job, nor even hint for it, did I? You gave it to me—forced it on me—handed it out on a silver platter. Now, don't have a sudden loss of memory if this ever comes up."

Carreau frowned, and appeared puzzled by the remark. But it kept him silent only for the moment. He laughed, showing plainly that a load was lifted from his mind.

"I guess I'm wise," he said. "And I'm to call you Darion, eh?"

"I'll answer to that name admirably." Darion passed a limp hand across his forehead. "Now, let's get on the job!"

CHAPTER III.

A CONFESSION.

WITHOUT being directed, Darion interested himself in the adjusting of the new dredge arm and the supporting cables. With plenty of men on the job, the affair was of but an hour's duration. During that time Darion became as grimy, as mud-spattered, as his companions. He stopped only once, and then to straighten and take up another notch in his belt. Somehow the excitement acted as a stimulant. He felt prepared to work an endless length of time without a thought of resting.

Once the dredge was again in working order, Darion climbed into the pilot room, nodded to the fireman, seated himself on the stool, and tested the numerous levers that projected about,

all within arm's reach. The fireman, interested, and plainly dubious as to the new engineer's ability, watched him closely.

The moment he saw the manner of Darion's handling, his eyes brightened, and he broke into a laugh.

"I guess you don't need any advice," he said. "You have held down this sort of job before, haven't you?"

"Carreau seemed to think so," Darion replied. And then, in quite another tone, he added: "What's your name?"

"Holt."

"Mine's Darion! Now let's get busy."

Carreau, watching from the opposite side of the flood wall—the only stretch of completed concrete on the job—grinned to himself. The huge bucket on the end of the thin steel arm dipped, arose, swept through the air in a half circle, and finally dumped its load of dripping earth in exactly the right place.

"That Darion's a real find," Carreau told himself. "And I know 'em when I see 'em, too. But he was devilish independent. Guess he don't have to work unless he wants to. Only hope I can keep him."

All the rest of the afternoon the big dredge obeyed the strong, brown fingers of the new engineer at the throttles. Not an accident marred its performance, not a hitch occurred in the intricate maneuvers.

Because of the necessity of getting the swamp excavated before the frost, the work was being carried on with three shifts, working eight hours each. The accident to the dredge had occurred shortly after the second shift had gone on duty—that is, the shift working from two p. m. until ten. The three crews were known as the morning, sundown, and graveyard shifts. The first reported at six a. m., and worked until two p. m. The second came on and worked until ten; the last from then until six.

When the dusk crept into the little valley, and the air became cooler—a great relief to the men in the stuffy engine room—the whole scene of operations was flooded with powerful, dazzling-white carbide lamps, each working

on the principle of a spotlight in a theater, and each circle overlapping the other.

Following this transformation, Carreau came down, and stepped into the pilot room for the moment.

"How's everything, Darion?"

The engineer scarcely lifted his eyes from the low window that commanded a view of the burrowing bucket.

"All O. K. so far," he answered. "Only I would suggest a plain scoop bucket instead of this fish-mouth style after we get through there into harder soil."

Carreau weighed the suggestion a moment. "Not a bad idea. Not bad at all. I shall consider it. Say," he went on sharply, as he noticed the engineer reel a trifle in his seat. "What's the matter? You're looking white about the gills. Work too hard on you?"

Darion tossed his head back and set his teeth grimly. He was conscious of a dull roaring in his brain, and somehow his arm muscles were growing stiff. If only he could hold out until the foreman left!

"Nothing ails me," he said quietly.

Carreau frowned, shrugged his shoulders, and went out. No sooner had he left the room than Darion pitched forward in his seat. He had presence of mind enough, however, to set his throttle at rest. The fireman, Holt, peering in from behind the boiler, gave a sudden exclamation, and hurried forward.

"What's up?" he said, lifting Darion from the seat, and stretching him full length on the floor. "Sick?"

Darion grinned, and struggled erect again, bracing himself against the wall of the room.

"I'm—I'm a wee bit hungry," he replied. "I haven't had a mouthful since yesterday noon!"

CHAPTER IV.

A WARNING.

AT ten o'clock, the end of the shift, Carreau called to Darion, and took him back to Rome in his motor boat. It was a clear stretch of sailing, without locks, and the majority of the men on

the contract had their own boats for this purpose, finding it, in fact, more convenient than a car.

At Stanwix Hall, the largest hotel in the town, and conveniently situated on the old canal, Carreau saw that Darion was introduced and credit given him. The Stanwix was headquarters for most of the engineers.

An hour later Carreau was in one of the upstairs rooms, in earnest conversation with two associates. He gave the men a hurried sketch of the afternoon's adventure, and ended up by saying that the new man, Darion, was a fortunate "find."

One of the men, Hammond—tall, thin-featured, with peculiar black eyes suggesting the Japanese; in fact, he had been nicknamed Jap Hammond—listened quietly to the foreman's report until Darion's name was mentioned. Then he started, and appeared interested.

"Say his name's Darion?" he asked sharply.

"That's what he said I might call him," Carreau answered.

"Rather suspicious actions he had, don't you think?" said Jap Hammond. "You know, Carreau, we can't afford to take many chances."

"He's a blamed clever fellow," Carreau exclaimed. "And Heaven knows I need him on this contract. He got more real work out of the dredge in his shift than the other engineer did in two."

"But there's a risk!" Hammond's face darkened, and he pounded a fist on the table. "The State of New York might be sending out a spotter—and this Darion might be the man. From what I've heard from you, he has acted like a spotter."

"Well, spotter or not, he sticks," Carreau was firm on that point. "Besides, he isn't working on our proposition. Our land company has been formed for the past three years, and we've had clear sailing, haven't we? This seems a rather late day for such a thing as spies."

Trubell, the third member of the circle, interrupted.

"I slipped in from Albany this morning," he said, "and things look quiet

enough around the capitol. I guess, with my inside drag, I'd be wised to any attempt to pry into—certain deals."

"We've never quarreled since we formed this partnership," Hammond said. "Our relations have been of the smoothest. But, Carreau, I ask you to get rid of this 'find,' as you call him. You're taking too big a chance."

"And you're asking me to cut my own throat," protested Carreau. "I need capable engineers, or I'll get behind in my work. You know what the law is on this point, don't you? You're a lawyer. I've put up a seventy-five-thousand-dollar bond. If this job isn't completed by next August I'll forfeit a good bunch of it—all the profits, in fact. I can't afford to take the risk."

Hammond left his chair and paced back and forth across the room, biting on his cigar, clasp and unclasp his fingers. Abruptly he paused in front of the table.

"You've got to fire Darion!" he burst out.

"Impossible!" Carreau said firmly.

"You'll have the State down on us when we close up this Delta deal," snapped Hammond.

"I'll forfeit all my profits if I continue to let good men like Darion out of my service," exclaimed Carreau, with just as much spirit as the other.

"Well, disclosure means more than a little money. It might mean—Sing Sing!"

Trubell looked up quickly. "You're a lawyer, Jap—that's why we let you in on our proposition. What good's a lawyer if he can't keep people out of jail?"

"This isn't a time for kidding," Hammond sputtered. "This man Darion must go!"

"Now, see here," Carreau said, trying to smooth matters. "You're jumping at conclusions. You haven't even seen Darion. I tell you he's a clean-appearing sort of chap, and I like his way of going against a proposition. Now, you're a lawyer, Hammond, and you should be able to judge men fairly well. I'll have him come up, and you can discuss some matter with him, and——"

"You'll do nothing of the sort!"

Hammond interrupted in a tone that amazed the foreman and Trubell. "I—I don't care to meet him just yet. The fact is—well, I don't care to meet him."

Carreau brightened. "Then in that case he'd probably be glad to see you."

Hammond threw the end of his cigar into the wastebasket.

"You'll oblige me by not mentioning to him that I am anywhere near this town," he snapped. "And if you're stubborn enough to keep him on your job, Carreau, you'll live to see the folly of it. That's all I've got to say. Good night."

He left the room, and slammed the door behind him.

CHAPTER V.

A GAME OF POKER.

DARION, ignorant of what had gone on in the hotel that night, got his second wind, as he expressed it, and proceeded to settle down to the steady job of dredge engineer. In this position he assumed full charge, and suggested locations as to the moving of the dredge when conditions should warrant it.

He seemed to know exactly how to go about certain kinds of jobs, the sort of bucket to use for muck, and the sort for gravel; how to swing the arm in the right direction with the least possible amount of energy, and to dump the waste in the proper space for it. As there were two dredges on the contract, a friendly rivalry sprang up between the operators of them, but week by week Darion's machine ran far in the lead.

Holt, the fireman, appeared to take a new lease of life with the coming of Darion. Formerly the engineer had seen the fireman when off shift hanging around saloons and gaming places in Rome, and had tried to show him the error of such ways. That his endeavors were bearing fruit was proven when one day Darion met the man's sister, Nora.

She was barely eighteen, and had lived all her years in the country. She was simple, straightforward in manner; her personality immediately impressed

the engineer. It was her practice to ride in from the farm, above Rome, on the Mohawk River, and bring Holt his dinner. After a while she began bringing extra portions of food, and asking Darion to join. In this manner their friendship developed.

As they became better acquainted, and her natural shyness wore away, she confessed her brother's weaknesses to the engineer.

"Since father died Grant has been drinking and gambling," she said. "Mother and I have begged him to quit, but it doesn't do any good. We've been afraid he'd do something—something desperate one of these days. You see, the farm was left to him, but he won't stay on it. He says he wants excitement."

On pay days Holt would disappear, and not be seen for several days; then he would turn up without a cent. At such times the girl would appeal to Darion. After considerable thought, the engineer hit upon a possible solution of the difficulty. On the following pay day he put it into effect.

When they were going off duty—the men were paid in currency—Darion sidled up to the fireman, and tipped him a wink.

"Isn't there a game going on somewhere?" he asked.

Holt looked surprised, but, noting the engineer's apparent seriousness, admitted that there was a place where such a thing as gambling might be indulged in.

"But I didn't think you gambled," he said later, as they left the hotel, and turned east into Dominick Street.

Darion laughed, and took hold of Grant's arm. "I don't play, as a rule," he answered. "But sometimes a fellow needs a little excitement, doesn't he?"

They walked rapidly through the twilight, crossed the Black River Canal, and continued on until the New York Central tracks were reached. Here, in a little room behind a saloon, run by a fellow called Flat-eyed Pierce, Darion was introduced to as ugly a group of gamblers as he had ever met.

The engineer was introduced around,

bought the usual drinks, and later got into a poker game that was in progress. It didn't take him an hour to learn as a certainty what he had already suspected. On looking around the dimly lighted room he noticed several workers on the canal. This strengthened his suspicions.

For the first few hands he won easily—too easily, he knew—but did not betray himself. He observed that a certain number of strangers played at each table with the canal men. The frame-up was now so plausible that he all but laughed aloud.

He watched Holt's eager, flushed face at another table. Darion continued to win nearly every hand, and an hour later quit fifty dollars winner.

After that he walked over and "sat in" at the table where Holt was playing. So far the latter had been winning, but now his luck changed. Darion won with a regularity that amazed the others, Holt included. The two others at the table shuffled uneasily in their chairs, and exchanged glances.

It came Darion's turn to deal, and he grabbed the cards suddenly out of the hands of one of the players, who was fingering the deck suspiciously. The man glared at him, but did not speak.

Darion ruffled the deck leisurely, then flipped out the cards, five all around. It came to the draw, and Holt asked for two cards. Darion hesitated a moment before handing them over.

"That was a bad discard you made, Holt," he said, looking evenly into the fireman's startled eyes.

"What—what do you mean?"

"I dealt you three kings, and two low cards, didn't I? Now you've thrown away the last two cards, and are drawing for a full house, I believe."

Holt's jaw fell, and he seemed stricken dumb.

"Too bad you did that, Holt," Darion exclaimed, lifting his voice so that it carried over the room. "For the next two cards you would have drawn are kings. We seem to have a remarkable deck here. I grabbed it just in time. It's not the first deck I've run across, however, that had five kings!"

Every play stopped. Holt's three kings fluttered face up to the table. Darion snapped down the other two. At the same time he dropped the pack and jerked out a revolver.

"Keep your hands in sight, gentlemen," he commanded, as the two men at the table started to make a move. "I'm sorry our little party has to be broken up so rudely. But I got wise to the play before I'd dealt the second hand. I've been on canal contracts before, and I know a certain kind of hangers-on that follow the camps. I learned your tricks some time ago, and a lot more you haven't discovered yet. By what I gather, the picking has been very easy and very pleasant. I merely wanted the floor a moment to tell the canal men, and any others who have come here looking for a square game, that you're up against a heads-I-win, tails-you-lose proposition, and the sooner you get wise to the scheme the better it will be for your pocketbooks. I'm not strong on handing out advice, but I've been on both sides of the table in this sort of game, and I know what I'm talking about. I guess that's all."

Before the listeners could collect their wits and realize what was taking place, Darion pushed Holt toward the door.

"Run for it," he whispered.

At the same time he slipped his free hand behind him, gripped his chair, and hurled it full against the low-hanging oil lamp in the middle of the room.

There was a crash of shattered glass, utter darkness, and a rumble of cries and shouts. Taking advantage of the confusion, Darion avoided the door, and stepped out through the nearest open window. A minute later he caught up with Holt.

They were silent until the lighted streets were reached. Then Holt turned to the engineer and gripped his hand.

"I guess you've taught me my lesson, Darion," he said. "I've been a fool. I've been dropping my wages there every week."

"You'll keep it next pay day, won't you?"

"You can just bet I will," Holt answered. Then, after a pause, he con-

tinued: "I only wish you had come sooner."

Darion caught a new note in the fireman's voice.

"What do you mean by that, Holt?"

The other flushed, and checked himself. He did not look the engineer squarely in the face.

"I—I—oh, it's nothing of importance," he stammered.

That was as much as Darion was able to get out of him that night. On his way back to the Stanwix he thought over the rough experience he had just passed through, and wondered if such a melodramatic adventure would have been possible in the quiet city of Rome before the advent of the barge canal workers and their shady camp followers.

CHAPTER VII.

CEMENT AND SALARY.

IT was Darion's expectation that he would be retained on the dredge, but Carreau came to him one day, and admitted that he was too valuable a man for inside work, and that he wanted him "out on the job." So from that day Darion was an assistant under the head superintendent, and he soon proved to those he came in contact with that his advancement was merited.

Taking an interest in Holt, and realizing that the more the young fellow was around the better he would act, Darion had him taken from the dredge, and put in charge of the cement-mixing machines.

The walls of the first lock were being constructed, and Darion watched the pouring of the concrete with anxious eyes. After a job was once started, the State specifications allowed—should the weather turn cold—the contractor to use artificial means to prevent the concrete from freezing. This was accomplished by heating both the sand and the water, and using a strong salt solution in the mixture.

Darion watched his thermometer carefully, and held up any work where the instrument registered below twenty degrees. When warmer weather came the work progressed more rapidly, al-

though to keep within the bounds of the contracts no cement could be laid when the thermometer rose above seventy-five degrees.

One day Darion and Carreau took the boat, and went down the old canal to a point in the neighborhood of Oriskany, where some retaining walls had been erected nearly six months previous. Carreau seemed proud of the completed job, and explained to the engineer the difficulties they had met and overcome in getting in the foundations because of the soft, shifting soil, and the force of the Mohawk River, which, for days, undermined the temporary caissons almost as fast as they were put down.

Darion, interested in such an undertaking, got out of the boat and inspected closely the huge, sloping walls, gleaming whitely in the early sunlight. Tearing off some of the boards that were used to cover the uncompleted end, he uttered a sharp exclamation. Carreau, following behind him, after tying up the boat, hurried to his side.

"What's the matter?"

Darion pointed to parts of the wall core, showing plainly in the cross section.

"See that?" He stuck a knife blade into the cement. It crumbled away almost as easily as loose sand. "How long do you suppose this wall will stand when there is any kind of pressure against it?"

Carreau's face darkened.

"That old superintendent is to blame for this," he muttered. "He put in the wall last July when we were having such hot weather. I told him to be careful."

Darion continued with his inspection, probing the core up as high as he could reach, and he became more and more puzzled.

"Wasn't the fault of the hot weather," he said, after a while, in a decided way.

"Then what's your idea?" Carreau asked.

"Rotten cement!"

"Impossible!" Carreau shook his head as if the supposition could not be

entertained for a moment. "Impossible, Darion! Every ounce of this cement has been tested and O. K.'d by the State officials."

"You mean you believe it has."

"I mean nothing of the sort. I'm positive on that point. Why, man alive, New York spends a small fortune on these tests. Cement is the heart of the barge canal. It's the making or the breaking of a hundred-million-dollar job. They've got to use caution."

"They haven't used much here!" Darion shut his knife and slipped it back to his pocket. "I've had experience with the stuff before. In fact, I——" he caught himself, and paused. "Anyhow, Carreau, I know bad cement when I see it. That wall looks O. K. on the face, and it'll probably last for a year or so, or until you are clear of the job."

"You're not insinuating," Carreau burst out, "that I'm a party to such a deal, are you?"

"Certainly not. If the State put its seals on the cement, and said you could use it, why, that lets you out, of course. Meanwhile, the wall will stand inspection until you get your money."

"I don't believe the wall is in as bad shape as you make out," Carreau sputtered. "You're too confounded critical."

"I've been brought up to believe that one cannot be too critical on a contract. A man's reputation, especially if he is working toward one end—that is, to gain the top of the ladder—can never be blackened because he took too many pains."

Carreau looked queerly into the engineer's face, but did not vouchsafe an answer. They went back to the boat, started the engine, and went spinning up the quiet canal toward the newer workings.

At a temporary dock Carreau steered in, and the engineer stepped ashore. Before they parted, Darion spoke:

"You're leaving me in full charge of these new locks, are you not?"

"Absolute charge, yes!"

"Then whatever job I undertake to do, I'm directly and solely responsible for. The concrete I put in is going to

stand. Remember that. I've taken extraordinary pains to make my word good."

"Why, of course," Carreau said, puzzled for the moment by the direct way in which the engineer put his declaration. "Of course. We can't overlook anything. Those locks must stand."

"The fact is, Carreau," Darion went on, "I—I think you'd better know now as afterward—I have condemned half the cement in your storehouse."

"You—you've what?" Carreau almost shouted.

"Condemned. It isn't fit to be used. Yet the State seals are on every barrel. I've been making tests myself."

Carreau's face was a picture of distress.

"You—you," he stammered. "You're going too far. Condemned my cement, have you? Made your own tests, have you? You seem to be—running my own job for me. Who do you think you are, anyway? I—I——"

But Darion did not wait to hear more. He turned, and walked away in the direction of the construction work, leaving the foreman incoherent with rage, standing in the boat.

That night, when Darion returned to the hotel, he met one of the subcontractors, who informed him that Carreau wanted to speak with him at once. Darion smiled grimly and went upstairs.

He found Carreau pacing the room, smoking steadily.

"Well, you got here at last, did you?" he growled, when the engineer entered the room. "I've been trying to get you all afternoon."

"Sorry, Carreau, but I had more important things to do."

"What I've got to say to you will only take one second," the foreman burst out. "Only one second!" He brought one fist into the open palm of his other hand. "You're running roughshod over me and over my job. You seem to be doing just as you please with my end of the deal. You never seem to think it necessary to ask whether a thing is satisfactory to me or not, do you? You've got more nerve and independence than——than——"

"I suppose you want me to resign," Darion said, interrupting him. "You needn't make so much fuss over it. I'm ready to quit."

"Quit! Resign!" Carreau gulped. "Who mentioned such a thing? Not me. That's the farthest thing from my mind. You're just the kind of an engineer I've been praying for. Go ahead on that job and do it up right. I'm going to raise your salary next month."

CHAPTER VIII.

A MATTER OF BUTTONS.

FOLLOWING that unexpected announcement of Carreau, Darion took a firmer hold on the erection of the new locks. The next day a State inspector turned up, accompanied by Carreau, and the three—Darion made himself one of the party without waiting to be invited—visited the storehouse to examine a new shipment of cement.

The usual routine was gone through. The inspector took a sample from one barrel in each ten. The result was he filled a fairly good-sized bag. Darion watched the operations critically.

Carreau called one of the laborers, and had him carry the bag through the workings to the motor boat. Here Darion watched the two men embark, the sack of cement in the stern of the boat. He stood and gazed after the little craft until it was lifted through the first lock, and had finally disappeared in the direction of Rome.

He retraced his steps, puzzling over the matter. The inspector appeared to be a calm and conscientious sort of chap, not given to much needless speech, and fully acquainted with his duty. Carreau had made no suggestions as to what barrels should be sampled; in fact, as far as Darion could make out, very few words had passed between them. Besides, the State's practice was to send a different inspector each time. This was to prevent collusion.

With this fact in mind, Darion, before the day was over, obtained at least a dozen samples from the different barrels, and tested them for his own satisfaction.

At the end of three days his suspicions bore fruit. The cement proved to be of an extremely poor quality, totally unfit for such exacting work as lock walls. Yet Carreau turned in a report from the official inspector, in which this latter passed all the cement in the storehouse, certifying that it was of superior quality, and fit to be used in the construction work.

The situation was puzzling. There was yet some little cog in the machine which Darion had to discover. He felt certain that the inspector was not at fault. He knew, too, that the cement testing laboratory at Albany, so well equipped and carefully conducted by a corps of earnest operators, was returning a correct report on the material sent them.

The conclusion was inevitable, then, that the bad cement did not reach Albany! The kind the testing laboratory reported on was not the kind that was being used for the barge canal work.

Darion knew that no crooked deal could be perfect; that somewhere, somehow, the unexpected would happen and the mechanism be uncovered; that there was always a loophole, and it was only a question of time when some sharp eye would discover it.

On the last of the month, Darion walked up the towpath of the old canal, trying to estimate roughly the amount of lumber needed to build a temporary path. Through this section the Erie Canal was to be widened, yet the work had to be carried forward without hindrance to the daily traffic. Provision had to be made for a towpath that could be utilized until the new canal should be in readiness. The new waterway was to be given over entirely to power boats, therefore the towpath would be done away with.

Darion walked slowly up the path, nodding to the men on the packets who spoke to him, and exchanging an occasional word with the rough and picturesque drivers.

Arriving at the lock, he crossed over and spoke to the old keeper, known the country around as Silent John. This lock tender was a quaint, sympathetic

old type, and had been in charge at this particular lock for nearly fifty years.

His hair was pure white, and it hung matted about his stooped shoulders. He never wore a hat. His clothes were faded and green with age, and seemed ready to fall apart at a touch. His beard was a trifle darker than his hair, and it hung well down to the middle of his chest.

His eyes—a peculiar shade of blue—were the most interesting thing about him—eyes that were, for the most part, expressionless, giving one the impression of belonging to a small, wondering child.

Silent John, when off duty, could be found wandering over the country, sometimes willing to stop and talk, other times silent. Of late Darion had noticed him about the new workings, his big, staring eyes fastened blankly upon the horde of laborers, or else watching the dredges.

It was said that Silent John had once had a small fortune, but speculated, and lost it. It was said, too, that he was partly insane; but, for all of that, never an accident had happened at his lock, and the State was contented to keep him in its employ.

"Hello, John!" Darion called out to him, crossing over on the narrow bridge from the bank to the "island," where the tiny house was built between the two locks. "Not your busy day, I see."

John's big eyes roved and rested upon the engineer. Not a trace of expression showed within their depths. He took his pipe from between his lips.

"Only three boats to-day," he said. "Only three." He shook his head slowly. "Time was when thirty went down in a forenoon. That was ten years ago."

"Well, just wait until we get the new canal through," Darion said enthusiastically. "Then you'll see fifteen-hundred-ton boats going through."

"I don't want to see 'em," John returned.

Darion sat on the bench running the length of the house, and filled his pipe, borrowing a match from the tender. A long, white boat appeared, and John

let it through the lock. As it moved past a man came from the cabin and tossed out an object. It fell at Darion's feet. He picked it up, but Silent John jerked it from his fingers.

"It's mine," the old man muttered. "It's my button."

"I saw it was a button," the engineer said. "What's it for?"

"The toll! They're payin' me toll. All of 'em do it. Ain't you seen my buttons?"

"Buttons?" A look into the old man's eyes kept Darion from smiling.

"Yes!" Silent John went on, his eyes widened as a child's might be at the sight of a desired toy. "I've got some beautiful buttons. They're all mine!"

Still wondering, the engineer followed the old man into the house. Here, on a long table, Darion saw a remarkable collection of buttons. They were of every size and description—pearl, brass, cloth, bone. There were cheap ones of tin, evidently from some laborer's clothes, and beside them others—wondrous creations that must have come from a woman's ball gown. They were all there, spread out upon the table, mute witnesses to the old man's childish hobby. Silent John sank down beside his treasures, and let his trembling, brown fingers caress them, one by one.

"They're all mine," he whispered over and over to himself. "They're all—I got—left—now." He smiled to himself. "Sometimes I get talkin' with them, and they tell me strange things—strange things."

Darion felt a lump creep into his throat, and he turned sharply away to look out of the window. He realized that through all these years, the rough men on the passing canal boats had humored the old lock keeper by giving him buttons for toll, and how such a little act must have cheered his narrow, dreary life.

In the interval that followed, while John still bent over his buttons, Darion swept his gaze about the little room. It was the typical lock keeper's shack—a few highly colored pictures on the dirty walls, advertisements mostly, nondescript articles on the floor and shelves,

an old stove which served both the uses of cooking and heating. A bunk was drawn up against the farther wall; framed on the door hung the "Rules and Regulations of the Erie Canal."

Suddenly Darion's eye caught a pile of bags, half covered by a strip of canvas. A curious thought leaped to his mind. For the moment he studied over the situation, pieced it out, bit by bit, as one might knot together lengths of string. He turned to the lock keeper.

"What are the bags here for, John?"

The old man let his eyes wander slowly to where Darion's finger pointed.

"Carreau—brings them," he answered, apparently reluctant to leave his hobby.

"What for?"

"I—don't know."

"What do you do with them?"

"I put them in his boat."

Darion reflected for a moment.

"But why do you do it?" He spoke slowly and plainly, as he might have addressed a child.

John appeared to be thinking. Apparently he had to study out every word before the meaning dawned upon his sluggish brain.

"I—I——" he began—and then, his eyes brightening, he went on: "Because Carreau—gives me such beautiful buttons. Oh, you don't know how pretty they are!"

Darion felt a torrent of questions leap to his lips. His pulses raced as if under a stimulant. Yet he calmed himself, and proceeded to cross-examine his man with the utmost patience. He realized that at any moment the lock keeper might stop and refuse to speak.

Sentence by sentence he drew John on, like a school-teacher prompting a dull pupil. The old man answered in monosyllables. Darion brought to bear all his tact and perseverance. He was in fear that a boat might appear and distract the lock keeper's mind.

At the end of an hour, Darion arose and passed a quick hand across his damp face. He had learned enough. It had come bit by bit, but the facts were indisputable.

He went outside into the sunlight, and

drew in his first relieved breath. John followed. As the engineer nodded good-by, the lock keeper caught quickly at his sleeve.

"Would—would you—give me one of those buttons?" He pointed to the peculiarly shaped ones on Darion's khaki coat.

Without a word the engineer snapped one free, and placed it in his open palm.

"Oh, thank you, thank you," old John murmured. "It—is so—pretty—so very pretty!"

And Darion left him, still murmuring his obligations.

CHAPTER IX.

WHERE HAMMOND LAUGHS.

THE late afternoon train from Albany brought into Rome Carreau and Hammond. The foreman had run down to the capitol in answer to an urgent telegram from the lawyer. Now that the little matter was fixed in an agreeable way, both men were returning to the Stanwix Hotel. This was Hammond's first meeting with Carreau since the day of Darion's employment.

As the train whirled through the outskirts of Rome, and past some of the contract operations, the lawyer spoke.

"You are still employing that engineer—Darion?" he asked.

Carreau nodded. "He's still on the job. And let me tell you, Hammond, the man's a wonder. He's saved me ten thousand dollars on this contract."

"Evidently you did not think my warning amounted to much, did you?" Hammond said.

Carreau shrugged his shoulders. "Darion may act a bit unusual at times, but so far I've found him frank—extremely so. In fact, Hammond, he spotted that job on the wall before I had time to open my mouth. He seems to know cement when he sees it."

Hammond's black eyes narrowed, and he fumbled with his cigar. "He's going to get you into trouble, Carreau, mark my words. You are so stubborn now you won't take a little warning. But you'll regret the whole job when the time comes."

"Maybe so!" Carreau looked puzzled. "He runs roughshod over me all the time. I don't know why I allow him to do it. But, hang it all, Jap, I've got sort of a sneaking regard for him. When you meet a clean, straightforward sort of chap with ambitions and ideals it—well, it makes a man regret some things."

"Doing the crawfish act, are you, Carreau?" Hammond snapped angrily. "After I get matters well oiled and things running smoothly you begin to act like——"

"I give you credit for the whole scheme, Jap," Carreau broke in. "You've got a great head on those shoulders. But for all you can say, that engineer sticks with me and the job."

"You'd let him walk all over you, eh? Dictate to you, would you? You're a smart contractor, you are!"

"Let's drop the subject."

"I want an understanding," Hammond protested. "You cannot work this game from both sides."

The train stopped before the contractor had time to answer, if such was his intention, and both men climbed out of the smoker to the station platform.

"Suppose we take a run out to the work," Carreau suggested. "The motor boat is tied up at the dock above here. I'd like to see what's been happening to-day."

Hammond hesitated a moment. "I'm not keen to meet your engineer," he said presently. "But I'd like to see what he's been doing."

"You won't need to meet him," the contractor said. "Only I can't see why you're so devilish afraid of running across him. He won't bite!"

"Oh, I'm not afraid of his bite," Hammond gave back, with an attempt at laughing. But there was something in the sound that did not ring true, and Carreau was more puzzled than ever.

However, he did not question the lawyer further, and in five minutes they were speeding up the canal in total disregard of its traffic regulations.

"Darion ought to have most of the lock walls in by this time," Carreau said, as they passed through Silent John's

lock. "He was to start on the lower ones this morning."

Hammond sneered. "Probably knowing you were in Albany, he's been loafing."

"Not *that* engineer," Carreau answered confidently. "I'd stake him against a thousand."

A twist of the canal brought them within sight and sound of the big job. The drills were barking and sputtering on the higher levels. The "dinkies," each pushing a string of dump cars, loaded with the waste rock, snorted back and forth across the temporary tracks. Swarms of men were running here and there over the towering falsework of the big dams; wagons with fresh earth were rumbling in single file along plank roads, their red-shirted drivers the one splotch of color in the picture.

Carreau steered his boat carefully past a line of moored construction "flats," and finally nosed it in at the usual docking place. When he stepped out and swept his eyes toward the spot where the concrete work was supposed to be in progress he came to a sudden halt, a questioning exclamation on his lips.

"What's the trouble?" Hammond asked, walking beside him.

"Why—why—the concrete work," the contractor said. "It's stopped!"

Hammond broke into a laugh. "By George, this *is* good! Expected to find your job completed, and it isn't even commenced. Your fine engineer probably got tired, and has gone off fishing."

Carreau seemed at a loss for speech. He rubbed his eyes, as if doubting what they showed him. The mixing machines were there, a dozen of them, but not a wheel was moving. Rows of wheelbarrows, high on the narrow planking, loaded with sand and gravel, were at rest. The falsework about the lock was deserted. It looked as if, in the midst of the operations, that some mysterious power had suddenly spirited away every human being from the concrete work.

Hammond was still laughing, hugely enjoying the fact that his previous insinuations had become realities.

A solitary figure came walking toward them. Carreau, recognizing a subforeman, called to him.

"What does this mean?" Carreau asked.

"What does *what* mean, Mr. Carreau?" asked the other, apparently puzzled by the contractor's manner and speech.

"Why—this—this idleness? This leaving off the work? What has happened?"

"We worked an hour on the cement this morning," the man explained. "Then your engineer, Darion, told us to quit."

Carreau's face turned as near purple as it was possible for it to become.

"Told—told you to *quit*?" he cried. "To quit? Wasted all day—when every hour has got to count?"

"Those were our orders. He's put most of the men on the excavation work."

"Where is Darion?"

"I think he's getting the new dredge in position."

"Go and tell him that I want to see him—at once, understand?"

"Will you wait here?"

"No!" Carreau whirled on his heel, and went toward the moored boat. "I shall be at the hotel."

CHAPTER X.

DARION HAS THE FLOOR.

AT nine o'clock that night, Darion came in from the job. Moving the new dredge had taken a longer time than he first thought, and he did not wish to leave until things were in proper shape. The clerk at the desk repeated what the subforeman had told him fully three hours ago—that Mr. Carreau wished to see him at once.

"He is in his room, and wants you to come up immediately," were the clerk's words.

Darion did not answer. He took his key, went to his own room on the floor above Carreau's, took a bath, and had dinner. It was ten o'clock when he knocked at Carreau's door. The large room—it was a parlor of the suite—was

in darkness, save for a single shaded globe, which hung down over a map-littered table.

Darion's entrance apparently was unexpected just then, for both men—Hammond was at the table with the contractor—stood erect. Darion bowed slightly to Carreau.

"Hello, Jap Hammond," Darion called out. "You're quite a stranger."

Carreau, consumed as he was with anger against Darion, did not overlook the significance of this. In a flash, he saw it as an evidence that Darion and Hammond had not only met before, but that the young engineer knew the lawyer by his none too savory nickname. A silence fell between the three men for the moment; intuitively each felt that a crisis was at hand.

Of the three, Darion was the calmest.

"I believe you wanted to see me, Carreau," he said.

The contractor wet his lips. "We—we were down on the job this afternoon." Carreau was fast gaining control over his words. "You were not there. The concrete machines were idle. Not a wheel was turning."

"I ordered everything stopped at ten o'clock," Darion replied, rolling the still-lighted cigar between his fingers.

"What right had you to give such an order?" Carreau demanded. "What right? You knew we had to get that cement laid this week. Yet you deliberately order the men off the job."

"You ask me what right I had, Carreau?" The engineer advanced a step toward the circle of light. "You placed me in full charge of the work, did you not?"

"Yes, yes!" cried Carreau, flinging up his hands wildly. "But you had no right to stop that cement work."

"Mr. Carreau," Darion said sharply, "the other day I told you that whatever job I undertook I would be solely and directly responsible for. Remember that? I told you also that the concrete I put in, even if it was only for a flight of stairs, *had to stand*."

"What's that got to do with it?"

"Everything! At ten o'clock this

morning I used up the last of the cement."

"Last of it?" Carreau frowned. "Why, the storehouse is full."

"I should have said, then, that I used up the last of the *good* cement," Darion answered. "As long as I am on this job that stuff in the storehouse you call cement will stay there."

Hammond, who to this point had remained an attentive though passive listener, now cleared his throat, bent over and whispered into the contractor's ear. Then he picked up his hat and started for the door.

Darion blocked his way.

"You'd better stay in the room, Hammond," he said calmly.

Hammond hesitated for a moment, his eyes questioning. "I don't think this matter concerns me."

"No? Then you've another think coming, Jap! I'm not through yet. You will find a lot to interest you in some remarks I have to make."

"I am not accustomed to being ordered," Hammond broke out angrily. "I prefer not to remain. Your actions and insinuations are distasteful."

"Really?" Darion allowed a faint smile to curve his lips. "It must be annoying, indeed. But you will have to grin and bear it to-night! Please go back and sit down."

Hammond clenched his fingers and half raised his arms—only to be met with Darion's cool, amused smile.

"You'd better sit down."

Hammond returned to the chair he had just left, dropped his hat on the table—and waited.

CHAPTER XI.

A WORD FROM DARION.

IT was Carreau who spoke next. He wondered what could be the meaning of the scene between the engineer and Hammond, but beyond a puzzled look did not betray his interest.

"About that cement, Darion," he broke in uneasily, quite aware that there was an undercurrent he could not fathom. "Every barrel of it has been passed by the State inspector."

Darion shook his head and smiled. "The State inspector never took a grain of that cement to the laboratory at Albany. You know that, Carreau, and Jap Hammond knows it, too."

"Don't bring me into this," Hammond snarled.

"My, my," Darion said, now thoroughly enjoying the situation, tense though it was. "What a good boy little Jap is, all at once! Why, Hammond, I've been seeing your handiwork all through the game. I couldn't mistake it. You're a pretty clever man, and your little schemes generally glide along without friction. I say *generally*! But sometimes a cog slips."

"I hope you know what you're talking about," Hammond snapped out.

"I think I was talking about the unexpected thing," the engineer returned. "Now, but for the fact that a certain old and harmless lock keeper had a mania for collecting buttons——"

Darion was interrupted here by angry exclamations from the others. Apparently it was an unconscious move. Darion's remarks had struck the nerve.

"Ah, I thought that would interest you," he said. "I think neither of you gentlemen will have serious trouble in understanding me now."

"See here, Darion," Carreau put in, "you're making a gallery play, aren't you? This lock keeper and his buttons have no connection with your failure to lay that cement."

"There's where you're wrong, Carreau. You know you're wrong. Oh, come out of your shells, gentlemen. Don't you begin to suspect that I am not entirely a fool? This isn't the first proposition of the kind I've bucked up against; your friend Jap can vouch for that. Why, down in Panama Hammond and I were interested along the same lines, weren't we?" Hammond winced, but did not answer.

"I'm sorry to find you the goat, Carreau," Darion went on. "I've grown to have a friendly feeling toward you. You handed me a job on a silver platter, figuratively speaking, and I'm indebted to you. Before that, because

Jap got me in bad down at Panama, I had a hard time landing.

"Now, the question arises: Are we to stick together? It depends upon you, Carreau. Prompted by Hammond, you've lured that poor old lock keeper into changing cement bags at his lock. You probably take the inspector into the shack, and give him a drink while Silent John does the trick. And he's a profitable man to deal with, John is, taking his pay in buttons! Having the State O. K. on all the cement, you've gone ahead and built your retaining walls and your dams and your locks, knowing the blame will never fall upon your shoulders. Your conscience—well, it has been taking a vacation."

Hammond was livid with rage. The castles he had cunningly erected were toppling about his shoulders.

"I told you, Carreau," he jerked out. "I told you how it would end. This smart engineer of yours has played spotter, and——"

"A year ago down at Panama you worked the same game, didn't you, Hammond?" Darion interposed, his voice hardening. "You were getting by with the trick until I showed you up. You won't deny that. But at that time you had influence, somehow, and because of it, I found myself out of a job—and my name blackened. Every place I hunted work they seemed to know of that Panama deal—you took particular pains to spread it well, didn't you?"

"I'm not through with you yet," Hammond raved incoherently. "You've bucked me one too many times, and I'm going to get you."

"I think it's going to be *me* who'll get *you*, Hammond," Darion retorted gravely.

"Oh, that's a threat, is it?" said Hammond. "Glad you've made it in the presence of a witness."

"Take it any way you please," returned Darion; "only from now on you go in your own little path and I'll go in mine. You're too crooked for even crooks to associate with. You're too big a coward to work alone. You like to hide behind another's back. Just so you get your fingers into the pie you

are satisfied. If trouble comes you drop from sight and the other man gets it all."

"You—you can't bring a single witness against me," Hammond gave back. "Not one. My word will hold against yours in any court."

"Yes, I suppose it would!" Darion's lips tightened. "That's a move you always prepare for. That's your lawyer's instinct. Silent John would be judged feeble-minded in court, and Carreau wouldn't dare to open his mouth because it would incriminate him. You've laid your wires with great care, Jap!"

The first smile came to Hammond's pasty features. "Well, what are you going to do about it?"

"Do?" The engineer walked over and stood before him. "I'm going to watch until I get something on you. Your game here on the barge canal is done. The curtain's down, and it's the last act. You'll get out before you're thrown out."

"You'd go that far, would you?"

"I used to buck a poker game down at Panama, and the sky was my limit," Darion replied.

"You mean that unless I leave here you'll find some method—fair or unfair—to make me, eh?" Hammond was struggling for a defense. He was arguing his own case as cunningly as he might have argued one for a client. "You've threatened me once before tonight. You're not so interested in my business affairs as you are in my personal ones, are you? Your actions and speech prove that you're out for revenge."

"I have greater motives than personal ones, Hammond," Darion said, answering him as calmly as he could. "But you, better than any one else, know that there would be a strong motive for revenge. Down in Panama, where I was struggling to make a name for myself, you accused and apparently proved that I was a cheat—that I was incompetent. I could not clear myself at the time. That stigma caused me to be shunned by every contractor to whom I applied for a position. I am still un-

der that shadow. My own father believes it, and my former friends ignore me. You played the little cement trick on me, and before I was aware of it my lock walls crumbled like so much sand. Do you wonder that I am after you?"

"Order this fellow from the room, Carreau!" Hammond shouted. "I refuse to listen to such——"

"Just a moment!" Darion broke in. "Carreau doesn't need to order me out. I'll go. But before I leave let me tell you something."

"Another threat, I suppose," said Hammond.

"Call it that if you wish," Darion resumed calmly. "In order to have that dredge working in a satisfactory way I must continue on the job for a few more days." He was addressing Carreau now. The contractor, by neither look nor gesture, appeared to be aware of the fact. "After that I will resign. I regret it, Carreau, because I am beginning to take a deep interest in my work. But I can't allow myself to be mixed up in shady transactions."

He turned back to the lawyer.

"Hammond, I can have a State inspector at the storehouse in less than three hours from the time I send a message to Albany. Five hundred barrels of rotten cement are liable to create a zephyr of excitement. I shouldn't wonder if it made Rome howl. And I don't think any pent-up Utica will contract that town's powers to yell. Nor is it likely to make gay Lyons pour peppermint oil upon the canal's troubled waters. It will not bring sugar from the salt wells of Syracuse. Rochester and other cities along our great inland waterway may be depended upon to sit up and take notice. But nothing unpleasant will happen, of course, if you two play fair with the State of New York. It is up to you, gentlemen," Darion added coolly, as he moved toward the door. "Think it over."

TO BE CONTINUED.

The next section of this serial will appear in the February Mid-month TOP-NOTCH, out on January 15th.



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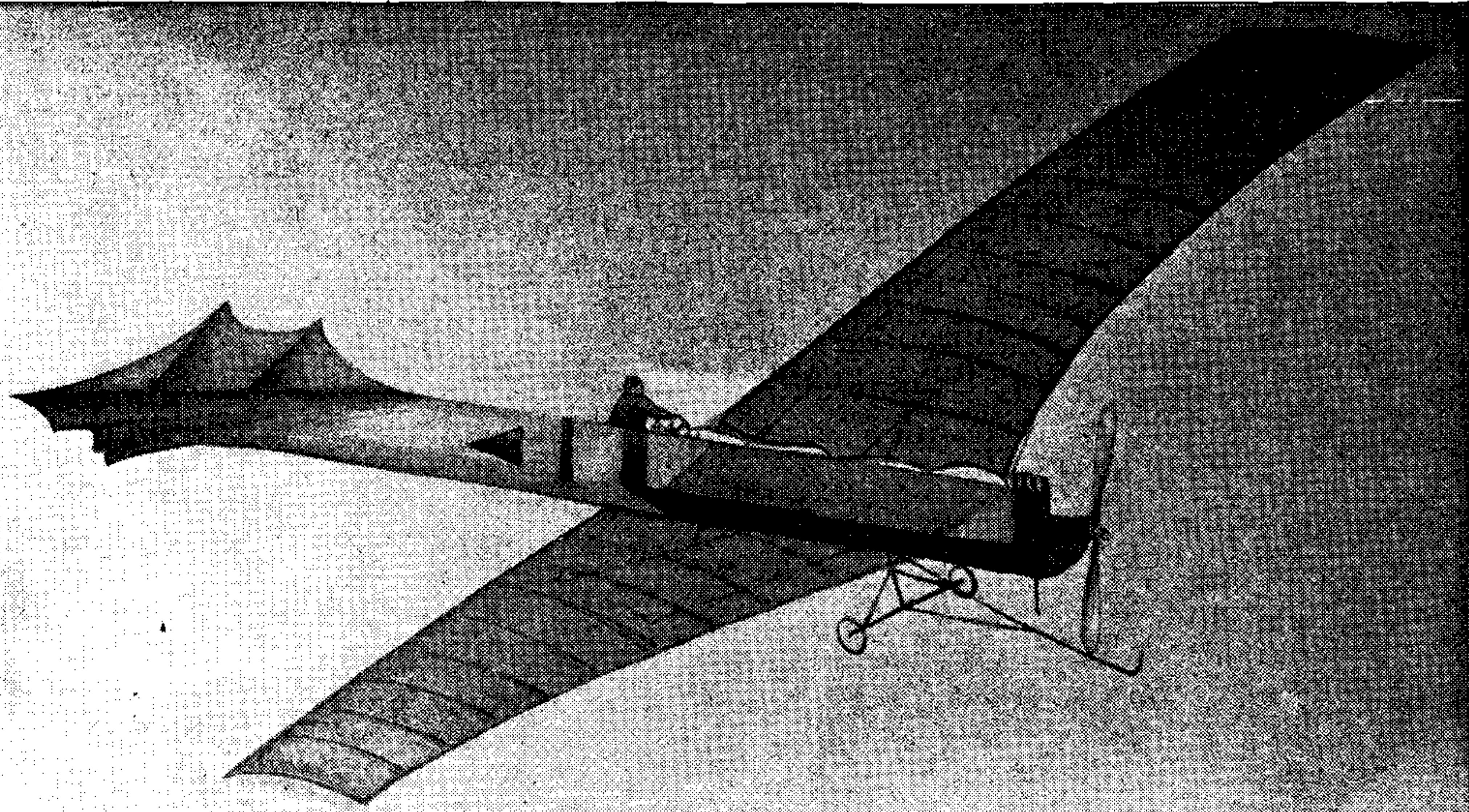
"Sargol is certainly the grandest treatment I ever used. I took only two boxes of Sargol. My weight was 120 pounds and now I weigh 140 and feel better than I have for five years. I am now as fleshy as I want to be, and shall certainly recommend Sargol, for it does just exactly what you say it will do."

Full address of any of these people if you wish.

Probably you are now thinking whether all this can be true. Stop it! "Sargol" does make thin people add flesh, but we don't ask you to take our word for it. Write us today and we will send you absolutely free a 50c. package for trial. **Cut off coupon below and pin to your letter.**

THIS COUPON GOOD FOR 50c. PACKAGE "SARGOL"

This coupon and 10c. to help pay postage and distribution expenses entitles any thin person to one 50c. package "Sargol" (provided you have never tried it). The Sargol Company, 501-N, Herald Bldg., Binghamton, N. Y.



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Nothing is impossible to the man with ambition! It does not make any difference what you want to do, there is a way to do it.

You may think it impossible to have your earning power doubled, tripled or quadrupled, but the realization of such an ambition is no more impossible than flying from New York to Los Angeles—telephoning from New York to Denver—or telegraphing without wires from San Francisco to Japan, all of which has been done within the last year.

Ambition knows no obstacles.

Ambition will find a way.

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When your *will* begins to work, nothing can stop you.

But your *will* must be directed by your mind. Train your mind along the lines of your chosen work. *Learn* more—and you will pass by all those who are satisfied with what they have.

To see how easy it is to do this, read the next page



To the Man With Ambition

The International Correspondence Schools offer to men with ambition, the opportunity to make their dreams come true. Thousands of ambitious men are now taking this short cut to better positions—to greater home comforts—to a higher standing as citizens.

An hour of your spare time each day is surely a small payment for special training that will put you at the top of your business or profession.

Now if you have said, "**I CAN DO IT**"—say, "**I WILL DO IT,**" and the I. C. S. will help you to succeed. Just mark the coupon, for that is the first step.

This step will bring you, without any obligation on your part, all particulars as to how the I. C. S. trains you for success and the realization of your ambition.

Now is the time to start.

If you wait until tomorrow you have wasted a whole day.

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

Box 1097, SCRANTON, PA.

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Concrete Construction
Civil Engineer
Textile Manufacturing
Stationary Engineer
Telephone Expert
Mechan. Engineer
Mechanical Draftsman
Electrical Engineer
Elec. Lighting Supt.
Agriculture
Electric Railways
Structural Engineer
R. R. Construction
Metal Mining
English Branches
Gas Engineer
Foreman Plumber

Civil Service
Architect
Chemist
Languages
Commercial English
Building Contractor
Architectural Draftsman
Industrial Designing
Commercial Illustrating
Window Trimming
Show Card Writing
Advertising Man
Stenographer
Bookkeeper
Cotton Manufacturing
Woolen Manufacturing
Toolmaking
Foundry Work
Pattern Making
Blacksmithing
Surveyor
Poultry Farming

Name _____

Present Occupation _____

Street and No. _____

City _____ State _____

—\$1 COUPON FREE—

To every sufferer from

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This coupon, when mailed to **Magic Foot Draft Co., Dept. 284, Jackson, Mich.**, will bring you a \$1 Pair of Magic Foot Drafts, prepaid, **TO TRY FREE**, as explained below.

**If You Have
Rheumatism Sign and Mail
This Coupon Today**



FREDERICK DYER, Corresponding Sec'y.

My unbounded faith in Magic Foot Drafts is built on my record of results. If you could see the thousands of letters I get, telling of cures at every stage in the progress of this cruel torture called Rheumatism, cures of old chronics who have suffered 20, 30 and even 40 years, as well as all the milder stages, you would lay aside your doubts. But I do not ask you to believe. I send you my Drafts to speak for themselves. Send my coupon today. You will get a \$1 pair of Drafts by return mail to try FREE. Then, after trying, if you are fully satisfied with the comfort they bring you, send me \$1. If not, they cost you nothing. **You decide.** Can't you see that I couldn't do this if my Drafts didn't satisfy? Wouldn't you mail a coupon to know for yourself, when I, knowing as I do, risk my dollar treatment on your verdict? Address **Magic Foot Draft Co., 284 Oliver Bldg., Jackson, Mich.** Send no money—only coupon. Do it now.



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I Will Tell Any Woman Absolutely Free of Charge How To Do It Positively And Safely.

Many women believe that the bust cannot be developed or brought back to its former vigorous condition. Thousands of women have vainly used massage, electricity, pump instruments,

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This method has been used in Europe with astounding success, and has been accepted as the most positive method known. To any woman who will send a 2c stamp to pay postage, I will send complete illustrated booklet of information, sealed in plain envelope. Address

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Develop Your Bust

50c Package FREE



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Dr. Kelly Company, Dept. 435AB

Buffalo, N. Y.

How a Fat Girl Became Thin



Fleshy people are intensely interested in the wonderful story of how Mae Edna Wilder, the fleshy girl, became thin in a few weeks at her own home without the knowledge of her most intimate friends. She was well known in her community, and a short time ago her friends were all startled at the rapidity with which her superfluous flesh began to disappear. So many of them made inquiries in regard to it that newspaper reporters became interested and began to write stories of a wonderful discovery which she had made. In a short time she began to receive letters from all parts of the country making inquiries regarding it. She was finally forced to write a book describing her wonderful system and she will be pleased to send to any one interested this book, free, which tells how she became thin in a few weeks. Her method is entirely different from anything ever before used for this purpose. There is nothing to take internally, no dieting or exercising is used. You eat what you like, drink what you like, still your superfluous flesh rapidly disappears. Many others who have been following her system report even more wonderful results than she obtained. Some report a loss of from ten to twenty pounds per week. Others have had their double chins completely removed in three weeks, and if

you wish to know all about the treatment and its wonderful possibilities, write to-day for a copy of her free book, and it will be sent to any address postage prepaid. Address **MAE EDNA WILDER, Dept. 113, Rochester, N. Y.**

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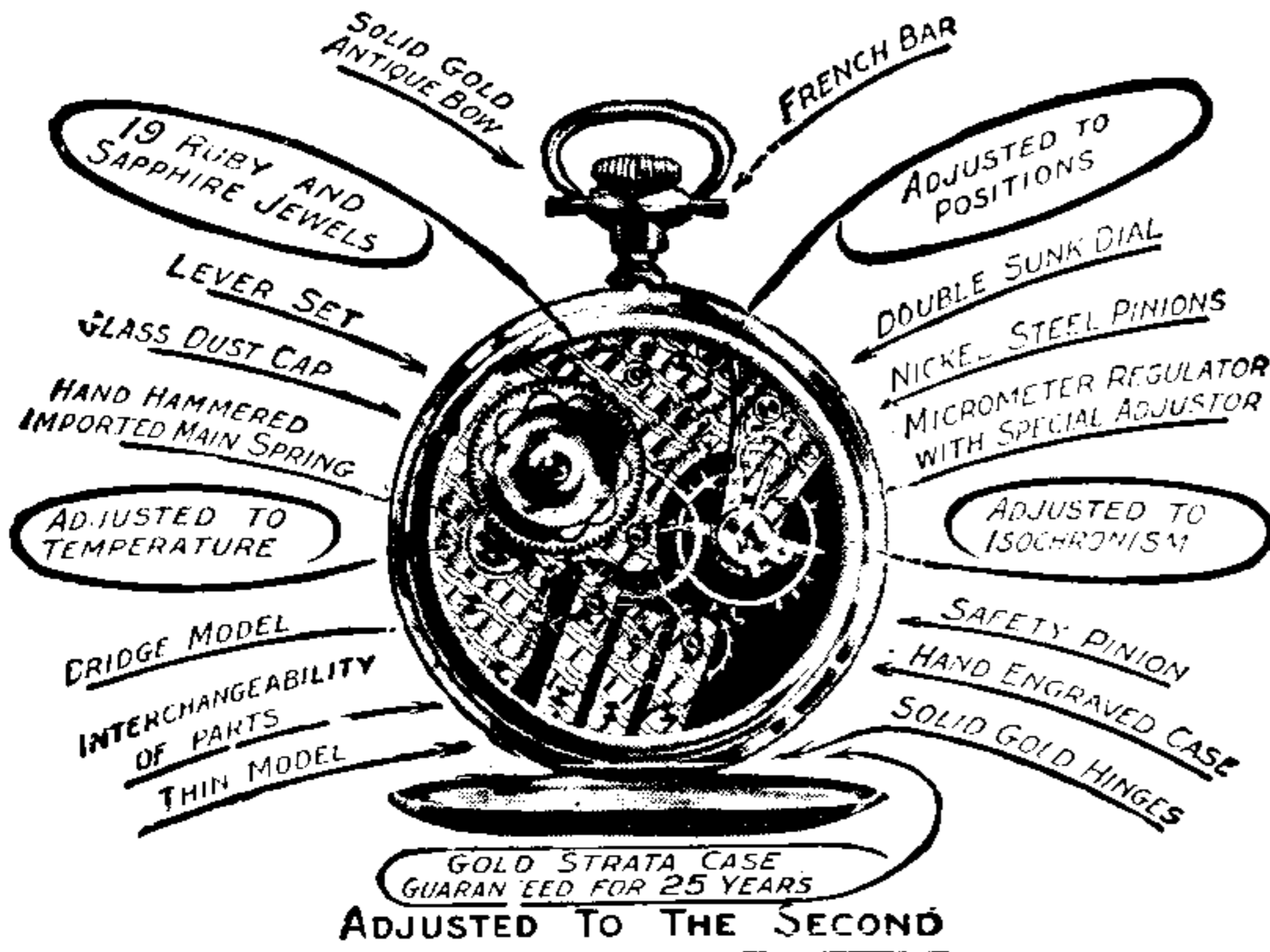
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